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NEWS

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***International DNA expert to head UTHSCD
Biochemistry.

DALLAS--Dr. Joseph Frank Sambrook, assistant director of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York, has accepted the chairmanship of the Department of Biochemistry at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. Sambrook, who will be spending time on campus on a regular basis throughout the year, will assume official duties sometime next summer. The researcher/administrator/educator is well known for his work with molecular cloning.

"The health science center is extremely pleased to have someone of Dr. Sambrook's qualifications and reputation accept the post as chairman of Biochemistry. His work is universally admired, and we are looking forward to his leadership and direction for the school," says Dr. Kern Wildenthal, dean of UT Southwestern Medical School.

Dr. William Neaves, dean of UT Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, agrees. "Joe Sambrook represents a crucial appointment in the achievement of the health science center's goal of becoming one of the world's top two or three biomedical institutions. In the next decade molecular biology will revolutionize medicine. Joe Sambrook will help put the health science center at the forefront of medically relevant molecular biology."

During his 15-year tenure at Cold Spring Harbor, Sambrook worked closely with Dr. James Watson, discoverer of the structure of DNA, who is director of the facility. The incoming chairman's work has primarily been involved with the molecular genetics of DNA tumor viruses and the mechanism by which they integrate their DNAs into the cell. More recent work centers around gene coding for cell-surface proteins, including the "guidance system" that directs the proteins to their destination and the means of transportation.

"Since proteins become deranged in many tumors, this work is interesting from both a biochemical and disease point of view," says Sambrook, who hopes to continue his research interests at the health science center along with administrative duties and some teaching, another major interest. He says that he has been involved in teaching both medical and graduate school classes at Cold Spring Harbor although this will be his first experience working in a university setting.

"I have particularly been involved in teaching molecular cloning, a subject for which people come in to Cold Spring Harbor in the summers from all over the world. I've also gone out and taught in many countries."

Dr. Michael Brown, professor of Molecular Genetics and Internal Medicine and director for the Center for Genetic Diseases, is familiar with Sambrook's work. He says that "Joe Sambrook has been one of the motivators of the current explosion in molecular biology. He's an intellectual leader who inspires young people to outstanding performance."

(more)

Dr. John Johnston, interim chairman of Biochemistry, is enthusiastic about what he believes Dr. Sambrook will do for the department.

"The UT Health Science Center is very fortunate to have been successful in attracting a scientist and administrator of Dr. Sambrook's stature to chair the Department of Biochemistry. His arrival will give impetus to the development of new directions of research efforts on this campus. The faculty in Biochemistry enthusiastically looks forward to the leadership Dr. Sambrook will provide," Johnston says.

A native of Liverpool, England, Sambrook received a bachelor of science degree with first class honors in microbiology from the University of Liverpool in 1962. He received his Ph.D. from Australian National University three years later.

"My father was a plumber, so I was educated in England at the time of the 11-plus exams -- which worked to my benefit," he jokes. "I've always felt slightly guilty that I've never worked in England, but it was still pretty much the old boy/old school network in the sciences when I got started, so there was no way I was going to work on the right side of the tracks."

Sambrook, who is a British citizen, came to the United States in 1967 as a junior fellow at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, Calif. He had previously served for a year as a research fellow in microbiology at the John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University, and as a post doctoral fellow at MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge. In 1969 he joined Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory as a senior staff investigator and held that position until he accepted the assistant directorship in 1977.

The incoming chairman says that he is very excited about the opportunity to head up the Biochemistry Department at UTHSCD. "The standard of science here is very high. Also, what I like about this place is its spirit -- the people here have such a desire to have the place be #1."

The fact is, continues Sambrook, that world-class science is already being done here. And there is a great deal of support for individual research coming from the school and its faculty members. He is also impressed with the community support given the health science center as a whole and support given to biochemistry through such sources as the Southwestern Medical Foundation and a major anonymous gift.

Another outstanding feature the health science center has, says Sambrook, is the exciting cross-fertilization that is evident among research projects. He hopes to encourage more collaboration among researchers from different departments.

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