

## @UlowaNeuro Notes

December 2025

This fall three more Iowa neuroscientists [won Young Investigator Awards](#) from the [Brain and Behavior Research Foundation](#). Alex Bova, Kyle Flippo, and Josh Tatz join a long list of us who count this award among our early independent funding—30 Iowa awardees in the last 25 years! Our track record of success with this award is an indicator of both our reputation as a hub of creative neuroscience and the impact of mentorship as previous awardees guide new applicants.

BBRF is the largest non-governmental source of funding for mental health research. Formerly called the NARSAD Young Investigator Award, this grant supports fundamental and translational investigators pursuing innovative research ideas related to understanding, treatment and prevention of serious psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar, mood and anxiety disorders, or early onset brain and behavior disorders. It rewards highly creative approaches and encourages thinking outside the box. Its emphasis on translational approaches fits well with our collaborative neuroscience community and the access we have to partner across clinical and laboratory settings.

It was one of the early awards in my career and since then I've encouraged others to apply. Marie Gaine applied and won the award when she was in my lab, and it supported her to launch her own lab in the College of Pharmacy. Since then, she has extended mentorship by offering an annual workshop for those interested in applying, which has been described as “very helpful in thinking about the type of projects that get funded and the focus of these grants.”

One of those who benefited from Marie's guidance is Jaekyoon Kim, who won the award in 2024, and this year will take over as the workshop leader, **Jan 30, noon-1 p.m. in 1289 CBRB**. All are welcome!

I asked some of our Iowa awardees for their thoughts on the application process and winning the award:



**Kyle Flippo:** “Don’t sweat the small stuff; you don’t even have space to put it in. They’re looking more for something that’s going to push the field forward.”



**Banu Gumusoglu:** “Be bold and focus on telling a compelling story.”  
“The award provided validation that my science was ‘on to something.’ It remains a cornerstone project that informs my ongoing work on extracellular vesicles and pregnancy-brain interactions.”



**Jaekyoon Kim:** “Not having to worry about whether the project fit within the scope of a specific review panel made me feel more comfortable and gave me more freedom in shaping the story of the project.”



**Nick Trapp:** “The short length of the application and the need to zero in on a specific psychiatric illness made for a different experience compared to applying for a large NIH grant. I did feel the ability to be more creative and ‘think big’ in terms of how the funding could lead to bigger grant opportunities and launch my career.”

I am eager to see the creative proposals you put forward in 2026.

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