

The National Herald

Niarchos Foundation Science Initiatives

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NEW YORK – The inaugural lecture of Stavros Niarchos Foundation Brain Insight Lecture Series, took place on March 19. The series is one of two initiatives of the Foundation in partnership with The Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute at Columbia University, to enhance understanding of the biology of the mind and the complexity of human behavior.

The series will offer four lectures per year, featuring Columbia University scientists and will be open to the public. The lectures aim to address issues of broader societal importance in a manner that informs and engages the community.

Andreas Dracopoulos, Co-President of the Board of Directors of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, said of the initiatives: “The dissemination of knowledge and engaging a broader audience are fundamental tenets of our grant-making philosophy. These two initiatives bring the important scientific work that takes place at the Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute into the greater community, enhancing public understanding of new developments on neuroscience research and its expansive consequences. The ability of high schools students at large to keep up with new scientific developments plays a critical role in determining a society’s future competitiveness and prosperity. At the same time, reaching out to high school teachers will provide a new generation of potential scientists with knowledge on current research developments in neuroscience and their impact.”

Dracopoulos continued that “What distinguishes Columbia’s Zuckerman Institute is its cohesion – we have brought together a visionary group of neuroscientists, researchers who share a deep commitment to improving our understanding of brain and mind, but equally importantly, to conveying what is now known to a broad audience beyond campus,” said Thomas Jessell, co-director of the Zuckerman Institute and Claire Tow Professor of Motor Neuron Disorders at Columbia University. “The initiatives funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation are crucial in our attempts to inform the public about brain science, engage the local community, and ignite the imagination of the next generation of brain scientists.” In the inaugural lecture Catherine Lord, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist whose influential work has helped shape worldwide standards for diagnosing autism, focused on Autism: Human Social Behavior and Communication. Dr. Lord’s long-term studies of children with autism are providing new insights into the course of the disorder and establishing an evidence base for effective treatments. The speaker is Professor of Psychology and founding Director of the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical College, and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in collaboration with New York Collaborates for Autism.



The second initiative is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Teacher-Scholar Program, run by Kelley Remole, Ph.D., Director of Neuroscience Outreach for the Zuckerman Institute. The program aims to provide selected, high school, science teachers in New York City with an opportunity to strengthen their science communication skills while developing lesson plans for their classrooms. The first Teacher-Scholars, who attended the March lecture, were chosen through a competitive application process of essays and interviews. The 2014 Teacher-Scholars are: Joseph Andrews – The School for Human Rights – Brooklyn; Rharaka Gilbert – High School of Economics and Finance – Manhattan; John Heneghan – Frederick Douglass Academy III – Manhattan; Bonnie Lestz – John Adams High School – Queens; Timothy Lewis – Lab School of Finance and Technology – Bronx; Deborah Reich – Bronx Theatre High

School – Bronx; Jessica Ross – Midwood High School – Brooklyn; Erik Shold – Landmark High School – Manhattan

The Teacher-Scholars will use the Brain Insight Lectures as case studies in scientific inquiry. By attending the public lectures, as well as Teacher-Scholar seminars, they will gain familiarity with the lecture's subject matter and workshop lesson ideas to bring back to their science classrooms. The lessons that are created as part of the Teacher-Scholar program will integrate the lecture content with national science teaching standards (the Next Generation Science Standards).

Both of these initiatives are part of the extensive public programs of the Education Center to be located at the new Jerome L. Greene Science Center.

