

# SAN FRANCISCO Business Times

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## Natural evolution

### Academy of Sciences hires homo sapiens

BY SARAH DUXBURY  
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Opening day isn't until Sept. 27, but the penguins and fish aren't the only new arrivals at the California Academy of Sciences.

The museum and research institution is staffing up. Many of the new hires, starting with Executive Director Gregory Farrington, who resigned as president of Lehigh University just over a year ago, are top executives who will oversee operation of the new Academy once it opens.

The new hires include: David Mindell, dean of research and science collections, and Don Skeoch, chief revenue officer, both in newly created positions, as well



PHOTO BY JOE HADWIN

SEE SCIENCE, 48 **Hire Intelligence:** "It's all part of a careful plan," Farrington says.

## SCIENCE: New museum reaches for a higher rung on the evolutionary ladder

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as Blair Shane, chief marketing officer, and Ryan Wyatt, director of Morrison Planetarium and science visualization.

The Academy is also conducting a national search for its first dean of public education, a new position made possible by a \$3 million endowment grant.

When the Academy moved to temporary digs on Howard Street, it downsized considerably from about 350 full-time positions to 200, which is one reason for its current hiring spree. Too, the new building is bigger, and the Academy's ambitions are grander, which will require more manpower, particularly in the bigger aquarium. The new museum will employ about 400.

"It's not as if we're in some undisciplined way hiring everyone in sight," Farrington said. "It's all part of a careful plan that's designed to run the new institution."

Indeed, most of these new hires were made after a national search. Wyatt previously worked at the Hayden Planetarium at New York City's American Museum of Natural History; Mindell was a professor at the University of Michigan and a curator in its museum of zoology, and Skeoch, whose job is to maximize the visitor experience and, with it, revenue, came from Universal Studios. Skeoch will build an entirely new department, and he's already made several hires.

The museum is dramatically increasing its volunteer base, too. It will rely on more than 500 volunteer docents to inform the public and lead tours, more than twice the number in the old Golden Gate Park museum.

Once settled in the new home, scientific research will be an even greater focus of the Academy, and so will be integrating it into the exhibits and making the public more generally aware of the scientific work the museum does.

The Academy has new leadership at the board level, too. Bill Patterson

2007.

"We have one crew who have imagined and then made real a whole new institution in terms of the physical, and then there's a natural transition point for the people ... who will focus on and invest in what goes into the building," Farrington said. "It's what I call the stage and the play. The stage is built. My focus is the play."

Farrington succeeds Patrick Kocielek, who has returned to pure research as the Academy's Hanna Chair in Diatom Studies.

One major undertaking has been to market the new Academy as one of the city's major tourist destinations. While half of all visitors to New York's Natural History Museum are tourists, only about 10 percent of visitors to the old Academy were tourists, Farrington said. "My chant here in the Academy is 'Beat Alcatraz.'"

The entire project cost, which includes moving to a temporary home on Howard Street, building the Renzo Piano-designed museum complete with a host of super-green elements and moving back in, will cost \$488 million. Of that, the Academy has raised \$440 million. The attention that the capital campaign has drawn to the museum has also attracted close to \$20 million for its endowment, which stands at \$164 million.

While the museum is far from fully occupied, countless fish and other creatures already call it home. Diego the sea turtle moves in this week, and the alligator swamp will soon be flooded to welcome its toothy occupants.

Farrington expects to welcome between 1.5 million and 2 million visitors in the first year, double the traffic of the old facility. New museums often see attendance drop in their sophomore years, but Farrington hopes the efforts to make the Academy a must-stop on every tourist and conventioner's itinerary will help avoid that slump.

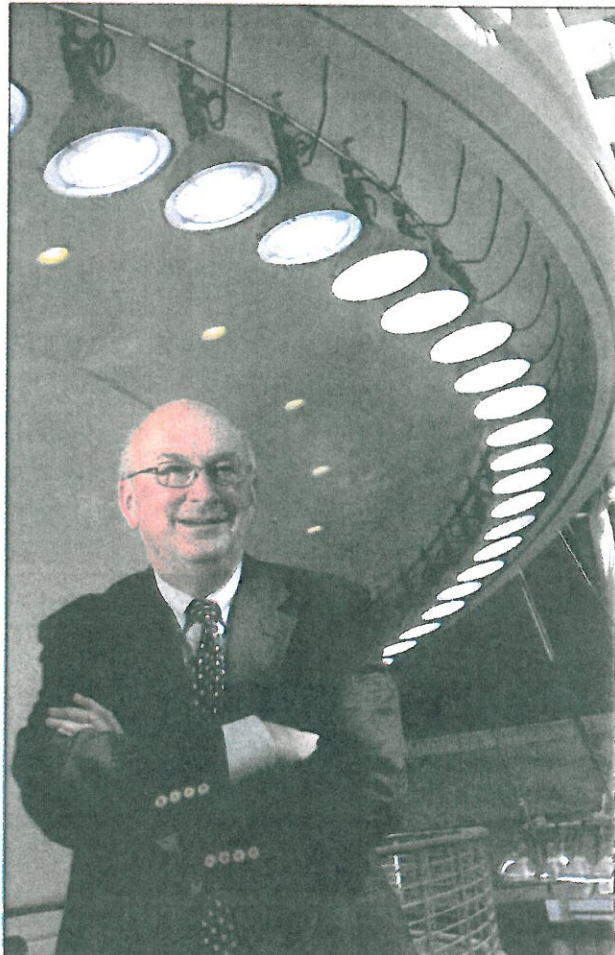


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