



**Search for the Chief Development Officer  
Marine Biological Laboratory  
Woods Hole, Massachusetts**

The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), North America's oldest private research laboratory, seeks an experienced, strategic, and collaborative individual to serve as its next Chief Development Officer (CDO). Recognized as one of the great international labs for research and education in the life sciences, the MBL has for over 135 years drawn many of the world's most accomplished researchers across a variety of disciplines, including 60 Nobel Laureates.

The MBL is one of six research institutions in Woods Hole including the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the Woods Hole Research Center, NOAA Fisheries, Sea Education Association, and USGS.

The MBL is known for pushing the boundaries of science, pioneering new fields, and establishing the careers of generations of leading scientists. MBL's [research](#) and [education](#) programs are renowned for their convening power and resulting seminal discoveries in biological research. This vibrant, year-round institution provides resident and visiting science programs and a growing portfolio of education courses. Research done at the MBL spans subject areas including cell and developmental biology, climate and environmental science, evolutionary biology, genetics and genomics, regenerative biology, neuroscience, microbial ecology, and physiology. Building on its historic strengths, the MBL is committed to strategic growth in the areas of imaging innovation and the development of novel, genetically tractable, research organisms for the advancement of science.

Over the years, the MBL has cultivated strong relationships with diverse donors, including foundations, corporations, individuals, and governmental agencies, securing substantial support for its cutting-edge research and education programs. Reporting to the Director and serving as a core member of MBL's leadership team, the CDO will craft and implement a strategic philanthropic plan to raise \$150 million over the next five years and to lay a foundation for sustained philanthropic success that matches the vision and scope of MBL programs. This is a tremendous opportunity for an experienced, bold and creative development executive to play a critical leadership role in advancing MBL's reputation and resources. To this end, the CDO will guide a current team of six individuals in the creation and execution of a strategic development plan that leverages creative initiatives and collaborations. They will also work closely with a

dedicated Board of Trustees, including a seasoned Development Committee. As an independent research institute with many academic partners, there is great opportunity for the MBL to expand its connections with academia and foundations to attract funding to advance biological research and education. As such, the CDO is presented with a unique opportunity to both build upon MBL's existing foundation of fundraising success while defining new strategies for elevated and sustainable philanthropic growth.

The ideal candidate should be a self-starter with an innovative approach to growing and guiding a philanthropic program in basic scientific research. They will bring a track record of success raising significant philanthropic support for an organization while also building its constituency, as well as prior success raising major and principal gifts and increasing the effectiveness of a development program through established objectives and performance standards linked with organizational initiatives and goals. They will possess the communication skills required to articulate the vision and mission of a program to a diverse group of funding organizations and individuals in clear and compelling language. A background in science is desirable; a passion for science is required.

Isaacson, Miller, the executive recruiting firm, is assisting the MBL in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

#### **ABOUT THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY**

Combining research and education has been integral to the MBL's mission since its founding in 1888. [The MBL and the University of Chicago affiliated in July 2013](#), a combination that enhances both institutions' missions of leadership and innovation in biological research and education. Today the MBL is home to a full-time resident research program with faculty and its education and visiting research programs welcome nearly 2,000 students, researchers, and faculty each year. The MBL employs more than 300 year-round passionate and dedicated employees. MBL's research and education work is funded by federal granting agencies such as the NIH, by the most respected charitable foundations such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, and the Moore Foundation, among others, and by private philanthropists dedicated to MBL's mission.

The MBL is known for pushing the boundaries of science, pioneering new fields, and establishing the careers of generations of leading scientists. Sixty Nobel Prize winners affiliate themselves with the MBL. Among the key discoveries made at the MBL are the mechanisms that explain nerve impulses, the use of horseshoe crab blood to detect bacterial contamination, proteins that control cell division — including its lack of control in cancer — green fluorescent protein (GFP) as a basic tool for cell biology, and how the transport of molecules is precisely controlled within cells.

Strategic research themes that drive MBL's research and education programs today include innovation in biological imaging and the development of a novel set of new genetically modified organisms to develop the next generation of research models. By leveraging its access to a rich and diverse ecosystem, MBL

scientists have unlocked secrets of basic biology that have resulted in major improvements to human welfare and health. Animals, plants, fungi, bacteria, and other organisms from the ocean have evolved over time to solve most every problem that interests humans — surviving extremes of heat and cold, regenerating hearts and limbs, and turning toxic compounds into sources of energy. Innovation and advancements in high-power imaging and analysis capabilities provide powerful tools that allow us to do more than admire evolutionary solutions that these organisms have achieved while also understand exactly how their solutions work and identify approaches to apply them to human needs and find solutions to long-standing biological challenges.

More information about the Marine Biological Laboratory can be found in the Addendum as well as on its website: <https://www.mbl.edu/>

### **Fundraising and Financial Overview**

In Fiscal Year 2023, MBL's operating expenses were \$52.6 million; the corresponding revenue was \$53.4 million. During the fiscal year, MBL received \$18 million in federal grants, \$5.3 million in foundation grants, \$13.6 million in support from UChicago, and \$5.6 million in contributions for use in operations. As of June 30, 2023, the endowment was valued at \$96 million.

### **Leadership and Governance**

The MBL is directed by [Nipam Patel, Ph.D.](#), who joined the MBL in 2018 from University of California, Berkeley. Patel is the 20th scientist to serve as MBL's director since its founding in 1888. The MBL remains a separate 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is as an affiliate of the University of Chicago. Currently 31 Trustees serve on the MBL Board. More information on the MBL's Board and its Bylaws can be found [online](#).

### **ROLE OF THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) is a critical position for the MBL. This role provides a unique opportunity for a seasoned professional to make an impact on the philanthropic performance of a historical laboratory that is a storied leader in the world of life sciences. This is an exciting time of opportunity and growth at the MBL with [an expanding Board of Trustees](#) and a new philanthropic and business strategy to support the next 100 years of excellence in scientific research and education.

Working alongside the Director, Board of Trustees, and serving as a core member of the MBL leadership team, the CDO holds the primary responsibility of shaping and delivering a comprehensive plan to raise \$150M over the next five years, thereby realizing the aspirations for MBL's impact in basic science and unique educational training. The CDO will bring experience in raising significant philanthropic support for an organization while building its constituency, as well as a high level of scientific communication credibility critical to connecting with a sophisticated and diverse set of donors and expanding the volume

of unaffiliated prospects. They will galvanize the existing team, working across major gifts, annual giving, foundation and corporate relations, donor relations, planned giving, donor stewardship/events, database management and gift processing/records, to seize new and creative funding opportunities, ensuring transformational support for years to come.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

### ***Create and implement a five-year strategic plan for philanthropic development.***

The CDO will shape and lead the creation and implementation of MBL's development strategy by establishing priorities across the range of foundation, corporate, individual, alumni and governmental funding sources; creating segment-specific strategies; and allocating development staff and other resources to those strategies. The CDO will work with the Director of Finance to integrate development plans into the MBL's annual and multi-year financial plans.

### ***Deepen the MBL's philanthropic network and prospect pool.***

The CDO will ensure that the size, quality, and level of commitment of MBL's philanthropic network and prospect pool matches the requirements of the development strategy. MBL seeks to be the beneficiary of the most important, innovative, and demanding donors that fund basic and applied biological research. The CDO will be expected to expand the organization's philanthropic network by setting priorities and deploying MBL leaders, trustees, faculty, and where appropriate, UChicago leaders. The CDO will work closely with the MBL communications head to ensure that messages across a range of audiences position the MBL appropriately with leading individual and institutional donors.

### ***Expand MBL's position with foundations funding basic research***

MBL enjoys long-term relationships with leading foundations in life sciences, organizations that have been generous with financial support and have helped shape our strategy. The breadth and quality of our research and education work intersects with the funding interests of many other foundations with which we have not worked. The CDO will work with the MBL Director, Head of Research and Head of Education to develop priorities and frame compelling proposals.

### ***Productively engage MBL leaders and Trustees in fundraising strategy and priority setting.***

The CDO will identify high-impact opportunities and tactics for involving the Director, other senior leaders, and distinctive faculty in philanthropic activities. They will work closely with the Board's Development Committee and individual trustees to ensure that the board plays a critical role in philanthropy and network building. They will also ensure senior MBL leaders and the Board Development Committee are well informed on major development initiatives and performance, with effective performance summaries and corrective action plans.

***Serve as a core member of MBL's leadership team, working to advance its reputation for distinctive impact.***

The CDO will bring perspectives from the philanthropic landscape and from other basic research institutions to inform strategic decision making and shape development communications strategies. The CDO is expected to set a professional example for staff leadership at MBL, integrating their work with that of MBL scientists and students.

***Build and lead a high-performance development team.***

The MBL development staff, currently consisting of six full-time employees, is responsible for major gifts, annual giving, foundation and corporate relations, donor relations, planned giving, donor stewardship/events, database management, and gift processing/records. The CDO is responsible for designing and implementing an organizational structure and skill set that matches the requirements of the development strategy; fostering a culture of accountability and achievement; creating a work environment that attracts and retains high performers; and mentoring/evaluating individual team members.

***Leverage development synergies between MBL and UChicago Development.***

The CDO will capture synergies through shared database management capabilities, coordinated prospect solicitation, and expanded alumni relations opportunities. The University of Chicago is a tremendous partner and asset to the MBL, and opportunities exist for the CDO to tap into the expertise available through UChicago's Alumni Relations and Development Department.

***Build and manage a comprehensive prospect portfolio.***

The CDO will be responsible for building and managing a portfolio of 50-100 individuals, families, and organizations with a personal goal of raising more than \$10 million annually through 15 to 20 solicitations each year. They will develop cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship plans tailored to specific donors and prospects.

***Lead the conception, preparation, negotiation, and closure of significant philanthropic gifts.***

This includes the creative identification of major gift prospects (individual and institutional), matching them with MBL strategic themes, and creating compelling case statements/communications strategies that tap MBL leadership, trustees, and other volunteers. The CDO is expected to create gift structuring options that fit donor preferences and MBL's needs.

***Oversee a high-touch, high-integrity gift operations and donor stewardship process.***

Ensure that gift operations and stewardship reinforce the donor's decision to donate to the MBL while also promptly meeting accounting requirements, ensuring donor intent is met, and providing appropriate periodic updates to the donor.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

- A minimum of ten years of professional work experience in nonprofit management; philanthropic development professional work experience required.
- Familiarity with, and intense curiosity about, life sciences will be critical for credibility among MBLs donors.
- Track record of successfully managing a large capital campaign and working with donors across the US.
- Demonstrated success working with a Board of Trustees consisting of prominent business and scientific leaders and their networks.
- Ability to engage creatively and boldly with large institutional donors, with an understanding of their strategies and program decision-making processes.
- Proven record of accomplishment in seven- and eight-figure gift solicitations and cultivation of prospective donors.
- Strong listening, verbal communications, and writing skills, with an ability to distill complex scientific topics to donors with a wide range of scientific sophistication.
- Ability to manage confidential information with discretion and tact.
- Demonstrated experience building and managing a high-performing development team through inspiring and motivating others.
- Ability to work collegially and collaboratively as part of a top management team setting. An exceptional work ethic and track record of personal initiative required.
- Bachelor's degree or higher required. Advanced degree preferred.

**COMPENSATION AND LOCATION**

The annual salary range for this position is \$225,000 to \$275,000. The stated hiring range represents the institution's good faith and reasonable estimate of the possible compensation at the time of posting.

**APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS**

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/marine-biological-laboratory/chief-development-officer>.

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*The Marine Biological Lab (MBL) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or veteran status, and does not discriminate against members of protected classes under the law.*

## **ADDENDUM**

### **HISTORY OF THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY**

The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) is one of the leading biology institutions in the world, founded in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1888. First established as a permanent station for the Fish Commission and further established by the Women's Education Association to perfect plans for the organization of a permanent seaside laboratory that would combine research and education.

A summer-only institution during its first decades, the MBL grew rapidly with 17 students and investigators in its inaugural year and grew to 110 students four summers later. Notably, women were well represented at the MBL from the start; in 1888, nearly half the students and investigators were women. The first summer course offered at MBL was Invertebrate Zoology (now called Neural Systems and Behavior). It was soon complemented by other courses that are still offered today more than 100 years later: Embryology, Physiology, and a course in microscope techniques. The MBL is world-renowned for the distinctive culture it brings to education, emphasizing hands-on laboratory training, teaching by faculty from universities around the world, operating across conventional disciplines in biology.

Since its founding in 1888, the MBL has been a driving force in biological discovery and research training. The MBL has attracted the world's most accomplished scientists to the campus, serving as a hub for exploration, knowledge generation, and knowledge dissemination in biology, biomedicine, and environmental science. Entire fields of study—cell biology, embryology, and neurobiology—have been nurtured and developed on its grounds. Among the scientists currently affiliated with the MBL are 118 Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigators and 202 members of the National Academy of Sciences. Sixty Nobel Prize Winners have been associated with the MBL since its founding.

Much of the MBL's renown reputation comes from being a crucible of novel scientific interactions in which conversations with colleagues from other institutions around the world blossom into major research collaborations. MBL researchers take great pride in their involvement with the institution and value its open and intellectually rich scientific spirit. Many scientists maintain a career-long connection to the MBL and return year after year. Scientists are drawn to the MBL for its location as well as the state-of-the-art research support facilities, including those for advanced imaging, collecting and maintaining marine organisms, and its wide variety of stellar research services and facilities. Woods Hole's proximity to the cold waters of the Labrador Current and warm waters of the Gulf Stream, as well as its numerous harbors and estuaries, provides a wide range of habitats that are home to an unusually rich variety of animal and plant species, and many researchers have made extensive use of this biodiversity.

## **PROGRAMS**

MBL's activities are organized along three lines: year-round research programs, visiting research programs, and education programs that have historically focused on advanced research topics but are expanding and now include nascent programs for undergraduates and high school students.

### **Resident Research Program**

The year-round research program includes 29 resident faculty and more than 150 year-round research staff whose research takes advantage of the MBL's unique location and resources and spans fields ranging from microbial evolution and cellular mechanisms of camouflage and regeneration to systems ecology and global climate change.

Resident research is currently organized into three Centers:

#### Josephine Bay Paul Center for Comparative Molecular Biology and Evolution

Scientists in the Bay Paul Center use the tools of molecular biology, genomics, and informatics to explore the evolution and interaction of diverse organisms that play significant roles in environmental and human health. Projects span all evolutionary time scales, from deep phylogenetic divergence of ancestral prokaryotic and eukaryotic lineages to ecological analyses of how members of diverse communities contribute and respond to environmental change. The Center has pioneered the use of next-generation sequencing strategies and novel bioinformatic approaches to understand microbial diversity and phylogenetic relationships.

#### The Eugene Bell Center for Regenerative Biology and Tissue Engineering

The Bell Center is a multidisciplinary research initiative that draws upon the special advantages of marine and aquatic organisms (vertebrate and invertebrate) to define and understand the natural processes by which damaged or aging tissues and organs can regenerate or be repaired, and to apply that knowledge



to the design of bioengineering-based therapies. An understanding of development and regeneration in marine and aquatic animals holds promise for translation to treatments for human conditions, including spinal cord injury, diabetes, organ failure, and neurodegenerative diseases. The Bell Center includes the National Xenopus Resource (NXR), which is a national stock center for several frog species that are used for biomedical research, as well as a training center for advanced technologies using these animals. Other research foci include sensory physiology and behavior at the organismal level, as well as the development of novel imaging technologies to visualize cellular, developmental, and regenerative processes.

### The Ecosystems Center

The Ecosystems Center was founded four decades ago to investigate the structure and functioning of ecological systems and to predict their response to changing environmental conditions. Scientists at this Center work at sites around the world and carry out observations, experiments, and modeling at all scales from the gene to the globe. The knowledge gained is used to help inform policy and craft strategies for sustaining and managing the Earth's resources. This Center serves as the home for two of the nation's 27NSF-funded Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) sites, one at Toolik Lake on the North Slope of Alaska and another in the Plum Island Estuary focused on wetland ecology and effects of changing sea-level along the coast.

### **Visiting Research Program**

Visiting researchers embed in resident faculty labs or rent individual lab space to establish collaborations and draw upon the MBL's specialized resources. Visiting researchers and a variety of research fellows routinely include scientists from different career levels, from senior luminaries (Nobel Prizewinners, National Academy of Science Members) to postdoctoral associates beginning their careers. The MBL foci include a range of disciplines that varies annually, with traditional topics including neurobiology, behavior, cell biology and pathophysiology, muscle physiology, developmental biology, regeneration and stem cell biology, genetic regulation, and evolutionary biology. Visiting researchers are part of a singular and highly esteemed culture of discovery at the MBL that includes both formal and informal interactions.

### **Educational Programs**

The MBL offers a comprehensive array of [educational programs](#) that cater to scientists at various stages of their careers:

- Their flagship [Advanced Research Training Courses \(ARTC\)](#) provide intensive, hands-on training in diverse fields of biological and environmental sciences to over 500 graduate students and postdoctoral students from around the globe.

- [Comparative Developmental Biology](#) is an intensive two-week laboratory course for graduate students in their second or later year of Ph.D studies and post-docs, who seek a broad training in experimental approaches to developmental questions across diverse study organisms.
- [The MBL/UChicago PhD Graduate Program](#) leverages the unique partnership between two leading research institutions and combines the best of both worlds – access to a collaborative and expansive research environment that spans the scales of biological discovery at the MBL in Woods Hole, MA and the first-class resources of the University of Chicago.
- [The ENGAGE Bio program](#) is a post baccalaureate program that will support training of recent STEM graduates in the biological sciences. ENGAGE-Bio aims to increase access to graduate education through an immersive, year-long independent research experience at the Marine Biological Laboratory.
- MBL offers [Undergraduate Programs](#) that provide hands on learning opportunities and academic rigor in several 13-15 week summer programs.
- The [High School Discovery Program](#) successful model used in its world-renowned Advanced Research Training Courses for pre- and postdoctoral training and applied it to high school students.

Please refer [here](#) for a comprehensive list of education programs.