

Washington Research Foundation announces 2021 cohort of WRF Postdoctoral Fellows

New Fellows will conduct research at four nonprofit institutions in Washington state

SEATTLE, WA, USA, November 9, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The newest cohort of [Washington Research Foundation \(WRF\) Postdoctoral Fellows](#) has been selected to carry out three-year research projects addressing areas of important public need. This marks the selection of 40 Fellows since the program began in 2017.



The 10 Fellows-elect will conduct their research at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (Fred Hutch), the University of Washington (UW), Washington State University (WSU) and Western Washington University (WWU) starting in 2021. Most will be carrying out research of their own design that focuses on solutions to challenges in the life sciences. They were chosen by a national [selection committee](#) from academia and industry to complete projects that will accelerate the development of products and services to benefit people in Washington state and beyond.

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WRF will support the following Washington Research Foundation Postdoctoral Fellows with funding of up to \$277,500 each:

- Andrew Weitz completed a doctorate in integrative biology at the University of California, Berkeley and will be analyzing tree rings at WWU to quantify the vulnerability of Washington’s forests to drought-induced mortality.
- Angela Yu earned a doctorate in computational biology and medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine and will be modeling the determinants of cellular RNA degradation to better understand its role in disease progression and to build more effective therapeutics and vaccines at UW.
- Braxton Jamison completed a doctorate in immunology at the University of Colorado Anschutz

Medical Campus and will be working at Fred Hutch to develop T cell-based therapies that target and eradicate dormant disseminated breast tumor cells with the goal of preventing metastasis.

- Ellie Armstrong is completing a doctorate in biology at Stanford University and will then develop genomic methods to assess and track mammalian species of conservation concern at WSU.
- Eric Szelenyi earned a doctorate in neuroscience at Stony Brook University/Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and will develop genetic neurotechnology in combination with whole-brain imaging techniques to better understand the motivational circuitry underlying reward processing at UW.
- Julia McKechnie completed a doctorate in immunology at Stanford University and will be engineering B cells at Fred Hutch to produce antibodies that protect against respiratory virus infections.
- Corena Mafune is completing a doctorate in soil and fungal ecology at UW and will remain at the university to explore how interactions among plants, bacteria and fungi can be harnessed to promote sustainable agricultural practices.
- Molly Carney is completing a doctorate in archaeology at WSU and will continue at the university to investigate how past Northwest people managed and produced native plant foods, to support contemporary native plant food restoration efforts.
- Sam Pellock earned a doctorate in chemistry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and will work on the de novo design of plastic degrading enzymes at UW to develop a sustainable plastic recycling system.
- Zachary Nicolaou completed a doctorate at the California Institute of Technology and will study the development of interpretable machine-learning algorithms and the potential for pattern-forming systems to self assemble unconventional computing technologies at UW.

Braxton Jamison, Ph.D., will begin his fellowship at Fred Hutch in January. His research centers on developing therapies to prevent breast cancer cells from causing tumors in other organs.

“Disseminated tumor cells [DTCs] can lie dormant in distant organs of breast cancer patients for many years. These can later awaken to give rise to metastases, which are ultimately what makes the disease incurable. I aim to develop a T cell-based immunotherapy with enhanced specificity and functionality that eliminates dormant DTCs before deadly metastases emerge. Being a WRF Postdoctoral Fellow will foster my development as an independent researcher, and will provide important networking opportunities that I hope will lead to collaborations in both academia and industry,” said Jamison.

Dr. David Shoultz, director of the grants programs at WRF, said, “Over the past four years we have invested over \$4.5 million in the WRF Postdoctoral Fellowship program, and we are thrilled with the return on that investment to date. We are especially excited to see Fellows choosing to carry out their work in labs at institutions across our state, including at WSU and WWU.”

WRF funds up to 10 new Fellows each year. The next application period is expected to open in the spring of 2021.

About Washington Research Foundation:

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) supports research and scholarship in Washington state, with a focus on life sciences and enabling technologies.

WRF was formed in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is one of the foremost technology transfer and grant-making organizations in the nation, having earned more than \$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington and providing over \$110 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, the Foundation's venture investment arm, has funded 107 local startups since 1994. Returns from these investments support grant-making activities at WRF.

For additional information, please visit www.wrfseattle.org.

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