PRESS RELEASE

IMB's Founding Director elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

28 April 2016, Mainz, Germany. *The American Academy of Arts and Sciences—one of the oldest and most prestigious honorary learned societies in the world—has elected IMB's Founding Director Professor Christof Niehrs as a Foreign Honorary Member.*

The Academy convenes leaders from the academic, business, and government sectors to address key challenges faced by today's global society. Through studies, publications, and programmes on various areas of the Arts and Sciences, the Academy provides authoritative and nonpartisan policy advice to decision-makers in government, academia, and the private sector. It currently has 4,600 Fellows and 600 Foreign Honorary Members. These include many of the most accomplished scholars and practitioners worldwide. Notable past Foreign Honorary Members of the society include Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Darwin, and Werner Heisenberg.

"I am honoured to have been elected to join such an exceptional group of scholars", says Christof Niehrs, "and I am very much looking forward to participating in the Academy's activities." Prof. Niehrs is the Founding and Scientific Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology (IMB), which opened on the campus of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU), Germany, in 2011. He is a developmental biologist who has received a number of honours and awards for his pioneering research into mechanisms underlying early embryonic development. His current research focusses on two fields, epigenetics of DNA methylation and Wnt growth factor signalling, both aiming to unravel how cells regulate differentiation and avoid disease.

Christof Niehrs is among 213 respected artists and scientists who have been elected to membership of the American Academy this year and one of the 37 Foreign Honorary Members. Other members of the 2016 class include winners of the Pulitzer Prize and the Wolf Prize, MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellowships, the Fields Medal as well as the Grammy and National Book Awards.

"It is an honour to welcome this new class of exceptional women and men as part of our distinguished membership," said Don Randel, Chair of the Academy's Board of Directors, in a press release. "Their election affords us an invaluable opportunity to bring their expertise and knowledge to bear on some of the most significant challenges of our day. We look forward to engaging these new members in the work of the Academy."

The new members of the Academy will be inducted at a ceremony on 8th October 2016 at its headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Further details

Further information about Christof Niehrs' research can be found at www.imb.de/niehrs.

About the Institute of Molecular Biology gGmbH

The Institute of Molecular Biology gGmbH (IMB) is a centre of excellence in the life sciences that was established in 2011 on the campus of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU). Research at IMB concentrates on three cutting-edge areas: epigenetics, developmental biology, and genome stability. The institute is a prime example of a successful collaboration between public authorities and a private foundation. The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation has dedicated 100 million euros for a period of ten years to cover the operating costs for research at IMB, while the state of Rhineland-Palatinate provided approximately 50 million euros for the construction of a state-of-the-art building. For more information about IMB, please visit: www.imb.de.

About the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of the medical, biological, chemical and pharmaceutical sciences. It was established in 1977 by Hubertus Liebrecht (1931-1991), a member of the shareholder family of the company Boehringer Ingelheim. With the PLUS 3 Perspectives Programme and the Exploration Grants, the foundation supports independent group leaders. It also endows the internationally renowned Heinrich Wieland Prize as well as awards for up-and-coming scientists. In addition, the foundation pledged to donate 100 million euros to finance the scientific running of the IMB at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz for ten years. In 2013, the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation donated a further 50 million euros to Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

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