

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

**ACTION REQUEST**

**Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement**

**Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

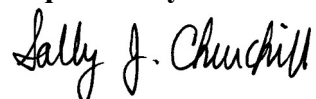
**Mark A. Saper, Ph.D.**, associate professor of biological chemistry in the Medical School and associate research scientist, biophysics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2021.

Professor Saper received his B.S. degree from the University of Connecticut in 1976 and his Ph.D. degree from Rice University in 1983. Professor Saper joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor and assistant research scientist in 1990, and was promoted to associate professor and associate research scientist in 1997.

Professor Saper quickly established himself while a postdoc, yielding three highly cited papers (>8000 citations) on the structure of the human major histocompatibility protein, HLA. He was honored as an HHMI, PEW, and Fulbright Scholar. He developed his international reputation from his structural biology studies of protein tyrosine phosphatases, publishing in journals such as *Nature*, *Science*, and *Molecular Cell* and giving presentations at international meetings. After his 1997 promotion he published structures of two *E. coli* heat shock proteins in collaboration with U-M Professors Bardwell and Jacob. A sabbatical visit to Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2003 resulted in binational funding with Professor Ilan Rosenshine and new research directions studying proteins necessary for the export of bacterial polysaccharide capsule (an essential virulence factor) from enteropathogenic *E. coli*, including crystal structure determination of one of these proteins. Thereafter he studied the LpoA protein, essential for bacterial cell wall biosynthesis, and an endopeptidase from *Vibrio cholerae*, also important for cell wall growth. To date, his publications have had over 15,000 citations (h-index=32). He was recognized by his peers as a highly skilled, hands-on crystallographer. Over his thirty years at U-M, Professor Saper taught an intensive course on X-ray crystallography for graduate students (Biophysics 602). He developed a hands-on molecular graphics component for the core Program in Biomedical Sciences (PIBS) course, Biological Chemistry 550 and Chemical Biology 501, and directed student seminar courses (Biol Chem 711 and Biophysics 801). He also lectured in Biol Chem 415/515 (Introductory Biochemistry). He advised undergraduate biochemistry majors, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers and also served on departmental and Medical School committees, including the PIBS and Biophysics Graduate Admissions Committees, as well as the U-M Biomedical Research Council.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Mark A. Saper, associate professor emeritus of biological chemistry and associate research scientist emeritus, biophysics.**

**Requested by:**



---

**Sally J. Churchill, J.D.**  
**Vice President and Secretary of the University**

**May 2021**