

## Henry Grass Rising Stars in Neuroscience Award

There are many wonderful programs aimed at enhancing diversity in science by recruiting underrepresented groups to science and offering initial entry to a research career. **However, far fewer programs focus on retention and promotion to encourage diverse scientists at postgraduate levels to persevere in academic research.** The diversity gap in research will inevitably persist unless the innovative work, and continuing participation, of underrepresented populations are recognized and incentivized during the period between receiving the PhD and gaining tenure-track employment.

The Grass Foundation has a long history of creating impactful change in neuroscience, especially through the Grass Fellowship Program at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL). Building on this history, the Henry Grass Rising Stars in Neuroscience Award seeks to increase the visibility of **postdoctoral fellows from groups under-represented in Neuroscience** (specifically those who self-identify as women and PEERs, persons traditionally excluded because of their ethnicity or race) who are U.S. citizens (regardless of their location) or permanent residents of the U.S. The award focuses on researchers who are between the third and seventh years of active post-PhD research, because at this stage, many are, or soon will be, ready to apply for faculty positions. At this stage, independent research projects are taking shape but few opportunities exist to garner outside recognition. The Award offers recognition and support during this particularly vulnerable period when PEER and women scientists frequently opt out of academia. Such opt-out may be triggered by concerns about career prospects, lack of support and recognition, job security, and financial concerns stemming from child-care costs, among others. With the protracted length of academic training, the postdoc has become a time when personal life changes (such as starting a family) and professional ambitions often collide, further discouraging gifted and highly qualified trainees from continuing in a research career track. Consequently, it is well documented that the postdoctoral training period represents one of the greatest points of attrition for PEERs and women in academic research: while there has been almost a 10-fold increase in the number of PEERs graduating from PhD programs in the past decade, this has barely impacted the diversity of faculty applicant pool and hires at most universities and medical schools. Likewise, while women make up roughly half of biology PhDs, they hold less than 29% of tenure-track faculty positions, a number that has not moved much in over two decades.

The Henry Grass Rising Stars in Neuroscience Award therefore targets a key career stage when individual recognition and support are particularly significant. The award, by recognizing individual scientists, is intended to contribute to a critical reshaping of the demographics of research faculty.

Applicants may be nominated or self-nominated. In either case, the nominee will be responsible for completing the application, which will consist of a short essay describing past and ongoing research followed by a short statement of research and career goals (2-page maximum, single space, 11pt), and a biographical sketch. The nominee must also arrange for three letters of recommendation. All materials must be received by Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Submit applications to [grassrisingstars@gmail.com](mailto:grassrisingstars@gmail.com). The recipient will be awarded a \$10,000 prize, and recognized during the July 2021 annual meeting of the Foundation.

Resources:

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/48774>

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/21393>

[https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(20\)31223-X](https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(20)31223-X)