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MOVERS

William Brody, president, Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California

1996–2008: President, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland
1994–96: Provost, Academic Health Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
1987–94: Professor of radiology, biomedical engineering and electrical and computer engineering, Johns Hopkins University

When William Brody decided to step down as president of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, earlier this year, the 64-year-old was looking forward to some downtime. But just as he was about to publicly announce his retirement, the Salk Institute came calling. "I asked if they were tapping my phone," says Brody, who will start as Salk's president next March.

Brody had assumed Salk was looking for an active molecular biologist. But Salk didn't want someone brought from the bench to manage fellow scientists. The small institute, often described as talent-rich but resource-poor, wanted a big name that could bolster its small endowment. Salk also wanted some stability; in the past two decades most of its presidents have stayed for only a year or two.

Brody fits the bill. Trained as a PhD-MD, he was Hopkins's president for 12 years and says he has made a five-year commitment to Salk. He will bring the connections that helped him complete a US$3.2-billion fundraising campaign at Hopkins. But the Salk Institute is no Hopkins, which spends $1.5 billion a year on research and development — the most in the United States — and has some 44,000 researchers. Salk has 870 researchers, and acquires most of its $113-million budget from federal, state and philanthropic grants. "Clearly we have to build up the resource base — which is going to be much harder in this economic environment," Brody says.

It will be a sort of homecoming for Brody, who grew up in Stockton, California. After pursuing electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he earned his PhD-MD from Stanford University in California. He put those skills to use in the field of radiology, developed several patents, and co-founded three medical-device companies. At Hopkins, he was one of the best-paid university presidents, making $1.9 million in 2005–06, according to a 2007 *Chronicle of Higher Education* report. At Salk, he says, "it'll be a whole lot less".

Salk will get an excellent president and fundraiser for a bargain price, says Ruth Faden, director of the Berman Institute of Bioethics at Johns Hopkins. Faden recalls a meeting between Brody — a renowned pianist — and benefactor Phoebe Berman, when she was contemplating a multimillion-dollar gift to found the institute. "I want to make sure you're everything you claim. Can you play?" Faden recalls Berman saying. "Bill didn't bat an eyelash, and sat down and played," says Faden. "She said, 'Okay, you got it'." ■

Eric Hand

NETWORKS & SUPPORT

Building up to an HIV vaccine

Vaccine development is a notoriously challenging career path, given the propensity for negative results. For every 100 potential immunogens made, very few will work. Young scientists often choose research areas more likely to offer career advancement. Hoping in part to address these shortcomings, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), a global non-profit organization, is investing $30 million to create a new HIV Neutralizing Antibody Center at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California.

"One of the major challenges in the HIV world is bringing young investigators into the field and maintaining their career path," says Wayne Koff, IAVI's senior vice-president of research and development. "We want to train the next generation of HIV vaccine discovery scientists." The organization is seeking young scientists willing to commit to a multi-year programme. It intends to combine expertise — at the graduate student, postdoc and scientist level — in immunology, molecular biology, protein chemistry, molecular virology, computational biology and drug discovery.

"The recent failure of the Merck HIV vaccine highlighted the need to think about antibodies as well the T-cell component in HIV vaccine development," says Scripps immunologist Dennis Burton, who is scientific director of the HIV Neutralizing Antibody Consortium (NAC), a collaboration between the IAVI and leading AIDS laboratories in the United States and Europe.

The centre plans to promote a multidisciplinary approach and dedicate time to mentoring. Graduate students will be afforded the chance to develop soft skills, such as grant-writing and giving presentations at international meetings, at a much earlier stage than is usual in academic settings. Young scientists will have instant connections to the top HIV labs around the world through the NAC.

Initially the centre will have 30 people, says Koff, including some senior international scientists within the consortium. The IAVI hopes to have the centre under way by the beginning of 2009. "This is the highest vaccine-discovery priority at the IAVI," says Koff. He says Scripps would like to identify an immunogen consisting of broadly neutralizing antibodies against HIV and be on its way to clinical development of that immunogen within five years. ■

Virginia Gewin

POSTDOC JOURNAL

Imposter syndrome

Last week, while giving a seminar, I suddenly felt as if the sentences coming out of my mouth weren't mine. And the brain controlling that mouth didn't seem to be mine either. This was not the first time I had suffered 'imposter syndrome'.

Although not officially recognized as a psychological disorder, it might have been if doctors had used me as a case study a few years back. Whether I had success in sub-cloning a long DNA fragment or fashioning a unique experimental design, I would usually attribute such accomplishments to luck.

I was relieved to discover that imposter syndrome is widespread in academia: sometimes successful people are unable to accept that their accomplishments are deserved. In extreme cases, I've heard it can lead people to avoid challenges altogether, for fear of failure. Fortunately, I have never suffered to that extent.

In fact, what I have come to realize is that the syndrome is a mechanism to keep my ego in check. This can be a good thing. An ego can be a dangerous monster, as I found out as an undergraduate student when I alienated a few lab mates by gloating that my fruitfly genetics project was far superior to theirs. Ironically, not long after, I scored a paltry 65 on my fruitfly genetics exam. Perhaps a few recent successes explain the resurgence of the imposter in my seminar. Maybe it's time my ego was tamed once again. ■

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