Stillman sounds alarm for basic science research

On October 11, CSIL President Bruce Stillman took to the airwaves to warn the public about the state of funding for American science research. Asked in 2013, "What will the future hold for American science?" Dr. Stillman spoke for an hour on NPRs Tom Ashbrook, host of the program symposium on the future of American science: "The alarm we sounded at the time is increasingly being confirmed by the policies of the political world.

Stillman pointed out that the NIH, a major source of federal funding, has been reduced by 10% in the last decade. Dr. Rothman, he called attention to the impact on the investigator-driven research, and particularly work done by early career investigators. These projects, he said, continue, might engender a culture in which risk-taking was frowned upon, and would be a great loss for science and could threaten America's leadership role in the global scientific community.

Yet even he sounded the alarm. Stillman said this remains optimistic. "Eventually, the public will demand that Congress support federal funding for research and development. This country will remain valuable. You can listen to the broadcast here.

Research Roundup: Neuroscience

New research from Professor Yi Zheng's lab offers insight into how the faithfully determines which smells it likes and dislikes. They identified a group of neurons that are specifically activated when the fly smells an enticing host, the moth attraction pheromone. More of the neurons are activated. More generally, the work suggests there are specific areas in the brain that determine what we are attracted to and repulsed by.

Associate Professor Glenn Turner and Eyal Gruenstein also explore the fly brain's complex connectivity. The researchers show how the brain remembers a complex, chemically diverse environment, and identify a single neuron that codes for one another.

A team of CSIL scientists led by Assistant Professor Adam Keiper has unveiled a cell type that controls brain activity. This new cell type is responsible, they argue, for inhibiting other inhibitory neurons in the central nervous system. These neurons are extremely important for proper cognitive control. The discovery, the team says, has implications for understanding the basis of sophisticated behaviors including learning, memory, and cognition.

The CSIL team received a $100,000 research grant from the National Institutes of Health to support postgraduate courses for scientists. Dr. Batsatan was the recipient of the Breakthrough in Life Sciences award, proceeds from which he has committed to support education and advanced techniques which they in turn apply to their own research.

Expanded public access to molecular biology's history

CSIL's Library & Archives has just completed a 2-year digitization project on the history of genetics in collaboration with the UK's Wellcome Library. The Archives Repository now contains 398,438 digital images from 298 rare book digitization of the John Innes Kew's Watson Collection and 261 manuscript copies of Sydney Brenner Collection. Over 10,000 folders have been digitized from these two collections, as well as 2,000 photographs from the CSIL's Symposia on Quantitative Biology. Check them out here!