

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

×



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)
[Back](#)

[About Us](#)
[Learn About Cancer & Treatment](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Inclusion & belonging](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

FOR THE MEDIA

Following last year's announcement of the first-ever Breakthrough Prizes, established by a well-known group of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs to celebrate scientists and encourage careers in the field, the winners were frequently asked what they would do with their newfound prize money of \$3 million each. Three of the winners — [Charles L. Sawyers, MD](#), of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; Cornelia I. Bargmann, PhD, of the Rockefeller University; and Lewis C. Cantley, PhD, of Weill Cornell Medical College — have answered that question by collaborating to “invest” in the next generation of scientists. They have committed a portion of their Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences award to establish a new annual prize for promising postdoctoral trainees. Including financial commitments made by each of their respective institutions, the award will be sustained by a \$3 million endowment.

The Tri-Institutional Breakout Awards for Junior Investigators will be given to three to six outstanding postdoctoral trainees every year, with each recipient receiving \$25,000. One prize will be awarded to an applicant from each of the three founding institutions, and additional awards will be given to the best candidates, regardless of their institutional affiliation. The inaugural winners will be announced by the end of 2014.

“By establishing the Tri-Institutional Breakout Awards we hope to stimulate young scientists at the start of their careers,” said Dr. Sawyers. “I am grateful to the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences Foundation for raising the level of recognition for the life sciences community, and I hope that by creating an award for postdoctoral scholars, we can contribute to furthering that vision.”

“We want to recognize and encourage the rising stars in science,” said Dr. Bargmann. “With this prize for exceptional postdocs, we can highlight their talent, passion, and accomplishment and celebrate exciting discoveries in our community.”

“The Tri-Institutional Breakout Awards are a unique and powerful statement of our institutions’ support for early-career investigators,” Dr. Cantley said. “They will encourage our trainees to pursue innovative work and reinforce their commitment to critical basic science research.”

The Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences — established by Art Levinson, Sergey Brin, Anne Wojcicki, Mark Zuckerberg, Priscilla Chan, and Yuri Milner — “recognizes excellence in research aimed at curing intractable diseases and extending human life.” Eleven inaugural winners each received \$3 million to “advance breakthrough research, celebrate scientists and generate excitement about the pursuit of science as a career.

Dr. Sawyers is an internationally recognized physician-scientist and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator whose research focuses on cancer drug resistance with an eye toward developing innovative therapies. His insights into the mechanism of resistance to standard hormone therapy for advanced [prostate cancer](#) led to the discovery of enzalutamide (Xtandi®), which was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2012. He shared the 2009 Lasker~DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award for earlier work leading to the development of the ABL kinase inhibitor imatinib (Gleevec®) for patients with chronic myeloid leukemia and the second-generation ABL inhibitor dasatinib (Sprycel®) to overcome imatinib resistance.

Dr. Sawyers completed his term as President of the American Association for Cancer Research in April and was recently appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Cancer Advisory Board. He is past President of the American Society of Clinical Investigation and a Member of the National Academy of Sciences and of the Institute of Medicine. He is Chair of the [Human Oncology and Pathogenesis Program](#) at Memorial Sloan Kettering and holds the Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Chair.

Dr. Bargmann is a neurobiologist who asks how genes and environmental factors interact to shape an animal’s behavior, and how behavior decisions are modified by context and experience. Using *C. elegans* worms as a model system, her lab has identified basic principles of neural circuit development and function. They have shown how developmentally-fixed circuit mechanisms encode innate behavioral

preferences, and how flexible neuromodulatory systems can rewire preferences based on context and learning. They have also discovered genetic variations that account for individual differences in behavior, and defined their actions on neural circuits.

Dr. Bargmann is Torsten N. Wiesel Professor; head of the Lulu and Anthony Wang Laboratory of Neural Circuits and Behavior; and codirector of the Shelby White and Leon Levy Center for Mind, Brain and Behavior at The Rockefeller University as well as an Investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In addition to the Breakthrough Prize, she has received the 2012 Kavli Prize in Neuroscience, the 2012 Dart/NYU Biotechnology Achievement Award, and the 2009 Richard Lounsbery Award from the US and French National Academies of Sciences. Dr. Bargmann currently co-chairs the working group at NIH that is planning President Obama's Brain Initiative.

Dr. Cantley is the director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center, the Margaret and Herman Sokol Professor in Oncology Research, and professor of cancer biology in medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College. He discovered the signaling pathway phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K), the most commonly mutated gene across cancers. The discovery has resulted in revolutionary treatments for cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases.

Dr. Cantley is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Among his other awards are the ASBMB Avanti Award for Lipid Research in 1998; the Heinrich Weiland Preis for Lipid Research in 2000; the Caledonian Prize from the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2002; the 2005 Pezcoller Foundation–AACR International Award for Cancer Research; the 2009 Rolf Luft Award for Diabetes and Endocrinology Research from the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm; the 2011 Pasrow Prize for Cancer Research; and in 2013, the Breakthrough in Life Sciences Prize and the Jacobæus Prize.

[Back to top](#) ^

About The Rockefeller University

Founded by John D. Rockefeller in 1901, The Rockefeller University was this nation's first biomedical research institution. Hallmarks of the university include a research environment that provides scientists with the support they need to do imaginative science and a truly international graduate program that is unmatched for the freedom and resources it provides students to develop their capacities for innovative research. The Rockefeller University Hospital, founded in 1910 as the first center for clinical research in the United States, remains a place where researchers combine laboratory investigations with bedside observations to provide a scientific basis for disease detection, prevention and treatment. Since the

institution's founding, Rockefeller University has been the site of many important scientific breakthroughs. Rockefeller scientists, for example, established that DNA is the chemical basis of heredity, identified the weight-regulating hormone leptin, discovered blood groups, showed that viruses can cause cancer, founded the modern field of cell biology, worked out the structure of antibodies, devised the AIDS "cocktail" drug therapy, and developed methadone maintenance for people addicted to heroin. Throughout Rockefeller's history, 24 scientists associated with the university have received the Nobel Prize in physiology/medicine and chemistry, and 21 scientists associated with the university have been honored with the Albert Lasker Medical Research Award. Five Rockefeller University scientists have been named MacArthur Foundation Fellows, and 20 have garnered the National Medal of Science. Currently, the university's award-winning faculty includes five Nobel laureates, seven Lasker Award winners and three recipients of the National Medal of Science. Thirty-four of the faculty are elected members of the National Academy of Sciences. For more information, go to www.rockefeller.edu .

[Back to top](#) ^

About Weill Cornell Medical College

Weill Cornell Medical College, Cornell University's medical school located in New York City, is committed to excellence in research, teaching, patient care and the advancement of the art and science of medicine, locally, nationally and globally. Physicians and scientists of Weill Cornell Medical College are engaged in cutting-edge research from bench to bedside, aimed at unlocking mysteries of the human body in health and sickness and toward developing new treatments and prevention strategies. In its commitment to global health and education, Weill Cornell has a strong presence in places such as Qatar, Tanzania, Haiti, Brazil, Austria and Turkey. Through the historic Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, the Medical College is the first in the U.S. to offer its M.D. degree overseas. Weill Cornell is the birthplace of many medical advances — including the development of the Pap test for [cervical cancer](#) , the synthesis of penicillin, the first successful embryo-biopsy pregnancy and birth in the U.S., the first clinical trial of gene therapy for Parkinson's disease, and most recently, the world's first successful use of deep brain stimulation to treat a minimally conscious brain-injured patient. Weill Cornell Medical College is affiliated with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, where its faculty provides comprehensive patient care at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. The Medical College is also affiliated with Houston Methodist. For more information, visit weill.cornell.edu .

[Back to top](#) ^

