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Dr. Ryan Smith and Laureate Institute for Brain Research Awarded $900,000 Grant from the Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation

Tulsa, Okla. – Associate Research Professor, Dr. Ryan Smith at the Laureate Institute for Brain Research (LIBR) has been awarded a $900,000 grant between 2022-2024 from the Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation. The grant is titled "Using active inference to uncover the neurocomputational mechanisms that contribute to wellbeing and their potential differences across diverse populations".

The grant seeks to explore how subjective wellbeing (SWB) may be involved in improving resilience, social relationships, emotional and physical health, and contributions to society within and/or between cultures using computational methods. Dr. Smith's expertise in computational psychiatry allows a unique approach to studying the mechanisms of subjective wellbeing, which have traditionally been assessed using self-report measures. Computational psychiatry uses mathematical models of cognitive and neural information processing to simulate perception, learning and decision-making. This framework will help his team better understand how one's beliefs and behavior from a cultural standpoint may be related to health outcomes and how learning from new experiences may or may not change those beliefs in positive or negative ways to influence the way we make decisions.

The grant means many more Oklahomans will have opportunities to participate in research studies. The research will proceed in three phases of recruitment, including up to 700 individuals using both online and in-person approaches to complete the work. LIBR will recruit participants with or without current mental health conditions between 18-65 years of age of all genders and races who identify as belonging to either eastern or western cultures. Participants will be paid for completion of the tasks involved in the study, including self-report measures, decision-making tasks, and non-invasive recording of how the body responds to such tasks.

Through support from this grant, Dr. Ryan Smith will lead a collaborative team consisting of a systems administrator, research coordinator, post-doctoral fellow and graduate student to accomplish task programming, recruitment, project coordination, analysis and project management, along with data collection, processing, and quality control.

The Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation (WPE) is a non-profit organization based on Japan that supports research, practice, and policy advances to reflect a global view of wellbeing. The Foundation's efforts are scientifically focused and driven by geo-cultural inclusiveness. Through international philanthropy and both public and private partnerships, the WPE Foundation is seeking to redefine wellbeing to accurately reflect the lived experiences and needs of humanity. As part of this mission, the WPE Foundation recently partnered with Gallup to foster a more inclusive and global understanding of wellbeing through their Global Wellbeing Initiative (GWI), generating an innovative research agenda to improve society, families, and workplaces.

"On behalf of LIBR, our laboratory is thrilled with the Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation award," said Ryan Smith, Ph.D. "This funding makes possible the collaborative advancement of new

methods to improve emotional and physical wellbeing for society while also laying the groundwork for new directions to improve subjective wellbeing within and/or across cultures."