



The Lab's Leading Lady

KIM BUDIL

LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL
LABORATORY DIRECTOR

When Kim Budil came to Livermore from Chicago in 1987 as a graduate student studying lasers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, she didn't expect to stick around. But 36 years and many roles later, she's still at the lab—and is now its director.

"I loved feeling that whatever I was doing had real purpose behind it," says Budil, an experimental physicist. "I wasn't just doing science—which is also very important! But for me the satisfaction came from being part of a team trying to solve real-world problems. That has kept me here through many career arcs."

At the helm of the renowned laboratory, with 7,900 employees and a \$2.7 billion operating budget, Budil will certainly help tackle some of the biggest issues of the day, from national security (modernizing the country's nuclear deterrent), to climate resilience (high-fidelity computer modeling), to viral response (countermeasures for emergent or engineered pathogens). When travel restrictions are eased, she'll frequent Washington, D.C., to brief the president's cabinet on the state of the country's nuclear weapons stockpile.

It's a remarkable role, and Budil doesn't take lightly the fact that she's the first



COURTESY LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY

woman to assume it. Over her career, she has seen more and more women working in science and technology—and yet Budil still has the near-daily experience of being the only woman in the room. “People remember me because they probably have only met a couple of women who are running nuclear weapons programs,” she says with a laugh. “But if I make a mistake or do something that doesn’t live up to everyone’s expectations, they also remember that.”

While biases persist in the scientific community, Budil is encouraged by the level of talent and confidence she sees in younger generations of women. She credits early mentor Donna Strickland (a 2018 Nobel Prize winner in physics) as well as her “personal board of directors” (people she turns to for technical, personal, or leadership questions), for providing the support and encouragement she’s needed along the way. And Budil is paying it forward

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by mentoring young women scientists and championing diversity and inclusion in fellowships and across the lab organization.

“It means a lot to me to be an example to others of what is possible,” she says, “and how being different can be a good thing. It’s like a superpower. People who are different bring new ideas and perspectives, a unique experience. They challenge the way you see the world. That can be scary, but that’s what makes excellence and innovation, that’s what makes us strong and keeps us from being complacent.”



Pioneering Transgender Studies
SUSAN STRYKER
MILLS COLLEGE SCHOLAR AND
ACTIVIST

Last fall, Susan Stryker—who has led a trendsetting career of activism through writing, filmmaking, academia, and beyond—joined the faculty at Oakland’s Mills College for a two-year appointment as the Barbara Lee Distinguished Chair in Women’s Leadership.

A prolific author and documentarian, Stryker helped found *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, served as coeditor of the *Transgender Studies Reader*, and led the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco as its executive director. Stryker has taught at more than half a dozen universities, including Yale and Harvard, and received a regional Emmy Award as a director, writer, and producer for the *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria* documentary.

“I’m really aware of how difficult it is for most trans women to find any sort of work at all—the employment discrimination is really extreme—or even for us to access higher education or graduate from high school,” says Stryker. “That I’ve been quite fortunate to find a pretty big public platform for my work—and to have it find an audience—is just the cherry on top.”



Guiding Our Open Spaces
**SABRINA
LANDRETH**
EBRPD GENERAL MANAGER

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is one of the region’s treasures, with some 125,000 acres of open space spread among 73 parks. So when Sabrina Landreth was named the Park District’s general manager, it was big news for several reasons.

One, she is the first woman to hold this position in the EBRPD’s 87-year history. And two, she succeeds the legendary Robert Doyle, who retired as general manager after a 47-year career with the Park District.

Landreth, who has deep roots in the Bay Area, built her career in local government; most recently, she served as city administrator in Oakland, directing operations for the city’s 25 departments and some 5,000 employees. Now, she comes to her new job at a critical time, when the EBRPD faces pressing issues that include wildfire threats and financial concerns stemming from the pandemic.

“I think the District can be the best local government agency in the country,” she says. “That’s one of the reasons I answered the call to come here. The District is ... uniquely situated to play a leadership role in helping to solve these problems.”