Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award

A program of the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation



Alumni Directory

2018 - 2026

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 $400,000 over two years.

Since 2018, the Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award has helped launch the careers of 47 outstanding scientists with support totaling $16.1 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.

Jonathan Abraham, M.D., Ph.D.
(2022 Award Recipient)
Cracking the codes of emerging virus entry
Harvard Medical School
jonathan_abraham@hms.harvard.edu

Haribabu Arthanari, Ph.D.,
(2022 Award Recipient)
Focus on the Blindspot: Deciphering the Functional Role of Disordered Regions on the Enzymatic Activity of Enzymes
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
hari@dfci.harvard.edu

Moitrayee Bhattacharyya, Ph.D.
(2026 Award Recipient)
A Native Bi-Nanodisc Platform Enabling Quantitative Molecular Analysis of Membrane Contact Sites
Yale University
moitrayee.bhattacharyya@yale.edu

Franziska Bleichert, Ph.D.
(2024 Award Recipient)
In situ structural biology of eukaryotic DNA replication
Yale University
franziska.bleichert@yale.edu

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

Alan Brown, Ph.D.
(2023 Award Recipient)
The Molecular Organization of a Liquid-like Biomolecular Condensate
Harvard Medical School
alan_brown@hms.harvard.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

Edward Chouchani, Ph.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Systematic Chemical Manipulation Of Redox Sensitive Cysteines To Regulate Inflammatory Processes
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
EdwardT_Chouchani@dfci.harvard.edu

Joseph Davis, Ph.D.
(2023 Award Recipient)
Visualizing Protein Complexes At The Membrane
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
jhdavis@mit.edu

Marcelo Dietrich, M.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Opioid-Producing Neurons that Mediate the Attachment of Infants to their Mothers
Yale University
marcelo.dietrich@yale.edu

Florian Douam, Ph.D.
(2024 Award Recipient)
Characterizing A Novel Humanized Mouse Platform to Model Arbovirus Transmission
Boston University
fdouam@bu.edu

Wenwen Fang, Ph.D.
(2026 Award Recipient)
Defining the Composition and Function of Natural RNA Nanocages
University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
Wenwen.Fang@umassmed.edu

Jessica Fetterman, Ph.D.
(2024 Award Recipient)
Development of Novel Approaches for Editing Mitochondrial Genetic Variants in Patient-Derived Stem Cells
Boston University
jefetter@bu.edu

Tianmin Fu, Ph.D.
(2026 Award Recipient)
Functional Amyloids: A New Paradigm for Antiviral Immune Defense Across Life
University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
Tianmin.Fu@umassmed.edu

Jenna Galloway, Ph.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Identifying the molecular and cellular determinants of exercise-driven tendon remodeling
Massachusetts General Hospital
jgalloway@mgh.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

Yonatan Grad, M.D., Ph.D.
(2020 Award Recipient)
Mechanisms of Host-pathogen Interactions from Conditionally Essential and Deleterious Genes
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
ygrad@hsph.harvard.edu

Paul Greer, Ph.D.
(2023 Award Recipient)
Elucidating Common Mechanisms Across Neurodegenerative Disorders
University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
Paul.Greer@umassmed.edu

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

Megan Insco, M.D., Ph.D.
(2026 Award Recipient)
Targeting Endogenous Retroviral RNA to Treat Melanoma
Dana-Faber Cancer Institute
Megan_Insco@dfci.harvard.edu

Ruaidhri Jackson, Ph.D.
(2023 Award Recipient)
Interchromosomal mRNA Chimerism in Innate Immunity
Harvard Medical School
ruaidhri_jackson@hms.harvard.edu

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

Ankur Jain, Ph.D.
(2025 Award Recipient)
RNA Misfolding as a Driver of Cold-Sensitive Autoimmune Diseases
Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
ajain@wi.mit.edu

Dong Kong, Ph.D.
(2022 Award Recipient)
Genetic Dissection of Dyslipidemia in Neurodevelopmental Disorders
Boston Children's Hospital
dong.kong@childrens.harvard.edu

Eunjung "Alice" Lee, Ph.D.
(2025 Award Recipient)
Harnessing Interactions Between Transposable Elements RNA and RNA-Binding Proteins for Personalized Splicing Modulation
Boston Children's Hospital
Ealice.lee@childrens.harvard.edu

Gene-Wei Li, Ph.D.
(2020 Award Recipient)
Breakaway Transcription as an Alternative Paradigm for Bacterial Gene Expression
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
gwli@mit.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

Chenxiang Lin, Ph.D.
(2020 Award Recipient)
Tension-loaded DNA Nanodevices for Structural Determination of Mechanosensitive Proteins
Yale University
chenxiang.lin@yale.edu

Sebastian Lourido, Ph.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Controlling the developmental transitions of a eukaryotic pathogen
Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research
lourido@wi.mit.edu

Sarah McMenamin, Ph.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Mechanisms by which shape is specified and remembered during development and regeneration of the zebrafish fin
Boston College
mcmenams@bc.edu

Wei Mi, Ph.D.
(2025 Award Recipient)
Designing Innovative BacPROTACs to Combat Gram-Negative Bacterial Infections
Yale University, School of Medicine
wei.mi@yale.edu

Jeffrey Moffitt, Ph.D.
(2026 Award Recipient)
Mapping the Role of Single-Cell- and Spatial-Heterogeneity in Bacterial Infections
Boston Children's Hospital
Jeffrey.Moffitt@childrens.harvard.edu

Meenakshi Rao, M.D., Ph.D.
(2020 Award Recipient)
Glial Phagocytosis in Intestinal Homeostasis
Boston Children's Hospital
Meenakshi.Rao@childrens.harvard.edu

Esther Rheinbay, Ph.D.
(2024 Award Recipient)
Impact of Somatic Y Chromosome Loss in Immune Cells on Tumor Response
Massachusetts General Hospital
erheinbay@gha.harvard.edu

Mohsan Saeed, Ph.D.
(2023 Award Recipient)
Deciphering the Immune Evasion Mechanisms of Arboviruses in Mosquitoes
Boston University School of Medicine
msaeed@bu.edu

Shruti Sharma, Ph.D.
(2024 Award Recipient)
Immune Pathways Safeguard Endothelial Integrity and Mitigate Atherosclerotic Severity in Aging: A Novel Target.
Tufts University
Shruti.Sharma@tufts.edu

Sichen Shao, Ph.D.
(2022 Award Recipient)
Establishing Tractable Systems to Mechanistically Dissect Mammalian ERAD
Harvard Medical School
Sichen_Shao@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

Mansi Srivastava, Ph.D.
(2020 Award Recipient)
Comparing Development and Regeneration to Uncover Mechanisms for Maintaining Regenerative Ability in Adult Animals
Harvard University
mansi@oeb.harvard.edu

Xin Tang, Ph.D.
(2025 Award Recipient)
GABAergic Inhibition of Brain Tumor Progression
Boston Children's Hospital
Xin.Tang@childrens.harvard.edu

Andrew Wang, M.D., Ph.D.
(2021 Award Recipient)
Understanding the Role of Brain T-cells in Defending Sleep
Yale University
andrew.wang@yale.edu

Marc Wein, M.D., Ph.D.
(2022 Award Recipient)
Trafficking and Translation of mRNA in Osteocyte Dendrites
Massachusetts General Hospital
mnwein@mgh.harvard.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

Craig Wilen, M.D., Ph.D.
(2022 Award Recipient)
Epigenetic Regulation of Coronavirus Susceptibility
Yale University
craig.wilen@yale.edu

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

Xu Zhou, Ph.D.
(2025 Award Recipient)
Intracellular Environment Engineering in Immune Modulation
Boston Children's Hospital
Xu.Zhou@childrens.harvard.edu