The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation is committed to effecting permanent positive change in the lives of the residents of Greater Boston, particularly individuals and families in economically disadvantaged communities. Today, three generations of the Smith family oversee the Foundation, stewarding approximately $15 million annually in grants aimed at promoting greater health, educational attainment, and economic mobility. In the area of health, the Foundation supports the advancement of biomedical research and the expansion of access to high-quality health care at safety net institutions serving low-income individuals and communities of Greater Boston.

The Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award was created in 2017 to fuel creativity and innovation in junior investigators in the basic sciences. The Award supports the pursuit of high impact ideas to generate breakthroughs and drive new directions in biomedical research. The Award funds high-risk, high-reward pilot projects solicited from the brightest junior faculty in the region. The Awards are currently in the amount of $300,000 over two years.

Over the past 2 years, the Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award has helped launch the careers of 10 outstanding scientists with support totaling $3 million.

The following is a listing of all Award Recipients in alphabetical order with current contact information as well as the title of the funded research project. The Smith Family is extraordinarily proud of the accomplishments of its Awardees and is honored to provide the critical support for their newly established research programs.
Lydia Bourouiba, Ph.D.
(2018 Award Recipient)
Respiratory Disease Transmission:
Mechanistic Understanding for Control and
Prevention of Epidemics
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
lbouro@mit.edu

Benjamin Lovegren de Bivort, Ph.D. (2018
Award Recipient)
Mapping Loci of Individuality for
Spontaneous and Stimulus-Evoked
Behaviors
Harvard University
debivort@oeb.harvard.edu

Elena Gracheva, Ph.D.
(2018 Award Recipient)
Regulation of Fluid and Ionic Balance Under
Extreme Physiological States in a
Mammalian Hibernator
Yale University
elena.gracheva@yale.edu

Ya-Chieh Hsu, Ph.D.
(2018 Award Recipient)
Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Fetal
Skin Regeneration
Harvard University
yachieh_hsu@harvard.edu

Shantanu Jadhav, Ph.D.
(2019 Award Recipient)
Neural Coordination Mechanisms for
Memory Function and Dysfunction
Brandeis University
shantanu@brandeis.edu

Maofu Liao, Ph.D.
(2019 Award Recipient)
Elucidating the Molecular Mechanism of
ABCA7, a Membrane Transporter associated
with Alzheimer’s Disease
Harvard Medical School
maofu_liao@hms.harvard.edu

Sarah Slavoff, Ph.D.
(2019 Award Recipient)
Non-Canonical Translation of Small Open
Reading Frames in the Human Genome
Yale Cancer Center
sarah.slavoff@yale.edu

Jing-Ke Weng, M.D., Ph.D.
(2018 Award Recipient)
Novel Psychiatric Therapeutics Inspired by
Bioactive Plant Polyketides
Whitehead Institute for Biomedical
Research
wengj@wi.mit.edu

Jessica Whited, Ph.D.
(2019 Award Recipient)
Transmission of Amputation Information
Throughout the Body in Axolotl
Brigham and Women's Hospital
jessica_whited@harvard.edu

Wesley Philip Wong, Ph.D.
(2019 Award Recipient)
Single-Molecule Protein Identification with
Mechanical Nanocalipers
Boston Children's Hospital
wong@idi.harvard.edu