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## **ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION FUNDS NEW SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY INITIATIVE TO EXAMINE SOCIETAL ISSUES**

(New York, NY) - The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation announces a new initiative to study societal issues associated with synthetic biology – a rapidly developing scientific field where researchers are constructing novel organisms from the building blocks of DNA. This new effort brings together leading scientists, ethicists and public policy specialists to explore the field’s potential benefits and risks, as well as ethical questions and regulatory issues. The new initiative launches with three grants totaling more than \$1.6 million to The Hastings Center, the J. Craig Venter Institute, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

“The Foundation has a long and rich tradition of funding scientific research,” said Dr. Paul Joskow, President Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “With synthetic biology, scientists have gone from reading to writing the genetic code; it’s imperative that we take a carefully reasoned and systematic approach to understanding the full spectrum of ethical and policy issues that may arise as research and applications in this field develop.”

At the [Hastings Center](#), Foundation funding will allow for in-depth investigation into ethical issues that may arise in connection with developments in synthetic biology. The project aims to make serious contributions to scholarly literature, produce a base for further scholarship, and inform public policymaking.

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funding will allow the [J. Craig Venter Institute](#) to examine potential societal concerns associated with developments in synthetic genomics. The project will both inform the scientific community about these issues while also educating the policy and journalistic communities

about the science. As a result, scientists, journalists and policymakers will be able to engage in informed discussions.

A grant to the [Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars](#) will analyze evolving public perceptions of potential societal risks that may arise related to research in and applications of synthetic biology, clarify whether our existing regulatory systems can address relevant risks that may be associated with the science, and inform and educate policymakers.

“This program builds on the Foundation’s biosecurity work and will establish a community of scientists, ethicists and policy specialists who can work synergistically on these issues,” said Paula Olsiewski, Program Director, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. “Ethical and policy discussions must be informed by the realities of the science and similarly the science must take into consideration societal concerns so that synthetic biology can be applied both inventively and wisely.”

**About the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation:**

The [Alfred P. Sloan Foundation](#), established in 1934, makes grants to support original research and broad-based education related to science, technology, and economic performance; and to improve the quality of American life. The Foundation believes that a carefully reasoned and systematic understanding of the forces of nature and society, when applied inventively and wisely, can lead to a better world for all. Please visit the Foundation’s Web site at [www.sloan.org](http://www.sloan.org).