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Sent: Thursday, May 12, 2016 9:28 PM
To: Jeffrey Epstein
Subject: Antidisciplinary Science Fellows Proposal

Replace Antidisciplinary with whatever word...

Proposal: Antidisciplinary Science Fellows Program MIT Media Lab April 2016

The MIT Media Lab seeks support for a fellowship program in Antidisciplinary Science. The Lab is a leader in this area, which promises to fundamentally rethink research and practice around scientific inquiry. We seek \$12 million to fund and operate the first three years of this fellowship program.

Today, we face a crisis in science. Academic science is not leading to breakthrough innovations, and the disciplinary structures of the academy are largely to blame. Certain types of research are recognized and rewarded, and become defined as disciplines. As this happens, people begin talking only to a very small peer group, often by publishing in a small number of very specific journals. Meanwhile, we believe the most important scientific questions today reside in the spaces between disciplines.

In contrast to interdisciplinary work where people from different disciplines work together, the Media Lab is driven by antidisciplinary work. An antidisciplinary project isn't a sum of many disciplines but something entirely new—the word defies easy definition. But what it means to the Media Lab is someone or something that doesn't fit within a traditional academic discipline—a field of study with its own particular words, frameworks, and methods. Most academics are judged by how many times they have published in prestigious, peer-reviewed journals. This system often leads researchers to align their work to the dictates of peer review rather than risking the potential repercussions of an unconventional approach. Indeed, the current peer review system causes hyper-specialization where people in different fields have a very difficult time collaborating—or even communicating—with people in other fields.

When Joi thinks about the “space” the Lab has created, he likes to imagine a huge piece of paper that represents “all science.” The disciplines, such as chemistry, “genetics” or “design” are small black dots on this paper. The massive amounts of white space between the dots represent antidisciplinary space. Many people would like to play in this white space, but there is very little funding available, and it's even harder to get a tenured position without some sort of disciplinary anchor in one of the black dots.

Additionally, it appears increasingly difficult to tackle many of the interesting problems—as well as the “wicked problems”—through a traditional disciplinary approach. Unraveling the complexities of the human body is the perfect example. Our best chance for rapid breakthroughs should come through a collaborative “One Science.” But instead, we seem unable to move beyond “many sciences”—a complex mosaic of so many different disciplines that often we don't recognize when we are looking at the same problem because our language is so different and our microscopes are set so differently.

So how do we find talent in as yet un-named fields? We hypothesize that the regular academic processes of hiring and peer review will not find these people. And current programs to find exceptional individuals are either too organized or not organized enough. There is a limit to how much the search for geniuses can and should be centrally planned and organized, as the best people tend to have their discussions outside of institutions. Events like Reilly's FOO Camp are a wonderful example of successful models of unstructured ways of discovering and engaging such talent. However, we are interested in exploring a different way that better integrates with the academic research structure. Therefore the

Media Lab is developing a new prize and fellowship program focused on finding extraordinary minds who are working beyond disciplinary bounds.

The Antidisciplinary Science Fellowship Program proposes to locate remarkable people working in interdisciplinary white spaces by offering prizes to individuals from inside and outside academia, giving them access to the resources of the Media Lab and each other, and bringing them to the attention of the world. We will work with a group of nominators and we will also utilize a novel Web-based nomination crowdsourcing platform, also offering prizes to people who identify such exceptional talents. A small, distinguished selection committee will then review nominees and award prizes of \$100,000 each to a maximum of ten individuals each year. Each winner will select up to five other individuals working on a related topic, forming an investigational cluster. Team members in each cluster will receive a prize of \$10,000. All Fellows and team members will stay in their current locations, but will be brought together at an annual Fellows event at the Media Lab, and will also communicate regularly over the course of a year.

Through this project the MIT Media Lab aims to trigger a shift in the nature of scientific inquiry and nurture entire new areas of discovery that could bring about beneficial impacts to humanity. We believe the Lab can bring the right balance of institutional rigor and free-form creativity to this search and selection process. The Media Lab is a top research and teaching program within one of the world's best universities, but at the same time is also unique within MIT. And we have worked for 30 years to ensure that our students and faculty have the freedom to explore the wildest and most compelling of ideas.

Budget (over 3 years)

Staff: \$1,118,164

Travel: \$490,000

Materials and Services: \$210,000

Convenings: \$1,725,000

Crowdsourcing system: \$300,000

Prizes: \$4,950,000

Selection Committee Honoraria: \$1,200,000

Overhead at 20%: \$1,998,633

Total: \$11,991,797

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