



Search for the Director of Education
Marine Biological Laboratory
Woods Hole, Massachusetts

THE SEARCH

The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), North America's oldest private research laboratory, seeks an innovative and ambitious academic leader to serve as its next Director of Education. Recognized as one of the great international labs for research and education in the life sciences, the MBL has drawn accomplished researchers and students across a variety of biological disciplines to Woods Hole for more than 135 years. The new Director of Education will sustain and build upon this rich history, providing strategic and administration leadership for the MBL's well known and beloved programs, and pursue a bold strategy to expand the Laboratory's educational offerings to amplify the MBL's impact and reach.

The MBL's [research](#) and [education](#) programs are renowned for their unique convening power and collaborative nature providing an innovative platform for seminal discoveries in biological research. This vibrant institution provides resident and visiting science programs and a growing portfolio of education courses from high school to advanced training levels. Research 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. Intensive laboratory-based courses, variable-length immersive educational programs, visiting research programs, and informal colloquia are also distinguishing features and well-established strengths of the MBL, as are the collection and cultivation of marine and aquatic organisms. 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.

Reporting directly to the President/Director of the MBL and serving as a member of the leadership team, the Director of Education is responsible for developing and leading the MBL's educational programs, upholding a culture of excellence and innovation through direction setting, fiscal management, and program assessment. Concurrently, the Director of Education will have the opportunity to conceptualize and pursue new educational offerings that capitalize on the MBL's resources and open new avenues for engagement and support. The successful candidate will be an accomplished researcher, able to quickly establish credibility with the MBL's academic community and comfortable with complex grant management and program administration. They will also be financially astute, able to develop sustainable funding models for educational programs and familiar with federal and philanthropic funding sources. Finally, the Director of Education will be a genuine relationship builder and collaborator, able to forge

connections internally and externally, lead and mentor teams, and genuinely excite and engage others over a shared love of science and discovery.

The Marine Biological Laboratory has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national search firm, to assist in this important recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications for this opportunity should be directed in confidence 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. 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 nearly 300 year-round employees, of which half are research staff. MBL's research and education work is funded by federal granting agencies such as the NIH and NSF, by the respected charitable foundations such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, and the Moore Foundation, by private philanthropists dedicated to MBL's mission, and through tuition.

The MBL is known for pushing the boundaries of science, pioneering new fields, and establishing the careers of generations of leading scientists. Among scientists with an affiliation to the MBL (serving as a researcher, course faculty, and/or student) are 63 Nobel Laureates (since 1929), 25 Lasker Award recipients (2000-2024), and more than 300 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) members (since 1960). In 2024, 14 of the 124 members inducted into the NAS are affiliated with the MBL.

Among the key breakthroughs made at the MBL are the use of horseshoe crab blood to detect bacterial contamination, the discovery of proteins that control cell division — including its lack of control in cancer, understanding how the transport of molecules is precisely controlled within cells, and uncovering how molecules can be concentrated and organized within cells without the need for membranes. Furthermore, other discoveries have relied heavily on resources provided by the MBL, including harnessing green fluorescent protein (GFP) as a basic tool for cell biology, and understanding how nerve impulses are propagated.

Strategic research themes that drive MBL's research and education programs include innovation in biological imaging and the creation of a novel set of new genetically tractable organisms to develop the next generation of research models. By leveraging its access to a rich and diverse aquatic ecosystem, MBL scientists unlock secrets of basic biology that result in major improvements to human welfare and health. Innovation and advancements in genetics, and high-power imaging and analysis capabilities, provide powerful tools that allow MBL researchers to understand how their solutions work and identify approaches to apply them to human needs. The MBL's research and education portfolio includes marine biology, but marine biology per se is not the Lab's sole focus. Rather the marine environment is just one of several key sources of inspiration for the MBL's basic biology research and education.

In 2013, the MBL and the University of Chicago (UChicago) formally affiliated, a combination that enhanced both institutions' missions of leadership and innovation in biological research and science. For 12 years, this relationship linked the MBL to the scientific resources and administrative supports of UChicago. As of June 30, 2026, the MBL will once again be a fully independent research and educational institution.

More information about the Marine Biological Laboratory can be found on the laboratory's website: <https://www.mbl.edu/>.

Educational Opportunities

The MBL offers an array of [courses, workshops, conferences, and internships](#) throughout the year. Educational opportunities engage a broad range of students, postdoctoral scientists, researchers, and faculty from around the world. Courses at the MBL are often described as “transformative,” a strong statement verified in course reviews each year. Students are empowered to pursue science at the very highest levels. Participants have access to state-of-the-art equipment and learn the fundamental principles upon which the technology is based. Trainees work directly with outstanding faculty from around the world, pursuing novel experiments that test new ideas and foster a global network of collaboration. From this comes a fearless, boundary-pushing pursuit of current knowledge.

Advanced Research Training Courses (ARTC)

Central to the MBL's identity are its more than 20 advanced, discovery-based research courses. The focus of these world-famous, graduate-level courses ranges from physiology, embryology, neurobiology, and microbiology to imaging and computation integrated with biological research.

Each year, the MBL's advanced courses attract about 500 of the best students in the world. In 2025, students hailed from 265 institutions and 27 countries, and course directors and faculty, who are leaders in their fields came from 280 leading universities and research institutions across 20 countries. The courses also benefit from MBL partnerships with many commercial developers and vendors, who bring the very latest technology in advanced imaging and other scientific equipment to the MBL each year.

The MBL believes that cost should never be a barrier to scientific discovery and training. Most advanced research training courses offer significant financial aid, including scholarships based on need.

Learn more about [ARTC and course offerings](#).

Graduate Courses and Programs

In addition to ARTC, the MBL offers additional opportunities for graduate students:

- [MBL/University of Chicago Graduate Research Fellowship](#): this program leverages the unique partnership between these 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 and the first-class resources of the University of Chicago.

- [MBL Light Microscopy Bootcamp](#): this course consists of a mixture of didactic lectures, discussions, and hands-on practice and empowers graduate students to use light microscopy as a powerful experimental tool in their own research.
- [Comparative Developmental Biology](#): this intensive two-week laboratory course is for graduate students who seek a broad training in experimental approaches to developmental questions across diverse study organisms.

Undergraduate Programs

The MBL provides a variety of [immersive programs for undergraduates](#) – for a summer or a semester – who are serious about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Undergraduate programs currently offered include Semester in Environmental Science, Semester in Biological Discovery, and other undergraduate offerings for students from academic institutions.

Additionally, the MBL hosts a variety of [internship programs](#) for undergraduates, enabling students to build professional experiences, skills, and knowledge through field- and laboratory-based research. Most internships are through the NSF’s Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program. Others are available specifically for students from the University of Chicago or Dartmouth College.

High School Science Discovery Programs

The MBL expanded upon its successful model used in its ARTCs for pre- and post-doctoral training and applied it to high school students. The MBL’s [High School Science Discovery Program](#) immerses students in active, ongoing basic biology research conducted by MBL research scientists.

Additional Educational Programs and Offerings

Finally, the MBL hosts dozens of workshops, training courses, and conferences for professionals and members of the public during all seasons of the year. While some programs are specifically tailored for a specific population, such as the [Logan Science Journalism Program](#), others, such as the [Friday Evening Lectures](#), are free and open to the public.

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 is a 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Currently 33 Trustees serve on the MBL Board. More information on the MBL’s Board and its Bylaws can be found [online](#).

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

The Director of Education reports to the President/Director, serves as a key member of the senior leadership team, and is responsible for developing an innovative and ambitious vision for the MBL's educational programs, engaging a wide range of constituencies and partnering with educational leaders and faculty at numerous institutions, both nationally and globally. Expansion into educational programs that are offered on a year-round basis is an expected strategic direction for this position. Activities at all levels, from high school to undergraduates to post-graduates will be explored to capitalize on the facilities and resources of the MBL.

Responsibilities include administration and coordination of all educational programs, encompassing MBL Advanced Research Training Courses (ARTC), high school programs, undergraduate programs – including full semester or quarter curricula – graduate coursework and programs, and other educational and conference outreach activities consistent with the MBL's integrated mission in research and education.

Institutional Responsibilities

- Develop a creative, ambitious, and distinctive vision for education that will build on and extend the tradition and impact of MBL courses - including but not limited to:
 - initiating plans to strengthen and maintain excellence in current programs,
 - creating new courses, or course formats, introducing the MBL approach to immersive learning ("learn by doing") into other education activities, including professional communities
 - stimulating linkages with other components of research at MBL, both within the summer and throughout the year.
- Consider additional models for program expansion (remote, traveling)
- Design transformative and challenging educational experiences that integrate interdisciplinary and collaborative scientific research, advance knowledge, instill passion, and utilize facilities and resources uniquely available at the MBL and throughout Woods Hole.
- Encourage course design and curriculum development that incorporate research-based practices and innovative strategies to advance research methods and processes to meet course objectives.
- Create a "learning-centered" atmosphere that facilitates cooperative and effective communication among all stakeholders throughout the broad MBL Community.
- Develop strategies to attract a diverse student body.
- Serve as a key member of the senior leadership team at MBL and be responsible for the financial development and management of all aspects of the educational program, including preparation of grant proposals; recruitment of course directors and faculty; identification of resources and development of sustainable funding models, as well as effective management of budgets and ongoing assessment of the ARTCs.

- Work closely with the MBL Director and the Chief Advancement Officer to develop a financial strategy in support of the MBL vision, building on the strong relationship MBL enjoys with national and international funding agencies and philanthropic groups, developing new ties and strengthening philanthropic support, establishing a sustainable plan for expanding endowment funds, and exploring new revenue opportunities.
- Lead staff members and harness and enhance relationships with MBL resident faculty, and faculty throughout the broader MBL community to implement the vision.
- Work directly with the Director and other senior team members to advance the integrated and year-round mission of MBL in both research and education.
- Design efficient educative assessments to inform and improve educational programs over the long term, providing assistance to teachers, faculty, curriculum supervisors, education/department administrators, deans, and educational programs/projects at relevant institutions.
- Create efficient, evaluative measurements to assess student acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate competencies in the areas of academic, career and personal/social development.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

The success of the next Director of Education will be determined by how well they address the following opportunities and challenges:

Uphold the Excellence of the Advanced Research Training Courses

The MBL's Advanced Research Training Courses (ARTC) are acclaimed for their quality and impact. The Director of Education provides strategic and administrative leadership for this keystone program, including direction setting, budget and grants management, and ongoing assessment. The Director of Education provides critical partnership and support to the Course Directors, world leaders in their fields who come to the MBL to contribute their time and energy to developing and delivering cutting edge curricula. The Director of Education will be responsible for making sure these talented researchers are compelled to return and for attracting new talent through short- and long-term recruitment strategies. This will include upholding, cultivating, and modeling the MBL's cherished culture steeped in openness, belonging, civility, respect, collaboration, and curiosity. The Director of Education also serves as a co-PI with Course Directors on the dozens of grants that provide funding for the ARTCs, providing credibility on grant applications for courses' administrative aspects.

Some legacy ARTCs date back one hundred years and are foundational to the program; however, as science changes rapidly, staying current and competitive is a perennial challenge. The Director of Education will develop and implement a process of regular course review, evaluating offerings to ensure the ARTC portfolio best serves the needs and interests of the research community, and unlocking resources for new courses on in-demand topic areas. Relatedly, the Director of Education will design assessments that inform and improve all of the MBL's educational programs over the long-term. They will

embrace a data-informed approach to assessment where measuring learning outcomes and student acquisition of knowledge and skills is directly tied to program and curricular development.

Develop New and Creative Programmatic Offerings

The MBL operates at full capacity in the summer as faculty and students flock to the MBL's campus for ARTCs. To capitalize on resources and talent year-round, one of the MBL's strategic goals is to expand educational offerings outside the summer months. The Director of Education will conceptualize and build new educational programs at all levels. Leadership and the Board are interested in creative ideas, including continuing education, opportunities that connect to the local community on Cape Cod, and partnership-based, remote, and traveling offerings. The Director of Education will catalyze the formation of transformative educational experiences that make best use of MBL's faculty, resources, and campus, stay true to the MBL's immersive learning approach, expand and strengthen its reputation, and advance interdisciplinary and collaborative scientific research.

Navigate the Shifting Funding Climate and Ensure Financial Sustainability

The Director of Education is responsible for the Division's financial success and growth. The Director of Education must possess a nuanced understanding of federal funding and an awareness of how changes across the funding landscape affects grant revenue and tuition models. Partnering closely with the President/Director, Chief Financial and Operations Officer, and Chief Advancement Officer the Director of Education will develop a sustainable funding model and revenue strategy for education. To this end, important skillset for the new Director of Education including program budget creation and evaluation, tuition and revenue generation, and cost-effective program delivery. Building on strong relationships the MBL enjoys with funding agencies and philanthropic groups, the Director of Education will ensure continued programmatic grant funding while also working closely with the CAO to establish a plan for expanding endowment funds and generating additional philanthropic support.

Support and Inspire a Collaborative Internal Culture

The Director of Education will lead the Division of Education, composed of 12 talented and dedicated staff and provide professional development and growth opportunities for team members. Leading by example, the Director of Education will promote a culture where the Division works closely and collaboratively with other teams across the MBL to advance the organizational mission. Of particular importance is the collaboration between the Division of Education and the Division of Research. The Director of Education will partner with the Director of Research to ensure interdivisional alignment, support permeant research faculty, share resources, advance joint goals, and identify and act upon mutually beneficial opportunities.

Develop and Maintain Critical External Partnerships

The Director of Education will work with an incredibly broad and diverse array of constituents to sustain and amplify the MBL's educational offerings. The Director of Education will harness and enhance existing relationships between the MBL and partner organizations including universities and schools, foundations and nonprofits, and state and federal agencies and funders. As the MBL looks to expand educational programs and grow revenue, it will be important for the Director of Education to proactively forge new partnerships to generate enrollment pipelines, identify new funding sources, develop innovative programs, or other creative endeavors. As the MBL steps away from its formal affiliation with the University of Chicago and becomes once again a fully independent research and educational institution, the Director of Education will explore new avenues for the MBL to formally provide students with course credit and transcript notations.

EXPERIENCE AND CAPABILITIES

The successful candidate will have an accomplished record as an educator, administrator, leader, and manager, with considerable financial skills and demonstrated ability to attract talent, empower colleagues, and promote growth. While no candidate will embody every quality, the incoming Director of Education will bring many of the professional and personal qualifications enumerated below:

Skills

- Strategic, creative and energetic leadership skills, including the ability to develop, direct, inspire, manage and evaluate all education programs associated with the MBL.
- Previous leadership experience in higher education within a scientific research environment, including financial management.
- A visionary, energetic, and analytical team player with the ability to inspire and motivate both internal and external stakeholders.
- An outstanding communicator with the ability to interact with a wide range of constituencies both within and outside of the MBL.
- Ability to multi-task, prioritize and work effectively in an environment with fast-moving and ambitious priorities.
- Proven track record in securing financial support for education initiatives through grant-funding opportunities with collaborative partners, donors, and alumni that span local, regional and international resources.
- Experience in developing a successful educational infrastructure and business model that will function in synergy with the MBL and its partners.

Education & Experience

- PhD or equivalent degree in an appropriate life sciences discipline, with a strong record of successful grant and research experience.
- Significant administrative experience including the design and implementation of educational programs, with appropriate financial management experience.
- Knowledge of and experience with processes for seeking and managing awards from NIH, NSF and a range of foundations.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The salary range for this position will be \$225,000 – \$275,000, based on relevant skills and experience. The role is based in Woods Hole, MA. The MBL is open to a hybrid work arrangement.

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: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/marine-biological-laboratory/director-education>.

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This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Marine Biological Laboratory. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by the MBL would supersede any conflicting information in this document.