

# MOVERS

**Susan Avery, president and director, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Massachusetts**



**2004–05 and 2006–07:**

Interim vice-chancellor for research and dean of the graduate school, University of Colorado, Boulder

**2005–06:** Interim provost and executive vice-chancellor for academic affairs, University of Colorado, Boulder

**1994–2004:** Director, CIRES, University of Colorado, Boulder

Susan Avery's PhD adviser Marvin Gellar saw her potential right away — and not just in terms of scientific acumen. "I predicted she would go further than her considerable scientific talents alone might merit because of her excellent people skills and effective collaborations," says Gellar. With Avery due to start as president of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Gellar's prediction looks sound.

Avery began her undergraduate study in physics at Michigan State University in East Lansing, but soon decided to focus on the physics of the natural world. She considered oceanography, then opted to study how atmospheric waves propagate in the stratosphere as a PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Upper-atmospheric physics research programmes are often found in electrical-engineering departments because the region, dubbed the ionosphere, controls how radiowaves move through the atmosphere. This engineering experience opened the door to Avery's first faculty position, in the University of Illinois' electrical-engineering department.

When her husband got a job in Boulder, Avery amassed two fellowships — from the National Science Foundation and the University of Colorado's Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Science (CIRES) — to start her own research. She quickly built collaborations at the National Center for Atmospheric Research and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and soon had a faculty position at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Avery then developed new radar technology that allowed the first measurements of wind in the upper atmosphere of remote equatorial regions, leading to years of collaborations in the tropics. "My work began to flourish by bringing point observations into the global context," she says.

After earning tenure, she reluctantly accepted a position as associate dean of research and graduate education. Before long, she became director of CIRES, where she spent a decade creating interdisciplinary programmes, and realized she enjoyed that part of the job.

Known as a strong administrative leader, Avery has held several key interim positions at the university since it underwent drastic changes between 2005 and 2007. Then she sought a change, and found it at the Woods Hole in Massachusetts. "I admit it was scary to accept a position leading a different field of scientists," she says. Among her initial goals at Woods Hole will be addressing the ocean's role in climate change.

**Virginia Gewin**

## BRICKS & MORTAR

### Grand designs

Ceiling patterns representing cell division and a colour scheme inspired by chromosome painting are among the decorative features of the new Cancer Institute at University College London (UCL). The £40-million (US\$84-million) building was partially funded by the childhood cancer charity Children with Leukaemia, the Wolfson Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies.

The institute nestles between the new University College Hospital and the Wolfson Institute for Biomedical Research, with which it will share several core services, including a microarray facility, a proteomics unit, and imaging and transgenesis suites.

The institute will accommodate 300 scientists, doubling the number working on cancer at UCL. With excellent clinical resources nearby, including the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, tumour banks and one of the largest bone-marrow transplant programmes in Europe, the UCL Cancer Institute hopes to boost basic and translational research in the area.

Director Chris Boshoff and his colleagues aim to investigate haematological malignancies, brain cancer, adolescent and young-adult cancers, and head, neck and lung cancers. "We will focus on cancer

types that aren't always at the top of other people's priorities," says Boshoff.

Over the next two years, Boshoff will recruit up to six promising early-career scientists to their first group-leader position. "We can help them establish their laboratory and then they can start their careers with us," he says.

Among the 180 scientists already there, Boshoff has secured some top talent — including leaders in genomics, brain surgery and paediatric and adolescent cancer biology — from other institutions, such as the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in Cambridge, the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and the University of California, San Francisco.

Canadian recruit Poul Sorensen, a clinician-scientist and expert in childhood cancers, says that the funding and the leadership helped lure him overseas.

"A lot of people talk about translational research, but my feeling is the people at the UCL Cancer Institute really understand what it means," he says. "Those driving the institute are clinician-scientists with a strong background in basic science. You need that combination to have the vision to develop new strategies for cancer treatment."

**Hannah Hoag**

#### POSTDOC JOURNAL

### Leaving science research

A couple of weeks ago, and with much trepidation, I knocked on the door of my adviser's office. I was about to tell him of my plan to leave the world of basic science research, and I had no idea how he would react. I had tried to imagine all of the possible outcomes of our conversation, and although I suspected that I could deal with any consequences, I honestly wasn't sure what would happen. Nevertheless, my growing discontent with lab research made it a conversation that I could no longer put off.

To my delight, my adviser was very understanding of my desire to pursue other interests, and immediately asked what I wanted to do and how he might be able to help. As a result of our conversation I have decided to continue working in the lab for now, focusing my attention less on the basic biological processes and more on the multiple public-policy issues related to our area of research. Given my burgeoning interest in policy matters, this is definitely a step in the right direction.

In my first journal entry, I gave myself two to three years to determine whether I wanted to make a career out of science research. A year later, I've concluded that it's time to start exploring other options. After all, there's much out there to explore, and there's no time to spare.

**Peter Jordan is a visiting fellow at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland.**