Washington Research Foundation announces 2022 cohort of WRF Postdoctoral Fellows

Newest cohort, the fifth for WRF, will begin three-year fellowships next year to address public needs in life sciences and other STEM fields

SEATTLE, WA, USA, November 12, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Washington Research Foundation (WRF) has announced its fifth annual cohort of WRF Postdoctoral Fellows. 10 researchers will begin three-year fellowships at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (Fred Hutch), Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) and the University of Washington (UW) in 2022.

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>
> *Meher Antia, Ph.D.*

This year's recruitment was the most competitive to date, with a record number of applicants proposing solutions to urgent areas of public need across a range of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The 2022 Fellows were selected for funding of up to $277,500 each by a national committee chaired by David Galas, Ph.D., a senior investigator at Pacific Northwest Research Institute. In addition to financial support, Fellows participate in networking and professional development events, including an annual symposium to present their research and to learn more about their colleagues' work and potential collaboration opportunities.

- Jose Araujo earned a doctorate in chemistry at UW and will be continuing at the University to develop new chemistries for grid-scale energy storage technology.
- Jingshan Du completed a doctorate in materials science and engineering at Northwestern University and will be studying nanoscale ice formation pathways at PNNL to address challenges in inhibiting or promoting ice in organisms and the atmosphere.
- Ben Koger is completing his doctorate in biology at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior and the University of Konstanz. During his fellowship at UW, he will use emerging imaging and computer vision technologies to facilitate the study and management of Pacific salmon in their natural habitats.
- Richard Lee is completing a doctorate in materials science at the University of Washington and

will remain at UW to further develop biosensors toward rapid and simple diagnostics for disease detection.

- Ido Levin completed a doctorate in physics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and will study how membrane mechanics and protein jamming drive conformational changes in yeast vacuoles, to better understand their role in the engulfment of lipid droplets at UW.
- Kelly Michaelsen earned her medical degree and doctorate in engineering at Dartmouth College and will use computer vision tools at UW to automatically detect drug delivery events in the operating room, with the goal of improving medical record fidelity and perioperative patient safety.
- Eva Nichols completed a doctorate in molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley, and will carry out her fellowship in the genome sciences department at UW as she works on a scalable spatial transcriptomics approach that can be used to produce atlases and improve 3D pathology efforts.
- Kasim Rafiq earned a doctorate in animal ecology at Liverpool John Moores University, and at UW will be researching the impacts of climate change on large predator behaviors to help futureproof conservation strategies against environmental change.
- Pravrutha Raman completed a doctorate in molecular and cell biology at the University of Maryland, College Park, and will study how changes in repertoires of histones (DNA-packaging proteins) dramatically alter biology across evolutionary timescales at Fred Hutch.
- Sumitra Tatapudy is completing a doctorate in genetics at the University of California, San Francisco, and will develop tools at UW to measure the impact of instructor behaviors on student belongingness and equity in student academic outcomes in biology courses.

Jingshan Du, Ph.D., will become the first WRF Postdoctoral Fellow to carry out his research at PNNL when he begins in January. His project, to improve the understanding of nanoscale ice formation, has potential applications in areas including health care and aerospace.

“Ice is such an overwhelmingly common substance in human activities, but we have a poor understanding of its structure and formation mechanism on the nanoscale,” said Du. “Under WRF’s fellowship support, I will develop and implement advanced electron microscopy capabilities at PNNL to directly ‘see’ nanoscale ice crystals, their dynamics, and how they interact with proteins and minerals.”

Meher Antia, Ph.D., director of WRF’s grant programs, said, “We are thrilled to welcome this latest cohort of fellows into the WRF Postdoctoral Fellowship program. Postdoctoral training is so influential in shaping a scientist’s future career and WRF recognizes the value of supporting researchers at this critical stage of career development.”

WRF Postdoctoral Fellows have progressed in a variety of roles following the completion of their fellowships, including positions in academia and industry. Several have joined local startups or formed companies to commercialize their research.

The next application for WRF Postdoctoral Fellowships is expected to open in May 2022.

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 founded 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 $127 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, a reserve pool of funds for investing in early-stage Washington state companies, has backed 114 local startups since 1994. Returns from these investments support the Foundation’s mission.

For additional information, please visit https://www.wrfseattle.org/.

Meher Antia, Ph.D.
Director, Grant Programs
+1 206-336-5600
meher@wrfseattle.org
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