Harvard Biologist Joan Ruderman is Named President and Director of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole

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CONTACT: Andrea Early, Marine Biological Laboratory, 508-289-7652; aearly@mbl.edu

Joan V. Ruderman Biography (pdf format)

Joan V. Ruderman, Ph.D., has been named President and Director of the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), an independent, nonprofit center for international research and education in biology, biomedicine, and environmental science. Ruderman is the first woman to become Director of the MBL, which next year celebrates the 125th anniversary of its founding.

Ruderman, who has served on the MBL Board of Trustees since 1986, is currently the Marlon V. Nelson Professor of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School. She succeeds Gary Borisy, Ph.D., who is retiring as MBL President and Director.

Ruderman has been closely affiliated with the MBL for nearly four decades. Her long tenure on the Board of Trustees includes membership on its Executive Committee since 2008, when she was named Speaker of the MBL Corporation. She was a student in the MBL’s world-famous Embryology course in 1974, and returned to teach and serve as co-director of that course in subsequent years. She also conducted research at the MBL for more than 20 summers, including groundbreaking studies on the mechanisms that regulate cell division.

“I can’t imagine a better choice than Joan Ruderman as the next President and Director of the MBL,” said John W. Rowe, MBL Chairman of the Board. “Her commitment to excellence in biological research and education are evident in her leadership roles at the MBL and Harvard, as well as at other institutions at the forefront of research, such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. A renowned biologist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, Joan has a breadth of knowledge, from the molecular to the environmental, that is a perfect fit for the MBL. She also knows the institution inside and out, and has a deep appreciation of its history, mission and potential. I am confident that Joan has the leadership acumen and vision to carry us forward, as we continue to drive discovery and debate in the scientific community for years to come.”

“I am honored to lead the MBL, an extraordinary institution that has catalyzed the careers and contributions of countless leaders in the biological sciences,” Ruderman said. “The MBL is truly unique: a diverse, rich, and open community of hundreds of leading scientists and students, with no barriers to communication and collaboration. My priorities as President and Director will be to maintain the MBL’s leadership role in driving scientific discovery and knowledge for the benefit of human health and the environment, and to develop a sustainable plan to support the MBL’s mission into the future.”

About Joan V. Ruderman

In addition to her association with the MBL, Ruderman’s leadership positions include Senior Science Advisor at the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study (2011 to present) and membership on the Medical Advisory Board of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (2000-2009) and the Scientific Advisory Board of the Whitehead Institute at M.I.T. (1999-2002). She is in incoming member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Ellison Medical Foundation (2013-).

Ruderman is best known for her work on the molecular mechanisms that regulate cell division. In the 1980s and 1990s, she conducted pioneering research on cyclins, proteins that drive cells through the cell division cycle. More recently, she has investigated environmental contaminants that can mimic estrogen, chemicals that may increase the risk of developing breast cancer and other hormone-dependent cancers. At the Radcliffe Institute, she has been involved in activities that focus on the cross-cutting roles of water in areas that range from human health to geopolitical disputes to climate change.

Ruderman’s scientific contributions have been recognized by her election to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Society for Microbiology, as well as by the New York University/Dart Award in Biotechnology.

Ruderman received her B.A. from Barnard College and her Ph.D. from M.I.T., both in biology. After postdoctoral work at M.I.T., she joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School in 1976. She moved to Duke University in 1986 and returned to Harvard Medical School in 1989.

She is married to Gerald Ruderman, a partner in an engineering firm involved in renewable energy projects. Their daughter, Zoe, is a journalist.

The Marine Biological Laboratory, founded in 1888, is an international center for research, education, and training in biology, biomedicine, and ecology.

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