

Joan E. Strassmann is the Charles Rebstock Professor of Biology at Washington University in St. Louis. She earned a B.S. with honors in zoology from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1974 and a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1979. She was on the faculty of Rice University in Houston, Texas from 1980 to 2011, where she was the Harry C. and Olga K. Wiess Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and department chair. In 2011 she joined the Biology department at Washington University in St. Louis. Professor Strassmann has received numerous NSF grants and has published over 170 research articles. Strassmann and her long-time collaborator David Queller, have explored how cooperative alliances come to be, what makes them stable, and how conflict is controlled. Her research centers on social evolution and behavior in insects and microbes under natural conditions, focusing on the kinds of cooperation that evolve, and the relative roles of ecological benefits, genetic relatedness, and power in selecting for cooperation. She pioneered the use of DNA microsatellite markers to get at the intricacies of within-colony genetic relatedness and its importance in predicting cooperation and social conflict. She then moved on to study altruism in social amoebae and used single gene knockouts, experimental evolution, genomics, and staged interactions to get at the molecular underpinnings of cooperation. In her view, cooperation and control of conflict defines organismality, something her current research explores. She has received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (2004). She was elected a Fellow of the Animal Behavior Society (2002), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2004), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2008), and the National Academy of Sciences (2013). She served as president of the Animal Behavior Society (2011). She writes a popular blog on the intricacies of academia (<http://sociobiology.wordpress.com>), and is an award winning teacher who has her students write for Wikipedia.