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Karen received her Ph.D. in biology in 1979 from the University of South Florida. Her B.A. and M.A. degrees are in zoology and marine science respectively. Her work experience is principally in harmful algal bloom ecology monitoring and management, and microalgal morphology and ultrastructure. She has also worked as a shellfish resource manager.

Dr. Steidinger is active in many professional organizations and has published numerous articles related to her research with red tide. She reviews scientific journals, oversees graduate students, and performs duties on several professional committees. She is an international instructor having taught the *Advanced International Phytoplankton Course* in Norway and Italy. She is also the President of the International Society for the Study of Harmful Algae.