

Richard E. Lenski was born in Michigan in 1956. He received his B.A. degree from Oberlin College and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina. After a postdoctoral research position at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Lenski served on the faculty at the University of California-Irvine. In 1991, Lenski came to Michigan State as a professor of microbial ecology. He is a renowned evolutionary biologist well-known for his 25-year E. coli evolution experiment tracking genetic changes in 12 initially identical populations of E. coli. Through this experiment and additional work with digital organism computer programs that self-replicate, mutate, compete, adapt and evolve in the computational world in which they live, Lenski seeks to study evolution as it happens on a reasonable time scale. Lenski is the recipient of many honors including receiving a MacArthur “genius” grant in 1996, being elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2006, and serving as a Hannah Distinguished Professor at MSU.