Press Information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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James L. Olds to Lead National Science Foundation Biological Sciences Division

MBL, WOODS HOLE, MA—James L. Olds, editor-in-chief of The Biological Bulletin, the 100+ year-old general biology journal published by the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), has been selected by The National Science Foundation to serve as assistant director for the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO).

BIO’s mission is to enable discoveries for understanding life. BIO-supported research extends across systems that encompass biological molecules, cells, tissues, organs, organisms, populations, communities, and ecosystems up to and including the global biosphere. Comprehensive concepts that bridge and unify the diverse areas of biology include complexity, robustness, communication, resilience, adaptability and cooperation.

Olds is a director and chief academic unit officer at the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study and the Shelley Krasnow University Professor of Molecular Neuroscience at George Mason University. He has had close ties to the MBL for more than three decades and is a member of the MBL Society. Since 2005, he has served as editor-in-chief of The Biological Bulletin.

“I was delighted to learn that Jim Olds has been selected for a leadership position in the Biological Sciences Directorate at NSF,” said Margaret McFall-Ngai, associate editor of The Biological Bulletin and professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin. “As a member of the editorial board for The Biological Bulletin, I had the opportunity to work with Jim, who has served as the editor-in-chief of the journal for the last several years. I have appreciated Jim’s breadth and rigor as a biologist, as well as his thoughtful and respectful nature. I feel that the directorate will be in very capable hands under Jim’s guidance.”

An expert in the role nerve cells, or neurons, play in learning and memory, Olds’s research is directed toward understanding and simulating the machinery that permits neurons and neuronal assemblies to store and recall memories, both under normal and diseased conditions.

Olds received his undergraduate degree from Amherst College in chemistry and his doctorate from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in the field of neuroscience. His postdoctoral research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) led to advances in understanding the molecular basis of learning and memory, and he received the NIH Merit Award in 1993. He was appointed director of the Krasnow Institute in 1998.
Olds serves on numerous private and public boards and has played a central role in scientific public policy development at all levels, ranging from Commonwealth of Virginia and the White House to advising heads of ministries internationally. He spent eight years as chair of Sandia National Laboratory’s External Cognitive Science Board. In the non-profit world, Olds was treasurer of Americans for Medical Progress. Olds will begin his NSF appointment in October 2014.

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The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) is dedicated to scientific discovery and improving the human condition through research and education in biology, biomedicine, and environmental science. Founded in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, in 1888, the MBL is a private, nonprofit institution and an affiliate of the University of Chicago.