

COLUMBIA | Zuckerman Institute

MORTIMER B. ZUCKERMAN MIND BRAIN BEHAVIOR INSTITUTE

Daphna Shohamy Appointed Director and CEO of Columbia's Zuckerman Institute

*Expert in learning, memory and decision-making looks to future with past
success in mind*

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NEW YORK, NY — Ten years after the inception of Columbia's Zuckerman Institute, [Daphna Shohamy, PhD](#), has been appointed director and CEO. The first woman to hold these positions at the institute, she brings to her new roles a strong desire to connect scientists to each other, to broader communities and to society.

"The institute has reached a critical and exciting moment in its growth," said Dr. Shohamy, Kavli Professor of Brain Science at Columbia. "We are poised to build on the excellence of our past to drive transformative discovery in the future."

Dr. Shohamy is a leading expert in her field, known for her work at the intersection of learning, memory and decision-making. [Her research](#), published in top journals and cited more than 11,000 times, explores how we draw on past experiences to make decisions and predictions about the future. It uses a combination of techniques, including functional magnetic resonance brain imaging (fMRI), computational modeling and behavior studies. She has been recognized with awards from the McKnight Foundation, the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, the Society for Neuroeconomics, Columbia University and the Association for Psychological Science, among others.

Committed to building bridges, Dr. Shohamy traces this impulse to her childhood: to being first an American child living in Israel, and then an Israeli living in the United States. With one foot in psychology and one in neuroscience, she collaborates extensively with colleagues across Columbia's medical center and Morningside campuses. Much of this work focuses on neurological and psychiatric disorders, including Parkinson's disease, anterograde amnesia and anorexia nervosa.

"Discovering how the brain works is among the most fascinating and consequential mandates of our time," said Dr. Shohamy. "We are excited to engage the institute to deeply connect research in the lab with the pressing problems we face as a society."

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Each year, Dr. Shohamy teaches the college's incoming class about the science of mind, brain and behavior, for Columbia's Core curriculum course Frontiers of Science. She also interacts frequently with school principals, teachers and others across the country to help bridge the neuroscience of learning with education. Deeply committed to sharing science and research with the public, she has been a speaker at the [World Science Festival](#), advised Pixar on the animated film *Inside Out* and been featured in [news outlets](#) worldwide.

A leader at the Zuckerman Institute and one of its first faculty members, Dr. Shohamy has a long record of service. She founded the Alan Kanzer Writer-in-Residence [program](#) and has held various roles that have helped shape the governance and vision of the Institute. With the departure of previous Director and CEO Rui Costa, she took on the mantle of [associate director](#), a position that, like her new roles of director and CEO, works closely with founding codirector [Richard Axel, MD](#). As the institute has grown to a community of some 850 researchers, staff, students and affiliates, including 51 principal investigators from 18 departments, she has been excited to welcome a cadre of early career scientists from diverse backgrounds.

"The Zuckerman Institute is serving as a model for other new neuroscience institutes being created across the country," said Dr. Shohamy. "We are focused on the future, continuing to nurture and support the next generation of scientists."

Dr. Shohamy has also been active in the broader Columbia community. She has participated in numerous committees for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, including the Policy and Planning Committee and the Academic Review Committee. She also holds the position of codirector of the Kavli Institute for Brain Science.

"The idea for a world-class center devoted to the study of the human mind is one I elucidated in my 2002 inauguration speech, and has been a vital cornerstone of the now thriving Manhattanville campus," said Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia, who [announced her appointment](#) today. "The entire University community should rightly take pride in the Institute's remarkable success, which will undoubtedly continue with Daphna serving as Director and CEO."

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Columbia University's [Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute](#) 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.