



# McKNIGHT BRAIN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Preserving memory, enhancing life

February 20, 2020

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*Established by  
Evelyn F. McKnight  
to Alleviate Memory Loss  
in the Aging*

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Tom Brannan  
Vice President for Development and Alumni  
The University of Alabama at Birmingham  
AB 1230 1720 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S  
Birmingham, AL 35294-0112

Dear Mr. Brannan,

The trustees of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation (MBRF) reviewed the 2019 annual report of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute (EMBI) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) at the February 2020 meeting. The report is comprehensive, printed in a very attractive format, and provides useful information.

The trustees were pleased to note the recent recruitment of Dr. Junghee Lee to fill the Geropsychiatry Research Chair, with an expected start date in March 2020. Dr. Lee's training as a clinical neuroscientist and behavioral psychologist predicts she can make valued contributions to research initiatives within the EMBI at the UAB.

The trustees are impressed with the attendance at the UAB hosted Symposium, "*From Chromosomes to Communities*." It is also impressive that the panel included Dr. Richard Hodes, Director of the National Institute on Aging. The trustees would appreciate receiving a copy of the program and proceedings, if it is published.

Congratulations to Dr. Lazar for his appointment to the Brain Health Science Subcommittee of the American Heart Association (AHA). His leadership is commended for chairing a major symposium for the AHA related to cognition and brain health and his preparation of lead statements for them on the relevance of brain health in primary care.

The number of departments listed with relationships with the EMBI is impressive, but it is noted the department of neurobiology is not listed as one. The trustees observe that Dr. Craig Powell occupies the Virginia B. Spencer Professorship, which is a component of the matching funds by UAB for the MBRF gift, and also serves as current professor and chair of the Department of Neurobiology. The number of scientific publications is also impressive, but the trustees had difficulty determining which ones were relevant and pertinent to the research initiatives in age-related cognitive decline and memory loss.

The reported numbers of post-doctoral, pre-doctoral, and "other" students are very impressive. The trustees are interested in knowing the number of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral students who are specifically affiliated with educational and research programs under the auspices of the EMBI at UAB.

In reviewing the financial reports on the Endowment Fund and associated accounts, the trustees questioned the value of the Endowment Fund from the displays in the annual report. Through personal communication, these issues were satisfactorily clarified and amended reports have been received. However, with the allocation of different endowments dedicated to the Match, the trustees have difficulty in understanding how the various endowments are integrated and utilized to advance the education and research programs in age-related cognitive decline and memory loss and not directed to other programs. The trustees recall when Dr. Lazar was recruited, an advisory committee was established for the EMBI at UAB. Does the advisory committee still exist, does it meet, and, if so, what is its function?

Thank you for your patience and response to the questions by the trustees who extend their collective appreciation to you and the leadership of the UAB for all your efforts to preserve and maintain our valuable research partnership.

Sincerely,

Amy Porter  
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Ronald M. Lazar Dr. Ray L. Watts  
Dr. Selwyn M. Vickers Trustees, MBRF  
Dr. David G. Standaert Melanie Cianciotto, Corporate Trustee  
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