

## David Agard '75 B.S.

When David Agard was considering colleges in the early 1970s, Yale emerged as a “unique and perfect fit.” It was, at the time, the only institution in the country to offer an undergraduate major in Agard’s chosen field, molecular biophysics and biochemistry. Today, closing in on a half-century later, Agard is a scholarly and strategic leader in the subject that first drew him to New Haven, and he is eager to bring his experience and insights to bear on Yale’s continued development as a global research university.

Agard, who completed his Ph.D. in biological chemistry at the California Institute of Technology in 1980, is a professor and Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where he oversees a lab that researches the molecular machinery responsible for cellular function. Throughout his career, he has devoted himself to teaching and mentoring rising scientists, all the while embracing the responsibilities of academic leadership. For thirteen years, he directed and built up the university’s graduate program in biophysics, driven by “feeling very strongly about the importance of training the next generation, especially in multi-disciplinary science.” He was also on the executive committee of the UCSF Graduate Programs in Biological Sciences, helping oversee graduate education in the basic sciences. In 2000 he spearheaded the creation of the University of California’s multi-campus Institute for Bioengineering, Biotechnology, and Quantitative Biomedical Research (QB3), a hybrid research institute and startup accelerator, becoming its founding director and later UCSF’s scientific director. He was also a member of the University of California Office of Research Science and Technology Panel, providing oversight to the Department of Energy’s National Laboratories. Reflecting his “strong technology bent” and a commitment “to developing technology, not just utilizing it,” Agard helped develop the first electron counting camera for cryo-electron microscopes (cryoEM) and now serves on the Life Sciences Advisory Board of FEI/ThermoFisher, the maker of cryoEMs.

Among his many professional distinctions, Agard was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2007 and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences two years later. He received an excellence in teaching award from the Haile T. Debas Academy of Medical Educators in 2006, and was honored with the QB3 award in quantitative bioscience in 2015.

Returning to campus last year after joining the University Council, Agard was struck anew by the transformation of New Haven since his undergraduate days. One thing that has not changed, however, is the “extraordinary experience” of being at Yale, “in an environment so conducive to exploration.” As a student in Davenport College, Agard would spend his breaks from coursework marveling at the university’s museums and reveling in Yale’s theater and musical performances. Now, as an alumnus, he always makes time to revisit the collections of the Yale University Art Gallery.

Agard’s appreciation for the arts extends beyond spectatorship, into practice: he is a ceramicist by hobby, sculpting bowls that he finishes with unusual glazes and textures. The craft, he explains, has “a complementarity with science,” allowing physical as well as cerebral expression.

Stepping outdoors, Agard and his wife, Dr. Lisa McConlogue, recently developed a passion for an entirely different kind of pastime. For a solar eclipse-viewing trip to Micronesia in 2016, the couple became certified in scuba diving. They “fell in love with it” and have been focusing on scuba-oriented travel ever since. For Agard, the pursuit is not only a way to engage with the natural world— it is a reminder that, at any point in life, we can always learn something new.