

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joanne Berger-Sweeney

PERSON

**Berger-Sweeny, Joanne**

**Alternative Names:** Joanne Berger-Sweeney;

**Life Dates:** September 21, 1958-

**Place of Birth:** Los Angeles, California, USA

**Residence:** Hartford, CT

**Work:** Hartford, CT

**Occupations:** Neurobiologist; Academic Administrator

## Biographical Note

Neurobiologist and academic administrator Joanne Berger-Sweeney was born in 1958. After graduating from Wellesley College in 1979, she went on to receive her M.P.H. degree in environmental health sciences from the University of California, Berkeley in 1981 and her Ph.D. degree in neurotoxicology from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in 1989.

Following her graduate training, she worked for two years at the Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), a multidisciplinary public health research institution in France. Berger-Sweeney then joined Wellesley College in 1991 as the Allene Lummis Russell Professor in Neuroscience and was named associate dean in 2004. As the associate dean, Joanne Berger-Sweeney oversaw twenty academic departments and programs. Not only was she active in the Minority Mentoring Program at Wellesley College, but she also served as director of the Neurosciences Program and as the director of the Society for Neuroscience's Minority Neuroscience Fellowship Program. In 2010, Berger-Sweeney was appointed as Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University – the largest school at the university.

Joanne Berger-Sweeney's research focuses on the neurobiology of learning and memory. She has helped to advance understanding of normal memory and cognitive processes and how these processes malfunction in neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative disorders, such as Rett syndrome and Alzheimer's disease. She is a member of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and has served on numerous national and professional boards and committees. Berger-Sweeney has been a member of the Behavioral Neuroscience Review Panel of the National Science Foundation, a member of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Study Section panel, and a member of the editorial board of Behavioral Neuroscience. She was also treasurer for the Society for Neuroscience.

Her honors include being named a Fellow by the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience, receiving a Lifetime Mentoring Achievement Award from the Society for Neuroscience, and a National Science Foundation Young Investigator award. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow in the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Joanne Berger-Sweeney was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 23, 2013.

## Related Entries

**Morningside High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**High School Diploma**

**Wellesley College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**University of California, Berkeley** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Master in Public Health**

**John Hopkins University Bloomberg School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**National Institute of Health (France)** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Post-Doctoral**

**California Department of Health** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1990 to 1993]

**Environmental Scientist**

**Engineering Science, Inc. (Parsons)** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1982 to 1984]

**Environmental Scientist**

**Tufts University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1965 to ?]

**Dean, School of Arts and Sciences**

**Wellesley College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 199108 to 201008]

**Professor of Biology and Associate Dean**

**Society for Neuroscience** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1986 to ?]

**Treasure/Councilor/Committee Chair**

**International Behavioral Neuroscience Society**  
[MEMBEROF]  
[from 2001 to 2004]

**U.S. Councilor**

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2003 to ?]

**Vestry Member**

**Framingham State University** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 2012 to 2012]

**Board of Trustees**