

Michael Thomashow is a university distinguished professor and director of the Plant Research Laboratory (PRL) at Michigan State University. His research focuses on abiotic stresses. Abiotic stresses, including extremes in temperature and water availability, are major factors that determine the natural geographical distribution of plants and limit agricultural production on an annual basis. Thomashow's research focuses on understanding the mechanisms plants have evolved to tolerate abiotic stresses and use that information to improve the yield of crops used for food and bioenergy. Thomashow received an A.B. degree in bacteriology from UCLA in 1972 and a Ph.D. in microbiology from UCLA in 1978. Following postdoctoral and faculty positions at the University of Washington and Washington State University, Thomashow came to Michigan State in 1986 as an associate professor. He became a full professor in 1991, joined the PRL as a member in 2000 and director in 2006, and has served as a distinguished professor since 2003, the same year he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences.