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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2017 GRANT RECIPIENTS
FOR UNDERGRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH

Funding Will Support the Work of Autism Researchers at the Start of Their Careers

NEW YORK, NY (March 23, 2017) – The Autism Science Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing innovative autism research, today announced the recipients of its annual undergraduate summer research grants. Six grants have been awarded to highly-accomplished undergraduates who will conduct research in the genetics of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), impulse control in adolescents, restricted and repetitive behaviors, brain development and function, and employment challenges. Most past awardees of this grant have gone on to pursue careers in autism research.

"Encouraging the work of promising, young researchers is at the heart of what we do," said Alison Singer, president of the Autism Science Foundation. "This group of grantees is doing important and innovative research that is going to expand our understanding of ASD in a number of key areas and have real impact on the lives of people with ASD. We are thrilled to play a part in catalyzing their research careers."

Autism Science Foundation Undergraduate Summer Research Grants

Danielle Dennis, Barnard College of Columbia University
Mentor: Rebecca M. Jones, PhD, Cornell University
Danielle will work at the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain to understand how the brains of individuals with autism function in tasks involving impulsivity. Her research will help improve intervention targets, specifically for adolescents who struggle with impulse control.

Jacqueline Emerson, Duke University
Mentor: Geraldine Dawson, PhD, Duke University
Sensory sensitivities may contribute to the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors (RRBs) like mouthing and hand flapping. Jacqueline will combine information on sensitivity with sensory information, including a new way to measure how people with autism react to sensory stimuli. This will help improve our understanding of what contributes to different RRBs so they can be better treated.

Christopher Esposito, Stony Brook University
Mentor: Matt Lerner, PhD, Stony Brook University
Individuals with autism struggle with obtaining, securing and maintaining employment. Christopher will work with Dr. Lerner to conduct a survey of individuals with autism, family members, employers and service providers on experiences, needs, and ways to improve employment opportunities, with the ultimate goal of developing an employment policy to help those with autism.

Edward Gao, University of California at San Francisco
Mentor: Stephan Sanders, BMBS, PhD, University of California at San Francisco
Edward will use a novel analytic tool developed by Google/Verily Life Sciences to study the genetic makeup of thousands of families, with the goal of identifying new genes associated with autism. Adaptations to this tool will help better identify a specific type of genetic change that has recently been discovered in ASD.

Ellyn Pueschel, San Diego State University
Mentor: Inna Fishman, PhD, San Diego State University
Relatively little is known about brain development in the first year of life, so making comparisons between those with and without autism is very difficult. Ellyn will combine images from existing brain atlases to create a template of the typically-developing infant brain so that it can be compared to the brains of infants at risk for autism.

Laura Thomas, University of Minnesota
Mentor: Jed Elison, PhD, University of Minnesota
Laura's research will focus on the amygdala, an area of the brain known to be affected in adults with autism. This project will study the function of the amygdala during an attention task in toddlers to help better determine the biological basis of attention problems in young children – problems that may be responsive to early treatment.

About the Autism Science Foundation:
The Autism Science Foundation (ASF) is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Its mission is to support autism research by providing funding to scientists and organizations conducting autism research. ASF also provides information about autism to the general public and serves to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the needs of individuals and families affected by autism. To learn more about the Autism Science Foundation or to make a donation, visit www.autismsciencefoundation.org.

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