
U.C. Irvine's Suzanne Sandmeyer joins Board of Stem Cell Agency

Posted: June 25, 2018

Oakland, CA – Suzanne Sandmeyer, Ph.D., Vice Dean for Research at the University of California at Irvine (UCI) School of Medicine, has been appointed to the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's Stem Cell Agency.

Dr. Sandmeyer was recommended for the position by UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman who called her “an outstanding researcher who has contributed significantly to the field of molecular genetics.”

Dr. Sandmeyer said she was honored to be chosen to join CIRM's Board. “It is a privilege to be involved in this new era of stem cell research and clinical trials. We have only just begun to understand the potential of our discoveries and the impact we can have on human health by advancing stem cell therapies.”

Jonathan Thomas, Ph.D., J.D., the Chair of the CIRM Board, welcomed the appointment saying: “Dr. Sandmeyer will be a great addition to the Board. She has a distinguished career, not just as a highly regarded scientist but also as a leader in helping UC Irvine become the great research institution it is today.”

Dr. Sandmeyer's career as a scientist had an early beginning.

“My Dad was an engineer, so science always seemed like a very natural thing to pursue. Growing up I liked to be outdoors and loved the diversity of living things, so I eventually gravitated toward biology.”

She received her PhD in biochemistry from the University of Washington and was a Damon Runyon postdoctoral fellow in Genetics at Washington University. Dr. Sandmeyer has served as chair of the Senior Editors of the Genetics journal and has served on numerous national advisory panels including the NCI Basic Sciences Board of Scientific Counselors, Genetics Study Section, Shared Instrument Study Section, NIH Director's New Innovator Award Editorial Panel, AAAS Electorate Nominating Committee, and California Cancer Research Coordinating Committee.

While her leadership roles have kept her busy, she also has a bustling and productive research lab at UC Irvine. Her research focuses on molecular genetics and biochemistry of retrovirus-like elements called retrotransposons (which make up almost half the human genome but are not well understood) and metabolic engineering in yeast. Although she has had amazing success in academia, she was not always sure that this would be her path.

“During my postdoc, I was developing the impression I would struggle to survive in my career as a scientist. I had a female mentor at the time and I shared this idea with her. She told me that was ridiculous: I was not going to starve, and I believed her. Turns out, she was right. Today, I enjoy the independence that comes with academia.”

As a member of the CIRM Board, Dr. Sandmeyer will provide important insight and perspective into advancing stem cell therapies.

“Our country has one of the most expensive systems of medical care and yet we don't have the longest-lived population. I want to work toward reducing the burden of medical expenses for people. I am very excited about the potential of stem cells to treat many disorders and the potential for new technologies like CRISPR to further empower that approach.”

When not making important scientific discoveries in the lab, you can find Dr. Sandmeyer pursuing one of her many and varied hobbies.

“I go through phases like everyone. There is never enough time. My favorites are astronomy, bird photography, guitar, biking, kayaking, reading and of course German shepherd dogs. “

Dr. Sandmeyer replaces Howard Federoff, M.D., Ph.D., who is stepping down to return to academia and continue his neurobiological research.

“We are grateful to Howard for his thoughtful contributions to CIRM at a critical time in our history,” said Dr. Thomas. “His deep scientific

knowledge and commitment to CIRM's mission helped us create an ambitious plan for the future and to ensure a smooth leadership change."

About CIRM

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information go to www.cirm.ca.gov

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