**MPBP Honors Dr. Avril Somlyo at Retirement Celebration for a Lifetime of Scientific Achievement**

**Charlottesville, VA —** On May 1, 2025, the Department of Molecular Physiology and Biological Physics (MPBP) at the University of Virginia School of Medicine hosted a heartfelt retirement celebration for Dr. Avril Somlyo, honoring her extraordinary career as a pioneering scientist, mentor, and leader in smooth muscle physiology. The 90-minute event brought together current and former colleagues, trainees, and friends to celebrate Dr. Somlyo’s lasting contributions to science and the UVA community.

Dr. Somlyo joined UVA in 1988 from the University of Pennsylvania and has been a driving force in the field of calcium signaling, the contractile apparatus and smooth muscle research for over five decades. She with colleagues played a major rule in the development and application of x-ray microprobe analysis for high resolution elemental analysis of organelles within cryosections of muscle cells and also of the application of caged compounds for ms resolution of signaling events in muscle. Although all her research was conducted within the Physiology department, her primary appointment was in Pathology for her first 16 years at UVA, during the tenure of her late husband, Dr. Andrew Somlyo, as Chair of Physiology. She later became a tenured full professor in the department and one of its most respected and accomplished investigators.

Throughout her career, Dr. Somlyo authored 274 scientific publications, many of which are foundational to the field. Her seminal reviews—*Signal Transduction and Regulation in Smooth Muscle* (Nature, 1994) and *Calcium Sensitivity of Smooth Muscle and Non-Muscle Myosin II* (Physiological Reviews, 2003)—have each been cited over 2,000 times. Her h-index of 72 is a testament to her exceptional influence and sustained impact in biomedical research.

Equally remarkable is Dr. Somlyo’s dedication to mentorship. She trained more than 60 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows at Penn and UVA, many of whom have gone on to distinguished academic and scientific careers.

Dr. Somlyo’s scientific excellence has been recognized with numerous prestigious honors. These include an honorary doctorate from the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, the Louis and Artur Lucian Award for Research in Circulatory Diseases from McGill University—Canada’s highest honor in cardiovascular research—the AHA CIBA Award for Hypertension—the Presidential Science Award from the Microbeam Analysis Society, and the Distinguished Scientist Award from the Microscopy Society of America. She is also a Fellow of both the Biophysical Society and the Microscopy Society of America.

Beyond her research and teaching, Dr. Somlyo has been an active and valued member of the UVA community. She has served on numerous institutional and national committees and is a longtime Board Member and Chair of the Collections Committee at the UVA Fralin Museum of Art, reflecting her deep passion for art as both a scholar and collector.

Remarkably, Dr. Somlyo has remained scientifically active to this day. She continued to serve as Principal Investigator on a Multi-PI investigator NIH-funded grant from the NHLBI extending into 2025.

Dr. Somlyo retires as one of the most distinguished and dedicated faculty members in the School of Medicine. Her legacy of scientific rigor, mentorship, and service will continue to inspire generations of scientists and students. She will be deeply missed by her colleagues, trainees, and the broader UVA community, but expects to occasionally be sighted at seminars.

