

University Institute excels behind strength of faculty

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Reporter

Money doesn't always talk, at least not very loudly, to scientists of the University's Institute of Molecular Biology.

When Aaron Novick, founding director of the institute, first arrived at the University in 1959, he had an enormous task before him: to make the institute a success under the constraints of a tight budget.

Before his retirement last year, Novick accomplished that goal with hard work and his ability to recruit a strong faculty.

A key concept Novick taught his colleagues at the institute is the importance of respect.

"I believe in having a lot of respect for individuals," he said. "If you treat people with dignity and respect they become very loyal. Never forget that the teaching relationship should be a loving one, not a judgmental one."

Much of the research at the institute focuses on genes, Novick said. A gene is a feature common to all life whether it is "trees or elephants or mosquitoes or bacteria," he said.

Genes contain the information for constructing proteins, the "machinery of all living creatures," Novick said. DNA are molecules that contain information just like a record or a compact disc with an abstract representation as opposed to an analog representation.

An example of analog representation would be dress patterns, which are the same shape of the dress, Novick said. An abstract representation would be an inscription in a computer, which could transfer a pattern on paper, which looks nothing like the end result.

The main questions that the institute's scientists are work-

ing to solve are: How is the expression of DNA regulated, what are the mechanics of decoding and what is the relationship between structure and function?

Novick's first faculty appointment to the institute was Frank Stahl. Stahl believes an important contribution to the institute has been the continued financial support from Washington, D.C., despite national cuts in scientific funding from federal sources.

"We have been able to get good people here and uninterrupted support from Washington even though support has grown more competitive and difficult," he said. "Now this university recognizes it has strong research in biology and is supporting it to the extent it can."

Salaries of science instructors in the institute are about 60 to 70 percent of what they could be making at other institutions, said Rod Capaldi, a member of the institute.

However, many scientists are attracted to the interactive style the institute provides, Capaldi said. "At other schools each scientist's work is like a little island behind locked doors. There is no interaction," he said.

There are three criteria for selecting faculty for the institute, Capaldi said.

The first is their scientific qualifications: Is their work outstanding?

The next is teaching abilities: Will they be able to communicate well with undergraduate and graduate students?

The last is their ability to fit in with the style of the institute.

This "style" of science is what attracted institute member Vicki Chandler.

"The University is strong sci-

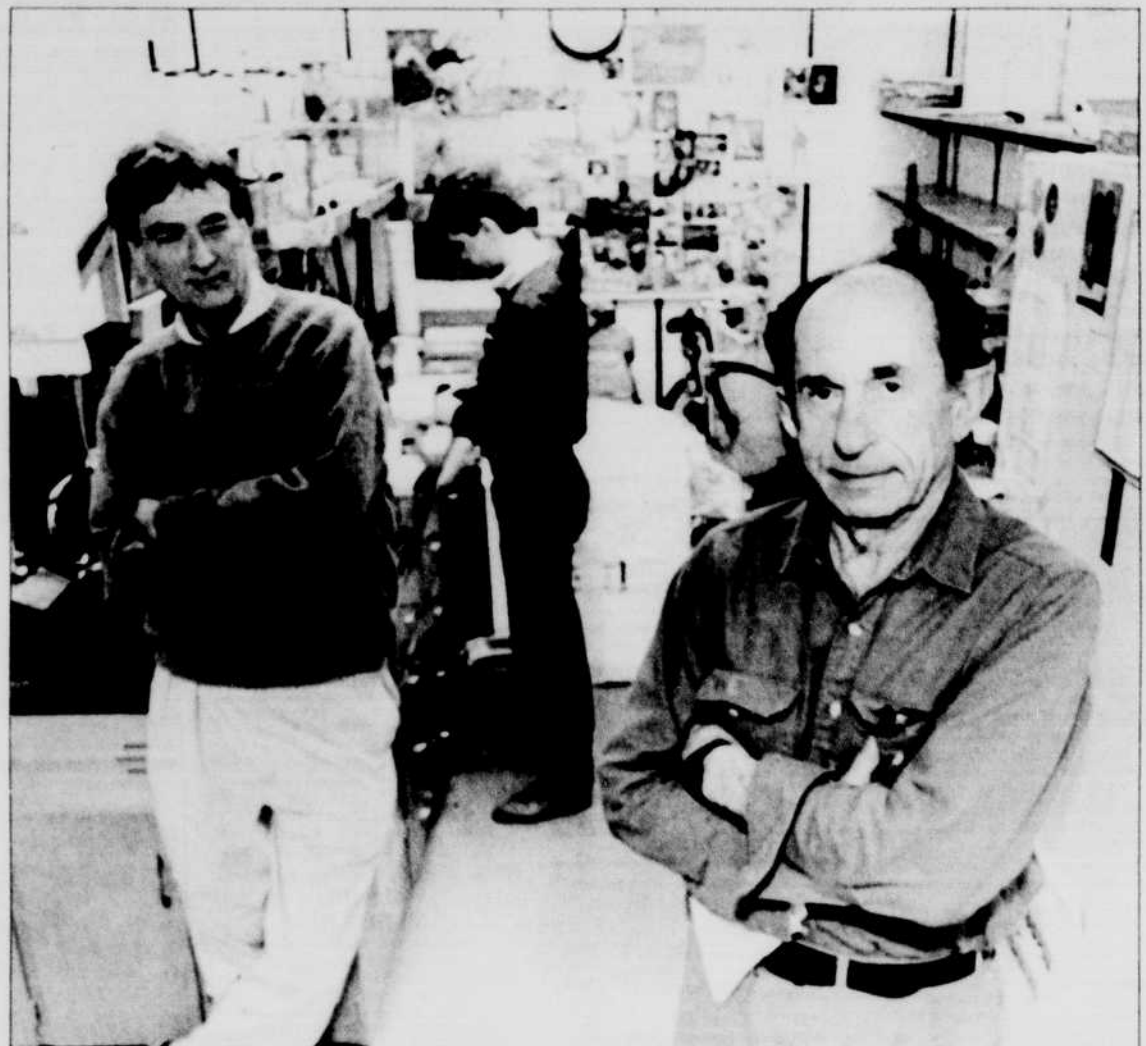


Photo by Andre Ranieri

Frank Stahl (left) was the first faculty appointment to the Institute of Molecular Biology by former Director Aaron Novick (right).

entifically and there's a lot of congeniality without compromise," Chandler said. "The style here is one of openness and interaction, and communication between faculty and students, and between students and students."

"We've turned down people who were outstanding scientists but who weren't willing to participate in the institute," Capaldi said.

Many universities don't employ this close-knit community approach to science, Capaldi said, despite the many benefits of an approach like the Univer-

sity's. "Science is the business of challenging ideas," he said. "Science is so complex and (full of) techniques that nobody can be an expert on all of them."

Brian Matthews, who replaced Novick as director of the institute at the beginning of last year, hopes to continue the degree of excellence established by Novick.

"I think Aaron has set a tremendous example," Matthews said. "I'll certainly do my best to follow that example. If we can maintain the sense of mu-

tual support coupled with excellence in science that is characteristic of the institute since its inception, I'll be well pleased."

Becoming a scientist at the institute is "not a situation of going to the boonies of Oregon to retire," Chandler said.

The University has an outstanding institute, though the state doesn't spend very much on higher education, she added.

"The state spends more on roads than on higher education," Chandler said. "And it's a sad situation."

MUG

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stabilizing, and if the EMU makes another joint purchase with Housing next fall, mug prices will fall, he said.

Paper waste reduction from mug use and other recycling efforts has meant financial savings for the EMU and Housing.

"We paid for the mugs in about a month and a half," Babcock said, which means Housing is now saving the cost of daily paper cup use.

Housing is also saving money on napkin use, which has gone down at least 50 percent, or about a case each day, he said.

This reduction came from a campaign by Housing and the Survival Center to reduce paper use in the dining halls.

Carr said garbage removal costs for the EMU have dropped dramatically, in part because of ordinary paper waste reduction, and because

of cardboard recycling by the Physical Plant.

Lewis Atkinson, a garbage truck operator for the University, said the reduction of paper waste, especially cardboard, has made it necessary for him to go to the dump only once a day, instead of the former two

or three times.

Both Housing and the EMU have committed to other measures that are good for the environment, including tin, plastic and glass recycling; elimination of Styrofoam and polystyrene containers; and using local vendors whenever possible.

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Much love,
Your Sister

105 PERSONALS

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