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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gerald R. Fink receives Genetics Prize for transforming molecular biology

November 3, New York, NY – No one knows better "The Promise of Human Genetics" than the man who will address that topic at a conference in Washington D.C. on Thursday: this year's Gruber Genetics Prize recipient Prof. Gerald R. Fink.

It is Fink who discovered how to "grow" genes in yeast, thus allowing scientists to create and study a never-ending series of DNA scenarios and track how cells inherit information. It is Fink whose "transforming" technique effectively opened a biological factory to produce insulin, vaccines and other medical products. It is Fink and his colleagues who discerned the genetic mechanisms by which certain disease-bearing fungi switch from benign to infectious, thereby setting the stage for an unprecedented defense of the immune system. And it is Fink who has generously shared his work with other scientists and who continues to teach the next generation of researchers.

He will deliver the Gruber Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics, immediately after accepting the $500,000 Genetics Prize from The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation.

The son of a medical doctor, Fink was born in New York 70 years ago. He majored in biology at Amherst College and earned his PhD in genetics from Yale University. He taught at Cornell University for 15 years before moving to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1982, where he continues to research and teach. He is also associated with the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research.

Additional Information

The official citation to the Prize reads:

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation proudly presents the 2010 Genetics Prize to Gerald R. Fink, Ph.D., a founder of modern yeast genetics and a leader in the use of model-organism genetics to study diverse biological problems.

Fink developed a system that allows insertions of laboratory-modified-DNA molecules into their natural locations in the yeast chromosomes. His breakthrough technique enabled the genetic

dissection of basic cellular processes and the manufacture of drugs and vaccines in yeast, as well as inspiring similar approaches to the genetic manipulation of diverse organisms.

Fink applied the "awesome power" of the new yeast genetics to discover how genomic information is transcribed, recombined, suppressed, transposed, and translated. In his own laboratory, he trained a legion of leading geneticists to apply yeast genetics to advance biomedical science, and inspired many more to do so through his teaching and writing.

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The Gruber Foundation has awarded the Genetics Prize annually since 2001. Laureates are: Rudolf Jaenisch, H. Robert Horvitz, David Botstein, Mary-Claire King, Robert H. Waterston, Elizabeth Blackburn, Maynard V. Olson, Allan C. Spradling and Janet Davison Rowley.

An independent Genetics Selection Advisory Board chooses the annual recipient from nominations received worldwide. Current members, including some former recipients, are:

Elizabeth H. Blackburn, University of California, San Francisco; **Martin Chalfie**, Columbia University; **Mary-Claire King**, University of Washington; **Maynard Olson**, Genome Center, University of Washington; **Janet Rowley**, University of Chicago; **Allan C. Spradling**, Carnegie Institution, Howard Hughes Medical Institute; **Robert H. Waterston**, University of Washington.

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The Gruber International Prize Program honors contemporary individuals in the fields of Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice and Women's Rights, whose groundbreaking work provides new models that inspire and enable fundamental shifts in knowledge and culture. The Selection Advisory Boards choose individuals whose contributions in their respective fields advance our knowledge, potentially have a profound impact on our lives, and, in the case of the Justice and Women's Rights Prizes, demonstrate courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles.

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The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities please visit www.gruberprizes.org.