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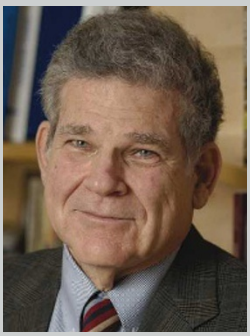
MOVERS

Eaton E. Lattman, chief executive and executive director of the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute, Buffalo, New York



2004–present: Dean of Research and Graduate Education, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland

1996–2004: Chair, Department of Biophysics, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins University

After spending almost his entire academic career at Johns Hopkins University as a student, researcher and administrator, Eaton Lattman has been lured away. The job, directing the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute, is a perfect fit, he says, because the institute's research profile mirrors his work in structural biology.

But an ambitious crystallography project, attempted at Johns Hopkins school of medicine in the 1980s, almost derailed Lattman's academic career. Ignoring advice that it would prove too difficult, he ambitiously tried to crystallize a virus called polyoma. He learned to grow mammalian cells and culture viruses, but couldn't grow crystals of sufficient quality for crystallography. His tenure was in jeopardy. Needing results quickly, Lattman began studying mutations that altered the folding of an already crystallized small protein: staphylococcal nuclease. After publishing a number of key papers in a short time, he earned tenure, and began studying the structure and function of proteins and RNA.

Lattman has long appreciated crystallography's challenges. After earning his BSc in chemistry and physics from Harvard College in 1962, he chose a PhD in biophysics at Johns Hopkins because the programme was one of the few to explore the growing field's variety of research areas. He excelled, creating a method to simplify the process of determining a crystal's structure; postdocs followed at Johns Hopkins and the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry in Martinsried, Germany. 'Lattman angles' are now used in crystallography computer programs around the world to display how molecules are oriented in space.

Lattman was later recruited to chair his former department, Johns Hopkins' Krieger School of Arts and Science, where he became his PhD adviser's boss. A series of retirements coupled with administrative mis-steps had left the biophysics department in a slump. Lattman hired new, diverse faculty to restore his graduate department's broad capabilities in biophysics.

Lattman now plans to strengthen Hauptman-Woodward by adding new investigators in areas such as computational biology and single-molecule diffraction, forging new collaborations with University of Buffalo researchers and raising endowments to guard against a nationwide funding crunch affecting many institutions. "Ed welcomes new ideas," says Johns Hopkins biophysics colleague George Rose. "And, importantly, he can instinctively spot the difference between a fresh approach and a quixotic gesture." ■

Virginia Gewin

NETWORKS & SUPPORT

Crossing borders

Extending an invitation can do more than bring in a guest — it can build a beneficial relationship. In 2005, the Feinstein Institute for Medical Research in New York named cytokine specialist Jan Andersson, head of infectious diseases at the Karolinska Institute of Stockholm, as its first invited lecturer. Andersson reciprocated by suggesting that the two institutes combine educational forces.

This month, they announced a joint training programme that will let Karolinska graduates do postdoctoral research in New York while Feinstein scientists have access to Karolinska labs. Both institutions have records of collaboration and mentorship that will be strengthened by the relationship, says Feinstein director Kevin Tracey. He and Andersson, for example, have worked together on the role of cytokines in inflammation.

The Feinstein Institute's research enterprise, with 750 employees doing research in 45 programmes, is about a third the size of the Karolinska's and lacks some of its infrastructure, such as mass spectrometry and proteomics facilities. However, it has strengths in inflammation research, neuroscience and neuropsychology that the Karolinska wants to tap into. "The Karolinska is much larger and has more departments, people and programmes," Tracey says.

Meanwhile, the Karolinska wants to augment its translational and clinical research. The Feinstein can help, as it is affiliated with the North Shore–Long Island Jewish Health System, which boasts 38,000 patients in 15 hospitals; 120,000 patients have been enrolled in clinical trials since 1998. The Feinstein serves the greater New York area, with 8 million people, close to Sweden's total population.

The Karolinska's medical and graduate training is strong, says Tracey, "but they were interested in having help with their postdoctoral training."

Both institutions offer high-quality mentoring. The Karolinska Institute launched its junior faculty programme in 2004, helping graduates make the transition to independent researcher (see *Nature* **427,** 470; 2004). The Feinstein Institute specializes in making doctors who have practised medicine into researchers. And most do continue in research, unlike graduates from many other such programmes.

Each institution will host up to six researchers. Those interested in working in the other institute's lab must apply for a place and be reviewed by a joint admission committee, including scientists from both institutes. ■

Paul Smaglik

POSTDOC JOURNAL

Meeting our targets

Non-scientists think research is not a 'real job' because scientists don't have deadlines or discrete targets. On the contrary, I say, we are accountable to those who fund us. Investors want financial returns, taxpayers demand medical advances. We are judged by the number and impact factor of our publications. I have friends who have actually calculated the average impact factor of papers published at their institution, hoping to gauge their own competitiveness.

At the Biopolis, we are subject to annual evaluations in which our productivity is rated on a scale of 1 to 5. These determine our bonus and possibly our career prospects. You don't get points for effort: my decision to study a novel protein has proved unwise because I cannot use established reagents and protocols to churn out data and papers. I can ask many questions about a protein of unknown function. But as I was specifically instructed to "focus on publishing my work as it is completed", the key question driving my research must be: what is the minimum amount of data that can coalesce into a paper?

This practical approach is difficult to reconcile with the risk associated with novel or creative projects. It is, however, necessary if I want to stay employed in a world dictated by 'key performance indicators'. We are subject to constant selection pressure. And, to paraphrase Darwin, those who can adapt, survive. ■

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