



## U.T. BRAIN: CALL FOR SEED GRANT PROPOSALS (\$100,000) FOR NEUROSCIENCE AND NEUROTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH

*The University of Texas System is announcing an extraordinary funding opportunity in FY2015 to align trans-institutional, multi-disciplinary research partnerships and teams that will be competitive for future funding opportunities of the national BRAIN Initiative. This is the first notice of call for proposals. A second notice with details on how to submit electronically will follow in mid-January 2015.*

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 2013, the Obama administration unveiled the U.S. Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, with financing through public funding from a variety of federal agencies and a growing number of private sector partners, currently estimated at \$4.5B over 10 years. The focus of BRAIN is to understand one of the most fundamental assets in existence, the human brain and mind. A clear early goal of all these funding plans is to drive blue-sky technologies and tools necessary to take current neuroscience research into a period of transformative breakthroughs.

For further BRAIN Initiative information, see <http://www.nih.gov/science/brain/2025/BRAIN2025.pdf>.

For further U.T. BRAIN information, see <http://www.utsystem.edu/offices/federal-relations/ut-system-neuroscience>.

To better understand the large capabilities of neuroscience-related discovery at our 15 institutions and determine how best to assist our researchers in competing for upcoming opportunities, a multi-campus U.T. System Neuroscience Council was created in 2013. The Council brings together top researchers to explore new convergent research that takes advantage of faculty expertise in disciplines such as neuroscience, engineering, computer science, mathematics, materials science, physics, genetics, statistics and chemistry, along with cutting-edge resources such as UT's extensive computing and imaging technologies.

At the advice of the Council and others, the U.T. Board of Regents authorized in 2014 the U.T. BRAIN initiative which funds \$20 million in support of a virtual U.T. System Neuroscience and Neurotechnology Research Institute. The institute's purpose is to promote trans-disciplinary, multi-institutional research projects focused on neuroscience and neurotechnology challenges that will transform the fields of imaging, neurocomputation, and molecular mapping; the development of neuro-devices; and basic/translational/clinical investigations in intractable neurological diseases.

### **INTENT OF THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS:**

In 2015, U.T. BRAIN seeks applications for seed research grants as described in the forthcoming funding opportunity announcement. One key goal for the seed funding program is to jump-start *diverse excellence*, i.e. forming new research partnerships and/or teams rather than advancing "shovel ready" projects. This process may involve collaboration among investigators in neuroscience with investigators of diverse disciplines that would not otherwise engage in neuroscience research and can contribute to excellence. These investigators may well arise from different U.T. campuses. A second key goal for this funding initiative is to increase competitiveness, i.e. position awardees to compete for current and future funding opportunities within the greater national BRAIN initiative. This may include a focus on collecting novel preliminary data or early to mid-stage proof of concept data that are necessary for future applications and competitions.

U.T. BRAIN's emphasis on diverse, multidisciplinary, multi-institutional approaches is aligned with the recent and upcoming NIH BRAIN RFAs, <http://www.braininitiative.nih.gov/nih-brain-awards.htm>. UT has remarkable scientific breadth and resources that speak to effective competition through collaboration. The U.T. System is the only university system in the nation to date that provides resources to create convergent BRAIN research teams across a major university system. An important intent is to stimulate across Texas institutions a cultural shift towards solving grand scientific challenges in a sustainable way.

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

U.T. BRAIN seed funding program will provide up to \$5 million in funding in 2015 to proposals that are consistent with the intent of the initiative, as described above. Proposals for this seed initiative can be funded up to a maximum of \$100,000. Applications and peer-review processes will be managed in collaboration with The University of Texas at Austin's Department of Neuroscience. Proposals will be selected after rigorous peer-review.

Applications of the *highest caliber of science* arising from *cross-institutional* research partnerships and/or teams of *diverse excellence* are preferred. Applications that have a *clear and stated trajectory* toward future neuroscience initiatives are preferred.

**PROPOSAL DETAILS:**

- Proposal due date: March 15, 2015.
- Expected award date: May 1, 2015.
- Format: 6 pages maximum. Include section for specific aims; rationale for studies relative to intent of U.T. BRAIN; description of investigators and collaboration contributions and responsibilities; scientific approach; expected results and outcomes.
- Salaries are acceptable, including those for post-doctoral, student and technical support.
- Lead investigator(s) must be a University of Texas institutional researcher. Collaborating investigators from other institutions are welcomed; however funds will be directly awarded to U.T. investigators, with subcontracts to non-U.T. institutions allowed. Seed grant funds for collaborations with investigators outside Texas are not allowed.
- Electronic submission to: Department of Neuroscience, The University of Texas at Austin. Details on submission procedures to follow mid-January.
- Follow U.T. BRAIN progress and information at <http://www.utsystem.edu/offices/federal-relations/ut-system-neuroscience>.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM CONTACTS:**

- Office of Academic Affairs - Dr. Dale Klein
- Office of Federal Relations - Dr. Thomas Jacobs
- Office of Health Affairs and Office Technology Commercialization - Dr. Patricia Hurn

**U.T. INSTITUTION CONTACTS:**

- Vice President for Research
- U.T. Neuroscience Council Members for listing see <http://www.utsystem.edu/offices/federal-relations/ut-system-neuroscience>