

For immediate release

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GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED FOR 2007 TEMPLETON RESEARCH LECTURES

Boston University and Johns Hopkins University win three-year grants

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PHILADELPHIA – The Philadelphia-based Metanexus Institute announced today that Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts are the 2007 recipients of the Templeton Research Lectures grants. The three-to-four year project grants provide up to \$500,000 to promote important conversations at the forefront of the field of science and religion through interdisciplinary study groups and an annual distinguished lectureship. The projects were selected through an international competition.

“As the pace of scientific discovery and innovation accelerates, there is an urgent cultural need to reflect thoughtfully about these epic changes and challenges” notes William Grassie, Executive Director of the Metanexus Institute, who manages this international grant competition. “The challenges of the 21st century require new interdisciplinary collaborations, which place questions of meanings and values on the agenda. We need to put questions about the universe and the universal back at the heart of the university.”

The Johns Hopkins University project is headed by Dr Steven Gross, Associate Professor of Philosophy. The project is entitled "Evolution, Cognition, and Culture" and will explore the explosion of interdisciplinary research in the cognitive science of religion and its implications—specifically, for religion, public policy, and our understanding more generally of evolution, cognition, and culture.

“Johns Hopkins is thrilled to receive this funding from Metanexus,” said Dr. Gross. “Researchers are only just beginning to understand the complex interactions among evolution, cognition, and culture; and religious belief and practice has provided some of the most fertile ground for thinking about these matters. This exciting interdisciplinary work not only promises to shed light on the role of religiosity in human lives, but also offers a particularly fruitful site for reflection on the place and limits of a scientific understanding of ourselves. This grant is also of great importance to Johns Hopkins because it will supply a much needed catalyst and opportunity for its widely dispersed scholars of religion to exchange ideas both with one another and with Johns Hopkins' scientific community.”

The Boston University initiative, based at of The Albert & Jessie Danielsen Institute, is headed by Dr. Robert C. Neville, Executive Director of the Institute and Professor of

Philosophy, Religion, and Theology at the University. The project, entitled “Religious and Psychological Well-being,” will draw collaborative work from scientists representing several departments and religious studies scholars to address its general theme. Religious and psychological well-being will be explored cumulatively through four related topics: religious experience, character development, meaning construction and value discovery, and therapeutic models/spiritual practices. In addition to the annual lecture series by the Templeton Research Fellows, the project will involve a program of inquiry for its Research Group (with representatives from Psychology, Medicine, Education, Religious Studies, Theology, and the Danielsen Clinic) with a publication each year, as well as the sponsorship of a course for graduate students that embraces the interdisciplinary model.

Said Dr. Neville, “The Danielsen Institute at Boston University sits at the intersection of psychology and religion and delights to receive this grant from Metanexus. The grant provides the opportunity to formalize the interdisciplinary connections we have been building informally over the years. Few problems at the interface of psychology and religion are as intriguing as the integration of psychological and spiritual models of “well-being,” and a better understanding of this has immediate application in practical help for people seeking well-being. We now have the opportunity to focus discussion of this heady topic at the University and also to draw in a larger public in the Boston area.”

The advisors in this year’s selection were:

- George Ellis, Physics, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Scott Gilbert, Biology, Swarthmore College.
- Solange Lefebvre, Religious Studies, Université de Montréal
- James Proctor, Environmental Studies, Lewis and Clark College
- V.V. Raman, Physics and Humanities, Rochester Institute of Technology
- W. Mark Richardson, General Theological Seminary, New York City

The Metanexus Institute advances scientific research, education and outreach on the constructive engagement of science and religion. Metanexus is a leader in a growing network of individuals and groups exploring the dynamic interface between cosmos, nature, and culture in communities and on campuses throughout the world. Metanexus sponsors dialogue groups, lectures, workshops, research, courses, grants, and publications. Metanexus leads and facilitates over 300 projects in 43 countries. Projects include the Local Societies Initiative, the Templeton Research Lectures, and topical interdisciplinary research projects such as the Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Project, Spiritual Capital, Templeton Advanced Research Program, and other endeavors. A membership organization, Metanexus hosts an online journal with over 370,000 monthly page views and 9,000 subscribers in 57 countries. www.metanexus.net.

Past winners of the Templeton Research Lectures grants are the Arizona State University, Stony Brook University, University of Frankfurt, the University of Pennsylvania, Vanderbilt University, the University of Arizona, the University of Southern California, University of California, Los Angeles University of Montréal, Stanford University, Bar Ilan University, Columbia University, and University of California at Santa Barbara.

The Templeton Research Lectures are made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The mission of the John Templeton Foundation is to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discovery in areas engaging life's biggest questions. These questions range from explorations into the laws of nature and the universe to questions on the nature of love, gratitude, forgiveness, and creativity. The Foundation is dedicated to rigorous scientific research and related scholarship exemplified by their support for open-minded inquiry and hope for advancing human progress through breakthrough discoveries. www.templeton.org.

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