

## Philanthropist Alan Kanzer Endows Inaugural Innovation Scholar

*New gift supports independent early career researchers pursuing bold approaches to mind,  
brain and behavior*

NEW YORK – Alan Kanzer, a member of the Zuckerman Institute’s Brain Trust, is continuing his philanthropy to brain science with a \$1 million endowment gift to the Institute’s Innovation Scholars program, which supports talented early career scientists pursuing ambitious research efforts that depart from the status quo.

As an alternative to traditional postdoctoral training, the program appoints scholars for up to five years as research scientists with principal investigator standing at the Institute. These scholars, noted for their ability to ask new questions from diverse perspectives and pursue exciting interdisciplinary answers to those questions, can benefit from broad-ranging collaboration opportunities and structured mentorship at the Institute, including guidance from faculty hosts and a committee of advisors, as well as competitive financial support. Of particular note is the Innovation Scholar’s dedication to societal impact.

“I have always been inspired by the Zuckerman Institute’s commitment to interdisciplinary neuroscience and fostering the next generation of talent,” said [Kanzer](#), senior counsel at Alston & Bird LLP and a Columbia College alumna, class of 1965. “This program beautifully unites both of these priorities, allowing early career scientists to move beyond the silo of a single laboratory and work at the nexus of many disciplines and with many mentors.”

The gift is Kanzer's third investment in the future of neuroscience at the Zuckerman Institute, with a total of \$3 million bestowed to the [Artist-in-Residence](#), [Writer-In-Residence](#) and now Innovation Scholars program. His generous support underscores his dedication to advancing science in creative ways.

[Zenna Tavares, PhD](#), is the first Alan Kanzer Innovation Scholar. Dr. Tavares aims to create machines that reason about the real world in ways inspired by the human mind and brain. Drawing on neuroscience, computer science, cognitive science, logic and philosophy, Dr. Tavares seeks to distill the mental strategies that we use to build models of the world around us into mathematical algorithms for machines.

“Alan Kanzer continues to be a great champion of innovative brain science, and I am deeply appreciative of his belief in this important new program,” said Daniel Wolpert, PhD, a principal

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investigator at the Zuckerman Institute and a professor of neuroscience at Columbia's Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons, who is leading the Innovation Scholars program. "With Alan's support, our scholars will have the freedom to pursue nonlinear paths and partnerships that push the boundaries of discovery and advance our understanding of mind and brain in exciting ways."

**Columbia University's [Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute](https://zuckermaninstitute.columbia.edu)** brings together a group of world-class scientists and scholars to pursue the most urgent and exciting challenge of our time: understanding the brain and mind. A deeper understanding of the brain promises to transform human health and society. From effective treatments for disorders like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, depression and autism to advances in fields as fundamental as computer science, economics, law, the arts and social policy, the potential for humanity is staggering. To learn more, visit: [zuckermaninstitute.columbia.edu](https://zuckermaninstitute.columbia.edu).