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# MOVERS

**Mike Tyers, director of the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance, Edinburgh, Scotland**

**1995–2007:** Senior investigator, Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute, Toronto, Canada
**1992–2007:** Professor, Department of Medical Genetics and Microbiology University of Toronto, Canada

**Mike Tyers is a world-renowned expert in cell division and a true believer in the notion that science can change the world. Both perspectives will inform his new duties as director of an alliance of Scotland's six major research universities.**

**The Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance is the latest of the pooling initiatives funded by the Scottish government. (Six other initiatives exist in areas ranging from engineering to geosciences.) The universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Strathclyde will share resources for life-sciences research. The Scottish Funding Council has put up £27 million (US$53 million) and the six universities another £50.6 million to create new research posts and to invest in core technology platforms. By pooling resources in strategic areas such as cell, systems and translational biology, Scotland can encourage collaboration across institutions and maximize productivity, says Tyers. "A relatively modest investment can go a long way."**

**The opportunity to direct a countrywide strategy for research is the main attraction for Tyers. One big priority will be promoting synthetic biology, which he sees as a logical evolution of systems-level approaches such as functional genomics and chemical biology.**

**After earning his doctorate in biochemistry from McMaster University in Canada, Tyers did postdoctoral work at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York. He took a faculty position at the University of Toronto in the Department of Medical Research and then settled in at the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute, also in Toronto.**

**Tyers developed his early fascination with the cell into a career-long research focus. He calls it his "cell-cycle-centric view of the world". Cell division affects "virtually every process you can think of", he says.**

**"He has a really clear vision of what ought to be done," says Bruce Futcher, who was Tyers' postdoctoral adviser and is now at Stony Brook University, New York. Tyers sets a high standard and leads by example, adds former student Paul Jorgensen, now a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University.**

**Tyers likes to cite Shakespeare's King Henry V as a model for leadership. "It's imperative to get in the trenches, and let everyone know you're going to work as hard as anyone in the group," he says. "You can do an awful lot with a relatively small team of committed people."** ■

**Jill U. Adams**

# NETWORKS & SUPPORT

## Sea change in business studies

A Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree may not be an obvious complement to oceanography research skills, but the combination could help to unearth novel economic solutions to ecological problems such as fisheries collapse. To those ends, the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) and the Rady School of Management at the University of California, San Diego, have created a joint oceanography PhD and MBA — the first in the United States.

"Ecology is the economics of nature," says SIO ecologist George Sugihara. "It is the flow and allocation of resources." Both are complex interconnected systems; perturbing one part causes ripples in another. "Management and policy are bumping up against business concerns, and having credentials in both worlds will give an individual that much more gravity," he says.

Damien Cie is the first to enrol in the programme, which starts this autumn. He wants to combine marine science, political science and anthropology to find environmentally friendly aquaculture approaches in his native Hawaii. "If I'm going to go out and tell scientists that the science is sound, I should also be able to demonstrate to business people why this is economically viable," he says.

Sugihara also expects areas such as marine-products chemistry, marine geology and biotechnology to benefit. The programme evolved out of an initiative from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in San Francisco to create a pipeline of environmental conservationists with science and business backgrounds — which their non-governmental partners were finding difficult to recruit. Market research showed nothing similar.

JoAnne Starr, assistant dean of Rady, says it will serve as a model for any future interdisciplinary degree offerings there. "Business schools are typically isolated," she says. "We felt the need to establish one that would work in partnership with science and technology experts on campus to better reflect how innovation reaches the marketplace." Students must first be admitted to the SIO through the normal admissions process. They may apply to Rady the year before they hope to begin their MBA study.

Sugihara says the programme will attract a fairly special individual, given the rigorous qualification standards at both the SIO and Rady. But he has no doubt that the programme will yield innovative successes, combining marine excellence with business in ways that no one can yet anticipate. ■

**Virginia Gewin**

**POSTDOC JOURNAL**

## Thinner air

I am a *ferengi* (foreigner) and my lungs are on fire. I must look as if I'm under the influence of some drug — I'm coughing and wheezing and have no appetite. And yet I have a permanent, beatific smile of wonder on my face. We have finally arrived at our campsite in the Simien Mountains of Ethiopia, more than 3,000 metres above sea level. I have been walking with the local baboons, called geladas, and I'm as high as a kite.

Just a few short days ago, my outlook was far more fatalistic and the future looked rather hopeless. Without the help of long-time Ethiopian friends in Addis Ababa, I am not sure how we would have escaped the city at all. To obtain a car, legal status within the country and amendments to agreements ad infinitum, we had to get signatures, stamps and approvals from a group of friendly but rather particular individuals spread across this large city. Small mistakes and misunderstandings would take days to correct. Escaping the city became an obsession. But nothing happens fast in Africa. Everybody but you has time.

Two long weeks later, we managed to head into the highlands. Now, with the shortage of oxygen to my brain, and panoramic views that make the Grand Canyon look like a dusty little upstart, I am experiencing a kind of euphoria. Bring on the monkeys, bring on the research questions, bring on the quest for scientific excellence! Nothing can bring me down — except perhaps gravity. ■

**Aliza le Roux is a postdoctoral fellow in animal behaviour at the University of Michigan.**