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**INNOVATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION**

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July 8, 2026

## OHSU Innovates



As summer gets underway, OHSU's innovation community continues to build momentum. This issue highlights startup milestones, recognition for early-career researchers and entrepreneurs, student innovation at InventOR and new opportunities for learning, collaboration and commercialization.

Read on for news, events and resources designed to help move promising ideas from discovery to impact.

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## FEATURED STORY

### NeoSakura BTX Advances to Science2Startup Showcase



**Photo:** Hiroyuki Nakai presents at the Science2Startup symposium. (Courtesy of Lisa Lukaesko)

[Hiroyuki Nakai, M.D., Ph.D.](#), professor of molecular and medical genetics in the OHSU School of Medicine and scientific founder of OHSU startup NeoSakura BTX Inc., represented the company at the [Science2Startup](#) symposium in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in May. Science2Startup connects academic innovators with

biotechnology investors, entrepreneurs and industry leaders to help advance promising discoveries toward commercialization and patient care. NeoSakura BTX is developing a pipeline of AAV-mediated gene therapies for kidney disease, including first-in-class candidates with curative potential.

In recognition of the important role universities play in supporting startup companies, technology transfer representatives also were invited to participate in the symposium. Lisa Lukaesko, Ph.D., CLP, technology development manager at OHSU Technology Transfer, attended alongside Nakai.

Nakai was selected from a pool of 120 applicants and advanced through multiple rounds of evaluation to become one of 22 finalists. As part of the program, finalists received one-on-one mentoring and strategic guidance from biotechnology investors and industry experts to sharpen their business strategies and presentations.

Only eight finalist companies were invited to present at the symposium, which brings together venture capital investors, biotechnology executives, entrepreneurs and pharmaceutical scouts. NeoSakura BTX's selection as a presenting company highlights the potential of its technology to improve treatment options for patients with kidney disease.

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## FEATURED NEWS

### OHSU Innovators Earn Top Honors at Nucleate PNW Demo Day



**Photo:** At left, the NGV Therapeutics team celebrates receiving the Omeros Scientific Excellence Award. At right, the Canonix Bio team celebrates receiving the Best Overall Pitch Award at Nucleate PNW Demo Day. (Courtesy of Nucleate PNW)

[Nucleate PNW](#), the Pacific Northwest chapter of the student-led life sciences entrepreneurship program, launched last year and continues to build momentum across the region's innovation ecosystem.

The program's 2025-26 Activator cohort culminated in Demo Day on May 13 at the Allen Institute in Seattle, where early-stage ventures presented their technologies and business strategies to investors, industry leaders and members of the regional biotech community. [Activator](#), Nucleate's flagship venture development program, provides education, mentorship and networking opportunities to help academic teams explore the commercial potential of their innovations.

OHSU innovators were well represented in this year's cohort. NGV Therapeutics and Canonix Bio participated in Activator, spending several months refining their technologies, business strategies and commercialization plans with guidance from mentors and industry experts.

NGV Therapeutics advanced an early-stage therapeutic concept through Activator. The team included Nicole Fletcher-Murray, Ph.D., former postdoctoral researcher in the OHSU Jungers Center for Neurosciences Research, Danica Bojovic, Ph.D., who recently completed her doctorate in neuroscience at OHSU, and other collaborators. At Demo Day, Fletcher-Murray delivered the team's final pitch on the translational potential of the research. NGV Therapeutics received the Omeros Scientific Excellence Award in recognition of the project's scientific merit.

Shamilene "Sam" Sivagnanam, a computational biologist in Cell, Developmental and Cancer Biology at the OHSU School of Medicine, participated in Activator as a

member of the Canonix Bio team. Canonix Bio earned the Best Overall Pitch Award, the top honor presented at Demo Day. At OHSU, Sivagnanam's work focuses on multiplex imaging and the analytical and operational strategies that support complex research programs. Through Canonix Bio, the team is exploring ways to make spatial biology approaches more accessible in clinical settings by leveraging tools already common in diagnostic laboratories.

OHSU also contributed to the Activator leadership team. Kenneth Riley Jr., a doctoral candidate in biomedical engineering, served on the leadership team and helped support the 2026 cohort and the continued growth of the Nucleate PNW community.

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## Autobahn Therapeutics Advances Potential Bipolar Depression Treatment

Building on an FDA Fast Track designation announced in May, OHSU startup company Autobahn Therapeutics reported positive topline Phase 2 results for elunetirom in June. The investigational treatment for bipolar depression met its primary and key secondary endpoints in the AMPLIFY-BD trial, providing the first clinical evidence for a CNS-targeted thyroid hormone receptor agonist approach. The milestone highlights the potential for new treatment options for people living with bipolar depression and reflects the impact of OHSU research translated into real-world innovation.

Elunetirom is based on technology developed in the lab of [Thomas Scanlan, Ph.D.](#), professor of chemical physiology and biochemistry at the OHSU School of Medicine and co-founder and scientific adviser to Autobahn Therapeutics. OHSU licensed the technology to Autobahn in 2018 for further development.

Read more in Autobahn Therapeutics' announcements on the [Phase 2 AMPLIFY-BD results](#) and [FDA Fast Track Designation](#).

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## Meet Our Newest OHSU Innovation and Commercialization Interns



The [OHSU Innovation and Commercialization Internship Program](#) provides graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and other emerging professionals with hands-on experience in technology transfer, business development and intellectual property while helping advance OHSU discoveries toward real-world impact. Two new interns joined the program this spring.

Katie Emberley, Ph.D., recently completed her doctoral training in neuroscience at OHSU, where she conducted research in the Emery Lab at the Jungers Center. Through dissertation research that included an industry partnership and collaborations across multiple organizations, she developed an interest in how academic research and industry work together to accelerate scientific discovery.

Michéla Mondesir is a fifth-year Ph.D. candidate in the OHSU Neuroscience Graduate Program. Her research focuses on the neural correlates of binaural fusion in the auditory cortex and contributes to efforts to improve hearing prosthetics. Through the internship, she hopes to learn more about patent prosecution, technology development and commercialization.

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## OHSU Students Compete in InventOR Statewide Competition



**Photo:** At left, Gergana Alteva and Tim Valuev showcase SurgiLift during the InventOR Finals Prototype Exhibition. At right, Maxwell Vanderpool showcases EaziStep; team member Joshua Vanderpool participated virtually. (Courtesy of InventOR)

Two OHSU student teams competed June 26 in the 10th annual [InventOR](#) collegiate prototyping challenge at Oregon State University-Cascades.

Joshua Vanderpool, a doctoral student in biomedical engineering, and Maxwell Vanderpool represented EaziStep, which is developing a work boot designed to offload weight from the ankle for people with chronic ankle pain. The team showcased a work boot designed to offload weight from the ankle.

OHSU medical students Tim Valuev and Gergana Alteva represented SurgiLift, which is developing an ergonomic support device to reduce physical strain and injury associated with lead vests worn in operating and procedure rooms.

Both teams advanced to the statewide competition through the [OHSU Student Innovator Challenge](#).

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## PMedIC Partnership Supports Two Research Teams Through Innovation Grants

The [Pacific Northwest Biomedical Innovation Co-laboratory \(PMedIC\)](#) is a partnership between OHSU and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) established in 2018 to accelerate the development of patient-specific approaches for diagnosing and treating complex diseases. The collaboration integrates PNNL's advanced pan-omics, mass spectrometry and data science capabilities with OHSU's clinical and translational research expertise.

To support these efforts, OHSU and PNNL sponsor pilot projects through PMedIC. In the latest funding cycle, OHSU-sponsored PMedIC Innovation Grants were awarded to two cross-institutional research teams:

- *Development of Bifunctional Phytocannabinoid Probes for Proteome-Wide Target Identification* – James Frank, Ph.D., associate professor of chemical physiology and biochemistry at OHSU, and Vivian Lin, Ph.D., chemist at PNNL
- *Profiling Antigen-Specific Endosomal Proteomes to Decode Defective Tumor Antigen Presentation* – Megan Ruhland, Ph.D., assistant professor of cell, developmental and cancer biology at OHSU; Ljiljana Pasa-Tolic, Ph.D., lab fellow and project manager at PNNL; and Yumi Kwon, Ph.D., chemist at PNNL

[Learn more about the funded projects.](#)

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# Three Innovative Projects Receive ASCEND Award Funding

The ASCEND Award supports bold, practical ideas that aim to make a real-world impact in the community and the professional growth of OHSU innovators. Open to students, trainees, faculty, staff and volunteers across OHSU, this funding opportunity offers up to \$4,000 for activities such as innovation training, conference travel, prototype development or materials.

The next proposal deadline is Sept. 30.

Three innovative projects were selected for funding in the Spring 2026 ASCEND Award cycle:

- *ICP-ID: A Smart Shunt Catheter for Early Detection and Prevention of VP Shunt Failure in Children* – Yasmeen Elsayaf, M.D., fifth-year resident physician in neurological surgery, School of Medicine
- *EEGonaut: Low-Cost EEG Neurofeedback Technology to Expand Pediatric Mental Health Care Access* – Chloé Le Moing, doctoral candidate in behavioral neuroscience, School of Medicine
- *Hinav: Patient-Centered AI to Improve Health Insurance Navigation for People with Multiple Chronic Conditions* – Manoj Rajesh, student, OHSU-PSU School of Public Health; research intern, Family Medicine, School of Medicine

See the [Request for Proposals](#) for more information and the [Application Form](#) to apply. (OHSU login required.)

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## BIP Corp Program Open for Enrollment

Applications are now open for the Biomedical Innovation Program Commercialization Readiness Program (BIP Corp), a six-week virtual training program offered through OHSU's Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute (OCTRI).

Modeled on the [National Science Foundation's I-Corps™ program](#), BIP Corp helps biomedical scientists, clinician-scientists and engineers explore how early-stage research and innovations can translate into real-world health and societal impact. The program is open to individuals or teams pursuing an early-stage biomedical innovation. There is no cost to participate, and non-OHSU participants are welcome.

The program runs Fridays from Sept. 11 through Oct. 16, with participants learning key concepts related to customer discovery, market assessment, regulatory considerations and commercialization readiness.

[Apply for the BIP Corp program](#). For additional information, including the full course schedule, review the [BIP Corp Fact Sheet and Course Details](#). Questions or accommodation requests may be directed to Melissa Mudd, innovation alliance manager for OCTRI, at [muddm@ohsu.edu](mailto:muddm@ohsu.edu).

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## FEATURED EVENTS

### Crafting Your Innovation Pitch: Communicating Your Idea Effectively

# OHSU INNOVATES FOUNDATIONS: NAVIGATING RESEARCH TO IMPACT

## Crafting Your Innovation Pitch: Communicating Your Idea Effectively



**Danica Bojovic, Ph.D.**

Postdoctoral Scholar, Collège de France  
Ph.D. Graduate, Neuroscience, School of Medicine, 2025



**Steve Runnels**

Entrepreneur-in-Residence, OHSU Innovates  
CEO, Myosana Therapeutics

Aug. 27  
Noon–1 p.m. PT



Join us on Aug. 27 for our next *OHSU Innovates Foundations: Navigating Research to Impact* seminar. Danica Bojovic, Ph.D., who recently completed her doctorate in neuroscience at OHSU, will join [Steve Runnels](#), entrepreneur in residence at OHSU Innovates and CEO of Myosana Therapeutics, for a conversation on communicating scientific innovations to audiences beyond academia.

At the Oregon Bio 2025 Innovation Showcase, Bojovic earned both the Judges' Choice Award and People's Choice Award in translational research for presenting her work on astrocytes and brain health. Drawing from their experiences in research, innovation and commercialization, Bojovic and Runnels will discuss strategies for developing effective elevator pitches, communicating complex scientific concepts clearly and

tailoring messages for different audiences, including industry partners and investors.

[Register here.](#)

When: Thursday, Aug. 27, noon–1 p.m. PT

Where: Virtual

Who: Open to all

Cost: Free

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## OBI Annual Startup Spotlight Expo



The annual [Oregon Bioscience Incubator](#) Startup Spotlight Expo will take place Thursday, Sept. 17, in Portland. The event showcases emerging biotech, health care and life sciences companies and offers attendees an opportunity to meet founders, researchers and entrepreneurs developing new technologies and therapies. This year's program includes a panel discussion, *Biotech Funding in 2026: What Investors Are Saying Yes To*, featuring investors and industry leaders who will discuss trends, challenges and opportunities in today's funding environment.

[Register.](#)

When: Thursday, Sept. 17, 5-8 p.m.

Where: Oregon Bioscience Incubator, Portland, Oregon

Who: Entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, industry partners and innovation community members

Cost: \$75

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## Save the Date: Oregon Life Sciences Annual Conference and Innovation Showcase



The Oregon Life Sciences Annual Conference and Innovation Showcase will take place Sept. 23-24 at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland. The two-day event brings together researchers, entrepreneurs, executives, policymakers and students from across the Pacific Northwest to explore trends and opportunities shaping the future of biotech, medical devices and the life sciences. Programming will include keynote speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions and the Innovation Showcase, where emerging companies and researchers will present their technologies and compete for industry recognition. The conference also includes the Oregon Life Sciences Excellence Awards and opportunities to connect with Oregon's life sciences community.

Researchers and entrepreneurs based in Oregon or Southwest Washington may also apply to participate in the Innovation Showcase Pitch Challenge, which features competition tracks for research projects and startup companies. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. PT on July 23.

[Learn more on the conference website.](#)

[Apply for the Innovation Showcase Pitch Challenge.](#)

When: Sept. 23-24

Where: Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Portland, Oregon

Who: Researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, industry professionals, policymakers and students

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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**Thursday, July 9**

[Startup Cafe \(Metro Region Innovation Hub\)](#)

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**Thursday, July 16**

[Discover the Metro Region Innovation Hub: Online Info Session](#)

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**Saturday, July 18**

[Party in the Pinot \(Technology Association of Oregon\)](#)

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**Monday, July 20**

[Oregon Life Sciences Membership Lunch-and-Learn](#)

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**Tuesday, July 21**

[OEN Pitch, Please: July](#)

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**Thursday, July 23**

[Think and Drink Trivia Night \(Oregon Bioscience Incubator\)](#)

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## TECHNOLOGIES

OHSU-developed technologies are available for licensing to industry partners. For a list of available technologies, visit the [OHSU Technology Portal](#).

## Newly Licensed or Optioned OHSU Technologies

Congratulations to the inventors of the below technologies, which were recently licensed or optioned to outside partners.

[OHSU 1740](#) - Tinnitus Functional Index

[OHSU 1771](#) - Materials from the BioLibrary

[OHSU 2241](#) - My Pregnancy Plate

OHSU 3344 - AAV epsilon (AAVe) family

OHSU 3432 - Methods and compositions of AAV vector-mediated gene therapy for a kidney disease

OHSU 3552 - AAV epsilon variants demonstrating enhanced transduction and cell type specificity in the central nervous system

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## U.S. Issued Patents

Congratulations to OHSU inventors of these recently issued U.S. patents.

Patent 12,648,690 - Systems and methods for phase-stabilized complex decorrelation angiography

Patent 12,649,784 - Monoclonal antibodies for intracellular delivery of payloads

Patent 12,653,542 - Clips and applicator for tissue closure

Patent 12,663,493 - Real time monitoring and prediction of motion in MRI

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# SPONSORS

Thank you to our current sponsors for their support of OHSU Innovates!



Questions? Contact us at [innovates@ohsu.edu](mailto:innovates@ohsu.edu)

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