

## Transitions

X **Wendy Freedman** will next month succeed **Augustus Oemler** as director of the Carnegie Observatories in Pasadena, California. Freedman first joined the observatories as a postdoc in 1984.

X **TransForm Pharmaceuticals**, a biotech company in Lexington, Massachusetts, this month took on **Duncan Higgons** as chief commercial officer. Higgons joins the company from drug-delivery firm Alkermes in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was senior vice-president of business development and marketing.

X **BioXell**, a biopharmaceutical company based in Milan, Italy, this month appointed **Alex Martin** as chief business officer. Martin comes to BioXell from Novartis Pharma in Basel, Switzerland, where he was vice-president for global business development and licensing.

X **Robert Liptak**, the principal and chief financial officer at global investment management firm MPM Capital's Boston office, was last month promoted to general partner and chief financial officer. The move follows the appointment in November of **Markus Hosang**, formerly of Hoffmann-La Roche in Basel, Switzerland, as a new venture partner in MPM's Munich office.

X **Paul Lunn** this month joins **Nastech Pharmaceutical** in Bothell, Washington, as patent counsel. He was most recently principal patent attorney at **ZymoGenetics**, a Seattle-based biopharmaceutical company. **Gordon Brandt** joined **Nastech** last month as executive vice-president of science and clinical development.

## CHEMISTRY

When **Hagan Bayley** takes up his position as chair of chemical biology at the University of Oxford in October, it will mark a homecoming. Bayley, head of the medical biochemistry and genetics department at Texas A&M University, graduated from Balliol College Oxford before heading to Harvard, where he gained his PhD in 1979. Since then he has worked mainly in the United States, including posts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University.

Funding from the Royal Society and the Wolfson Foundation, designed to encourage 'brain gain' to Britain, helped to attract him back, as did a £60-million (US\$96-million) chemistry research laboratory at Oxford, due to be completed this summer. The building will help to bring together physical and organic chemists, who, Bayley says, have been 'balkanized' in separate buildings in the past.

## PHARMACEUTICALS

Although **Ruth Roberts** has been at Aventis's Paris office since last summer, she felt she'd officially arrived this month, when she held her first departmental meeting in French. Roberts moved after 12 years with Syngenta's Central Toxicology Laboratory in the United Kingdom, where she was head of cancer biology research. She went to Paris as director of toxicology for Aventis Drug Safety partly to immerse herself in another culture, she says, and partly to expand her expertise in regulatory toxicology.

With her background in the molecular mechanisms of adverse responses to drugs, Roberts now enjoys bridging research and regulatory affairs. "I can anticipate research needs for safety assessments," she says. As for the language, it's coming along. After her first French-speaking meeting, she checked in English to see whether people had done or planned to do various things. "Tenses can be very important," she jokes.

## UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

After 30 years away, **Jack Dixon** returns to the University of California next month as Dean for Scientific Affairs, Health Sciences, at San Diego (UCSD). Dixon did his first degree at Los Angeles, his PhD at Santa Barbara and a postdoc at San Diego.

"The University of California system has been awfully good to me in terms of providing training," Dixon says. "It's nice to be able to give something back." He moved in 1973 to Purdue University and in 1991 to the University of Michigan, where he was most recently director of the Life Sciences Institute.

His biggest challenge at UCSD may be to



Hagan Bayley



Ruth Roberts



Jack Dixon



Federico Capasso



Kristian Helin

manage growth in the middle of a state budget crisis (see *Nature* 421, 202; 2003). For instance, he admits it is unlikely that the UCSD campus will double in size, as planned, during the next ten years. But he sees room for optimism, including a new school of pharmacy and the fact that many medical-faculty members will retire in the next ten years, allowing him to bring in new talent. "All the gloomy news I take seriously, but I don't view it as something that will last very long," he says.

Dixon, an expert on the role played by phosphatase enzymes in cellular responses to molecular signals, will maintain a lab at UCSD and will also hold professorships in pharmacology and in cellular and molecular medicine.

## PHYSICS

After 26 years at Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey, most recently as vice-president of physical research, **Federico Capasso** this month joined Harvard University as Gordon McKay professor of applied physics and Vinton Hayes senior research fellow in electrical engineering. Known for his pioneering research on semiconductor nanostructures, Capasso helped to invent the quantum cascade laser, which has applications in many disciplines including planetary science, environmental monitoring, atmospheric chemistry and medical diagnostics.

He is pleased by Harvard's increasing commitment to interdisciplinary research. "Nourishing those interfaces has always appealed to me," Capasso says. "It's extremely attractive for me to break down barriers and establish collaborations with lots of professors."

## BIOLOGY

**Kristian Helin**, a Dane who since 1995 has worked in Milan at the European Institute of Oncology, is leaving Italy to direct Denmark's new flagship Biotech Research and Innovation Centre (BRIC). "This is a position where I hope I can have a very big impact on research going on in Denmark," he says. BRIC is run by an independent board, associated with the University of Copenhagen but with industry representation too. "It gives you the possibility to move faster than you normally could in a university and have good contact with industry," says Helin.

The 3,000-square-metre facility is due to open in 2005; until then, BRIC will lease space from the university. Helin aims to start recruiting scientists for 12–15 research groups this year, with at least 30% of them coming from outside Denmark.

## CONTACTING US AT MOVERS

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