

Request for Proposals

BRIDGE Initiative Faculty 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 and Research Foci

The goal of this initiative is to fund pilot or seed projects that will spur independent lines of ELSI research capable of attracting future external funding. Proposals must address understudied topics at the intersection of human genetics/genomics and religious groups. 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 and Team Requirements

To foster workforce development and transdisciplinary integration, all projects must adhere to the following team structure:

- **Lead Applicant:** Must hold a faculty-level appointment at Biola University from any department (e.g., Public Health, Psychology, Theology, Biological Sciences, Intercultural Studies, Communications).
- **Transdisciplinary Integration:** The team must include members from at least two different academic disciplines.
- **Junior Faculty Involvement:** If the primary lead is not a junior faculty member, a junior faculty member (i.e., within ten years of first academic appointment) must be included in the project team.
- **Student Participation:** Projects must involve either graduate or undergraduate students.
- **Community Engagement:** Teams must include meaningful involvement of a member or members of the religious community being studied in the research process in all stages of the research. The BRIDGE Initiative leadership team can assist with recruitment of appropriate community partners.
- **Training:** Applicants must complete **ELSI research capacity-building** training before submitting an application. The purpose of the training is to prepare Biola faculty for engaging well with existing ELSI research and for producing excellent such research of their own.
- **Training:** New faculty and student participants must complete **Responsible Conduct of Research** training, consisting of an in-person RCR training (totaling 3 hours) with the remaining hours fulfilled by synchronous, remote RCR trainings (totaling 5 hours) during the duration of the research project. The first in-person RCR training will take place on the morning of January 29th, 2027. 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.

IV. Award Information

- **Award Amount:** A maximum of \$20,000 in direct costs may be requested per project.
- **Indirect Costs:** Indirect costs are not allowed.
- **Duration:** Projects may last up to two years.
- **Navigation Support:** Awardees will receive "ELSI research navigation" support from the BRIDGE leadership team, including help with recruitment, statistical consultation, and ethical oversight.

V. Allowable Costs

Funds may be used for:

1. Research personnel compensation or faculty course releases. For Biola Faculty members, the cost for course buyouts will be the amount needed for internal grants: \$6600.
2. Research participant recruitment and compensation.
3. Consultant and community partner fees.
4. Research materials and equipment.
5. Travel and registration for the NHGRI Research Training and Career Development Annual Meeting or the Biennial ELSI Congress.
6. Travel costs to present the research at academic conferences.

VI. Application Process & Deadlines (Round 1)

The call for proposals follows a two-stage process beginning with a Competitive Letter of Intent (LOI). Applicants are required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research training and ELSI Capacity-Building training as prerequisites for application. LOIs should be submitted to bridge@biola.edu.

Timeline for Round 1

- **ELSI Capacity-Building Training:** 1:00-2:30pm, October 23, 2026
- **Responsible Conduct of Research Training:** 9am–12pm, January 29, 2027
- **Seed Grant Information Session:** TBD — February or March, 2027
- **Letter of Intent (LOI) Deadline:** April 1, 2027
- **Invitations to Full Application Issued:** May 1, 2027
- **Full Application Deadline:** June 30, 2027
- **Award Decisions & Notifications:** August 2027
- **Official Launch & Funding Payout:** March 2028

VII. Letter of Interest (LOI) Requirements

1. Project Title
2. Executive Summary: Describe the specific research questions, their significance, research conceptual framework, and concrete deliverables of the project. *(150 word limit)*
3. Project Narrative: *(1000 word limit)*
 1. Research questions and existing literature: What specific research questions will the proposed project address? How are these questions situated within the existing literature?
 2. Methodology: 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.
 3. Alignment: Explain how the proposed project aligns with BRIDGE initiative focus on ELSI research and religion. Demonstrate fulfillment of team structure criteria. Include team composition and proposed contribution of each team member.

4. Outputs: List the types of academic (e.g., conference presentations, journal articles) and community-facing, non-academic (e.g., podcast, videos) outputs that will be produced at the end of the project
 5. Budget: Provide a brief budget explanation and, if applicable, sources of additional funding.
 6. Feasibility: Describe the proposed timeline for the project and support its feasibility given the budget and other resources available.
4. Reference list

VIII. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by the BRIDGE leadership team and community members based on:

- **Alignment:** Fit with BRIDGE Initiative's focus on ELSI and religion.
 - **Rigor:** Methodological rigor and scholarly quality.
 - **Team Composition:** Qualifications of the transdisciplinary team and quality of integration.
 - **Community Impact:** Equitable engagement of community members and accessibility of findings for those communities.
 - **Feasibility:** Potential for success; realistic budget.
 - **Sustainability:** Potential for securing future external funding.
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For more information, consult our website or contact the BRIDGE Initiative team at Biola University at bridge@biola.edu.