

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP FUND



Achieving Gender Parity in Academic Science: Enabling Women to Realize the Medical Applications of Their Discoveries

The Rockefeller University is seeking to establish a *Women & Science* Women's Entrepreneurship Fund. The goal of the Fund is to give women scientists the same opportunities that male scientists have had for decades to translate their discoveries into new therapeutics and drugs. Women lag behind their male counterparts in academic entrepreneurship. Currently, women are listed on only 18 percent of university-owned patents. At the present rate, gender parity in patenting will not be achieved until 2092. This is unacceptable. Sadly, this disparity results in fewer companies being created, fewer treatments for disease, and fewer jobs in the biosciences sector of our economy.

Women are making discoveries with substantial clinical potential, but they are not taking the next steps to commercialize their ideas. Yet, when given training, role models, roadmaps, mentorship, and funding, women are exceptional entrepreneurs.

Background

The world is witnessing a revolution in bioscience and a golden age of therapeutic discovery. The Rockefeller University is driving this wave of innovation. In addition to making basic discoveries that are fueling the biomedical revolution, scientists at Rockefeller are now translating their discoveries into new therapies.

Today, to a greater degree than ever before, industry requires the academic scientist to demonstrate that a new finding has the potential to generate a medicine that will be safe and effective in vivo. Research institutions must now shoulder the burden of demonstrating proof-of-concept before a faculty member's work will attract the attention of drug companies or investors seeking ground-level opportunities in biotech. Academic investigators have, in effect, assumed the responsibility of shepherding their own discoveries across some or all of the proverbial Valley of Death—where so many drug development projects stall, never to regain momentum.

The Rockefeller University—a leading light in the life sciences and the birthplace of clinical research in the United States—is at the forefront of current efforts to translate discoveries made by academic laboratories into effective strategies to prevent and treat disease. During the last five years, the University has built a robust translational research pipeline to support these efforts, helping to ensure that its scientists can explore potential medical applications of their discoveries while keeping projects under the inventors' control at critical stages in development.

There is also growing recognition that young scientists should be educated in how to transform their discoveries into products that improve human health. The Rockefeller translational pipeline provides training in this area of entrepreneurship, in part by offering faculty members the opportunity to have their projects reviewed by outside experts.

The goal of the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund is to ensure that women scientists take advantage of these opportunities to the same degree as their male scientist colleagues.

Challenges

Academic scientists today are able to participate in creating the new therapeutics and diagnostics that their basic research breakthroughs have made possible. Strikingly, most of the investigators who move their discoveries towards potential drug development are men, not women. Women are

underrepresented in entrepreneurial endeavors, not only in academia but in biotech as well. Women hold fewer than 20 percent of senior management positions in industry. The number of women on the boards of biotech and pharma companies is even lower, with women occupying fewer than 10 percent of corporate board seats. Because their numbers are smaller, women researchers in both industry and academia have fewer mentors than their male colleagues.

Rockefeller's Response: A Women's Entrepreneurship Fund

The goal of the **Women & Science Women's Entrepreneurship Fund** is to provide grants for innovative early-stage research, as well as entrepreneurial training for Rockefeller's women scientists. In recent years, the University has created an environment that encourages all faculty members to investigate the potential clinical applications of their work. This robust translational pipeline includes Rockefeller's unique clinical research hospital, as well as a bioscience ecosystem that enables researchers to test the therapeutic possibilities of their work. The Fund's goal is to encourage women at Rockefeller to take full advantage of these new avenues.

Early-Stage Innovation Grants will provide from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per project to support studies aimed at understanding the causes of human disease and developing breakthrough therapeutics, novel diagnostic tests, and other medical advances. These grants will also fuel exploratory science that can generate the experimental data needed to compete successfully for follow-on funding from other Rockefeller University initiatives and external sources, as appropriate.

The program's external reviewers will be leaders in the biotech, pharma, and investment communities, who can offer expert feedback and guidance about the projects under consideration. Thus, the evaluation process for these competitive grants will provide valuable learning opportunities for the women faculty, students, and postdoctoral investigators who apply for support.

The **W&S Women's Entrepreneurship Fund** will also have a broader educational dimension. To spark the creation of a women's network in translational science, the Fund will bring to the Rockefeller campus women who are leaders in biotech and pharma, as well as women who have created their own companies. This program will provide role models for the University's women investigators and help them to develop roadmaps for commercializing their discoveries.

How Your Gift Can Make a Difference

Early-Stage Innovation Grants

To fuel exploratory science that can generate the experimental data to advance the clinical applications of innovative research conducted by women scientists.

\$25,000 - \$100,000

Entrepreneurs In Residence

Enable Rockefeller to bring to campus accomplished women working in biotech. They will help coach and advise women scientists moving their discoveries along the translational pathway and teach them how to garner industry support.

\$2,500 - \$10,000

On-Campus Educational Opportunities

Assist Rockefeller University in devising on-campus educational opportunities, including symposia, training programs, lecture series, and one-on-one consultations.

\$1,000 - \$5,000

Off-Campus Educational Opportunities

Provide off-campus networking, training, and educational opportunities. Enable women scientists to attend conferences and programs that give researchers the opportunity to hear from and build contacts with industry professionals. These include the I-Corps program, a U.S. government effort to help move academic research to market, and citywide initiatives such as eLab and the New York City Early-Stage Life Sciences Funding Initiative.

\$1,000 - \$5,000

Gifts of all sizes are welcome and appreciated, and will be directed to launch the ***Women & Science Women's Entrepreneurship Fund***.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact:

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