

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **UT BRAIN: A UT SYSTEM SEED GRANT INITIATIVE**

**BACKGROUND:** Since FY14, a major national effort is underway to address the goal of better understanding how the brain works in health and disease. The White House issued a call to action in FY14 for the Brain Research to Advance Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) initiative®. Several Federal agencies along with private foundations, industry and academia (UT is a non-Federal partner) responded to the call to advance our knowledge of how the brain produces behaviors and how these behaviors are affected by disease.

### **NATIONAL PRIORITY:**

- Neuroscience is now the highest funded research area by the NIH (\$7.2B in FY17).
- In FY18, The NIH received a significant boost in funding for Alzheimer’s Disease, pain, addiction and the BRAIN Initiative®.
- Additional budget increases for neuroscience research are proposed by Congress for FY19 and beyond.

### **UT SYSTEM ACTION:**

- Board of Regents provided an initial investment of \$5.0 M.
- Established a virtual Neuroscience and Neurotechnology Research Institute (NNRI) to facilitate new collaborations among scientist in different academic disciplines across our 14 institutions.
- Implemented a seed grant initiative in FY15 called UT BRAIN to facilitate the seeding of new ideas through trans-institutional, multi-disciplinary research partnerships (team science).
- Stimulate a cultural shift towards solving grand scientific challenges via team science approach in a sustainable way through Federal and private funding.

### **UT BRAIN PROGRESS:**

- 100+ scientists outside Texas participated in the peer review conducted by OFR.
- 45 of 158 proposals were awarded \$100,000 each after review.
- 96% of the awardees had formed new trans-disciplinary collaborations.
- 44% reached out to collaborators at UT and other institutions.
- 48% of the awards were made to early stage investigators.
- UT BRAIN awardees successfully sustained seed grant research with highly competitive Federal and private funds (\$26.2 M, 5-fold return on investment).

### **TAKE HOME:**

- UT System is the first academic system that provided resources to create convergent BRAIN research teams across a major university system.
- The emphasis on diverse, multidisciplinary, multi-institutional approaches through UT BRAIN aligns with emerging trends for new funding through Federal (NIH) initiatives.
- UT BRAIN may provide a new model for effective leadership and competition through collaboration to address grand neuroscience challenges for Texas and the Nation.