

meters of research space in two new buildings that will be occupied near the turn of the century. They will be built on 12 hectares of land donated in 1987 by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Among those recently lured by UT Southwestern's resources is geneticist Steve McKnight, who made his reputation working on gene regulatory elements while at the Carnegie Institution's embryology lab in Baltimore. After leaving Carnegie and flirting with a position at UT Southwestern in 1992, McKnight headed to San Francisco to help found Tularik Inc., a biotechnology company that focuses on the regulatory mechanisms of gene transcription. Like many earlier recruits, McKnight, a native Texan, was lured last year by the resources UT Southwestern was able to offer. "The [biochemistry] department had a commitment of approximately 40,000 square feet [3700 meters²] of spectacular new space ... that I was able to design with total flexibility," says McKnight. The school provided funds to equip all of the core labs, and an endowment will help sup-

port start-up packages for eight new faculty members—bringing the department to 30, each with an independent lab.

The potential for interdisciplinary work helped attract developmental biologist Eric Olson from the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston last November, to head the Nancy L. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Basic Cancer Research. Olson says he expects the Hamon Center to interact broadly with Brown and Goldstein's Molecular Genetics Department.

In addition to hiring established researchers like Olson and McKnight, UT Southwestern has also been recruiting promising young researchers like Margaret Phillips, who arrived at UT Southwestern in 1992 after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco. Phillips received a Burroughs Wellcome Fund New Investigator Award in Molecular Parasitology in 1995 for her investigation of drugs to control the parasites, called trypanosomes, that cause African sleeping sickness and Chagas' disease, among others.

And the school has not abandoned Seldin's initial policy of hiring UT Southwestern's own graduates. Andrew Zinn received his M.D./Ph.D. in 1988 before training at Mass General and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since returning in 1993, he has found a comfortable working environment. "[UT Southwestern] likes its young faculty ... you don't feel like some of the places I've been exposed to, where it's a Darwinian struggle to survive."

A shelter from today's cutthroat funding environment is a luxury indeed. Zinn can thank UT Southwestern's successful fund raising for that luxury, but the fund raising in turn built on UT Southwestern's growing academic reputation. Seldin recognized the secret of that success long before anyone else: "Those west Texas farm boys turned out to be as good as anybody."

—James Kling

James Kling is a science writer in Bellingham, Washington.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Grad Students Press for Right to Strike

Student activism may be assuming a new form: Instead of taking to the streets to denounce war and racism, graduate students are demonstrating for the right to unionize. At the University of California (UC), students who work as teaching assistants (TAs) at three campuses—Los Angeles, San Diego, and Berkeley—went on a "rolling strike" last week to press for the right to engage in collective bargaining. And at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, students who last year charged the university with unfair labor practices have convinced the National Labor Relations Board to issue a complaint charging Yale with violating federal labor laws.

The TAs, mostly students in the humanities and the social sciences, contend that teaching loads are rising and salaries aren't keeping up with increases in the cost of living. The situation won't improve, they say, until they are able to organize. But university administrators argue that TAs are students, not employees. Says UCLA chancellor Charles E. Young: "We believe that unionization would seriously harm the flexibility, collegiality, and harmony" in student-teacher relations.

The issue has been simmering for some time. At a few state schools, such as the University of Wisconsin, everyone who works on campus has collective bargaining rights. But in California, the labor law governing higher education institutions—the 1979 Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act—has been interpreted to cover only

graduate students who act as tutors and readers, not TAs or research assistants (RAs).

In 1989, Berkeley graduate students demanded the right to negotiate collectively over working conditions. When the university turned them down, they appealed to the state's Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). The case made its way to the California Supreme Court, which, in 1992, ruled that the higher education act does not require the university to recognize TAs as employees. The students continued to press for the right to unionize, however, and Administrative Law Judge James Tamm recently decided, in response to a case brought by UCLA graduate students, that TAs (but not RAs) are "an appropriate group for collective bargaining." The university asked PERB to review the ruling, sparking last week's UC "systemwide strike."

UC officials say they won't back down. "We will not voluntarily recognize those not deemed eligible" under the higher education act, says UCLA spokesperson Linda Steiner Lee. Joseph Duggan, an associate dean at UC Berkeley, says that once universities consent to collective bargaining with grad students, "then nothing is shielded from bargaining." He claims negotiations could spill over into topics such as "content of classes [or] minimum grade-point averages."

Students say the fight is not about grades. "All we want is the right to bargain over working conditions," says Lily Khadjavi, who heads the Association of Graduate Stu-

dent Employees at Berkeley. Joel Beeson, an organizer for the Association of Student Employees at UCSD, says "Some TAs have upwards of 90 to 100 students per quarter. ... They get paid for 20 hours of work a week, but are working 30 to 40 hours just to minimally do their job."

It's not clear how many students have embraced the cause. UCSD's Dolores Davies says that of 750 TAs on campus, no more than 50 have been striking, while Beeson puts the number at 400 to 500. But Khadjavi warns that at Berkeley, at least, there may be more to come: "Unless the university ... comes to the bargaining table, there will very likely be escalations in the spring."

Back East at Yale, while students were hailing the NLRB action as a "turning point" in unionization efforts, Yale spokesperson Tom Conroy says the school will seek a hearing to argue its case. "No private university in the country recognizes graduate students as employees," he says.

Political science professor Roger Smith of Yale sees the unrest as an unfortunate but inevitable development. Universities are relying increasingly on graduate students for teaching, he says. "Graduate students have more and more become employees; they need the rights of employees. I hope [unionizing] is not the wave of the future, but it will be if universities don't start operating differently."

—Constance Holden

The Berkeley student union's account of events can be found on the Internet at <http://www.nagps.org/NAGPS/UCStrike96/index.html>