



Brown Investigator Award

Guidelines for Candidate Selection and Nomination

2027 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 U.S. 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 as of July 1, 2026.

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 physics, condensed matter physics, or fundamental areas of chemistry, who have received tenure within the past 10 years as of July 1, 2026.

Program Timing

15 July 2026	Requests for nominations sent to university provosts
15 September 2026	Nominations due to the Institute
9 November 2026	Full proposals due to the Institute
16 November 2026	Reference letters due to the Institute
Late Jan/early Feb 2027	Candidate interviews
17-19 February 2027	Annual meeting
Early April 2027	Notification of results to selected applicants
April-June 2027	Award negotiation
Mid-May 2027	Public announcement
1 June 2027	Initial year funding
1 July 2027	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.
 - b. The "attestation statement" should be a short, simple letter, signed by the nominator (i.e., Provost). Sample wording: *"As a representative of [University], I certify that [Nominee] fits the criteria of the Brown Investigator Award as described in the Brown Institute Award guidelines and acknowledge the institution's intention to support this grant, if awarded."*
2. CV containing:
 - a. Biosketch style preferred (standard NSF version; 2-page limit).
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 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. A 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 describes the nominee's talents and experience that prepare 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 2026	Nominations Due
9 November 2026	Full Proposals Due
16 November 2026	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 and a brief financial report are 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 and projected expenditures for each award year.
- Grantees are expected to attend the annual meeting of grantees and to make an oral or poster presentation of their work.

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Brown Institute for Basic Sciences contact

Additional award requirements and Frequently Asked Questions are available [[here](#)].

For questions, please contact Sue McHugh at browninstitute@caltech.edu.

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