

Blavatnik Gift Provides Academic Freedom at a Key Stage in Scientific Careers

Freedom. Stanford Medicine's Biomedical Innovation Initiative is built on it and for five outstanding fellows each year since 2016, the Blavatnik Family Foundation has provided a remarkable degree of academic and financial freedom. The Blavatnik Fellows are pursuing exciting avenues of research in areas that vary from cancer immunotherapy to neuroscience to prenatal health.

By offering both fellowships and generous research stipends, Blavatnik funding has removed the often-onerous constraints of more restrictive funding sources. Students have the freedom to pursue a bold project, to pick a mentor who shares their passion, and to change course in pursuit of a new idea. They are able to make independent decisions, big and small, that are based on their faith in the potential of the science, not dollars and cents.

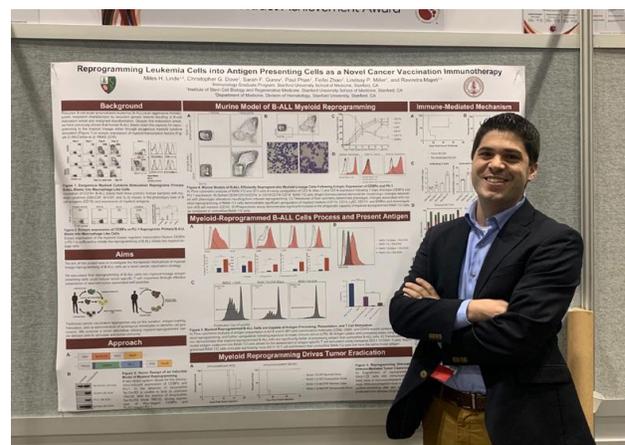
Through collaborations across departments at Stanford and forums like the Blavatnik Symposium, students are building connections outside their laboratories. Faculty report that as their graduate students collaborate across labs, they are cross-pollinating Stanford's basic science programs, spreading ideas among friends and mentors. These kinds of interdisciplinary relationships often engender the most groundbreaking research projects, allowing old problems to be seen with new eyes.

It is easy to imagine what these Blavatnik Fellows will be doing in 30 years: they will be leaders across academia, industry, and the public sector, all contributing to biomedical discovery and translation. We can try to imagine the breakthroughs they will make, the people they will help, and the companies they will form, but the reality will likely prove to be beyond what we can envision.

The effects of the Blavatnik Family Foundation investment will reverberate throughout these students' careers. More than that, this philanthropy is making a difference in the future of the field as a whole—by sending a powerful message, here at Stanford and beyond, that basic science matters. Stanford University is very grateful to the Blavatnik Family Foundation for giving these students the freedom to strive toward discovery and innovation.

“This award provides far more than funding for immunological research; it has also played an instrumental role in my development as a scientist.”

–Miles Linde, Immunology presenting at the American Society of Hematology Conference, December 2019.





From Left: Albert Hinman, Sabrina Ergun, Julie Ko, Nora Gonzalez, Molly Uyeda, and Rob Bierman at the 2019 Blavatnik Science Symposium

“I’m extremely grateful for the Blavatnik Family Foundation’s support during my PhD journey. I am especially glad that the Blavatnik Science Symposium was part of my experience because it was one of the most unique and inspiring symposiums that I have attended. The presentations inspired me to push past the edge of knowledge, reminded me to take a step back to think about the bigger picture, and reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary communication and collaboration.”

– Molly Uyeda, Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine



From left: Brittany Flowers, Chris Stock, and Jacob Blum at the 2018 Blavatnik Science Symposium

“Your commitment to funding science has created a network of young, innovative researchers who are bound together by the common goal of innovation and understanding. I feel honored to be included in that community of scientists and truly appreciate the gift.”

– Jacob Blum, Neurosciences
