



## **Brown Investigator Award**

### **Guidelines for Candidate Selection and Nomination**

### **2026 Awards**

#### **Program Overview**

The Brown Institute for Basic Sciences seeks to support bold ideas for curiosity-driven basic research. The Institute believes that there is a reservoir of great scientists who have demonstrated their talent and capability by earning tenure at leading US universities, but who cannot pursue their most daring ideas because of the often-conservative nature of government funding. Therefore, the Institute intends to provide significant funds with few funding restrictions and limited reporting requirements to a small number of such scientists in physics and chemistry departments. Because the Institute wants to support basic research, which may have eventual technological impact, it has chosen to award grants to investigators working in atomic and condensed matter physics and fundamental areas of chemistry.

#### **Who We Fund**

Each year the Institute will invite a select group of research universities to nominate one mid-career faculty member who possesses the attributes outlined above. We define mid-career as having received tenure within the past 10 years.

Nominations will be reviewed by the Institute's Scientific Advisory Board. The Institute anticipates making eight grants. Each Brown Investigator, who is an experimentalist, will receive up to \$2,000,000 over five years, and each who is a theorist will receive up to \$1,250,000 over five years. The funds may be used for support of postdoctoral research staff, graduate students, non-faculty technical staff, supplies, equipment, user fees, and indirect administrative costs up to 10% of the non-equipment portion of the grant.

## What We Fund

We make grants to universities to fund exceptional faculty members. Candidates must pursue new research avenues that are highly creative, and for which conventional sources of research funding may not be readily available. These investigations may include not only the exploration of new phenomena, but also the development of new approaches to the collection of new data for use by future researchers, the development of new and original techniques to detect or measure properties and processes, and new ideas for the analysis of newly observed phenomena.

## What We Do Not Fund

The Institute seeks to support curiosity-driven basic research that might have eventual technological implications. Areas not under consideration for funding are biomedical research, applied or engineering research, astronomy, astrophysics, and particle physics. We do not want to provide additional resources to faculty members who already have large amounts of flexible funding. Universities are advised not to nominate those who control large amounts of discretionary funds, and those with large awards, with great flexibility in how they are spent, such as HHMI Investigators or Vannevar Bush Faculty Fellowships. Further, nominees that have or will have significant administrative duties, such as department chair, may not be competitive.

## Nomination Procedure

This year nominations will be requested from 24 universities. Each university will be asked to make one nomination. Candidates must be faculty members working in atomic and condensed matter physics and fundamental areas of chemistry, who have received tenure within the past 10 years.

## Program Timing

14 July 2025	Requests for nominations sent to university provosts
15 September 2025	Nominations due to the Institute
10 November 2025	Full proposals due to the Institute
17 November 2025	Reference letters due to the Institute
Late Jan/early Feb 2026	Begin candidate interviews
18-20 February 2026	Annual meeting
Early April 2026	Notification of results to selected applicants
Mid-May 2026	Public announcement

1 June 2026

Initial year funding

1 July 2026

Period of performance begins

## Nomination and Application Requirements

1. A completed nomination form:
  - a. The nomination form [here] should include the nominee's name, title, contact information including email address, departmental affiliation, tenure date, sponsoring institution's name, and cognizant university officer's name and contact information. The name of the nominating university administrator and an attestation statement will be required.
2. CV containing:
  - b. Biosketch style preferred, including section for current and past support
3. 500-word abstract for publication:
  - a. The 500-word abstract will help the Institute's Scientific Advisory Board understand the research and may be used to publicize the award.
4. Research statement:
  - a. The Scientific Advisory Board is composed of both physicists and chemists, so it is important that the research statement be accessible to this broad audience. The research statement should describe why the research is important, the state of the field, and should outline the general research goals for the next five years. The statement should also describe, in general terms, how funds will be used. The research statement should also explain why funding from government agencies for the proposed research is especially difficult to obtain.
  - b. The research statement is limited to a maximum of 4 pages of text including figures and references, prepared in 12-point font with 1-inch margins.
5. Current and pending support:
  - a. The description of current research support should describe not only government grants for specific projects, but also any funds that can be used for research at the discretion of the candidate.
6. Budget:
  - a. The budget should show proposed award installments and distribution for each award year.
  - b. A detailed budget is not required and will not be binding on the actual use of funds.
  - c. Resource planning form should be completed.
7. Letters of support:
  - a. Three letters of support addressing the nominee's unique attributes and drive to pursue very creative research in untrodden space.

The letters should come from the following sources:

- i. A letter from the nominee's department head, which should describe the nominee's talents and experience that prepares them to undertake high-risk, high-payoff basic research.
- ii. Letters from two people outside the nominee's university who are personally familiar with the nominee's work and creative ability. Both should have had no supervisory or collaborative contact with the nominee.

## Submission of Materials

All submissions and letters of support must be sent directly to this [\[Box link\]](#).

All submission materials should be submitted as a single pdf, clearly titled in the following format:  
"[university name] [nominee last name] [date of submission]"

Letters of support should be submitted separately from the other submission materials using the same naming format as above.

Submission deadlines:

15 September 2025 Nominations Due

10 November 2025 Full Proposals Due

17 November 2025 Letters of Support Due

## Annual Reporting Requirements

The Institute seeks to keep reporting requirements to a minimum for active Investigators. However, because the Institute is interested in tracking the progress and direction of the research, a brief annual narrative report including a brief financial report is required.

- A narrative report must be filed in accordance with the Grant Agreement/Contract.
- The annual report should also include a brief financial statement listing actual expenditures for the grant period.
- Grantees are expected to attend the annual meeting of grantees and to make an oral or poster presentation of their work.

## Brown Institute for Basic Sciences Contact

For questions, please contact Sue McHugh at [browninstitute@caltech.edu](mailto:browninstitute@caltech.edu).

Rev 071125