

Newsletter

Lyda Hill Philanthropies Commits \$1 Million in New Funding to Advance High-Impact Research in Texas

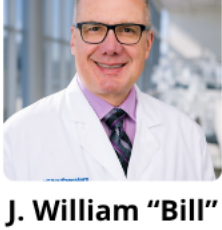
Grants Will Support Top-Tier 2026 Hill Prizes Applicants



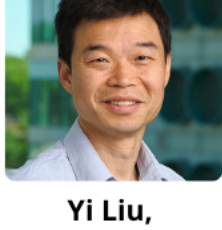
Karen M. Basen-Engquist, Ph.D.
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center



Elizabeth Chen, Ph.D. (NAS)
UT Southwestern Medical Center



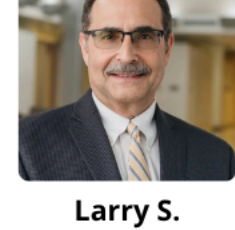
J. William "Bill" Harbour, M.D.
UT Southwestern Medical Center



Yi Liu, Ph.D.
UT Southwestern Medical Center



Rebecca Richards-Kortum, Ph.D. (NAM, NAE, NAS)
Rice University



Larry S. Schlesinger, M.D.
Texas Biomedical Research Institute



TAMEST and Lyda Hill Philanthropies are pleased to announce \$1 million in additional research funding awarded to six exceptional Texas researchers selected from the 2026 Hill Prizes applicant pool. These grants — ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000 — provide targeted support to advance high-impact, paradigm-shifting innovations across the state to some of the most promising proposals not selected for the 2026 Hill Prizes.

The Hill Prizes annually award \$3.5 million (\$500,000 across seven prize categories) to accelerate breakthrough innovations in Texas. To maximize the impact of the high-caliber applicant pool, Lyda Hill Philanthropies provides extra discretionary funding as a separate component of the program, bringing this year's total funding amount to \$4.5 million. [Read More](#)



Mark Your Calendar: TAMEST 2027 Annual Conference Registration Opens Next Week

Registration opens next week for the **TAMEST 2027 Annual Conference: Frontiers of Discovery: Exploring from the Quantum to the Cosmos**, February 1-3, 2027, at the InterContinental Houston in Houston, Texas. The program will examine how advances in science and technology at every scale are leading society into exciting new frontiers. Speakers and sessions will explore innovations in the fields of precision medicine, neural engineering, targeted disease therapeutics, deep space exploration, robotics and more. [Read More](#)



TAMEST O'Donnell Awards 20th Anniversary Series: 2018 O'Donnell Award Recipient in Physical Sciences Xiaojin Elaine Li, Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin

As TAMEST celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Edith and Peter O'Donnell Awards, TAMEST connected with **2018 O'Donnell Award in Physical Sciences Recipient and O'Donnell Awards Summit Speaker Xiaojin Elaine Li, Ph.D.**, to discuss how the award fueled her trajectory, how she is helping build a statewide quantum ecosystem across Texas and why giving early-career researchers space away from the academic "rat race" is essential for breakthrough science. [Read More](#)

Featured Video



There's still time to register for the **TAMEST Edith and Peter O'Donnell Awards Summit: Celebrating 20 Years of Impact and Innovation**. The summit will take place on **Thursday, September 10, 2026**, at Robert B. Rowling Hall at The University of Texas at Austin in Austin, Texas. Don't miss the opportunity to engage with leading scientific minds and celebrate the enduring impact of innovation in our state. [Click here to see what 2023 O'Donnell Awards Committee Chair Oliver C. Mullins, Ph.D. \(NAE\) thinks makes the awards so special.](#)

TAMEST In The News

National Inventors Hall of Fame: Where Serendipity Happens: The Frances Ligler Story, TAMEST Member and O'Donnell Awards Committee Chair Frances S. Ligler, D.Sc., D.Phil. (NAE), Texas A&M University

The Daily Texan: Artificial Intelligence Researchers from The University of Texas at Austin Are Awarded Grants in Department of Energy Initiative, TAMEST Member and Hill Prize in Artificial Intelligence Committee Member Karen E. Willcox, Ph.D. (NAE), The University of Texas at Austin

The Dallas Morning News (Subscription Required): Lyda Hill, the Dynamic Woman Quietly Shaping Modern Dallas. 2025 Kay Bailey Hutchison Distinguished Service Award Recipient Lyda Hill and Lyda Hill Philanthropies

ZDNET: How Would AI Data Centers in Space Work? A Former NASA Robotics Chief Explains, TAMEST Member and TAMEST 2027 Annual Conference Technology Co-Chair Robert O. Ambrose, Ph.D. (NAE), Texas A&M University

Innovation Map: Rice University Lands \$19 Million Grant to Build AI-Driven Quantum Materials Lab, TAMEST Member and Rice University Executive Vice President for Research David Scott Sholl, Ph.D. (NAE)

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Member Briefs

In Memoriam:



Tom Luce

1940 – 2026

CEO of Biotech Initiatives, Lyda Hill Philanthropies

Founder and Chairman Emeritus, Texas 2036

TAMEST honors the life and legacy of **Tom Luce**, an irreplaceable civic giant, a key supporter of TAMEST and a true architect of Texas' education policy and pioneering biotechnology ecosystem. Mr. Luce's career reflected an unwavering commitment to building a stronger state — from fighting for public education reform and student literacy to establishing Texas 2036 to ensure data-driven, nonpartisan solutions for our state's long-term future. His legacy will remain foundational to the state's continued progress, and he will be deeply missed.

George Ligler Appointed to National Academy of Engineering Council

The National Academy of Engineering has appointed TAMEST Board Member **George T. Ligler, D.Phil. (NAE), Texas A&M University**, as Councillor. Dr. Ligler was elected to the NAE for leadership and engineering innovation in specifying and implementing complex computer-based systems for aviation and the U.S. Census. He has contributed extensively to the work of the National Academies since 1990, serving on numerous panels, committees and boards. In 2014, he was recognized as a lifetime National Associate of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. [Read More](#)

Triple Crown Celebration for Lydia E. Kavradi and Rebecca Richards-Kortum

Today, August 27, the George R. Brown School of Engineering and Computing at Rice University will host a celebration honoring TAMEST Members **Lydia E. Kavradi, Ph.D. (NAM, NAE, NAS)** and **Rebecca Richards-Kortum, Ph.D. (NAM, NAE, NAS)**, recognizing their election to all three U.S. national academies. This rare "triple crown" distinction underscores the national impact of their contributions to robotics, computational biology, global health and low-cost diagnostic technologies. [Read More](#)

US Department of Energy Announces First Genesis Mission Projects Selected to Accelerate AI-Driven Scientific Discovery

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced the **first projects** selected under the Genesis Mission Request for Applications (RFA) as part of President Trump's Genesis Mission. Selected researchers include teams from **The University of Texas at Austin** — including **TAMEST Member and Hill Prize in Artificial Intelligence Committee Member Karen E. Willcox, Ph.D. (NAE)** — as well as Rice University, Texas State University, Texas A&M University, The University of Texas at Arlington and University of Houston. The teams will help develop and demonstrate AI-enabled scientific workflows designed to accelerate breakthroughs in energy, discovery science and national security. [Read More](#)

The International Society for Engineering Health First Annual Summit on Engineering the Elimination of Diseases

The International Society for Engineering Health (ISEH), led by **TAMEST Member Roderic I. Pettigrew, M.D., Ph.D. (NAM, NAE), Texas A&M University, Houston Methodist**, will hold its First Annual Summit, September 10-11 at **Rice University**. This inaugural gathering brings together leaders in medicine, engineering, science, industry, government and patient advocacy to identify the challenging diseases most ready for elimination and to launch the first ISEH initiatives. [Read More](#)

Texas Quantum Strategy Takes Shape at UT Dallas Summit

Leaders from academia, industry and government convened at **The University of Texas at Dallas** for the 2026 Texas Quantum Summit, outlining statewide priorities in quantum research, infrastructure development and commercialization as Texas advances its coordinated quantum strategy. Among the featured experts was **TAMEST Member Scott J. Aaronson, Ph.D. (NAS), The University of Texas at Austin**, who contributed insights on the scientific foundations and long-term challenges of quantum computing as Texas positions itself as a national leader in the field. [Read More](#)

[Read More](#)

About TAMEST

TAMEST was co-founded in 2004 by the Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison and Nobel Laureates Michael S. Brown, M.D., and Richard E. Smalley, Ph.D. With more than 360 members, eight Nobel Laureates and 23 member institutions, TAMEST is composed of the Texas-based members of the three National Academies (National Academy of Medicine, National Academy of Engineering and National Academy of Sciences) and other honorific organizations. We bring together the state's brightest minds in medicine, engineering, science and technology to foster collaboration, and to advance research, innovation and business in Texas.

TAMEST's unique interdisciplinary model has become an effective recruitment tool for top research and development centers across Texas. Since our founding, more than 350 TAMEST members have been inducted into the National Academies or relocated to Texas.

TAMEST Member Institutions



TAMEST recognizes members of the Founders of the Endowment and the Legacy Circle, whose extraordinary commitment ensures sustainable funds to continue the mission of promoting excellence in science and technology.

Founders of the Endowment

Anadarko Foundation • AT&T • BNSF Foundation • ConocoPhillips
Energy Future Holdings • Edith and Peter O'Donnell • Temple-Inland
The USAA Foundation

Legacy Circle

The Eugene McDermott Foundation