

# People to Watch in 2009



The United Kingdom's new science minister, **Paul Drayson**, is the first to have a seat in the Cabinet and chair a new committee for science and innovation. Research funding fared well during the first decade of the Labour government,

and researchers hope Drayson will fight for them in the current financial crisis. "We desperately need a champion like him in the run-up to the next spending review" in 2010, says Member of Parliament Phil Willis, chair of the House of Commons science committee.

For China's health minister, **Chen Zhu**, 2008 was framed by two disasters that observers say he handled well: the Wenchuan Earthquake in May and the tainted milk scandal that reared its head in September (*Science*, 28 November 2008, p. 1310). This year, the Paris-trained hematologist's primary challenge will be health care reform, including the creation of a specialized funding channel for medical research. Whether he prevails—and keeps his job—may depend on whether China can avoid another health crisis. "He's an ideal person to ask to fall on his sword if the need arises," says one scientist, noting that Chen is one of only two ministers who is not a member of the Communist Party.



The United Kingdom's biomedical community will be watching British biochemist and Nobelist **Paul Nurse** closely this year as he delivers a scientific plan for a controversial \$1 billion laboratory that the government wants to build by 2013 (*Science*, 14 December 2007, p. 1704). The ambitious UK Centre for Medical Research & Innovation would include as many as 1000 scientists from University College London, biomedical charities the Wellcome



Trust and Cancer Research UK, and the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR), whose staff has resisted moving from its Mill Hill location to downtown London. Among Nurse's tough choices will be how many NIMR labs to relocate and whether the center should include biocontainment facilities to enable work with dangerous pathogens.

Expect **Svante Pääbo**, a paleogeneticist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, to make headlines this year by completing a very rough draft of the Neandertal genome. Two years in the making, the genome sequence signals how far the field of ancient DNA has come since Pääbo's team was able to isolate the first mitochondrial DNA from a Neandertal in 1997. Comparing the draft to the human and chimpanzee genomes would help determine which sequence differences likely define our species. But, as Pääbo pointed out in 2001, "it is a delusion to think that genomics in isolation will ever tell us what it means to be human."



Scientists and environmental activists are hoping that **Lisa Jackson**, nominated to be administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), will reenergize the agency. They'd like to see her start by overhauling EPA's science advisory board and adding top scientists. "That makes a statement

that science will be the important voice," says toxicologist Ellen Silbergeld of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Naming a world-class scientist to head the Office of Research and Development would also be a "huge boost to morale," says Linda Greer of the Natural Resources Defense Council. The community also hopes Jackson will undo administrative changes that aim to slow or reduce the use of research in regulations.

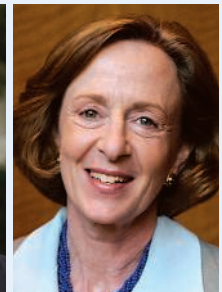


Can Singapore make a name for itself in information technologies and engineering the way it has in biomedical research? That's the challenge for **Lim Chuan Poh**, chair of Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*STAR), who must devote himself this year to turning the agency's just-completed Fusionopolis into a hub for public and private research in interactive media, physical sciences, engineering, and technology. Lim's military demeanor—he rose through the ranks of the Singapore Armed Forces—is quite a contrast from the fast-talking, wise-cracking style of his A\*STAR predecessor, Philip Yeo, who led the creation of Biopolis in 2004. The economic crisis poses a major hurdle for luring private sector labs to the development.



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As university endowments continue to plummet amid a deepening recession, the academic community is watching how two leading institutions—and Cambridge, Massachusetts, neighbors—are responding to the crisis. Harvard University President **Drew Faust** (left) has asked campus administrators to scale back the university's 2009 budget in the wake of the projected 30% decline of its \$37 billion endowment. Harvard officials are reconsidering a plan to move two graduate schools to a new campus across the Charles River in Allston (*Science*, 11 July 2008, p. 190). Several kilometers down the road, Massachusetts Institute of Technology President **Susan Hockfield** (right) has called for a \$50 million cut in the university's operating budget. Many universities have imposed hiring freezes, and the pain is expected to intensify.



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