

Office of Research & Innovation Newsletter - Autumn 2025



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An Introduction from Sue Rhoades, Assistant Vice Provost, Applied Innovation

Dear Colleagues,

As autumn leaves fall, the Applied Innovation team is experiencing a season of change as well. I'm excited to serve in a new role as Assistant Vice Provost for Applied Innovation, overseeing our unit's efforts to support the Drexel research community. I'm also pleased to share that Robin Stears recently joined our team as Director, Intellectual Property (IP) and Agreements. We're currently working to fill a licensing manager vacancy and deeply appreciate the patience of Drexel researchers reaching out to us with questions on their existing IP or with new innovations as we rebuild our team to serve you.

Within the Office of Research and Innovation, the mission of our group is to expand the impact of Drexel research through technology transfer. A small core team focuses on providing a range of services to researchers and inventors in two main areas - Intellectual Property & Agreements and Industry Engagement.

We also collaborate with partners in the Drexel and Philadelphia innovation ecosystem to support faculty and graduate students' entrepreneurial interests and to find investors, entrepreneurs, and industry who may help bring promising Drexel technologies to market.

Some of these programs and resources include the [Coulter-Drexel Translational Research Program](#), the [Laurence A. Baiada Institute for Entrepreneurship](#), the [Drexel Entrepreneurial Law Clinic](#), and Drexel's participation in the [NSF Regional I-Corps program](#), which is now led by Dr. Caroline Schauer. Within ORI, we also work closely with the Office of Sponsored Programs around intellectual property on grants and contracts and federal invention reporting.

As the University undergoes Academic Transformation, and as part of ORI's Clarity project, our office is revisiting and redefining our core processes (i) to better support University efforts, (ii) to engage and serve Drexel inventors, (iii) to meet Federal compliance requirements, and (iv) to focus limited resources on meeting our mission of driving impact. For example, while we pursue appropriate levels of intellectual property protection for selected Drexel innovations, our goal is not simply to secure and maintain patents for years and years just for the sake of having a large number of patents. Our goal is to increase the impact of Drexel innovations. To this end, we are actively reviewing the age, stage, and commercial prospects of assets in the Drexel IP portfolio to support ongoing research at Drexel and those technologies with real potential for translation, commercialization, and impact. We will also assess licenses and reporting processes to better cover costs and optimize revenue opportunities. Our team is guided in this work by standard practices for university tech transfer and leveraging AI-driven tools for market assessment, promotion, and industry engagement.

We look forward to continuing to partner with the research community to help protect and promote Drexel research and innovations to drive impact. We'll keep you updated on new or enhanced processes through our website and future updates in this newsletter.

Please feel free to reach out to me with questions, comments, or ideas.

Warmly,

Sue Rhoades

Questions? Please email Sue Rhoades, *Assistant Vice Provost, Applied Innovation*, at sue.rhoades@drexel.edu.

General

Welcoming New ORI Team Members

Please join us in welcoming our new colleagues to the following teams:

Joining the Applied Innovation team

Robin L Stears, PhD MBA, Director of IP and Agreements. Robin is the new Director of IP and Agreements in the Applied Innovation Office. She has a PhD in cellular and developmental biology, an MBA, and a strong background in both industry and academia. During her graduate work she was honored to be a selected participant in the Woods Hole Cell Physiology course. After her PhD work she spent several weeks conducting research in Antarctica as a selected participant of the NSF's 'Introduction to Antarctic Biology, International Scientist Training Course'. After that, she did two post-doctoral fellowships, the first at the University of Hawai'i (to warm up!) and Harvard University, the second at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Her life sciences industry experience covers Pharma (at Sanofi), a California Startup as well as Bio Rad Laboratories and Intel Corporation.

After consulting for startups and pre-startups, the next stage of her career led her back to academia as a Licensing Manager at UC Davis. Here she worked her way up to Director of Business Development and Licensing. Her prior positions include Senior Director of Business Development and Innovation at Boston Children's Hospital and a Director of Business Development at UMass Chan Medical School. Robin is happy to be at Drexel University where she hopes to contribute to the protection and licensing of Drexel's discoveries and innovations for societal benefit.

Robin is a native New Yorker and an unabashed animal lover. She enjoys hiking with her spouse, playing with their two dogs, and painting.

Joining the Research Business Operations & Technology team

Kwesi Owusu-Ansah, Associate Director, Finance & Administration. Kwesi brings experience in financial management, operational strategy, and general administration, with a focus on building efficient processes that support academic and research excellence. He is passionate about streamlining processes and supporting teams to do their best work.

As he has just one year in Philly, outside of work he enjoys exploring the city for restaurants, live music, or spending time at home with his rescue pup and lots of houseplants. He is really looking forward to working with everyone and learning more about the great work happening across ORI!

Joining the Sponsored Programs team

Gia Boersema, CRA, MS, Assistant Vice Provost, Sponsored Programs. Gia brings over 18 years of experience in research administration across higher education and nonprofit sectors. A Certified Research

Administrator and familiar face at Drexel, she returns after serving as Senior Associate Director in the University of Pennsylvania's Office of Research Services.

At Penn, Gia oversaw proposal and award management for more than 100 departments, led a team of five, and served as an Authorized Organizational Representative. She implemented tracking systems, streamlined subaward execution, and enhanced training programs to strengthen compliance and efficiency.

In her new role at Drexel, Gia will lead the central administration of grants and contracts within the Office of Sponsored Programs. She will focus on ensuring compliance, supporting faculty and staff, and advancing the implementation of Novelution to improve research operations and foster a culture of excellence across the University.

James Hawkins, Lead Contracts Negotiator. James originates from Bloomington, Indiana. He is married with two children and two dogs. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Clearwater Christian College and a Masters in Business Administration from TUI University. He worked for 20 years for the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy as a Contracting Officer. He currently serves in the Air Force Reserves as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Sheilah Wiley, Lead Subaward Officer. Sheilah manages the full subaward process from negotiation to closeout. She brings prior experience from Auburn University's subaward team, where she cultivated her expertise in research administration and compliance. At Drexel, Sheilah is dedicated to building strong partnerships and ensuring the university's research collaborations run smoothly and compliantly.

Joining the University Laboratory Animal Resources (ULAR) team.

Dr. Melanie McFadden, Executive Director of Veterinary Services. As Executive Director, Dr. McFadden oversees veterinary clinical operations and supports the University Lab Animal Resources (ULAR) team and regulatory compliance team to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare and scientific quality across Drexel. She obtained her bachelor's degree in animal science from Penn State, followed by a master's in laboratory animal sciences right here at Drexel. She also earned a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from Western University of Health Services and completed a Residency/Fellowship at the University of Southern California.

Dr. McFadden brings extensive experience in veterinary clinical care, research support, and leadership. With a proven track record of advancing animal care and fostering collaborative, compliant research environments, she plays a critical role in leading Drexel's veterinary services team and supporting the University's mission of excellence in research and animal welfare.

During her free time, she loves to spend time with her family and enjoys going to the beach or being outside!

Shannon Morton, Senior Veterinary Technician. Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Shannon earned her degree in Veterinary Technology from the University of Cincinnati and became a Registered Veterinary Technician. Over the course of her career, she has gained extensive experience across multiple areas of veterinary medicine — including private practice, emergency medicine, and histopathology. However, she has found her true passion in laboratory animal research and brings over 15 years of experience in the field.

Shannon holds a Laboratory Animal Technologist (LATG) certification from the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) and offers a wealth of experience in research support and animal care. In her new role, she will work closely with Dr. Melanie McFadden to provide veterinary oversight, ensure compliance with research protocols, and uphold the highest standards of animal welfare.

In her free time, Shannon enjoys spending time with her three cats, playing pub trivia with friends, and riding her motorcycle.

Questions? Please email the ORI Human Resources Team at ori_hr@drexel.edu.

Update on the Novelution Implementation Project

The Novelution Project Team is committed to building a modern, integrated, and transparent research administration system that benefits the entire Drexel research community. The team continues to make exciting progress on the IRB and Sponsored Programs modules:

- **IRB Module:** Configuration and **CITI compliance** integration is moving forward. Workflow testing will begin after current configuration is completed—and we'll need your help! Watch for upcoming communications on how to participate in targeted testing exercises.
- **Sponsored Programs Module:** Development is gaining momentum with improved data collection, enhanced budgeting tools, and stronger integrations taking shape. While we aren't ready for testing yet, opportunities will be shared after current configuration milestones have been met in the coming months.

A Novelution webinar is being planned and will be delivered the coming weeks to share more details on progress and timelines. Stay tuned for updates via email, the ORI quarterly newsletter, and the **Novelution Hub**.

Questions? Please email the Novelution Project Team at novelution_info@drexel.edu.

Display Associated UN Sustainable Development Goals on your Drexel Research Discovery Profile

Do you want to strengthen the connection between your name and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the ones associated with your work? The Drexel Libraries is now offering a new profile option for researchers and Drexel units: display associated UN SDGs on your profile in the **Drexel Research Discovery repository**. The Libraries will add this feature to your profile upon request. Contact libsystems@drexel.edu for more information. View examples of individual researcher profiles [here](#) and [here](#); plus a **mock-up of a unit page** option.

Questions? Please email Stacy Stanislaw, *Director of Communications, Drexel University Libraries*, at stacy.v.stanislaw@drexel.edu.

Introducing the Drexel Libraries' New Website

Earlier this summer, the Drexel Libraries debuted a new, accessible, and more mobile-friendly website. Other highlights include a more modern look and feel; a redesigned home page with a more prominent “search” function; and new and expanded pages for library news, events and exhibitions. Check out the **website** and share your feedback with the Libraries team!

Questions? Please email Stacy Stanislaw, *Director of Communications, Drexel University Libraries*, at stacy.v.stanislaw@drexel.edu.

Applied Innovation

From Idea to Innovation: Take the First Step

When Drexel innovators develop something novel with potential commercial value, the first step toward advancing their innovation is to disclose it for review and guidance from the Applied Innovation team. We serve as a committed partner in translating Drexel research into real-world impact—offering strategic intellectual property (IP) protection for selected technologies, access to entrepreneurial resources through our partners, and support for industry engagement to promote Drexel research and IP assets. Our services are available to faculty, staff, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students and are guided by the University's IP policy.

Disclosing an invention—or even a potential one — may open the door to licensing opportunities or to new sponsored research or technical collaborations with industry partners.

If you plan to present your innovation in a paper or at a conference, it's important to submit the potential invention to our office well ahead of any public disclosure to allow for time for review and discussion with a licensing manager.

HAVE A TECH TO DISCLOSE?

Download and complete the form from our site to get started. Send your signed disclosure to our licensing team at techdisclosure@drexel.edu and we'll be in touch to review.

If you're not sure if you have an invention, contact us at applied_innovation@drexel.edu.

Research Compliance & Regulatory Affairs

ORI Guidance and Procedure Update

As the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) continues its efforts toward Drexel University's strategic plan and CLARITY project we are excited to introduce new and updated SOPs and guidelines through ORI's established workgroup processes that will continue to provide best practices, enhance collaboration, and reinforce our commitment to Drexel University and our Research Community:

COI Procedure Updates

COI-001: [Research Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)

- The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the personal financial interests of Drexel University employees do not compromise their objectivity in a) designing, conducting, or reporting of their research activities; b) protecting the welfare of research participants; or c) developing intellectual property.
- Effective 9/29/2025

IRB/HRP Procedure Updates

HRP-010: Drexel IRB Human Research Protections Program

- The Drexel University HRPP, in partnership with its research community, is responsible for ensuring the ethical and equitable treatment of all human subjects in research conducted under Drexel University's auspices.
- Effective 10/15/2025

HRP-430: Self, Family Member, Student, and Employee Experimentation

- These procedures provide additional steps and considerations for self, family member, and Drexel University student and employee enrollment into a research study, including mitigation of potential conflicts of interest, undue influence or coercion, and to ensure equitable selection to ensure scientific integrity.
- Effective 7/18/2025

HRP-070: Institutional, Investigator, or Sponsor-Initiated Holds

- An "Institutional-, investigator- or sponsor-initiated hold" refers to a voluntary action by the institution, investigator or sponsor of the study to place some or all research activities associated with that study on hold. These procedures describe the process for submission and review of institutional, investigator or sponsor holds.
- Effective 9/10/2025

HRP-080: IRB Documentation and Records

- Drexel University prepares and maintains adequate documentation of the IRB's activities. These procedures describe the IRB documentation and records, including meeting minutes, IRB membership and roster, and procedures for accessing records.
- Effective 9/10/2025

[These procedures & guidelines, along with supporting materials and forms are available in ORI's Guidelines and Procedures Catalog.](#)

Feedback or Questions? Please email Marisa Corbett, *Executive Director of Research Quality Assurance*, at marisa.jo.corbett@drexel.edu.

Strengthening Biological Safety in Research at Drexel University

October is **Biosafety and Biosecurity Month**, which is a time to reflect on and reinforce our shared commitment to fostering a safe and compliant research environment. As the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is working on **initiatives to modernize and strengthen biosafety oversight** and **improve transparency of research involving recombinant and synthetic nucleic acids**, we, too, are working to

ensure our biomedical research is being conducted with the highest possible safety.

As part of efforts to achieve this goal, we are launching a campus-wide survey to identify all biosafety agents currently in use across the University's research laboratories. This initiative is designed to ensure that all applicable research is properly reviewed and approved by the [Institutional Biosafety Committee \(IBC\)](#) and is in alignment with [federal \[PDF\]](#) and [institutional \[PDF\]](#) requirements. Information collected through this survey will also help prepare the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) and the IBC for the implementation of the biosafety module in the Novelution Research Management System, set to be incorporated in the latter half of 2026.

This mandatory survey will be distributed through BioRAFT within the next few weeks. Once the survey is available, an email will be sent with further instructions on how to complete the survey. All researchers will be required to complete the survey by the deadline specified in the instructions once it is released. Your participation is essential to maintaining a safe research environment and ensuring institutional compliance with federal guidelines.

Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to biosafety.

Feedback or Questions? Email Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (EHRS) at ehrs@drexel.edu.

Significant Financial Interests Just Got Bigger: Foreign Financial Interests Now Included

In an ongoing effort to promote transparency and integrity in research and decision-making, the definition of Significant Financial Interest (SFI) has been expanded. The updated criteria now encompass a broader range of financial relationships and ownership interests, including income or equity interests from private entities, intellectual property rights, and reimbursed or sponsored travel related to institutional responsibilities. This change aims to ensure that all potential conflicts of interest are disclosed and appropriately managed, reinforcing public trust in research outcomes and institutional accountability. Investigators are encouraged to review the [updated policy](#) and assess whether any new or previously undisclosed interests must now be reported.

In addition, disclosures of foreign financial interests are required. It is important to note that disclosure of foreign financial interests differs from disclosure of domestic financial interests. Investigators, including subrecipient Investigators, must disclose all foreign financial interests (which includes income from seminars, lectures, or teaching engagements, income from service on advisory committees or review panels, and reimbursed or sponsored travel) received from any foreign entity, including foreign Institutions of higher education or foreign governments (which includes local, provincial, or equivalent governments of another country) when such income meets the threshold for disclosure (e.g., income in excess of \$5,000).

Drexel has updated the disclosure process to include foreign financial interests.

Questions? Please email Lacey Harris, PhD, *Executive Director of Research Compliance*, at lacee.harris@drexel.edu.

Thinking of a Sabbatical Abroad or Working Remotely?

Drexel faculty have an opportunity to broaden their impact, recharge their scholarship and engage globally through international or remote sabbaticals. Whether you're exploring research overseas, collaborating with

a partner institution abroad, or working remotely while based outside the U.S., be sure to check the relevant policies and required approvals.

For example, [Drexel's global workforce guidelines](#) provide key direction on remote and international work arrangements. They state that any paid or unpaid work performed from outside the U.S. requires departmental initiation and review by Drexel's Global Work Review Committee.

Also, [Drexel's Key Dates & Forms calendar](#) lists the application timelines for sabbatical leave (e.g., Intent to Apply, Proposal submission) for academic year 2026-27.

Before you plan an extended period abroad or remote work outside the U.S., remember to:

- Submit the department-level intent and proposal forms within the published deadlines.
- Coordinate with your college and the Office of Faculty Advancement to ensure your sabbatical plan satisfies Drexel's policy requirements.
- For remote work from a foreign location, obtain approval per [Drexel's Global Work Review protocols](#) to address tax, insurance, employment law, export controls, and data security risks.
- [Register your travel with Drexel.](#)
- Review ORI's [Recommendations for Faculty Engaging in a Remote Sabbatical.](#)

By following these steps, you can ensure your international sabbatical aligns with Drexel's regulations and maximizes your professional growth.

Questions? Email the ORI Export Control Team at export@drexel.edu.

NSF Now Requires Research Security Training for All Senior Personnel

In alignment with federal mandates to safeguard the integrity of U.S. research, the National Science Foundation (NSF) now requires mandatory research security training for all senior personnel supported by NSF-funded projects. This training must address key topics such as conflict of interest and commitment, foreign influence, data protection, and research integrity.

As of October 10, 2025, Institutions are responsible for implementing and documenting completion of this training as a condition of NSF award compliance. At Drexel, all applicable personnel will be notified of their training obligations and provided access to approved training modules in accordance with NSF guidance.

For more information on who is required to complete the training and how to access it, visit:

- [NSF Research Security Requirements](#)
- [Drexel's Research Compliance & Training Resources](#)

Ensure you complete the training in a timely manner to remain eligible for participation on NSF-funded projects. There is both an individual and institutional requirement to certify completion of training; [submit your certification of training here](#).

Questions? Please email Lacey Harris, PhD, *Executive Director of Research Compliance*, at [lacee.harris@drexel.edu](mailto:lacey.harris@drexel.edu).

Annual Research Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure Period: November 1–30

It's time for the **annual Research Conflict of Interest (COI) disclosure process**! All faculty, researchers, and staff engaged in sponsored research must complete their COI disclosure between **November 1 and November 30**.

This annual disclosure helps ensure transparency, uphold research integrity, and maintain compliance with federal and institutional requirements. Even if you have **no conflicts to disclose**, a **submission** is still required.

Visit the [FAQ](#) page to review guidance on what constitutes a potential conflict of interest.

Disclosure Period Opens: November 1, 2025

Deadline: November 30, 2025

Questions? Email the ORI FCOI Team at FCOI@drexel.edu.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training Day 2025

We are pleased to share that the **Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training Day, held on September 18**, was a great success, bringing together over 95 researchers, staff, and students from across the institution to strengthen our shared commitment to research integrity.

Highlights from the Day

- **Expert Guidance:** Facilitators from compliance, IRB, IACUC, and faculty leadership provided insight into navigating regulatory expectations and institutional responsibilities.
- **Interactive Sessions:** Sessions encouraged active participation while working through real-world scenarios on authorship, data management, and conflicts of interest, applying ethical principles to complex situations.

Key Takeaways for Researchers

- **Integrity First:** Responsible research requires honesty, transparency, and accountability in every step of the process.
- **Know the Rules:** Awareness of federal regulations and institutional policies is critical to protecting research participants, collaborators, and the public trust.
- **Data Responsibility:** Proper collection, management, sharing, and reproducibility are essential for credibility and compliance.
- **Culture of Accountability:** Ethical research is a collective effort; collaboration, mentorship, and ongoing training strengthen the institution's research enterprise.

We thank all participants and presenters for their engagement and contributions. Events like this reflect our shared responsibility to uphold the highest standards of research integrity and ensure our institution continues to lead by example.

Questions? Please email Carissa Miller, *Compliance Coordinator*, at carissa.miller@drexel.edu.



Clinical Research Training Series

The six-session Clinical Research Training Series concluded in September 2025. This series featured interactive sessions on key topics, including:

- Regulatory administration
- Informed consent processes and procedures
- Investigator obligations
- Root cause analysis and event reporting
- Protocol compliance and how to avoid common challenges

More than 195 students, staff, and faculty who conduct interventional studies, observational studies, or behavioral and public health research attended throughout the six sessions. Stay tuned for future clinical research training session announcements.

Questions? Please email Carissa Miller, *Compliance Coordinator*, at carissa.miller@drexel.edu.

Research Quality Assurance Program

The **Research Quality Assurance (QA) Program** plays an important role in supporting our research community and strengthening trust in the integrity of our work. Through routine audits and reviews, the QA Program partners with researchers to ensure studies are conducted responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with the highest standards.

The purpose of these reviews is not only to evaluate compliance with **laws and regulations, institutional policies and procedures, funder requirements, and approved protocols**, but also to provide feedback and resources that help research teams succeed.

Reviews may include, but are not limited to:

- **Human subjects research**
- **Research integrity**

- **Export compliance**
- **Conflict of interest management**

By participating in QA reviews, research teams gain valuable insights that enhance study quality, strengthen compliance practices, and protect both participants and investigators. Together, we are fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, and excellence in research.

Please visit the [Research Quality Assurance Program](#) webpage for additional information and helpful resources, including information on Common Audit Findings, [Root Cause Analysis and CAPA plans \[PDF\]](#).

Don't forget to check out our [Clinical Research Guidelines and Tools](#) webpage for additional guidelines and resources related to clinical research, including a delegation of authority log template, site initiation log template, eligibility checklist template, and more.

Feedback or Questions? Please email Marisa Corbett, *Executive Director of Research Quality Assurance*, at marisa.jo.corbett@drexel.edu.

Sponsored Programs

Government Shutdown Update

As we move into the fourth week of the federal government shutdown, we would like to remind the research community to continue to perform federally sponsored research unless you have been directed to stop work by the sponsor. The following activities continue to be impacted during the shutdown:

- **Limited Contact with Federal Employees:** Due to furloughs, federal employees will generally be unavailable for inquiries and support.
- **Proposal Submission:** Proposal submission systems should remain online; however, each federal agency will provide guidance on the status of the proposal submissions. Please note that proposal submissions will not be processed until a shutdown ends hence review and awarding timelines may be impacted.
- **Limited Support for Proposal Submissions:** Some Help Desks for system submissions, including Grants.gov, may become unavailable.
- **Peer Reviews and Council Meetings:** No peer reviews or council meetings will take place, which may have an impact on the evaluation and approval process of proposed projects.
- **Awarded Grants and Cooperative Agreements:** Generally, awarded grants and cooperative agreements will continue with minimal disruptions.
- **Federal Contracts:** Some contracts may be subject to stop-work orders. Determinations will be made by each agency on a contract-by-contract basis. Monitor your email for any messages from sponsors.
- **Research Performance Progress Reports (RPPRs) and Technical Reports:** Unless the federal agency provides additional guidance, RPPRs and technical reports will still be due on current due dates but will not be processed or reviewed during the shutdown. Compliance with standard due dates is important at this time given federal staff are not available to approve any extensions etc.
- **No Cost Extensions:** Refer to specific agency guidance. NCEs requiring agency approval may not be processed during a shutdown.
- **New Awards and Contracts:** New awards will not be issued, and contracts will not be executed.

Specific Agency Guidance:

NIH: “Information for the NIH Extramural Community During the Lapse of Federal Government Funding” Notice Number: NOT-OD-26-004 <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-26-004.html>

NSF: <https://www.nsf.gov/shutdown/recipients>

For a complete list of additional federal agency guidance visit the Council on Government Relations, visit: <https://www.cogr.edu/considerations-federal-government-shutdown>.

The Office of Research and Innovation continues monitoring this situation closely and we remain in close regular contact with our colleagues in the Provost Office, Office of Government Relations, Research Accounting Services, and the Office of the Comptroller.

We recognize this continues to be a challenging time for the research community and we are here to address any concerns or questions you may have. Please share this information with your units.

Questions? Please email the Office of Sponsored Programs team at duresearch@drexel.edu.

NIH Will Stop Posting Notices of Funding Opportunities in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts in FY2026

The NIH recently issued NOT-OD-25-143, stating that beginning in FY2026, they will no longer post notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) in the **NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts** (NIH Guide).

Instead, the NIH will explicitly utilize [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov), as their sole source for sharing grant and cooperative agreement funding opportunities. They will continue to use the [NIH Guide](#) for policy and informational notices. This is an effort to streamline processes and reduce duplication across their systems.

Don't miss out on notifications of new NIH funding opportunities! Be sure to sign up for [Grants.gov subscriptions](#).

LEARN MORE

Questions? Please email the Office of Sponsored Programs team at duresearch@drexel.edu.

Drexel Researchers Receive New Awards

We're proud to share that since July 1, 2025, Drexel researchers have secured **86 new awards**, totaling **\$23.7 million in funding**. These awards reflect a diverse range of support, including:

- 68% from federal sponsors.
- 24% from private foundations and non-profit organizations

Despite ongoing challenges in the federal funding landscape, this achievement is a powerful testament to the resilience, creativity, and commitment of our research community. It highlights the remarkable ingenuity

of Drexel researchers and the meaningful impact they are making across disciplines.

A summary of the top five awards for this quarter ranging from \$691,000 to \$3,726,027 are noted below. Congratulations to the investigators on the following projects:

- **BIO-AI: Dendritic Democracy in Drosophila Connectomes**
Dr. Jessica Ausborn – Neurobiology & Anatomy, College of Medicine
Dr. Catherine R. von Reyn – School of Biomedical Engineering and Health Systems
National Science Foundation (NSF)

Drs. Jessica Ausborn and Catherine von Reyn are leading a five-year, NSF-funded project that explores how neurons integrate information to guide behavior. The team uses advanced electron microscopy maps that capture every neural connection in the fruit fly brain, along with computer modeling, machine learning, direct recordings from neurons in behaving flies, and genetic manipulations. The project investigates whether neurons follow a principle called “dendritic democracy,” meaning that all incoming signals are treated equally, no matter where they arrive on a neuron’s branches. The researchers aim to uncover general rules of brain computation and determine when simplified neuron models can accurately represent real biological function. The project also engages high school students in hands-on neuroscience and machine learning through local outreach and summer programs.

- **Advancing Structured Literacy Access and Research**
Dr. Aroutis Foster, School of Education
Drexel University

Drexel University’s School of Education is launching a two-year, \$1.4-million initiative to address the nation’s literacy crisis through the creation of a new translational research hub focused on structured literacy. Supported by a private family foundation, the project will unite leading researchers, practitioners, and other educators to serve as a national resource for literacy instruction. It will also strive to prepare the next generation of literacy scholars and academic leaders by helping school systems gain access to research and how it can be implemented in practice.

The Hub, which is still in its early stages and awaiting a finalized name, will establish a new EdD concentration in literacy leadership and implementation science, host annual literacy events, and be a resource for all stakeholders interested in strengthening literacy instruction and learning. By bridging research, neuroscience, and leadership development, Drexel’s School of Education aims to transform literacy outcomes and ensure all students have access to effective reading instruction.

- **Adapting and Testing a Novel Method of Engagement in Research: Prioritizing Autistic Perspectives in Behavioral Interventions**
Dr. Matthew Lerner – A.J. Drexel Autism Institute
Dr. Dena Gassner – A.J. Drexel Autism Institute
Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute

Drexel University has received \$2.3 million in funding from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute® (PCORI®, award SOE-2024C2-39502). Led by Dr. Matthew Lerner and Dr. Dena Gassner, the three-year project will develop and test novel approaches to engaging the autism community in challenging conversations around the future of behavioral interventions.

The project, “Adapting and Testing a Novel Method of Engagement in Research: Prioritizing Autistic Perspectives in Behavioral Interventions,” includes an investigative team of interdisciplinary

specialists, many of whom are both professionals and autistic individuals. The primary intent of the project is to evaluate different approaches to creating spaces for listening, healing, and collaborating on a way forward in this often-conflicted discussion around behavioral interventions and their potential harms and benefits. The project will compare two different approaches to doing so – one that has already been developed for other types of collaborative discussions, and one uniquely co-created as a part of this project. Results of these discussions will then be compared in terms of acceptability in a national survey of the broad autism community, to guide a way forward and build towards the next generation of autism interventions, incorporating the priorities and experiences of those across this community.

- **Diet and the Exposome in Autism: Discovering Complex Interactions with Diet in Autism Etiology and Variability**

Dr. Kristen Lyall – Dornsife School of Public Health, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute

NIH Autism Data Science Initiative

This project seeks to examine the role of diet in combination with other prenatal risk factors for autism, including environmental chemical exposures, maternal metabolic conditions during pregnancy, and the broader prenatal exposome, using data from the large US Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) consortium. In addition, potential pathways linking exposures to outcomes, using metabolomics data, and the role of child diet in autism and its co-occurring conditions and trait variability, will also be examined.

The multi-disciplinary team includes collaborators at the University of Colorado (Wei Perng, Traci Bekelman), Harvard Pilgrim (Emily Oken), UC Davis (Rebecca Schmidt, Debbie Bennett), and UNC (Jessie Buckley).

The study will build on prior work the team has led in the ECHO consortium, to more fully consider how diet may modify the effects of other exposures, and interact with other factors, to contribute to neurodevelopmental outcomes and ASD risk. They will also be examining how diet in children with ASD differs. The project will also seek to include feedback and input from community advisory board members.

- **Improving Health Through HUD Housing Assistance for Chronic Disease Care**

Dr. Lindsay Shea, DrPH, MS – Policy and Analytics Center, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute

National Institute of Nursing Research

Dr. Lindsay Shea, DrPH, of the Policy and Analytics Center based in the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, leads an interdisciplinary team of public health scientists, epidemiologists, clinicians, and social workers that recently received a five-year \$3.8 million grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) focused on improving the health of adults with chronic diseases who qualify for and receive rental assistance through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

This mixed-methods research study examines access and utilization of recommended care for highly-prevalent chronic health conditions and the impact that newly-gained HUD rental assistance has towards adherence to appropriate care. The study will also analyze moderating impacts of individual and community characteristics to quantify how newly-gained rental assistance is associated with differing health impacts across key strata. To characterize these findings, and also to identify mechanisms that contribute to better health and housing outcomes, the study team will conduct policy surveillance of innovative state efforts to address the needs of this population, and will hold focus groups with key policy and advocacy groups to further contextualize study findings and determine evidence-based policy strategies for those at the intersection of chronic disease management and housing unaffordability.

Seeking funding?

Resources are available to help you find grants:

[Search for funding opportunities using Pivot and Funding Institutional.](#)

Let's keep the momentum going!

Questions? Please email Rose Ann DiMaria-Ghalili, *Interim Associate Vice Provost for Research & Innovation*, at rose.a.dimaria-ghalili@drexel.edu.

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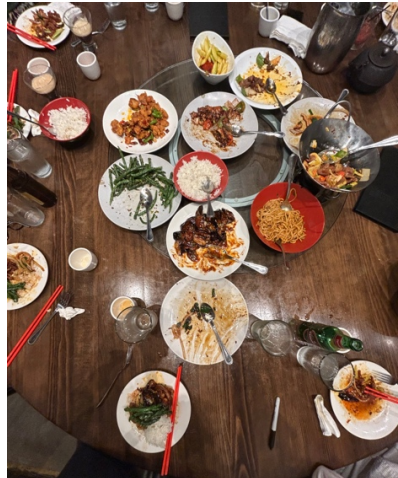
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- **Quarterly Newsletter Archive:** Key announcements and updates
- **Novelution Hub SharePoint:** Engage with the COEUS Replacement Project via our new Novelution Hub
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- **Upcoming Events:** Explore a comprehensive list of research-related events
- **LinkedIn:** Follow us for the latest news about Drexel research

Questions? Please email Becky Campbell, *Senior Business Analyst*, at becky.campbell@drexel.edu.

The ORI Team Shares an Evening Out!

ORI staff had a fun evening together at Han Dynasty near campus last month. As a primarily remote group, it was a joy to share each other's company in person after many of our out-of-town team members traveled to Philadelphia to host the Responsible Conduct of Research Training Day. Check out photos from the group outing!



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