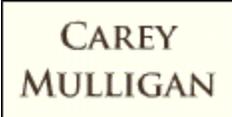


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Genentech Scientist to Lead Rockefeller University

By **ANDREW POLLACK**

The No. 2 research official at **Genentech** will become the next president of **Rockefeller University**, in the first departure from the company's top scientific ranks since its acquisition by **Roche** in March 2009.

Marc Tessier-Lavigne, who is executive vice president for research and the chief scientific officer at Genentech, will become the first president of Rockefeller University to come from industry, Russell L. Carson, the chairman of the university's board of trustees, said in an interview Wednesday.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne, who will assume his new post on March 1, will succeed Paul M. Nurse, who has been president since 2003. Dr. Nurse, a Nobel laureate, announced in April that he would be returning to his native Britain to become president of the Royal Society.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne's departure could stir new concerns that the acquisition by Roche could erode the scientific culture that has made Genentech, developer or co-developer of the **cancer** drugs **Avastin**, **Rituxan** and **Herceptin**, among the most innovative and successful biotechnology companies in the world.

In an effort to maintain that culture, Roche preserved Genentech's research and early-stage clinical trials division as an autonomous unit run by Richard Scheller, who is Dr. Tessier-Lavigne's boss.

That has seemed to work so far. There have been significant departures from other parts of Genentech — like sales and marketing and clinical trials — but not, until now, from the top ranks of its research unit.

Last week, Roche announced a review of its operations that could lead to job cutbacks across the company. The company said it had to cut costs in part because it had suffered some setbacks in developing drugs.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne, a neuroscientist, said that his departure was unrelated to developments at Roche and that the scientific culture at Genentech remained intact.

“Of the top leadership in research, I’m the first person to leave and it has nothing to do with the merger,” he said, adding, “I wasn’t looking to move away. In fact, this is probably the only job that could have lured me away from Genentech.”

Dr. Scheller said in an e-mailed statement that Dr. Tessier-Lavigne’s departure “is part of the tradition of exchange between academia and Genentech.”

Mr. Carson, who headed the presidential search at Rockefeller, confirmed that Dr. Tessier-Lavigne had not been looking to leave Genentech. “I literally called him cold,” he said.

Mr. Carson, who is general partner at Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe, a [private equity](#) firm, said Dr. Tessier-Lavigne was the first choice of the search committee.

“He’s relatively young — 50. He’s high energy. He presents himself well. He’s articulate,” Mr. Carson said, adding that Dr. Tessier-Lavigne’s management experience was a plus.

Mr. Carson said that Dr. Tessier-Lavigne was also a well-respected scientist, a credential necessary to run Rockefeller, which is more like a biomedical research institute than a conventional college. The university, which is based in Manhattan, has 70 independent laboratories, each headed by a high-powered scientist who reports directly to the president.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne was born in Trenton, Ontario, and grew up mainly in London and Brussels, where his father, who was in the Canadian military, was posted to [NATO](#). He received a degree in physics at [McGill University](#). Then, as a Rhodes scholar studying at Oxford, he said, “I first encountered the nervous system and fell in love with it.”

He earned a doctorate in physiology from University College London and has specialized in research on how the human brain develops. That research led to discovery of a possible mechanism behind [Alzheimer’s disease](#).

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne was on the faculty of the [University of California, San Francisco](#), then Stanford before joining Genentech in 2003. He said he would remain at Genentech, where he oversees 1,400 researchers, until next March.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne said it was too early to discuss his priorities at Rockefeller University. He expressed interest in helping to further the university’s efforts to turn basic biological treatments into treatments for diseases.

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne is not the first top Genentech executive to become head of a university. Susan Desmond-Hellmann, who was president of product development until the acquisition, is now chancellor of the University of California, San Francisco.