

and the effective operation of subnational fisheries management councils.

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## Nurturing the microbiome field

THE UNIFIED MICROBIOME Initiative Consortium’s desire to organize research efforts across disciplinary and geopolitical boundaries is much needed (“A unified initiative to harness Earth’s microbiomes,” A. P. Alivisatos *et al.*, Policy Forum, 30 October, p. 507; published online 28 October 2015). Previous “Big Science” efforts have had a top-down focus: Large amounts of money are invested in the ideas of a small number

of individuals. For the microbiome project, I would propose a bottom-up approach, in which a broad vision is outlined and then as many researchers as possible address those concepts in their biological systems with their own talents and research networks.

Regardless of the structure of the initiative, this field belongs to its researchers, and we must nurture it to ensure continued funding and public interest. We must communicate our efforts to do robust hypothesis-driven research as well as the importance of descriptive studies that contribute to our still-incomplete census. The Consortium and the rest of us must lead by example in terms of transparency, robust methods, pre- and post-publication peer review, and acknowledgment of negative results. As much as we are enthusiastic about the role of the microbiome, we must also realize that it is not responsible for everything. It is exciting to see the nucleus of a grand vision for the field, but we must make the fundamentals of the scientific method central to our mission.

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