budget, has helped some campuses grow despite declines in other income streams.

Even with cutbacks, notes Cech, who spent 22 years at the University of Colorado, Boulder, before joining HHMI in 2000, many academic research programs will end up ahead of where they were just a few years ago. "It just may take a little longer to fill those buildings," he says. –DAVID MALAKOFF

U.K. RESEARCH

Courting Universities Break Off Engagement

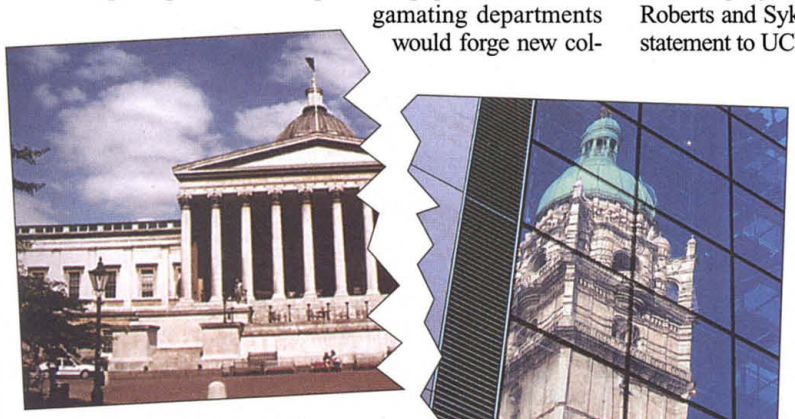
LONDON—To some observers, it was shaping up as a marriage of necessity: London's two leading research universities uniting to pose a more potent challenge to the United Kingdom's academic powerhouses, Cambridge and Oxford. But mounting resistance to a plan to merge Imperial College and University College London (UCL) forced administrators earlier this week to call off the wedding.

The decision is a stunning retreat for Imperial rector Richard Sykes and UCL interim provost Derek Roberts, who when announcing the engagement on 14 October had argued that joining forces was the only way to compete in the knowledge economy. Despite needing parliamentary approval, Sykes had predicted last month that the two universities would "start sharing resources by December."

That vision is shattered. In a terse, unsigned statement on 18 November, UCL said that "the best interests of the two institutions are not served by a formal merger." Roberts told *Science* that "there were very strong opinions both for and against … but overall there were not enough people giving strong support." Sykes did not respond to requests for comment. Although the architects of the failed plan were circumspect, many faculty members—particularly at UCL, where opposition ran high—aren't hiding their glee. "I'm completely delighted," says UCL biologist Steve Jones, a comment echoed by several others contacted by *Science*.

The climb-down is all the more remarkable considering that Sykes, before coming to Imperial, had orchestrated the merger of GlaxoSmithKline, now the world's largest pharmaceutical company (*Science*, 16 November 2001, p. 1443). He and Roberts, formerly managing director of General Electric Co., found common ground and agreed on a merger in a private meeting last month. They created a committee to report to their councils on 19 December about how a merger would affect operations.

The committee's initial "vision" statement portrayed the combined university as a world-beater that would attract more funding for research in part by eliminating some competition for grants. Existing funds would also be spent more efficiently by not duplicating purchases of expensive equipment, and amalgamating departments would forge new collaborations and attract new blood. The new institution would have had a research budget of $600 million a year.



Irreconcilable differences. UCL (*left*) and Imperial have abandoned their merger plans.

But within days of the proposal, many academics started balking. Some argued that the merger was far too slanted toward business interests. UCL immunopharmacologist John Foreman, dean of students and leader of the Committee for UCL, a group that voiced doubts about the merger, speculated that Sykes and Roberts might have been "blinkered by their extensive industrial experience." His concern was that the new university would be governed by market forces, not educational needs. There was also a feeling that the merger was being "pushed through," says UCL neurochemist John Clark. Adds UCL biologist Adrian Lister: "We'd been asked to subscribe to a great vision without being given any of the details." Dissent also emerged at Imperial, where 160 staff members had signed a petition requesting an all-staff referendum on whether the merger should proceed. The petition was presented to the university senate at a 6 November meeting that Sykes chaired. According to Tom Pike of Imperial's electrical engineering department, Sykes subsequently denied the request.

Many scientists expressed fears that the merger would narrow the range of subjects taught and studied, triggering staff cuts and a reduced scope of research. And the Committee for UCL claimed that some departments might have to relocate. Roberts insists that no such relocation was in the works and lashed out at the committee, which he claims was "behaving in a malignant way and deliberately stirring up fears."

Stung by the criticism nevertheless, Roberts and Sykes offered in an 8 November statement to UCL and Imperial staff members to "clarify the process" and assured them that a final decision would not be reached at the next month's meeting. But following what the UCL statement described as "intense deliberation," the universities shelved the plans altogether. UCL has resumed its search for Roberts' replacement, who will take the helm in October 2003.

All the soul-searching triggered by the merger hasn't been for naught, researchers say. The discussions "highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of the current system," says Jones. "We can now take these deficiencies on board and deal with them."

–KERI PAGE

Keri Page is an intern in the Cambridge, U.K., office. With reporting by John Bohannon.

RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

German Inquiry Finds Flaws, Not Fraud

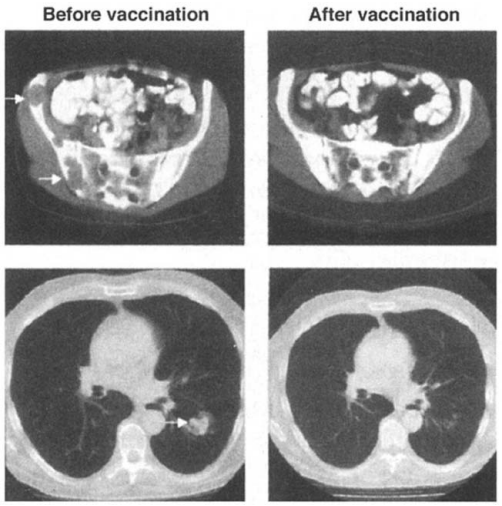
BERLIN—A paper claiming a spectacular remission of tumors is marred by shoddy scientific practices, but investigators aren't saying whether the results are also too good to be true. Last week the University of Göttingen said that its investigative committee had found evidence of sloppiness that constitutes misconduct, but not fraud, in a disputed paper about an experimental cancer vaccine. But with only a brief statement to go on, scientists following up on the work still don't know

CREDITS: (LEFT TO RIGHT) UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON PRESS OFFICE; JAN CHLEBIK/IMPERIAL COLLEGE

whether the data are valid.

The paper "was not prepared according to good scientific practice," according to the Göttingen panel. First author Alexander Kugler, a urologist who has since left Göttingen, drafted the manuscript so sloppily that inaccuracies made their way into the published paper, the committee said, faulting his selection of subjects and the documentation of illustrations and techniques. None of the other 14 authors, the committee found, was guilty of scientific misconduct. The university says it will release the full report when the authors have resolved the paper's fate with *Nature Medicine*, which published it in March 2000.

The paper made headlines around the world. It reported that patients suffering from advanced kidney cancer had been injected with cells formed by fusing their own tumor cells with dendritic cells, a type of immune cell that helps trigger the body's defenses. The idea—which has shown promise in many animal trials—was to prompt a tumor-specific attack by the patient's immune system. Of 17 patients, the paper reported, four enjoyed a complete remission, two more experienced partial remission, and one showed "mixed results." Kugler and Gernot Stuhler, a co-author from the University of Tübingen, won a $22,000 prize for their work from the German branch of Abbott Laboratories. (Stuhler says the money was never awarded.)



Before and after? Figure 3 from the disputed paper. An investigating committee found that the lower right CT scan is from a patient who was excluded from the study, and the origin of the scan at lower left is in dispute.

CREDIT: A. KUGLER *ET AL.*, *NATURE MEDICINE* 6, 335 (2000)

But doubts began to surface shortly after the paper was published. Biophysicist Ulrich Zimmermann of the University of Würzburg, an expert in cell fusion, criticized the methods the paper described for preparing the fused cells. He charged that the patients had been treated with an ill-defined "brew," which could have even been harmful due to impurities introduced during the electrical fusion treatment.

Peter Hans Hofschneider of the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry in Martinsried and two colleagues were tipped off to other possible irregularities by an anonymous whistleblower. These concerns, widely reported in the German press, prompted formal inquiries at both Göttingen and Tübingen.

In July 2001, the University of Tübingen announced that it had found no evidence of misconduct by Stuhler. The Göttingen inquiry ended only this month, slowed by Germany's strict privacy laws that restrict access to patient data (*Science*, 7 June, p. 1778). In spite of its criticisms of the paper, the Göttingen committee concluded that no patients were harmed by the study. "Despite all the inaccuracies we found, some of the patients seem to have responded to the treatment," says Hans-Jürg Kuhn, the head of the investigation and a professor of anatomy.

Hofschneider is not satisfied with the conclusions of the investigation. He believes that the investigators should have examined more carefully what each author contributed to the paper and that it is too easy to blame only the first author, who is no longer in research. Kugler is now a senior physician at a hospital in southern Germany.

But Rolf-Hermann Ringert, the corresponding author on the study and Kugler's former supervisor, believes that the report is fair: "There is a high degree of sloppiness, but there has been no fraud and no recklessness." Ringert has offered to publish a clarification in *Nature Medicine*, but he says he sees no reason for a retraction.

Dolores Schendel of the National Research Center for Environment and Health in Munich, who works on vaccine therapies for renal cancer, is concerned that Göttingen's public statements aren't sufficient for those who need to know whether they can trust the findings. Since publication, the *Nature Medicine* paper has been cited more than 200 times, but there have been no published results using the same technique. However, several scientists told *Science* that as many as four papers on the technique are about to be submitted. Indeed, a trial almost identical in design to the one in Göttingen was launched 6 November by Genzyme Molecular Oncology.

Oncologist David Avigan of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, who is directing the trial, says the preclinical data are strong enough to justify additional work. He says the *Nature Medicine* paper "was a tantalizing result, but one is always skeptical of a small trial."

–ADAM BOSTANCI AND GRETCHEN VOGEL

Adam Bostanci is a science writer in Exeter, U.K.

ScienceScope

Cells on Ice French researchers will have to wait a little longer to get imported stem cells. France's Council of State last week suspended an earlier government directive allowing researchers to import human embryonic stem cells from other countries (*Science*, 5 April, p. 27). Former research minister Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg had approved the imports pending the approval of a revised bioethics law that would allow French scientists to produce their own cell lines.

The decision follows the filing of a lawsuit against embryo imports by the Alliance for the Rights to Life, a group supported by France's Catholic Church. The courts are expected to decide the suit early next year, but the case will be moot if Parliament approves the new bioethics law. Although the bill was introduced under the previous Socialist government, it is reportedly supported by key members of the current conservative regime, including research minister Claudie Haigneré. Geneticist Axel Kahn, director of the Cochin Institute in Paris, says, "The prognosis is that the law will pass."

Rubinstein to Big Apple The beleaguered New York Academy of Sciences has a new boss. Former *Science* editor Ellis Rubinstein became president of the 185-year-old institution this week, ending a yearlong search. He replaces Rodney Nichols, who resigned last year amid disagreements over how to stem the academy's financial woes (*Science*, 8 March, p. 1824).

Rubinstein, 56, has worked as a journalist and administrator in a variety of settings, including at *Newsweek* and *IEEE Spectrum*. He became *Science*'s news editor in 1989 and is credited with helping bring the magazine into the Internet era. He gradually moved away from journalism, spearheading an array of ventures, including Web sites focused on young scientists (www.nextwave.org) and research on aging (www.sageke.org). He shed his title as *Science*'s editor earlier this year.

Rubinstein says he wasn't seeking a new job and that the academy "sought me out." He aims to reinvigorate the 22,000-member organization by making it a more active presence in New York City and catering more to the needs of younger scientists. Nobel laureate Torsten Wiesel, who chairs the academy's board, says Rubinstein's "experience in business development and scientific publishing will serve the academy's needs at this crucial time."