



IGI Women in Enterprising Science Program Press Release

*Under embargo until 6:00 AM PST, March 1, 2021

Innovative Genomics Institute Launches HS Chau Women in Enterprising Science Program to Enhance Gender Equity in Bio-entrepreneurship

Inaugural program offers scientific entrepreneurs the opportunity to receive up to \$1 million of funding to create and grow new ventures around promising genomic and emerging biotechnologies

BERKELEY, CA, February 22, 2022 — The Innovative Genomics Institute (IGI) today announced the launch of the HS Chau Women in Enterprising Science Program (WIES) to promote gender equity in science and entrepreneurship as part of its mission to advance genome research for a better world. With philanthropic support from the foundation of Solina Chau Hoi Shuen (co-founder of Horizons Ventures in Hong Kong), the program is now accepting proposals from aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to translate genomics research into impactful solutions to real-world challenges and advance the representation of women founders in biotechnology.

Despite the rising numbers of women majoring in STEM fields across the US and efforts to increase diversity in STEM programs, biotechnology as an industry has a wide gender imbalance. A recent Harvard Business Review study (Bittner & Lau, February 25, 2021 issue) found that female founders in biotechnology only received 2.3% of venture capital funding in 2020. The WIES program is specifically designed to support aspiring founders with a commitment to addressing gender equity to help spur change across the industry.

The WIES program, located on the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) campus, will support Fellows whose work specifically aligns with the mission of the IGI — a joint initiative between UC Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco founded by CRISPR pioneer and Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna — and promotes gender equity in biotech entrepreneurship. The IGI is focused on bridging revolutionary genome-editing and biotechnology tool development to affordable and accessible solutions in human health, climate, and agriculture. A world-leading collective of scientists, technologists, and entrepreneurs, the IGI is steering toward a world where genome-editing technology is routinely applied to treat genetic disease, enable sustainable agriculture, and help achieve a carbon-neutral economy.

“The Women in Enterprising Science Program is a natural extension of the IGI mission to develop world-class genome-engineering innovations into solutions that benefit all of humanity,” said Jennifer Doudna, Founder and Chair of the IGI’s governance board. “I’ve found being an entrepreneur in the biotech world incredibly exciting and rewarding. But too few women have

the opportunity to become entrepreneurs, even though a lot of the needed innovation today is coming from women researchers. If women have the dream of founding a company based on their research, the barriers that stand in their way need to be removed."

The WIES program offers entrepreneurial-minded individuals who are committed to advancing gender equity in biotechnology exciting opportunities to learn and pursue building new ventures around emerging genomic and related biotechnologies while developing their leadership talents. The selection committee for the program will be led by Jennifer Doudna, IGI Executive Director Brad Ringeisen, and a group of UC Berkeley professors. Entrepreneurial advisors will include [Helen S. Kim](#) from Vida Ventures and [Luciana Borio](#) from ARCH Venture Partners.

The program will be split into two phases. During Phase I, up to four WIES Fellows will be selected and provided with support to conduct foundational research for the early stages of their entrepreneurial ideas. This support will include up to up to \$150,000 for salary, benefits, supplies and educational programming. Fellows will either be appointed as Postdocs or retain their existing UC Berkeley faculty affiliation. After a period of one year, up to two Fellows from Phase I will be selected to enter Phase II as WIES Entrepreneurs and may receive up to \$1 million dollars in seed funding directly from the HS Chau Foundation, while continuing to have access to the IGI's entrepreneurial community for 1.5 more years. A total of four cohorts of Fellows will be supported by the program over the coming years, with the individuals in the first cohort beginning their fellowships in September 2022.

Overall, the program will provide up to 2.5 years of financial, scientific, and educational support to the program participants. Fellows will have opportunities to engage in formal and informal collaborations, dedicated lab space for Phase I, individual mentoring, and access to an active and engaged scientific advisory board, including members from the IGI's network of diverse entrepreneurs. The WIES Program is integrated within UC Berkeley's vibrant entrepreneurial community and participants will have access to programs, networking, classes, and additional resources across the UC Berkeley campus.

"The IGI is uniquely suited to identify and support female scientists on the rise who are not only spearheading cutting-edge research in the lab, but also showing high potential for success as company founders," said Brad Ringeisen, Executive Director of the IGI. "With our pioneering team and growing and diverse community of scholars and women entrepreneurs, the time is now for us to scale up our efforts to empower this next generation of individuals and help them realize the full potential and real-world impact of their innovations."

"Our commitment to lasting public impact is rooted in every IGI initiative and exemplified in our Women in Enterprising Science Program," said Melinda Kliegman, Director of Public Impact of the IGI. "We look forward to welcoming Fellows who share the HS Chau Foundation's goal of empowering women for positive impact and the IGI's commitment to promoting equity from all backgrounds including historically underrepresented individuals into our extensive network of scientific and industry pioneers, and providing access to learning opportunities and state-of-the-art facilities for cultivating their ideas."

Applications received by April 1, 2022 will receive priority for consideration, but will be accepted until April 30, 2022. Selected WIES Program Fellows will be announced by June 1, 2022. To learn more about the program and submit an application, visit enterprisingscience.org.

About the Innovative Genomics Institute (IGI) — The Innovative Genomics Institute is a non-profit a partnership between the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco founded by Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna with the mission to use genome engineering to solve humanity's greatest problems in health, climate, and sustainable agriculture. The IGI is committed to advancing public understanding of genome engineering, providing resources for the broader community, and guiding the ethical use of these technologies. For more information, go to innovativegenomics.org.

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