

Request for Proposals

BRIDGE Initiative Graduate & Undergraduate Student Seed Grants

Project Title: BRIDGE: Building Religious Insights for Developing Genomic Engagement

Granting Agency: National Institutes of Health (NIH) / NHGRI

Host Institution: Biola University

I. Overview

The BRIDGE Initiative at Biola University, in collaboration with Washington University in St. Louis, is pleased to announce a call for Seed Grant proposals. The BRIDGE Initiative is a five-year project dedicated to establishing Biola as a leader in ELSI (Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications) questions at the intersection of human genetics and genomics (the study of genes, genetic variation, and their interaction with health, disease, and human development) and religion.

II. Purpose & Research Foci

This funding initiative supports high quality, faculty-mentored undergraduate and graduate theses and dissertations addressing understudied Ethical, Legal, and Social Implication (ELSI) questions at the intersection of human genetics and genomics (the study of genes, genetic variation, and their interaction with health, disease, and human development) and religion. The religious groups that are the focus of study may be Christian or from one or more other religions. We welcome proposals from a range of academic disciplines — including, but not limited to theology, philosophy, psychology, public health, intercultural studies, and communications — and from any scholarly approach appropriate to the discipline.

The foci of proposed research topics may include, but are not limited to:

- How Christian or other religious traditions understand, interpret, and evaluate a broad range of genomic applications, including direct-to-consumer genetic testing, newborn genomic screening, pharmacogenomics, and hereditary cancer risk assessment, whether examined through theological, historical, comparative religion, or other scholarly lenses
- How religious, philosophical, legal, or ethical frameworks shape reasoning about genomic medicine, access to genomic treatments, and questions of human dignity, identity, and justice.
- How religion, in interaction with personal factors (e.g., scientific knowledge, personality traits), social and cultural factors (e.g., acculturation, community variables, differential experiences in health care settings), and structural factors (e.g., cultural competency of providers, continuity of care, cost of services) may shape people's perceptions of or engagement with genomic information and technologies. Research on this topic

may draw on quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods and may come from disciplines including psychology, public health, intercultural studies, and nursing.

- How genomic information and technologies are communicated, represented, or received within religious communities, including through pastoral care, health communication, media, or community education.

NB: Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that are consistent with the NIH's guidance on "Promoting research focused on scientifically valid, measurable health outcomes" found in this [document](#). Projects that primarily focus on matters of diversity, equity, or inclusion will not be considered for funding.

III. Eligibility & Team Requirements

Requirements of research personnel are as follows:

1. Student needs to be a Biola undergraduate or graduate student.
 - a. If Biola undergraduate student, the proposed research activity should be conducted within a formal framework (e.g., enrolled independent study project, undergraduate thesis course code)
2. Faculty mentor/supervisor needs to be a Biola faculty member
3. Commitment for the student to complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) trainings, composed of one in-person RCR training (totaling 3 hours) and participate in ongoing in-person or synchronous-remote RCR training (four hours per year up to a maximum of 8 hours) throughout the duration of the project. The first in-person RCR training will take place on the morning of **January 29th, 2027**.
 - a. Important: Please note that this RCR training is **NOT** the [free ethics training](#) Biola offers through the Citi Program for Institutional Review Board (IRB) submissions.
 - b. Faculty mentors are not required, but are strongly encouraged to complete RCR trainings as well.
4. Grant applicants are required to attend and participate in ELSI research capacity-building trainings offered by Dr. DuBois, Dr. Mozersky, and/or ELSI Scholar guests via Zoom
 - a. An ELSI research capacity-building workshop is offered once each academic year. The first one will be held 1:00pm - 2:30pm, October 23rd, 2026.
 - b. Each training lasts 90-minutes and will cover the following topics:
 - i. Training 1:
 1. Introduction to the ELSIhub.org: Literature, measures, and networks of ELSI scholars
 2. Writing for Significance and Rigor in NIH ELSI Research Grants
 3. Finding ELSI Literature and Publishing ELSI Scholarship
 - ii. Training 2:
 1. Identifying ELSI Funding Opportunities
 2. Assembling an NIH Research Grant: Introduction to SF424 (R&R) Application Packages

IV. Award Information & Allowable Costs

- Call for student seed grant proposals will be made in the 1st, 3rd, and 4th year of the BRIDGE project
 - Each time, we anticipate awarding 2-3 student seed grant awards

- Research teams can request up to a maximum of **\$5,000** direct costs for projects that may last up to 3 years
- Allowable costs may include but are not limited to:
 - Research participant recruitment and compensation
 - Research materials and equipment (including books for theory-based research such as theology and philosophy)
 - Travel and registration funds for participating in the NHGRI Research Training and Career Development Annual Meeting and/or other conferences that facilitate career development
 - Travel and registration funds for presenting research results at the Biennial ELSI Congress and/or other research conferences

V. Letter of Interest (LOI) Requirements

1. Project Title (*20 word limit*)
2. Executive Summary: Describe the specific research questions, why it is important to address these research questions, overall research conceptual framework, and concrete deliverables of the project. (*300 word limit*)
3. What specific research questions will the proposed project address? Provide a brief literature review that addresses why it is important to address these research questions. (*500 word limit*)
4. Describe the conceptual framework that will be used to answer the above research questions, such as the structure and guiding principles that will enable the researcher to thoroughly address the research questions. (*500 word limit*)
5. Describe the types of academic outputs (e.g., thesis paper, dissertation paper, conference presentation) will be produced at the end of the project. (*200 word limit*)
6. Describe how the proposed project aligns with BRIDGE initiative focus on ELSI research and religion. (*200 word limit*)
7. Describe brief budget explanation in a table and, if applicable, sources of additional funding. (*100 word limit*)
8. Describe how the proposed project is feasible given the proposed timeline, requested funding amount, and the resources available to the researcher. (*200 word limit*)
 - Map the research activities according to a brief and clear timeline (e.g., Months 1–3: Data Collection; Months 4–6: Analysis)
9. Letter of support from faculty mentor/supervisor
 - *Note: Please request the letter writer to comment on the applicant's ability to (1) successfully complete the project, (2) complete the above-mentioned RCR training, and (3) complete the ELSI-capacity building workshops.*
10. Email completed application in a PDF document to bridge@biola.edu.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

Applications for seed funding will be reviewed by the BRIDGE Initiative leadership team. Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Fit with BRIDGE Initiative's focus on ELSI and religion.
- **Rigor:** Methodological rigor and scholarly quality
- **Feasibility:** Potential for success
- **Fiscal responsibility:** Budget items that are commensurate to activity goals

VII. Timeline (Round 1)

Milestone	Date
ELSI Capacity-Building Training	1:00-2:30pm, October 23, 2026
Responsible Conduct of Research Training	9am–12pm, January 29, 2027
Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline	November 15, 2026
Invitations to Full Application Issued	December 1, 2026
Full Application deadline	January 15, 2027
Award Decisions & Notifications	February 15, 2027
Funding available starting	March 1, 2027

For more information, consult our website or contact the BRIDGE Initiative team at Biola University at bridge@biola.edu.