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THE WEEK**

Globalization implies increased information sharing, capital investment and communication among the countries of the world. In other words, it's a greater integration of economies and labour markets. But when it comes to science, globalization's reach has been less than global.

At the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston earlier this month, several sessions examined the effects of globalization. For instance, Mark Fishman, president of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research, explained why the Swiss company seeks scientists in India and China and why it has moved its research headquarters to Boston: it follows the talent. In the case of Boston, it wanted an entrepreneurial talent base that was not too risk averse, which is harder to find in Switzerland, said Fishman.

Several speakers noted the rising prevalence of branches of US universities overseas where funds are plentiful and nations are looking to diversify their economies. In the Qatari desert, for example, Cornell University has set up a medical school, Texas A&M teaches engineering and Georgetown University holds classes on foreign services.

But from Nigeria to Mexico, and Indonesia to Chile, globalization is less obvious. One potentially disappointing, even damaging, trend in these nations is an increased prevalence of private universities — schools that are often unaccredited and that tend to favour more profitable business-administration classes over a basic-science curriculum. This was the thesis of Wayne Patterson, a programme manager for developing countries at the US National Science Foundation. Patterson canvassed representatives from 19 countries and found that most shared his concerns, citing a lack of money, a shift in students' careers away from science, and a continued loss of scientific talent to regions such as Europe and the United States.

So far, science's spread is more of a regionalization or a concentration than a globalization. This is quite a shame, as developing nations could stand to benefit most from research talent and innovation.

Gene Russo, acting editor of *Naturejobs*

CONTACTS

Acting Editor: Gene Russo

European Head Office, London
The Macmillan Building,
4 Crinan Street, London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

European Sales Manager:
Andy Douglas (4975)
e-mail: a.douglas@nature.com
Business Development Manager:
Amelie Pequignot (4974)
e-mail: a.pequignot@nature.com
Natureevents:

Claudia Paulsen Young (+44 (0) 20 7014 4015)
e-mail: c.paulsenyoung@nature.com
France/Switzerland/Belgium:
Muriel Lestringuez (4994)
Southwest UK/RoW: Nils Moeller (4953)

Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal/Italy:

Evelina Rubio-Hakansson (4973)
Northeast UK/Ireland:
Matthew Ward (+44 (0) 20 7014 4059)
North Germany/The Netherlands:
Reya Silao (4970)
South Germany/Austria:
Hildi Rowland (+44 (0) 20 7014 4084)

Advertising Production Manager:

Stephen Russell
To send materials use London address above.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs web development: Tom Hancock
Naturejobs online production: Dennis Chu

US Head Office, New York
75 Varick Street, 9th Floor,
New York, NY 10013-1917
Tel: +1 800 989 7718

Fax: +1 800 989 7103
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

US Sales Manager: Peter Bless

India
Vikas Chawla (+91 1242881057)
e-mail: v.chawla@nature.com

Japan Head Office, Tokyo
Chiyoda Building, 2-37 Ichigayatamachi,
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0843
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:
Ayako Watanabe (+81 3 3267 8765)
e-mail: a.watanabe@natureasia.com
**Business Development Manager, Greater
China/Singapore:**
Gloria To (+852 2811 7191)
e-mail: g.to@natureasia.com