



National Institutes of Health
Turning Discovery Into Health

Launching Biomedical Innovators

June 20-21, 2023



theWONDRY



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About the Event

Launching Biomedical Innovators is a two-day mini-conference spearheaded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), LaunchTN, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Meharry Medical College, and University of Tennessee Health Science Center. This event aims to educate university-based startup companies and translational researchers as well as Tennessee-based non-university affiliated companies States on the benefits of small business innovation research (SBIR) and small business technology transfer (STTR) grants, the submission process, and resources available to applicants.

Attendees will have the opportunity to hear about small business funding opportunities through the NIH and entrepreneurial resources offered through partner institutions, learn successful habits from past and present small business grantees. Attendees are encouraged to schedule 1:1 meetings with NIH Program Staff after the event to discuss their ideas. Our hope is that at the end of this conference, attendees have gained critical information that will help them prepare competitive SBIR/ STTR grant applications.

Participating Institutions

Lead Institutions

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

Life Science TN

LaunchTN

Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Meharry Medical College

University of Tennessee Health Science Center

University of Memphis

Featured Institutions

The Wond'ry

Jumpstart Health Investors

EpiCenter Memphis

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)

NIH Small Business Entrepreneurial Education and Development (SEED) Office

National Institute for Diabetes, Digestive, and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)

National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)

National Institute for General Medical Science (NIGMS)

National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB)

National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)

National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR)

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)

National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

National Eye Institute (NEI)

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

Agenda

June 20

12:00 PM	Welcome and Introduction <i>Jim Stefansic, Ph.D.</i>
12:10 PM	Overview of the NIH Small Business Program and SEED Office Resources <i>Adam Sorkin, MEM., MSE.,</i> NIH Small Business Policy Manager
12:40 – 1:20 PM	NIH Institute-Specific Resources
12:40 PM	National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) <i>Yasamin Moghadam, M.S.</i> Scientific Program Specialist
12:48 PM	National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) <i>LCDR Michael Banyas, M.P.A.</i> Small Business Program Coordinator
12:56 PM	National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) <i>Meena Rajagopal, Ph.D.</i> Program Officer
1:04 PM	National Eye Institute (NEI) <i>Paek Lee, Ph.D.</i> Small Business Program Coordinator
1:12 PM	National Institute for Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) <i>Kari Ashmont, Ph.D.</i> Program Director
1:20– 1:30 PM	BREAK
1:30 – 2:20 PM	Overview of Local Programs and Resources For Entrepreneurs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch TN- Charles Layne• Life Science TN- Abby Trotter• Jumpstart Health Investors - Marcus Whitney• EpiCenter– Jessica Taveau• The Wond'ry - Charleson Bell, Ph.D.
2:20 – 3:00 PM	Academic Resources for Entrepreneurs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vanderbilt University Medical Center –Charleson Bell, Ph.D.• Meharry Medical College –Todd Gary, Ph.D.• University of Tennessee Health Science Center – Todd Ponzio, Ph.D.• University of Memphis – Brian Evans, Ph.D.

Agenda

June 21

- 1:00 – 1:04 PM **Welcome and Introduction**
Stephanie Davis, Ph.D.
- 1:04 – 2:25 PM **NIH Institute-Specific Resources**
- 1:04 PM National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
Jessica Forbes, Ph.D.
AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow
- 1:12 PM National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR)
Kris Bough, Ph.D.
Program Director
- 1:20 PM National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)
Emrin Horgusluoglu, Ph.D.
Program Director
- 1:28 PM National Institute for Diabetes Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
Danny Gossett, Ph.D.
Program Director
- 1:36 PM National Institute for Arthritis Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
Xibin Wang, Ph.D.
Program Director
- 1:44 PM National Institute on Aging (NIA)
Josh Hooks, Ph.D.
AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow
- 1:52 PM National Human Genome Research Institute
Katie Bardsley
Small Business Program Analyst
- 2:00 PM National Institute for Allergy Immunology and Infectious Disease (NIAID)
Hejiao English, Ph.D.
Small Business Development Specialist
- 2:08 PM National Cancer Institute (NCI)
Saroj Regmi, Ph.D.
Program Director
- 2:16 PM National Institute for General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)
Eddie Billingslea, Ph.D.
Small Business Program Coordinator
- 2:25 – 2:35 PM **BREAK**
- 2:35 – 3:20 PM **Ask An Awardee: Lessons from SBIR/STTR-funded investigators**

Moderated by Kwame Ulmer, M.B.A. (NHLBI Entrepreneur-in-Residence)
- *Kyle Hocking, Ph.D.* (Founder and CEO, VoluMetrix)
 - *Monica Jabslonsky, Ph.D.* (Founder and CSO, Occulo Therapy, LLC)
 - *Justin Baba, Ph.D.* (Founder and CSO, Yaya Scientific, LLC)
- 3:20 – 3:30 PM **Event Closing**

Please feel free to schedule a 1:1 meeting with representatives from the following institutes

Institute/Office/Center	Name	Email
SEED Office	Adam Sorkin	seedinfo@nih.gov
NCI	Saroj Regmi	saroj.regmi@nih.gov
NCATS	Meena Rajagopal	meena.rajagopal@nih.gov
NHLBI	Yasamin Moghadam	yasamin.moghadam@nih.gov
NIAID	Hejiao English	hejiao.english@nih.gov
NIAMS	Xibin Wang	wangx1@mail.nih.gov
NIA	Josh Hooks	joshua.hooks@nih.gov
NIBIB	Kari Ashmont	kari.ashmont@nih.gov
NEI	Paek Lee	paek.lee@nih.gov
NIDDK	Daniel Gossett	daniel.gossett@nih.gov
NINDS	Jessica Forbes	jessica.forbes@nih.gov
NIMHD	Michael Banyas	michael.banyas@nih.gov
NINR	Kris Bough	kristopher.bough@nih.gov
NCCIH	Emrin Horgusluoglu Moloch	emrin.horgusluoglu-moloch@nih.gov
NIGMS	Eddie Billingslea	Eddie.Billingslea@nih.gov
NHGRI	Katie Bardsley	NHGRI_SmallBusiness@NIH.gov

NIH Program Staff Contact Information

NIH
Speaker
Biographies



Kari Ashmont, Ph.D. is the Translational Team Lead at the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB). She joined NIBIB in 2022 and manages the NIBIB Small Business Programs, including the Concept to Clinic: Commercializing Innovation (C3i) Program, and supports the institute's RADx® Tech programs. Additionally, Dr. Ashmont co-leads the Dissemination Programs for the NIH BRAIN Initiative. Previously, Dr. Ashmont was a Program Director at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) where she oversaw translational device cooperative agreements and ran the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research Education Program on Translational Devices (R25). Prior to joining the NINDS in 2017, Dr. Ashmont was a postdoctoral researcher at Phoenix Children's Hospital, where her work focused on using engineering approaches and technology to improve clinical care and diagnostics, particularly in pediatric epilepsy and traumatic brain injury. As a graduate student, Dr. Ashmont developed a novel seizure detection algorithm and worked on projects involving micro-stimulation capabilities for cortical visual prosthetics and sensory discriminability. She received Bachelor of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Biology from Clarkson University and both a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degree in Biomedical Engineering from Arizona State University.



Lieutenant Commander Michael Banyas, is a Senior Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service and a Health Specialist in the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities (NIMHD). The mission of NIMHD is to lead the nation's scientific research to improve minority health and reduce health disparities. In his role, he is the Program Director for NIMHD's SBIR/STTR program and oversees an award budget of almost \$12.5 million and over 37 awardees. LCDR Banyas specializes in underserved health care and public health systems with a focus on implementation science. Previously, he served as Public Health Analyst in NIH's *All of Us* Research Program, where he led the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Pilot Project and Co Led the Tribal Engagement Strategic, as well as operational process improvement. Additionally, he served as a Project Officer in the Health Resources Services Administration for FQHCs and as the Communications Lead for the Office of Health IT and Quality. Additionally, he served as a Fellow on the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee's Health Policy subcommittee and has worked in three academic medical centers. He has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Vermont, a Master's in Public Administration in Health Management and Policy from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, graduate work in health informatics from Columbia University, and a Masters of Arts at the U.S. Naval War College.



Katie Bardsley, B.S., is a Scientific Program Analyst at the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI). She joined NHGRI in 2021 and predominantly supports NHGRI's Small Business and Genomic Technology Programs. Katie attended the University of Vermont where she earned her B.S. in Plant Biology and minors in Statistics and Chemistry. Her research background is largely in ecological genomics, bioinformatics, and developmental genetics



Eddie Billingslea, Ph.D., is the small business strategy coordinator at the Office of the Director. He is responsible for coordinating the NIGMS small business program, as well as identifying and developing new opportunities for NIGMS commercialization and entrepreneurial activities, especially those related to capacity building, training, mentoring and diversity. Prior to joining NIGMS, Billingslea was the strategic planning and evaluation lead in the Office of Research on Women's Health. Prior to that, he was a health science policy analyst in the Center for Research Strategy at the National Cancer Institute. Billingslea earned a B.A. in psychology from Virginia Union University and a Ph.D. in neuroscience from Georgetown University. He performed postdoctoral research at the University of Pennsylvania.



Kristopher Bough, MS, Ph.D., is the Coordinator of the National Institute of Nursing Research's (NINR) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR/STTR) Program and Team Lead for Special Programs, including SBIR/STTR, training, and HIV/AIDS research. He oversees a diverse portfolio of healthcare technologies. Prior to joining NINR, Dr. Bough worked as a Program Director at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for 12 years (2008-2020). At NIDA, Dr. Bough worked with both small businesses and academic researchers to develop pharmacotherapeutics and medical devices to treat substance use disorders, and chemical countermeasures to prevent opioid-induced overdose. From 2005-2008, Dr. Bough served as a Pharmacologist at the US Food & Drug Administration where he reviewed new drug applications in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. Dr. Bough holds a B.S. degree in Biology from Gettysburg College and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Biology (neuroscience) from Georgetown University. His academic research focused on elucidating the mechanistic underpinnings of the ketogenic diet as a treatment for epilepsy.



Stephanie Davis, Ph.D., received her doctorate Molecular Pharmacology (2016) from the University of South Florida. Stephanie was a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Neurology. Before joining NHLBI as the Small Business Program Coordinator in December of 2020, Stephanie was selected for the 2019-2020 Executive Branch AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellows Program, where she served as a Program Manager in the National Institute on Aging Office of Small Business Research.



Hejiao English, Ph.D., is a Small Business Health Specialist in the Office of Research Training and Special Programs (ORTSP), Division of Extramural Activities (DEA), National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), NIH. In her current position, Dr. English established, coordinates, and oversees the NIAID Small Business Applicant Assistance Program (AAP) that provides proposal development assistance and guidance to NIAID SBIR/STTR applicants in need. She has previously led applicant survey for Women Owned and Social-economically Disadvantaged NIAID SBIR/STTR applicants. Prior to NIAID, Dr. English was an Invention Development and Marketing Specialist at NCI Technology Transfer Center (TTC), where she conducted portfolio and market landscape analysis for multiple cancer therapeutics, diagnostics, and devices inventions developed by NCI intramural investigators. Dr. English received post-doctoral research training at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB) in NCI in antibody engineering and cancer immunotherapy. She holds a Ph. D. in Biochemistry from Boston University, School of Medicine, Boston, MA.



Jessica Forbes, Ph.D., is an accomplished clinician-scientist and policy advocate who currently serves as a 2022-2023 AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow for the Small Business Program at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). In her role, Dr. Forbes leads outreach and company engagement for the Small Business Program, conducting presentations to accelerators and federally and state-funded technology programs. She also provides guidance on the grant process to applicants, with a portfolio that includes the first-time Applicant Assistance Program and the Diversity Administrative supplement. Dr. Forbes' work in these areas has been instrumental in promoting innovation and inclusivity, ensuring that small businesses from diverse backgrounds have equal access to funding and support. She is a talented and engaging speaker, with a talent for communicating complex scientific concepts to diverse audiences. Her presentations have been well-received by audiences ranging from academics to policymakers, helping to raise awareness of the critical role of science and technology in driving economic growth and improving public health.



Daniel Gossett, Ph.D., is a Program Director in the Division of Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). His portfolio includes tool and technology development efforts, biomedical imaging, translational research, and research conducted by small businesses in the areas of kidney, urologic, and hematologic diseases. He is the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) coordinator for the NIDDK and works on several consortia projects including the Kidney Precision Medicine Project (KPMP) and (Re)Building a Kidney (RBK).



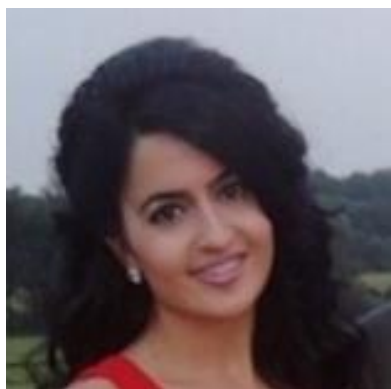
Joshua Hooks, Ph.D., is an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellow who joined NIA's Office of Strategic Extramural Programs in August 2022. He is primarily working with the Small Business team, assisting with various opportunities for start-ups and new entrepreneurs. Dr. Hooks is leading and developing several programs to assist small businesses, and early-stage investigators, bring their age-related innovations to market. Additionally, he is working to evaluate and implement programs aimed to diversify the backgrounds and experiences of individuals in aging technology and research. Prior to starting this fellowship, Dr. Hooks completed a postdoctoral fellowship in biomaterials and immuno-engineering at Johns Hopkins University. He completed his Ph.D. in bioengineering, with a focus on the lymphatic system, at Georgia Institute of Technology.



Emrin Horgusluoglu, Ph.D., is a program director in the Basic and Mechanistic Research Branch of the Division of Extramural Research at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Horgusluoglu is also the coordinator for NCCIH's small business research programs. Dr. Horgusluoglu currently represents NCCIH on the following working groups: Collaborative Research in Computational Neuroscience (CRCNS), Point of Care Technologies Research Network (POCTRN), Blueprint MedTech, Small Business Education and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED), and the National Science Foundation–National Institutes of Health (NSF-NIH) interagency initiative Smart and Connected Health. Dr. Horgusluoglu earned a master's degree in genetics from Istanbul University and a doctorate in medical and molecular genetics from the Indiana University School of Medicine. She completed postdoctoral training at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Horgusluoglu was also an adjunct assistant professor teaching statistical methods in psychological research, psychological and developmental disorders of childhood and adolescence, and introduction to neurobiology at the Psychology Department at Brooklyn College.



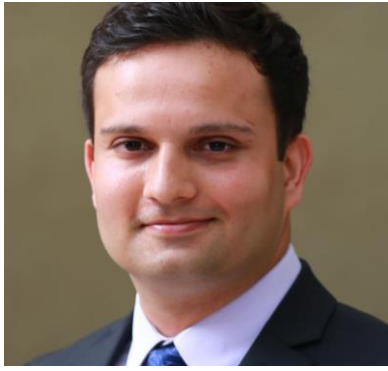
Paek Lee, Ph.D., is a Program Director in the Division of Extramural Science Programs at National Eye Institute (NEI). Dr. Lee's portfolio includes bioengineering and technology development efforts addressing retinal functions and vision impairments caused by retinal diseases, as well as SBIR and STTR projects in the areas of the posterior segments of the eye and vision neuroscience. He is the Small Business Research program manager for the NEI. Prior to joining NEI, Dr. Lee was a Scientific Review Officer at Center for Scientific Review (CSR) at National Institutes of Health (NIH), managing various study sections in the areas of Neuroscience and Vision Sciences. During his tenure at CSR, Dr. Lee also served as a Referral Officer for the Division of Receipt and Referral (DRR).



Yasamin Moghadam, M.S., serves as the Scientific Program Specialist to the Innovation and Commercialization Office at the NHLBI. Prior to joining ICO, Yasamin served as a Health Specialist at the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Center for Clinical Research. In this capacity, she collaborated with Project Scientists and Program Officers to support the management and programmatic evaluations of funded grants and other trans-NIH research activities. Her leadership experience includes International and Global Health/Regulations, healthcare systems / operations, special project management and regulatory guidance. Yasamin previously held the role of Scientific Program Analyst at the National Institute of Mental Health and Program Specialist at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Yasamin received her B.A. in Health Care Administration and Public Policy with a concentration in Global and Public Health from the University of Maryland – Baltimore County and an M.S. in Health Care Administration from the University of Maryland.



Meena U. Rajagopal, Ph.D., is a program officer in NCATS' Office of Strategic Alliances, where she manages a portfolio of SBIR and STTR grants and contracts. She is involved in SBIR/STTR outreach activities and serves as an alternate member of the NCATS Small Business Programs Management Committee. Meena is an experienced translational research scientist and has worked in academia and several research institute laboratories in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Before joining NCATS, Meena was a scientist at the NIH Clinical Center and carried out translational proteomics research in partnership with investigators at Tulane University. Prior to working at the Clinical Center, she was a research specialist at Georgetown University, where she coordinated various metabolomics research projects at the metabolomics facility within the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Meena received both her Master of Science and doctorate in chemistry from the University of Kentucky and completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.



Saroj Regmi, Ph.D., is a Program Director at the National Cancer Institute's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Development Center. In his role, he provides oversight, guidance, administers funding, as well as offers networking assistance for small businesses to accelerate the translation of cancer-related technologies. Saroj conducted his postdoctoral work at NIH using CRISPR/Cas9-based approaches to study cellular processes. He received his Ph.D. in molecular and cellular biology from Dartmouth Medical School.



Adam Sorkin, MEM, MSE has over a decade of experience championing small business research and development. He previously supported Small Business Programs and intramural technology transfer activities at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Prior to joining NIH, Adam led R&D, strategy, and fundraising efforts of start-ups developing novel regenerative medicine and anti-infective applications. Adam has served as the Small Business Policy Manager in the NIH Small Business Education and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Office since 2022.



Kwame Ulmer, MBA, is the Managing Partner at MedTech Impact Partners - A Regulatory Strategy Consulting Firm and currently serves as an Entrepreneur-in-Residence for the NHLBI Innovation and Commercialization Office. Kwame brings over two decades of experience evaluating medical technologies in the government and private sector, and serving in senior operating roles at medical device companies to help companies successfully engage the FDA. He has personally evaluated more than 1,000 medical technologies in his career. Kwame spent 12 years at the FDA in progressive leadership roles. He also served as Vice President, Regulatory Affairs and Quality Assurance at Implant Direct, a Danaher Corporation operating company. He is also a venture partner at Wavemaker Three-Sixty Health – the leading Southern-California based, early-stage venture capital firm (Seed and Series A) focused on the healthcare industry. Kwame founded MedTech Color, a nonprofit with a mission to advance the representation of persons of color in the medical device industry. He earned his B.S. in Physics from Lincoln University, and has two Masters degrees from the University of Virginia, in Materials Engineering and Business Administration



Xibin Wang, Ph.D., has been the manager of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Program at the NIAMS/NIH since 2009. Before joining the NIAMS Extramural Program, Dr. Wang completed his postdoctoral training in the Cartilage Biology and Orthopedics Branch of the NIAMS Intramural Program. Dr. Wang received his doctoral degree in Nutrition from Penn State University and a Bachelor's degree in Public Health from China Medical University, Shenyang, China.

Tennessee Partner Biographies



Justin Baba, Ph.D., is an Associate Research Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt University and an Associate Director of the Vanderbilt Biophotonics Center. His research focusses on the development of non- and minimally-invasive sensing, diagnostic, and monitoring technologies. Prior to that, he spent 15+ years as an R&D Biomedical Engineer at Oak Ridge National Lab where he acquired 13 of his 14 US issued patents. He is a Founder and Chief Scientific Officer for Yaya Scientific, LLC, a Nashville TN based start-up that develops innovative, diagnostic, therapeutic, and integrated hardware solutions for biomedical problems. He has 10+ years serving on NIH Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant review panels.



Cody Behles, Ph.D., Director for Innovation and Research Support at the University of Memphis, has served the University for the last 10 years as a faculty member and administrator. He is a native Memphian committed to the idea that through research and collaboration with community partners we can make sustainable transformational growth opportunity for citizens across the region. His roles include serving as Director for the UMRP Research Park, overseeing strategic projects and team development for major grants such as NSF Engines and Build Back Better Regional Challenge. He received his Doctorate focused on Autonomous Cyber-Physical Systems Testing and completed two Masters in Central Eurasian Studies and Library and Information Science at Indiana University.



Charleson S. Bell, Ph.D., is the Director of Entrepreneurship and Biomedical Innovation at the Vanderbilt Center for Innovation and Design, the Wond'ry. He is also the Hub Director of the NSF I-Corps Hub, Mid-South Region ("Mid-South Hub"). He is a Research Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt University, and Associate Director of the Medical Innovators Development Program in the Vanderbilt School of Medicine. Dr. Bell is a "Triple 'Dore'" earning his Bachelors in Engineering, Masters in Science, and Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering – the first African-American to earn a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt. Dr. Bell's Department of Defense funded research seeks to improve point-of-care deployability, interoperability, and smartphone-compatibility. Dr. Bell has always possessed an entrepreneurial spirit and embraces new endeavors and innovations with great enthusiasm and passion. The first graduate student at Vanderbilt to receive an investment of venture capital to launch a startup, Dr. Bell uses his innovative mind to combine his engineering knowledge to create novel technologies of great impact.



Brian Evans, BSE., MS, Ph.D., focuses on increasing institutional research competitiveness through targeted capacity building, partnership and interdisciplinary team development, and funding acquisition. Dr. Evans is a graduate of Case Western (BSE) and Vanderbilt University (MS, PhD) and has over 10 years of research experience in biologic therapeutic and pharmaceutical development both in academia and industry. Dr. Evans has submitted and participated in a multitude of funded SBIR and STTR projects and serves as an SBIR/STTR grant writing consultant for Launch TN.



Todd Gary, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of biomedical data science and the director of R&D Partnerships in the School of Applied Computational Sciences (SACS) at Meharry Medical College. He has a PhD in Molecular Biology from Vanderbilt University and has industry experience which includes helping a Tennessee small company, WPC Healthcare, win the 2017 AI Global award for the best use of AI in Healthcare. He is actively working to connect companies to achieve successful partnerships with SACS faculty and students. He has helped submit more than 200 grant proposals to the NIH, NSF, NASA USDA, and the Department of Defense to support research, collaborations, and education. He is part of a current NIH Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) award to Serious Health, a minority-owned women small business, partnering with Meharry and Launch Tennessee to support community-based care for underserved populations.



Kyle Hocking, Ph.D., is the founder and CEO of VoluMetrix LLC, a Nashville based start-up company dedicated to advancing waveform analysis technology and improving the field of patient monitoring. He received his Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from Vanderbilt University in 2014, after completing his undergraduate (B.E.) and masters (M.E.) degrees at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Hocking also serves as a Research Assistant Professor of Surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center as well as a Research Assistant Professor of Engineering at Vanderbilt University. He holds numerous patents in the field of venous waveform analysis and has published over 50 peer reviewed papers in established journals. Dr. Hocking is currently funded by the NIH through the NHLBI for a Phase IIb grant that furthers the development and commercialization of NIVA_{HF}, a non-invasive volume status monitor for use in home and hospital by heart failure patients.



Monica Jablonski, Ph.D., is the Hamilton Professor at the Hamilton Eye Institute of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. She also serves as Vice Chair & Director of Research for the Ophthalmology Department. Driven by her quest to translate research findings from her laboratory to technologies with tangible benefits for patients, she founded OculoTherapy in 2013 and built a team of scientists with complementary expertise to assist with this task. OculoTherapy has successfully competed for two Phase 1 SBIR grants and received partial matching funds from LaunchTN. They are putting the finishing touches on their pre-IND meeting request and plan to file with the FDA within weeks.



Maha Krishnamurthy, Ph.D., is the President of the University of Tennessee Research Foundation. In her role at UTRF, Maha oversees the offices in Knoxville and at the UT Health Science Center in Memphis responsible for the commercialization of a diverse set of technologies and the development of strategic partnerships with industry. Prior to joining UTRF in 2011, Maha served as an intellectual property commercialization, licensing, and maturation consultant for several NASA and Oak Ridge National Lab technologies and as a physics research associate at UT Knoxville. Maha holds a bachelor's degree from Saint Xavier College in India, an MBA from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and a Ph.D. in physics from Colorado State University.



Charles Layne, known as “Chuck” to friends and colleagues, currently serves as the Innovation Manager at Launch Tennessee, where he works to facilitate the commercialization of technologies across the state of Tennessee in addition to striving to improve the Tennessee innovation ecosystem through policy, advocacy, and development efforts. Before joining the team at Launch Tennessee, Chuck worked in Nashville and Memphis on a variety of housing, transportation, and public infrastructure projects. He holds a bachelor's degree in community development and a Master of City and Regional Planning from the University of Memphis. Chuck's earliest entrepreneurial experience was a short venture of undercutting school vending machines in the 3rd grade, which he used the exit proceeds from to build his first computer. His favorite part of working at Launch Tennessee is connecting with entrepreneurs who have a vision for how they can create something new for the places they call home. When not dreaming about the future, Chuck usually spends his time thinking about Nashville hot chicken,



Todd Ponzio, Ph.D., is the Vice President of UTRF at the Health Sciences Campus (HSC) in Memphis, managing the office and working alongside colleagues to provide technology commercialization services to UTHSC, UT Martin, UT Southern, as well as various health sciences components nested across the full UT system. In addition to negotiating and managing licenses and other strategic alliances, he oversees technical analyses, intellectual property matters, and regulatory advising, focusing particularly on advancing biomedical and digital health technologies to commercially sustained enterprises. Prior to joining UTRF, Todd led Wake Forest Innovations where he overhauled the health system's technology development efforts and tripled licensing activity. As the leader of the Office of Research and Technology Applications at the Naval Medical Research Center, he oversaw one-third of the US Navy's technology transfer partnerships. His efforts have enabled commercialized and clinical stage technologies, including medical devices, therapeutics, and digital health technologies. A graduate of the Johns Hopkins Cary Business School Innovate program, he earned his doctorate in neuroscience, holds a regulatory affairs credential, and is licensed to practice with the US Patent and Trademark Office.



James David Stefansic, Ph.D., is the Senior Director of Corporate Development at Cumberland Emerging Technologies (CET). His responsibilities include sourcing, evaluating, and negotiating for new biopharmaceutical product and technology opportunities especially with academic institutions, in addition to project fundraising and product commercialization. Dr. Stefansic was previously COO of Pathfinder Therapeutics, Inc., a company he co-founded, where he led FDA regulatory submissions and business development activities. While there, he raised more than \$17 million in venture capital and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) funding. He also previously served as the Director of Commercialization at Launch Tennessee, where he was instrumental in leading the acquisition of funding to develop and support the statewide SBIR program. He earned an undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering from Johns Hopkins University, a doctorate from Vanderbilt, and his MBA from Belmont University's Jack C. Massey Graduate School of Business, where he currently serves as an Adjunct Professor of Business and was named the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year in 2011. Dr. Stefansic started his career as a Research Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and has patented several technologies. He also serves as a Director at Raiven Healthcare, an AI analytics company he co-founded and sold to a private equity group.



Jessica Taveau currently serves as the president and CEO of Epicenter, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing local entrepreneurs with equitable access to resources needed to launch and grow businesses. Jessica helped establish the organization as its Chief Brand Officer in 2017. Jessica's previous positions include Director of Communications for Memphis Bioworks Foundation, a biotech and medical device incubator, and executing internal, external, and legislative communications for the University of Kansas Medical Center. She also has served in several public relations roles for consumer-facing brands at global and regional marketing communications firms in Kansas City, Mo., and Dallas. A graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia and native Memphian, she serves on the boards of Life Science Tennessee, the Greater Memphis Chamber, and Women's Business Center South. She is also a member of the Leadership Tennessee NEXT Class II and is a graduate of the New Memphis Institute Fellows Program. She and her family love to experience the Memphis area's arts, food, sports, and outdoors together.



Abby Trotter, has significant experience working with the state's startups and innovation-based economy through her work as executive director of BioTN and Life Science TN (LST). Abby is also a partner at Hall Strategies, a public and government relations firm. She was a driving force behind Tennessee's SBIR/STTR matching program, as well as the development and expansion of LaunchTN's Mentor Network programs that now assist startups in the life science, automotive/mobility, energy and ag-tech industries. Abby has vast experience managing multi-faceted, complex projects that include communications, policy and advocacy, events, membership development, fundraising, and grassroots campaigns. A native of Oak Ridge, TN, Abby is a graduate of the University of Tennessee. Abby is regularly engaged in community work. She has a passion for education, the biosciences, the Nashville Zoo, Tennessee's lakes, and hot chicken. Her husband Doug is a high school history teacher. She has two daughters, one freshman at Purdue and the other a senior at Nashville's John Overton High School.



Marcus Whitney, is a Founding Partner of Jumpstart Health Investors (JHI), the most active early-stage healthcare venture capital firm in America. Of JHI's funds, Marcus leads Jumpstart Nova, the first healthcare venture fund in America investing exclusively in Black-founded and led startups. He is also co-founder and minority owner of Major League Soccer team, Nashville Soccer Club. Marcus is the author of the Amazon #1 best-selling book "Create and Orchestrate", about claiming your Creative Power through entrepreneurship. His work has been featured by Entrepreneur, CNBC, Inc., NPR, Fast Company, and The Atlantic. Marcus is an Aspen Health Innovators Fellow, and a member of the board of the Healthcare Finance Management Association, Celtic Bank, the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum, the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation, OZ Arts, and Scott Hamilton CARES. Marcus actively competes in Jiu Jitsu, is an IBJJF World Master Champion, and trains on the competition team at Renzo Gracie Nashville under Shawn Williams. He is married and has two adult sons.

Useful Resources

Resources for TN-based Life Science Entrepreneurs

BioTN/Life Science Tennessee. [BioTN](#), a state-based 501c3 non-profit, and [Life Science Tennessee](#), an industry association, partner to help support life science entrepreneurs with education and networking opportunities to further grow early-stage companies in Tennessee. Stay up to date with Life Science Tennessee's [monthly newsletter](#).

[Life Science Mentor Network](#)- Managed by BioTN and funded by LaunchTN, the Life Science Mentor Network is a systematic program that helps develop quality startups as they prepare to make pitches for investment. During the program, early-stage life science companies are put through a stage-gated process to engage with seasoned professionals in the industry as they leverage this knowledge to improve their companies.

[BIO Business Solutions](#)- Through its partnership with BIO, Life Science Tennessee members and BioTN Mentor Network companies have the opportunity to take advantage of the BIO Business Solutions® programs which includes discounts on lab equipment, R&D tax credit services, small group health insurance, grant writing, project management, and more.

[Scipreneur Challenge](#) is an entrepreneurship-based competition organized by the BioTN Academic Alliance. This startup accelerator program facilitates the transfer of technology from the research institution to the market. Over 10 weeks, we showcase real intellectual property and form mock companies with real founders to build an investable business opportunity.

Resources for TN-based Life Science Entrepreneurs

[Launch Tennessee](#) has a unique network of statewide relationships with our Entrepreneur Centers, industry-based Mentor Networks, and universities that provide useful resources. Stay up to date about key industry news regarding funding, resources, upcoming events, promotions, and general updates with [LaunchTN's weekly newsletter](#).

[SBIR/STTR Matching Program](#) is a strategic initiative developed and administered by LaunchTN to advance the commercialization of technological innovations across the state. The Matching Fund aims to advance commercialization efforts through matching the successful Phase I and Phase II awards of Tennessee-based companies.

[InvestTN](#) is made possible by [Fund Tennessee](#) and \$117 million in federal funding for Tennessee. InvestTN's Regional Seed Fund is a \$28M Tennessee-focused initiative for Pre-Seed and Seed stage startups. InvestTN's Technology Fund will invest \$30M into Tennessee-located companies from industries driving the state's growing ecosystem. InvestTN's Technology Fund has the ability to serve as the lead investor, though this is not a requirement.

[Internships Program](#) allows companies to apply to host a summer intern which LaunchTN will facilitate through intern recruitment, onboarding support, and assistance with student stipends. Over 270 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in Tennessee's startup community via paid summer internships sponsored by LaunchTN.

Resources for TN-based Life Science Entrepreneurs

[Cumberland Emerging Technologies](#) offers services tailored to inventor scientists seeking a corporate partner to assist in developing their biomedical technologies, as well as life sciences companies seeking facilities in which to locate their headquarters, grow their businesses and develop their technologies.

[UT's Spark Innovation Center](#) helps startups secure funding, prepare their product for commercialization, and upon graduation, provides an incentive to build in East Tennessee.

[The Wond'ry](#) is Vanderbilt's Innovation Center. Its three story, 13,000-square foot space, located adjacent to the Engineering and Science Building, facilitates transinstitutional collaboration between students, faculty, and staff from all schools, levels, and disciplines. From engineers to scientists to entrepreneurs to artists, the Wond'ry is the primary point of connection for students interested in innovation and entrepreneurship.

[ZeroTo510](#) is a first-of-its-kind pure play medical device accelerator that has developed a unique program that takes advantage of all Memphis has to offer in the medical device space. For ten years, we have enabled entrepreneurs with ideas for innovative health tech startups to harness the robust resources and experts present in the Memphis medical device ecosystem.