

Busquin plans white paper to integrate European research

Brussels

The European Union's (EU) new research commissioner, Philippe Busquin, has promised to publish a white paper (policy document) early next year outlining his plans for the creation of a European Research Area (see *Nature* 401, 837; 1999).

Speaking to a meeting of the European Parliament's committee on industry, external trade, research and energy, Busquin said that the paper will address issues such as how to achieve mobility of researchers across the EU, whether researchers' careers should have a 'European dimension', and how to "stimulate the taste for research among the young and promote the participation of women in science".

Busquin told the committee that he wanted to raise the total research and development spending of EU member states from its current level of 1.8 per cent of gross domestic product towards the 2.8 per cent of the United States and the 3 per cent of Japan.

Keith Nuttall



Clayton (left) and Rubin: expected to shake up management of the largest US medical charity.

made quickly once they take over operation of the institute in January. "I don't know what will be announced, but I'd hope that the first year of the administration will be an interesting one," says Clayton.

Cowan, who has steered the institute's scientific programmes with an iron hand for the past 12 years, says he plans to pursue his keen personal interest in the history of neuroscience during his retirement.

Purnell Choppin, the outgoing president, will remain at the HHMI's headquarters at Chevy Chase, Maryland, writing an official history of the institute. There are conflicting views as to whether the institute's secretive and eccentric billionaire founder set it up primarily as a medical research institute or a tax dodge.

Colin Macilwain

graduate and postgraduate education, and for research overseas.

Cech says Rubin will take over supervision of the investigators, while Clayton will be responsible for "strategic planning" of the institute's activities. Clayton is currently a senior scientific officer at the HHMI and was formerly associate director of the Beckman Center at Stanford University in California.

Rubin will maintain his laboratory at Berkeley, although it will contract sharply once it has completed its current project to sequence the genome of the fruit fly *Drosophila* in collaboration with Celera (see *Nature* 401, 729; 1999).

"I've felt for a while that it is time to take on a more administrative role," he says. "I enjoy policy, and this is the ideal job because you don't have to worry about where the money's coming from."

Cech is also keeping his laboratory at the University of Colorado. Both Rubin and Cech plan to spend about 20 per cent of their time on research.

Although all three say that no decisions have been made about new directions at the HHMI, Cech suggests that the institute will explore new ways of encouraging top-quality clinical research in the United States, and is likely to build on plans already announced to appoint investigators in bioinformatics.

But they expect that such decisions will be

Genentech pays \$200m over growth hormone 'theft'

San Diego

The biotechnology company Genentech last week agreed to pay \$200 million to settle a patent infringement lawsuit, over the alleged use of human growth hormone DNA taken 20 years ago from the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF).

The settlement — the largest such payment in a biotechnology case — ends a federal lawsuit that has exposed a seamy side to the relations between universities and industry at the dawn of the biotechnology era.

The university sued Genentech nearly a decade ago, claiming that a midnight 'theft' in 1978 of growth hormone DNA was key to the firm's development of its blockbuster growth-hormone drugs. The company acknowledged receiving the growth hormone DNA, but insisted that it was not used to produce its drugs.

About \$85 million of the settlement will be split equally between three inventors formerly at UCSF — Peter Seeburg of Germany, John Shine of Australia and Howard Goodman of Harvard University — and two collaborators, John Baxter of UCSF and Juan Martial of Belgium.

The settlement also includes a Genentech

contribution of \$50 million towards the construction of a research building on UCSF's developing Mission Bay Campus. Genentech has the right to name the building, which will cost \$235 million. The remaining \$65 million will go to the university and UCSF.

UCSF Chancellor Michael Bishop says that the settlement "was negotiated in an amicable manner out of mutual respect. The relationship between these two institutions in the past has been collegial and historic. Now, we can continue in the same spirit." A joint statement by the university and the company noted that the settlement is not an admission of patent infringement.

Arthur Levinson, Genentech's chairman and chief executive, said that the company "has decided to put this matter behind us and avoid the distraction and uncertainty of another jury trial covering complex patent issues that are based on events that took place nearly 20 years ago". Genentech will take the \$200 million as a one-time expense during the next quarter, he said.

Last June, in the eyes of many observers, the university nearly won its demand for \$400 million in damages, which it sought to have tripled because of Genentech's conduct.

After a six-week trial, eight of the nine jurors found that the university's patent had been infringed (see *Nature* 399, 512; 1999), but a unanimous verdict was required. This set the stage for a retrial, scheduled for January.

Seeburg, who is now at the Max Planck Institute for Medical Research in Cologne, remains under investigation for possible scientific misconduct 20 years ago. At last spring's trial, Seeburg testified about how he took the growth hormone DNA from UCSF to Genentech, where he had gone to work after leaving UCSF.

The UCSF DNA was used to produce Genentech's drug, he testified, and a *Nature* article in 1979 (see *Nature* 281, 544–548; 1979) contained "technical inaccuracies" which effectively disguised Genentech's use of the UCSF DNA. This testimony prompted the ongoing probe.

UCSF officials acknowledged last week that the investigating German authorities have requested assistance, adding that the university is in the process of responding. Contacted in Germany, Seeburg said that he was "very relieved" about the settlement, although he denied that he had been required to contribute towards the legal costs incurred.

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