

November 16, 2021

GOV. MSG. NO. 556

Jo-Ann C. Leong
Director and Professor Emeritus
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Dr. Jo-Ann C. Leong is Director Emeritus of the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology and Professor in the School of Ocean & Earth Science & Technology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Dr. Leong was a Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and the former Chairman of the Department of Microbiology at Oregon State University. There, she held the Emile Pernot Endowed Professorship. She is an elected member of the American Academy of Microbiology. She is the past Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Center of Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture in Hawai'i, is Past President of the National Association of Marine Laboratories, was Co-Chair of the Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group for the NOAA Scientific Advisory Board, and was on the Executive Secretariat of the National Climate Assessment Development and Advisory Committee. She was a lead author for the chapter on climate impacts on Hawaii and the Affiliated Pacific Islands.

She served as the editor of the Viral Diseases section of Diseases of Aquatic Organisms for more than 10 years and was on the Editorial Board of Marine Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and the Journal of Marine Biotechnology. Dr. Leong has published over 150 refereed research papers that resulted from the work of her 18 doctoral students and 6 M.S. students. She holds 3 patents for the first viral vaccine for fish and the first DNA vaccine for aquacultured species in the U.S. It was in her laboratory that a new genus of Rhabdoviridae, the Novirhabdovirus, was discovered and the type virus, Infectious Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus, kills millions of young trout and salmon each year. She has devoted much of her career to the development of vaccines and control strategies for diseases of aquatic organisms. In 2020, she edited a compendium on Climate Change and Infectious Fish Diseases with Patrick Woo and Kurt Buchmann. At the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, Dr. Leong assembled a faculty whose expertise includes coral reef ecosystem health, marine vertebrate and invertebrate evolution, connectivity and biogeography. The HIMB faculty has focused their research efforts on coral reef biodiversity, mesophotic reef ecosystems, marine animal sensory processes and ecology, physiological basis for coral reef health, and the recruitment and training of the next generation of ocean scientists, managers, and public stewards.

When Dr. Leong assumed the position of Director of HIMB, the Kāne'ohe Bay community viewed the research institute as an enclave to scientist with no connection to its neighborhood. It was her aim to change that view and welcome the community to Moku o Lo'e. She serves on the Boards for Paepae O He'eia, Kako `o' Oiwī, and is a contributing member of the Koolapoko Hawaiian Civic Club. She and Jonathan Kanekoa Kekua Shultz proposed the designation of the National Estuarine Research Reserve site at He'eia and that proposal was selected for the federal designation process by the state. Dr. Leong has been privileged to represent He'eia on the Hawaii Community Development Authority since 2017. She lives in the ahupua'a of He'eia and has a strong commitment to the people who live there and in the Kāne'ohe Bay region.