

Leonard Rome is a cell biologist and biochemist who has been a faculty member of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA since he joined the Department of Biological Chemistry in 1979. He became a full professor in 1988 and has also served as the Senior Associate Dean for Research in the School of Medicine since 1997. He is the Associate Director of the California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI) since 2004, and was Interim Director from 2007-2009. In addition, he served from 2001 to 2005 as Associate Vice Chancellor for Research for the Life and Health Sciences.

Dr. Rome earned his B.S. in Chemistry and M.S. and Ph.D. in Biological Chemistry at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the National Institutes of Health, where he worked on lysosome biogenesis. His laboratory research at UCLA centers on a novel cellular organelle called a "vault" which he and a former postdoc, Dr. Nancy Kedersha, discovered in 1986. Over three-times the size of a ribosome, vaults are the largest cytoplasmic ribonucleoprotein particles known. They are ubiquitous cell structures that have been conserved throughout evolution and are found in phylogeny as diverse as mammals, avians, amphibians, and even primitive eukaryotes like slime mold and amoeba. The particle is thought to carry out a basic cellular function and they have been shown to play a role in multidrug resistance of cancer cells. Rome leads a team of interdisciplinary scientists affiliated with the CNSI who are engineering the vault particle as flexible nano-scale capsules for a wide variety of applications from drug and RNAi delivery to intercellular sensors.

Dr. Rome has chaired the School of Medicine Faculty Executive Committee (the governing body of the School of Medicine Faculty) and is actively involved in graduate and medical education. He has supervised 16 Ph.D. students and 20 postdoctoral fellows. In 1991, he received a School of Medicine Award for Excellence in Education. Since becoming Senior Associate Dean for Research, he has organized strategic planning for research in the School and spearheaded campus-wide efforts in genomics, proteomics, and computational biology. He is the past chair of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Group on Research Advancement and Development (GRAND). He has received a number of honors for his research including a March of Dimes, Basil O'Connor grant, an American Cancer Society Faculty Research Award.

