



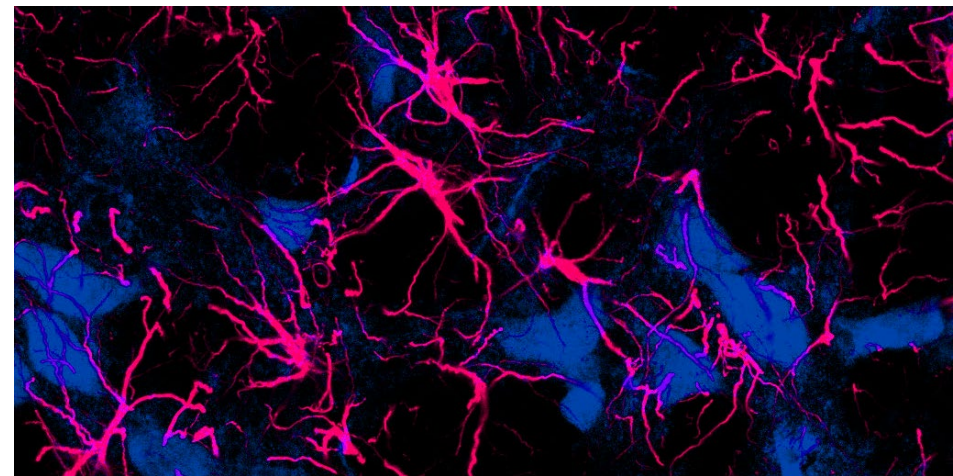
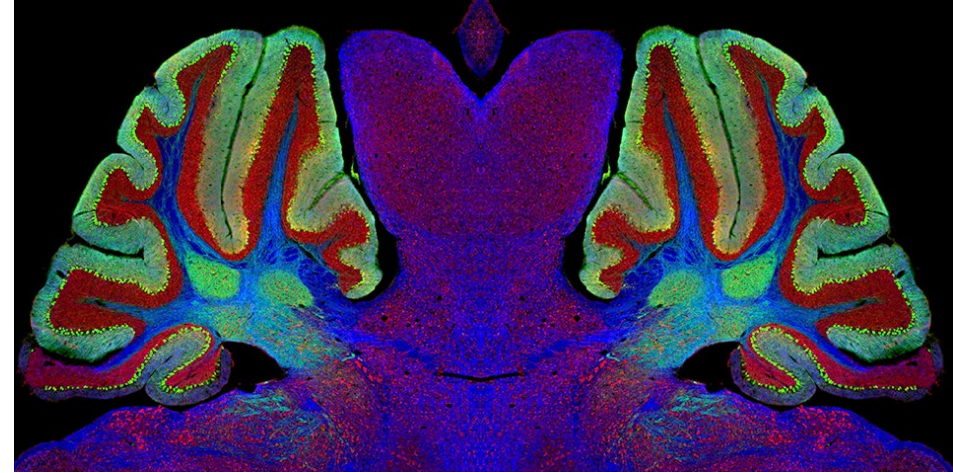
NIH **Blueprint**  
for Neuroscience Research



National Institutes of Health  
*The BRAIN Initiative*

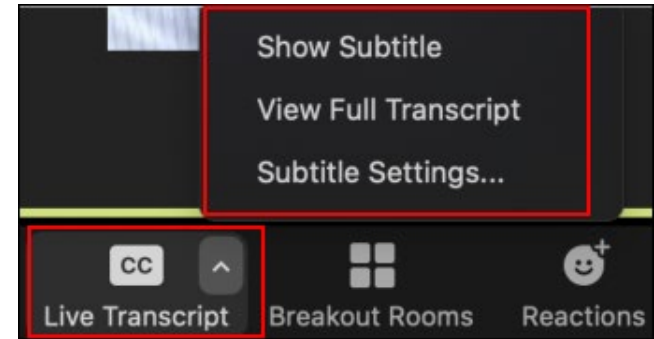
# Diversity Specialized Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Advancement in Neuroscience (D-SPAN) Award (F99/K00)

October 2, 2023



# The F99/K00 D-SPAN Award Webinar

- Captions and live transcript are available.
- Type any questions into the chat. Questions will be addressed in the breakout rooms after the presentation.
- The recording and webinar resource materials will be available in a few weeks.



# Outline of the Webinar

- Introduction to the D-SPAN Program
- F99/K00 Application
- Review Considerations
- Breakout rooms



**Michelle Jones-London, PhD**



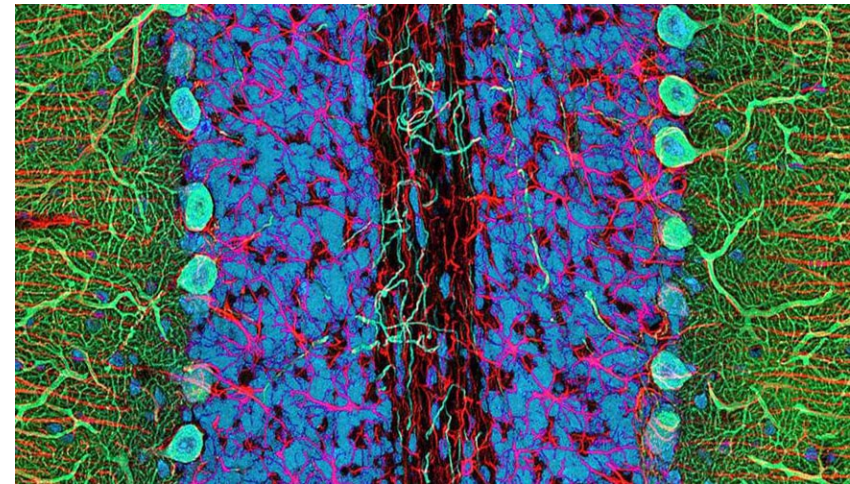
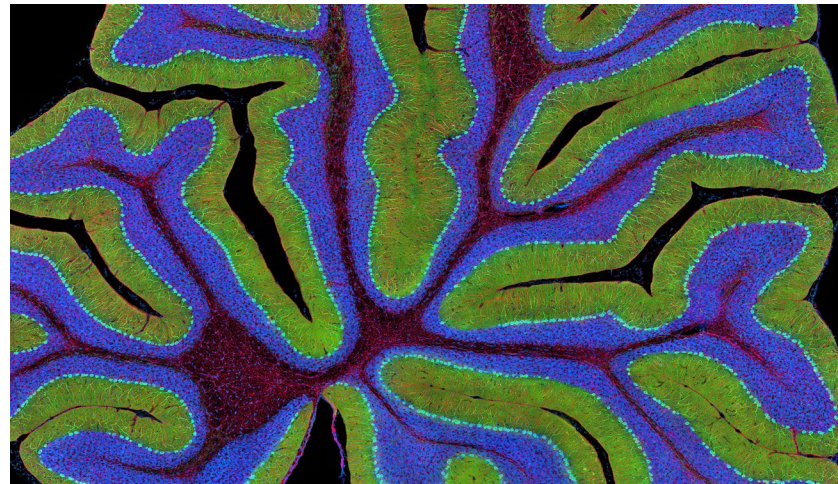
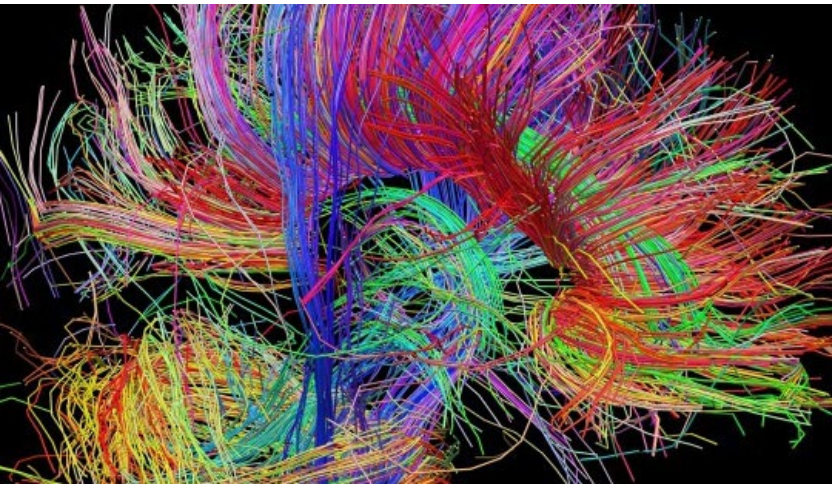
**Lauren Ullrich, PhD**



**Ashlee Van't Veer, PhD**

# Speakers

# Introduction to the D-SPAN Program



# Goals of D-SPAN

- Create a defined pathway for a critical juncture in the training pipeline—the transition from predoc to postdoc.
- Encourage and retain outstanding, diverse graduate students who have demonstrated ability and interest in careers as **independent neuroscience researchers**.
- Minimize transition barriers, enhance mentorship, build community

# Dual-Phase Funding

- 1-2 years of support for completing PhD dissertation (F99) at current (US) institution
- Up to 4 years of support for postdoctoral training (K00) at any US institution



# Scientific Focus

- D-SPAN is intended for individuals who have demonstrated an interest in a neuroscience research career in NIH Blueprint and/or BRAIN Initiative research areas.
  - \*Note that NIDCD participation is limited to BRAIN Initiative research areas only.
  - NINDS administers D-SPAN, but it is a **Blueprint and BRAIN program**

## Participating NIH Institutes and Centers

- NEI
- NIA
- NIAAA
- NIBIB
- NICHD
- NIDCD\*
- NIDCR
- NIDA
- NIEHS
- NIMH
- NINDS
- NCCIH
- OBSSR



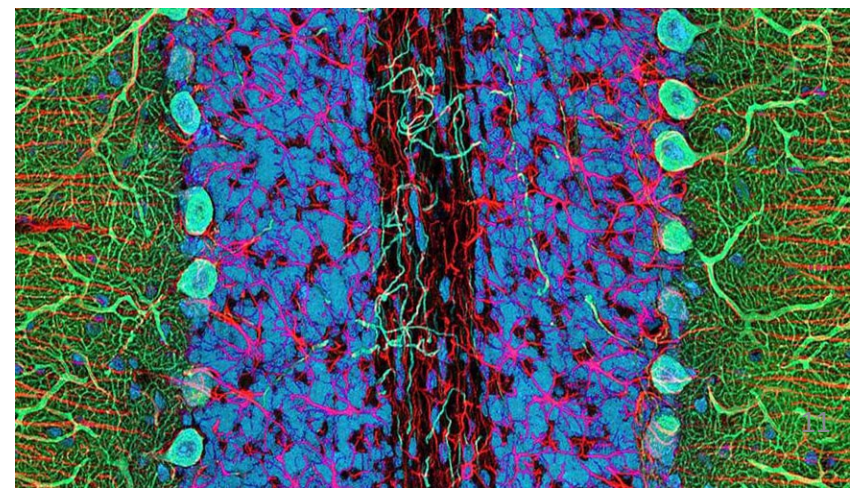
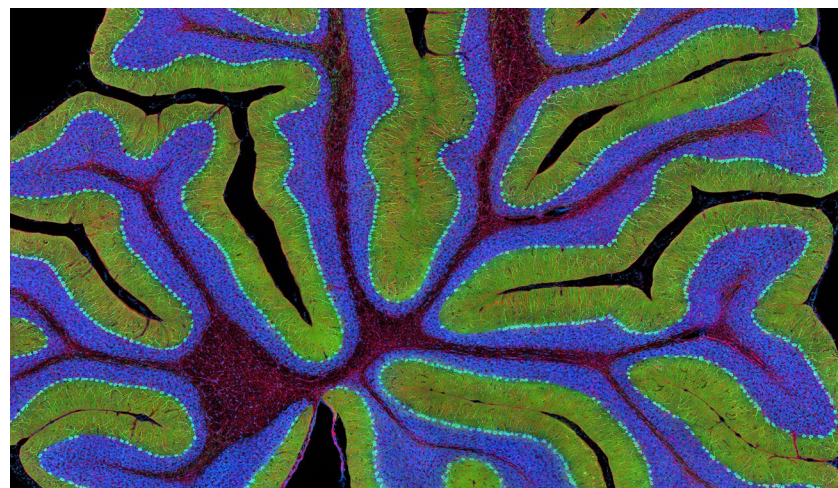
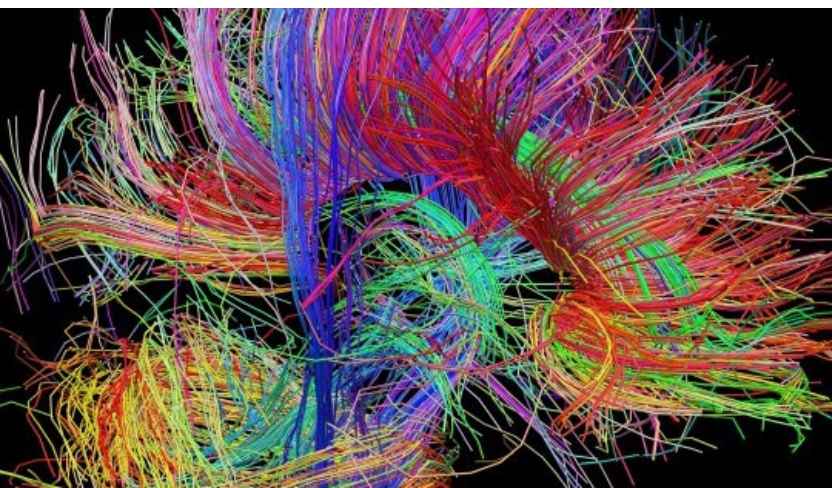
# PD/PI

- Graduate students from diverse backgrounds, including individuals from nationally underrepresented groups in neuroscience research (see Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity)
- Applicants must have 1-2 years left in PhD *at time of award*.
  - Usually 3rd or 4th year PhD students (later is ok, with justification)
  - Must be at the dissertation phase
- US citizen or permanent resident only
- May not be in a clinical, health-professional or dual-degree program
- Current T32 appointees and F31 awardees are eligible
- Both phases **MUST** have mission relevance to one of the neuroscience institutes listed on NOFO!

# Transition from F99 to K00

- F99 phase must be at least 1 year, no more than 2 years. Except in unusual circumstances, F99 phase will not be extended.
- Transition is not automatic. You must submit a K00 application.
- To activate the K00 phase, you must have been offered and accepted a neuroscience-focused postdoctoral research position.

# F99/K00 Application Components



# Before You Start

- **Define your career goals.** Explicitly define your career goals and area of research interest.
- **Outline the techniques, skills, knowledge, and relationships necessary to achieve your career goals.** Describe the scientific and professional skills you will need as a postdoctoral researcher and beyond.
- **Perform a skills “gap analysis.”** What skills from the above description have you already mastered? What skills need to be developed?
- **Define your research plan.** How will the two phases of your research (F99 and K00) build off your existing strengths to provide you with skills, techniques, and data that will facilitate your success as a postdoc and independent investigator?
- **Build a training plan that is tailored to your needs.** What activities will you perform to develop your professional skills? Provide a detailed timeline for training goals.
- **Assess guidance and mentorship needed.** What will you learn from each identified mentor; are all your areas of development covered?

# General Guidance

- Use the resources on the website
- Read the entire NOFO, including the review criteria
- Read the Fellowship (F) Instructions of the SF424 Application Guide
- You will follow the instructions in the NOFO unless directed to the application guide, then use the F31 instructions

# The Applicant

- Given the applicant's
  1. *prior training record,*
  2. *goals and proposed training plan,*
  3. *referees' evaluations,*
  4. *graduate research plan, &*
  5. *postdoc research direction*
- Is it reasonable to expect that the applicant will be ready to transition to a postdoctoral position in 1-2 years and will be prepared to successfully implement a strong postdoctoral research project?
- Does the applicant demonstrate commitment to a neuroscience research career in the future?

# The Sponsor/Mentor

- F99 phase
  - Mentor has a strong track record in training and transitioning graduate students to successful postdoc positions
  - Does the mentor have a comprehensive, **individualized** plan to support the candidate, keeping in mind the applicant's strengths and any **gaps in needed skills**, and **facilitate their transition to the postdoc phase?**
  - Each mentor and co-mentor(s) should clearly describe how they will coordinate mentoring of the candidate
- K00 phase
  - **A mentor DOES NOT need to be identified**
  - The applicant and sponsor(s) should describe an appropriate set of qualifications and attributes for the mentor in the career development (K00) phase and how the person will be identified

# Specific Aims Page

- All applicants must use these **two** Specific Aims:
  - Aim 1: The Dissertation Research Project
    - *Provide a detailed description of the overall dissertation research project, what has been accomplished to date (preliminary data may be included), and the research to be completed in the F99 phase.*
  - Aim 2: The Postdoctoral Research Direction
    - *Identify the research direction to be pursued for the K00 phase.*



# Aim 1: The Dissertation Research Project

## Significance

Overview of the dissertation research. The Research Strategy should offer a clearly stated rationale and hypothesis, go beyond just experimental details, and provide perspective about the work's expected outcomes and significance.

## Approach

The Approach for this Aim should be organized into two sections:

1. A progress report on the dissertation research project thus far
2. A detailed research proposal for the work to be completed in the F99 phase, including research and career development milestones for the transition from the F99 phase of the award to the K00 award phase.

Please pay close attention to caveats and alternative approaches!

# Aim 2: The Postdoctoral Research Direction

## Significance

- Describe a specific scientific question or observation that will be investigated. Explain the significance of and rationale for the K00 research direction.
- The postdoctoral research plan **does not have to be a continuation or within scope of the predoctoral research** but should have a logical connection to previous research experiences and must have relevance to participating NIH Blueprint/BRAIN ICOs.

## Approach

- Provide a general description of how the research will be conducted, including approaches and methodologies that could be used, anticipated results, challenges that might arise and how to address them (all broad strokes).
- Career and professional development skills to be acquired should also be detailed.
- Potential mentor(s) do not need to be identified, but a plan for identifying a mentor(s) should be included.

# Research Strategy Section (6 pgs)

- Applicants should individually address the Significance and Approach for each Specific Aim.
- Relate each of the aims to your career goals
- Take a broad, bird's-eye comprehensive viewpoint when writing this. Use a narrative style.
- Carefully consider the review criteria prior to writing

# Additional Considerations

- Ensure that the emphasis of the proposal should be on the training plan, mentors and collaborators who will assist in the training, as well as how the thesis research training will prepare the applicant for their future career development.
- Check and correct for grammatical errors and typos.
- Have someone unfamiliar with your research proof for overall grantsmanship and for ambiguous sentences or statements.

# Tips

- Avoid these common errors!
  - Including unnecessary or irrelevant activities
  - “Generic” plan—list specific activities, *why* you’re doing them, and how they will advance you towards your goal
  - Mentor and mentee sections don’t match up
- Get advice from people with experience, but...
  - DO NOT just copy a training plan from other “successful” applications
  - Each person has a different background and is pursuing different goals
  - It should be written in your voice, not someone else’s

# Letter of Intent

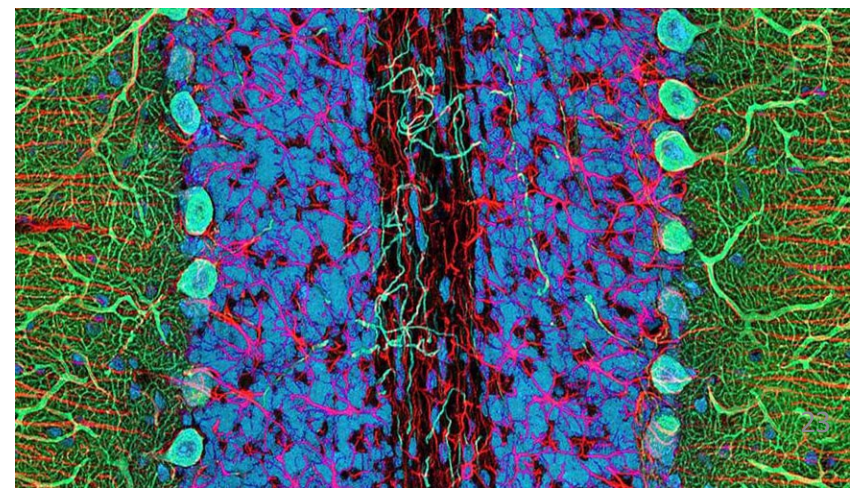
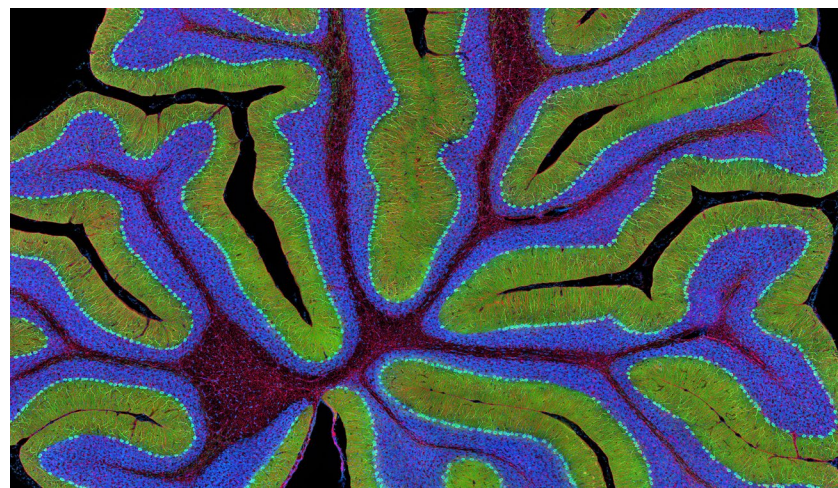
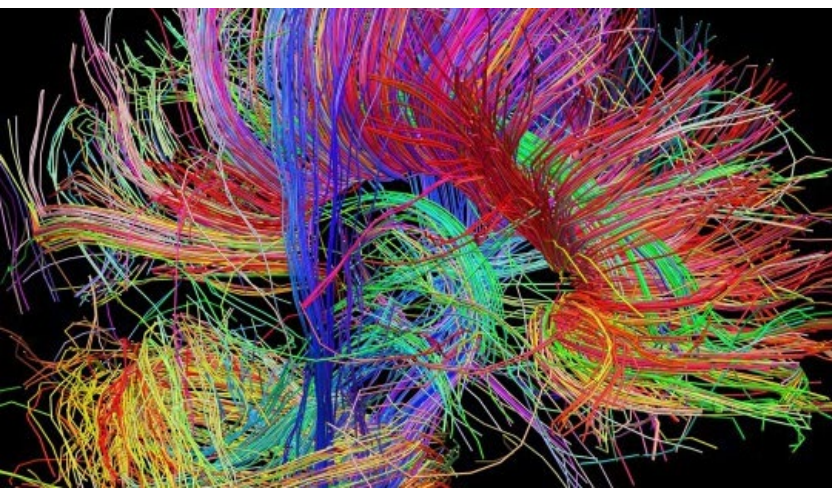
- Indicate intent to submit an application, via email, to [DSPANF99K00@nih.gov](mailto:DSPANF99K00@nih.gov).

Include the following information:

- Descriptive title of proposed activity
- Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the PD(s)/PI(s)
- Names of primary sponsor and other key personnel
- Participating institution(s)
- Number and title of this funding opportunity

**More than one person may apply from an institution.**

# Review Considerations



# After You Have a Draft...

- Carefully check what you have written against the Scored Review Criteria
  - Applicant
  - Sponsors, Collaborators, and Consultants
  - Research Training Plan
  - Training Potential/Development Plan
  - Institutional Environment & Commitment to Training



# PHS Submission Form

- You do not need to fill out an assignment request form or indicate an IC/study section
- All D-SPAN applications are reviewed in the same study section
- The panel has diverse neuroscience expertise

# Post-Submission Materials

Post-submission materials must be received by the SRO by 30 calendar days prior to the peer review meeting

## **Excerpted Allowable Post-Submission Materials**

- News of an article accepted for publication since submission of the application
- New funding for the Sponsor/Mentor
- Change in Mentor(s) or other Senior/Key Persons specified in the original application.
- Biographical sketches (e.g., due to the hiring, replacement, or loss of an investigator)
- Letters of support or collaboration due to the hiring, replacement or loss of an investigator

**Initial Point of Contact:**

Michelle Jones-London, PhD

Lauren Ullrich, PhD

NINDS

DSPANF99K00@nih.gov

# Breakout Rooms

- D-SPAN questions #1
- D-SPAN questions #2

Discuss other funding opportunities:

- NINDS Postdoctoral NRSA (NINDS F32)
- NIH F31 and Diversity F31

Discuss research priorities in the institutes and other training grants:

- NIMH
- NIBIB, NIDCD, & BRAIN Initiative
- NINDS
- NIAAA, NEI, & NIDA
- NIA & NICHD