

November Updates: People & Places

Envigo launches Science and Technology Advisory Group (STAG)

Envigo recently announced the launch of their new Science and Technology Advisory Group (STAG). It will sponsor internal research and explore collaborations with current customers and external partners, such as universities, to develop new technologies and expand Envigo's scientific capabilities.

STAG Deputy Chair Brian Burlinson remarks, "We are encouraging our scientists to put forward new projects for funding, acting as an internal innovation incubator, but also, we are going out to market and asking our customers if they have research problems they would like us to develop into commercial solutions." Looking long-term, STAG will also partner with universities to sponsor postdoctoral work and place recent graduates. Students with cardiovascular and pharmacology expertise from King's College London will be among the first to work with Envigo as a result of a STAG collaboration.

STAG is composed of 6-8 representatives with experience across the company who will rotate every two years. Sixteen internal applications have already been reviewed, with five preliminarily approved for development. According to Burlinson, "The aim is to generate a balanced portfolio of projects into an annualized program."

Charles River expansion in Shrewsbury

Charles River Laboratories is re-opening a research facility in Shrewsbury, MA. The location, formerly occupied by Hewlett-Packard but owned by Charles River since 2007, will provide approximately 80,000 square feet of lab and office space with an additional 80,000 square feet dedicated to a new animal facility. Researchers at the site will primarily work on rodent model testing; the company is currently recruiting scientific and technical staff.

With the expansion, Charles River is also exploring options to share space and

services with smaller life sciences businesses—approximately 250,000 square feet of the facility is still available. Senior site director Michael Broadhurst comments, "We're being very creative in our business model." With the revived space and potential for collaborations, the company is hoping to attract new customers.

NIH expects to lift moratorium on chimera research

In August, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced that the agency expects to lift the moratorium on human-animal chimera research. Funding for such studies had previously been suspended in September 2015 while NIH considered the ethical issues of chimera research and considered how to proceed. They now propose a new agency review process, in which an internal steering committee composed of scientists, ethicists, and animal welfare experts will consider the experimental design and implications of proposals involving chimeras. Under the purview of the committee will be two areas of research: the introduction of human stem cells into nonhuman vertebrate embryos up to gastrulation, and the introduction of human cells into nonhuman mammalian brains (excluding rodents). Their conclusions will inform the NIH's ultimate funding decision for each project.

Although potentially opening the door for some chimera research, the NIH also proposes tightening restrictions on others. Researchers will not be allowed to insert human cells into primate pre-blastocysts, whereas the former restriction only applied to blastocysts. Additionally, they will prohibit breeding of animals where any human cell, not just pluripotent ones, could contribute to the germ line and thus be passed on.

Public comment on the NIH proposals was collected through early September and

CAREERS UPDATE

Evan Keller has been named 2016 Oscar W. Schalm Lecturer at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.



Keller received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Master of Preventative Veterinary Medicine degrees from the University of California. He also holds a PhD in Developmental Biology from the University of Wisconsin. Board certified in Oncology by the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, Keller's research at the University of Michigan focuses on prostate cancer metastasis and single cell analytical methods.

The Oscar W. Schalm Lectureship was established to honor its namesake, a founding faculty member at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, and is offered to recognize the lecturer's contributions to veterinary medicine.

the agency anticipates issuing their final policy decision by late January 2017.

Nobel judges removed from panel

The Nobel Prize panel secretary, Thomas Perlmann, has asked for the resignation of two judges, Anders Hamsten and Harriet Wallberg, as a result of the scandal surrounding surgeon Paolo Macchiarini. Macchiarini was employed at the Karolinska Institutet, the Swedish university that appoints the Nobel Assembly awarding the Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He was fired in March for supplying false information on his CV and has been accused of scientific negligence after two of his patients died following synthetic trachea transplants. Wallberg, formerly chancellor of the Swedish higher education authority, has been fired and Hamsten has resigned from his position as vice-chancellor of the Institutet.