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## Building a Bridge Towards Greater Discovery

*Two Gladstone scientists inducted into California Academy of Sciences, setting stage for continued collaboration between both research institutions*

BY ANNE D. HOLDEN, PHD

The San Francisco Bay Area is home to many stellar scientific institutions. Two such institutions, the [Gladstone Institutes](#) and the [California Academy of Sciences](#), have been furthering scientific discovery and innovation collectively for more than a century. And today, the Academy has once again chosen to recognize Gladstone as a partner in science—by bestowing its highest honor upon two Gladstone scientists.

In 2011, [Bruce Conklin](#), MD, became the first Academy Fellow from Gladstone to be inducted. And this year, in an unprecedented move, the Academy will induct two more Gladstone scientists: President [R. Sanders “Sandy” Williams](#), MD, and Gladstone Investigator [Katherine Pollard](#), PhD, as Academy Fellows. [Fellowship into the California Academy of Sciences](#) is one of the highest honors available for California-based researchers in the natural sciences. Drs. Williams and Pollard have been chosen as two of just ten Academy Fellows to be inducted this year.

Academy Fellows are a governing group of 300 distinguished scientists who have made notable contributions in one or more fields of the natural sciences. They are nominated by their colleagues and selected each year by the Academy's Board of Trustees. Academy Fellowship is for life. The induction is taking place on the evening of October 8<sup>th</sup> in San Francisco.

Dr. Williams has served as Gladstone's president since 2010. Prior to joining Gladstone, he was on the faculty of Duke University and the University of Texas before assuming the role of Dean of the School of Medicine at Duke in 2001. He was also the founding Dean of the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School of Singapore. During his career as a physician-scientist, his research focused on the genes, proteins and pathways that control the development and proliferation of *myocytes*, which are cells that make up cardiac and skeletal muscle. His laboratory defined basic principles of how these cells adapt to changing physiological demands associated with exercise or disease states.

“As a scientist, I admire the Academy's mission to promote scientific discovery and to participate in high caliber scientific research,” said Dr. Williams, who is also a professor at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), with which Gladstone is affiliated. “And as Gladstone's president I'm certain that my induction as an Academy Fellow, along with the induction of Dr. Pollard, will foster additional scientific exchange between our two great research institutions.”

Last January, Gladstone and the Academy together organized **Brilliant!Science: Decoding Human Health**, a weeklong science festival that featured Gladstone's latest research advances, while also highlighting the Academy's commitment to biosciences research. Dr. Williams hopes that he and Dr. Pollard's induction will help spur future collaborations between Gladstone and the Academy.

An expert in bioinformatics, Dr. Pollard uses statistics and computational biology to analyze massive genomic datasets. Her research focuses on the evolution of the human genome, in particular how genetic differences are associated with human health and disease.

Currently, Dr. Pollard focuses on two major areas: 1) identifying the genetic basis for traits specific to humans, such as our susceptibility to AIDS, and 2) analyzing the genetic make-up of the human 'microbiome'—the vast array of microorganisms that dwell in or on the human body. As a member of the National Institutes of Health's Human Microbiome Project, Dr. Pollard and her colleagues hope to use the data to understand the precise relationship between the microbiome, health and disease.

Prior to joining Gladstone in 2008, Dr. Pollard was an Assistant Professor in the University of California, Davis Genome Center and a comparative genomics postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Santa Cruz. While in Santa Cruz, she participated in the Chimpanzee Genome Project, in which she identified fast-evolving genetic sequences unique to humans that reveal new insight into the evolutionary history of both humans and our closest living relatives—chimpanzees.

"I am both honored to be inducted as an Academy Fellow and humbled to be in the company of such stellar scientists," said Dr. Pollard, who like Dr. Williams is also a professor at UCSF. "I look forward to working with Academy scientists who are harnessing the power of complementary methods, such as paleontology, to understand what separates us from our closest animal relatives."

As Fellows, Drs. Williams and Pollard join the ranks of some of the world's most esteemed researchers, including UCSF Chancellor [Susan Desmond-Hellmann](#), MD, MPH, renowned paleoanthropologist [Donald Johanson](#), PhD, and evolutionary biologist [Neil Shubin](#), PhD.