

Connecting Kids to Brain Science, Columbia's Zuckerman Institute Teams up with BioBus

~New mobile lab-on-wheels will visit 100 schools in Harlem, Washington Heights and the Bronx annually~

News Release

Contact: Anne Holden, anne.holden@columbia.edu, 212.853.0171

NEW YORK, October 13, 2016 — Columbia's [Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute](#) and [BioBus](#) announce today a partnership aimed at bringing new educational opportunities to schools and community centers across upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

"The BioBus scientists create educational opportunities that are authentic, exciting and approachable for diverse audiences," said Kelley Remole, PhD, director of governance, research support and outreach at the Zuckerman Institute. "Their expertise working with schools and providing after-school programming adds a new dimension to our existing public programs at the Zuckerman Institute."

BioBus is the brainchild of former Columbia graduate student Ben Dubin-Thaler, PhD. While finishing his degree in cell biology in 2007, he placed a Craigslist bid on a 1974 transit bus — and won. Turning down a research position in Singapore, Dubin-Thaler refurbished the bus instead, stuffing it with top-tier research-grade equipment to create a mobile lab-on-wheels.

The first stop for BioBus, which hit the road in 2008, was a public event at Columbia University; today it has visited more than 500 schools and community events. Over 150,000 people have climbed on board to make movies of crawling amoeba and peer through microscopes at objects invisible to the naked eye, such as glowing plant chloroplasts. Working along actual scientists — as well as volunteers ranging from local college students to special guests such as Bill Nye "The Science Guy" — students leave with a new appreciation for how cool science is. More than one has spontaneously shouted "I want to be a scientist!"

Building on this record of success, Columbia University will be home to a second BioBus: An Airstream trailer, fully equipped with state-of-the-art scientific tools, that will serve as a scientific ambassador to the Zuckerman Institute's neighbors. A new curriculum focused on brain science, developed in collaboration with the Zuckerman Institute, will open up multiple entry points and pathways into science for young people.

"As part of our partnership with Columbia's Zuckerman Institute, we'll be bringing the new BioBus to 100 schools in Harlem, Washington Heights and the Bronx every year," says Dubin-Thaler, now executive director of BioBus. "Our experience has shown us that there is an enormous interest in science amongst students and teachers in these neighborhoods, but they don't have enough access to scientists and scientific equipment."

The new mobile science platform will spend more than a hundred days a year visiting local K–12 schools such as PS 125 and the Urban Assembly Institute for New Technologies. It will travel across Harlem, Washington Heights and the South Bronx, providing more than 30,000 students a year with a hands-on introduction to science.

After visiting the BioBus, students can then enroll in BioBase programs, located in the Zuckerman Institute’s Education Lab on the ground floor of the new Jerome L. Greene Science Center. Set up as a scientific laboratory, this space will allow students to partner with scientists to engage in in-depth science projects lasting weeks or months after school, on weekends or during school breaks. BioBase will also offer internship programs, professional development for teachers and host public events for science enthusiasts.

“Being a part of the Zuckerman Institute and working with its world-class scientists is an incredibly exciting opportunity,” says Latasha Wright, PhD, chief scientist at BioBus. “We are finding creative ways to translate their extraordinary research on the mind and brain into exciting educational projects for kids, teachers, grandparents and everyone in the neighborhood.”

###

Columbia University’s [Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute](https://zuckermaninstitute.columbia.edu) brings together an extraordinary 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.