2026 Friends of BrainHealth
Visionary & Emerging Scientist Award Research Grants
Application Information

Center for BrainHealth is proud to announce the 18th year of our internal research awards, the *Friends of BrainHealth Scientist Awards.* In anticipation of the availability of Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT) funding in coming years, in 2026 we are excited to announce a new focus to provide seed funding to prepare BrainHealth researchers to develop projects for DPRIT applications and the expansive state funds of $3B that will become available over the next 10 years.

We are seeking applications designed to support research initiatives that contribute to dementia-related research broadly construed. Relevant topics could include: basic mechanisms of neurodegeneration, diagnostic tools for early detection, risk factor research, prevention programs and interventions, heath disparity research, technology and artificial intelligence applications, caregiver support, mechanisms and/or prevention of age-related decline, and quality of life research.

This funding mechanism **supports research clinicians and scientists of any rank affiliated with Center for BrainHealth, researching brain health with the goal of understanding, protecting, and optimizing the human brain**. Friends of BrainHealth is a donor group of ardent supporters who have made a significant financial contribution towards furthering important BrainHealth research.

The *Visionary Scientist Award* offers up to $25,000 in research funds and is intended to facilitate innovative research led by exceptional scientists at any rank (PhD level staff member or faculty level). Three awards are planned. Funding for pilot projects should lead to preliminary data to be used for a DPRIT application. Awardees will be selected by a lay committee prior to the luncheon. Funded PIs will be expected to provide a brief overview of their project at the Ramona Jones Friends of BrainHealth Scientist Selection Luncheon at the Dallas Country Club on September 28.

The *Emerging Scientist Award* offers up to $10,000 of research support plus a $2,500 stipend to be paid on completion of the project. A lay committee will review applications to select finalists. Up to four finalists will attend the luncheon to pitch their proposed studies to the Friends in attendance. The Friends will vote during the luncheon to select two winning studies.

Evaluation of project applications for both awards will include **feasibility of the work being completed in 2 years or less.** Funding will begin in October 2026.

2026 Awards
Award recipients and finalists must attend the Ramona Jones Friends of BrainHealth Scientist Selection Luncheon at the Dallas Country Club on September 28 and present their studies to the Friends.

To Qualify:
Candidate Requirements (Visionary and Emerging Scientists)

- Must be currently appointed at the UT Dallas Center for BrainHealth.
    - Emerging Scientist Awards are intended for graduate students, post-

graduate students, and post-graduates who obtained their degree within the last two years.
- Visionary Scientist Award applicants must be faculty or independent scientists at Center for BrainHealth.

- Multidisciplinary collaborations are encouraged, and joint applications from a Center for BrainHealth candidate with a candidate from a collaborating UT Dallas department are permitted provided that the Principal Investigator is primarily affiliated with the Center for BrainHealth.

- Prior recipients of a Friends of BrainHealth award are eligible to apply for a second award if they have completed their previously funded study. All funds from the prior study must be fully utilized and a final report must be submitted before a candidate is eligible to apply for a second award.

Important Dates:

- July 31, 2026 – Applications are due by 5 p.m. CT
- August 2026 (exact date TBD) – Visionary Scientist Award winners and Emerging Scientist Award finalists will be informed by email.
- Monday, September 28, 2026 – Winners and finalists will present their research projects in person at the Ramona Jones Friends of BrainHealth Scientist Selection Luncheon.
- October 2026 – Initial funding of awards.
- October 31, 2028 – Deadline for projects to be completed and final reports submitted.

Application Requirements:

Applications should be emailed to cindy.samuelsen@utdallas.edu, in one optimized .pdf file in the order listed below, by 5 p.m. on July 31, 2026. Cindy can help answer questions regarding proposal presentation.

The application will consist of the following items (complete application- *maximum of 6 pages*):

A. Research Proposal – *Maximum of three pages (inclusive of figures, tables, and references).* This is a document prepared by the applicant describing the project in **lay language** with sufficient detail to elucidate the hypothesis, significance, and research methods. Please also include short individual sections (each one paragraph or less) that address the following issues:

1. Relevance and Narrative – Briefly outline current or recent research project goals that will be accomplished within the Award period and the relevance to dementia care.
2. Human Subjects – Outline human subjects' inclusion (involvement and protection against risk).
3. Budget - Provide detailed budget information, including salary, supplies, travel and other expenses for use of the research funds. Budget can be up to $25,000 for the Visionary Award and $10,000 for the Emerging Scientist Award but must be well justified. Travel is limited to $1,500 total.

B. Mentor Letter – *One page limit.* Emerging Scientist Award proposals only.

Discuss qualifications, support and **likelihood of project completion within time proposed.**

C. Biosketches – Limited to 2 pages in NIH format.

D. Timeline for project completion.

Format:

- Use Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 11 points or larger. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)
- Use at least one-half margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages.
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per horizontal inch.
- Type may be no more than six lines per inch.
- You may use a smaller type size for figures, graphs, diagrams, charts, tables, figure legends and footnotes. However, it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirements.

Grading Criteria:

- The project should directly address a relevant problem and be original and innovative.
- The project should involve research goals that could improve lives.
- The project's research goals should be clearly defined and its method reasonably and logically designed.
- The project's results should be measurable in order to gauge success.
- The project should be able to be completed in the time proposed.

Review Process:

- Applications will undergo an internal feasibility review before being reviewed by a lay panel of members from the Friends of BrainHealth. The evaluation process will seek to identify those projects and investigators with the highest likelihood of pursuing an innovative approach to a significant problem in brain health. Feedback for each submission will be provided.
- Applications will be blinded; names and personal pronouns will be blacked out.

Reporting Requirements:

- Visionary and Emerging Scientist Award recipients must provide a final report no later than two years after receiving the award. Once awarded, the awardee will be provided an exact due date for these reports. Projects are expected to be completed within two years after receiving funding; unused funds at that time will be returned to the organization. Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing and are subject to the approval of the Friends of BrainHealth Committee.
- Award recipients will notify Cindy Samuelsen if they leave UT Dallas or change labs or mentors before completing their project or are unable to complete their project for any other reason.

Reports will be sent to Cindy Samuelsen and should include:

  - Project goals accomplished during the reporting period.
  - Future plans for follow-up grant funding.
  - General estimations of funds spent, reasons and plans for future spending.