

The Friedman Brain Institute

2026 FBI Research Scholars

On behalf of the Philanthropic Leadership Council of The Friedman Brain Institute, we are pleased to announce the 2026 recipients of The FBI Research Scholars Awards.

Lipschultz Research Scholar Award



Brian Sweis, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor,
Neuroscience & Psychiatry



Jonathan M DePierro, PhD

Professor, Psychiatry

Translational neuroeconomic investigation of stress-modulated ensembles in regret processing

Chronic stress can distort how individuals learn from past experiences, contributing to mood disorders such as depression. This project examines how stress reshapes counterfactual thinking—the ability to consider how alternative actions might have produced better outcomes—and how these reflections guide future decisions. These valuation processes form the computational basis of sensitivity to regret, yet their underlying mechanisms remain largely unknown. By combining innovative cross-species behavioral paradigms rooted in neuroeconomics with cutting-edge neural imaging and circuit manipulation approaches, this work will define how stress-sensitive ensembles in the nucleus accumbens encode forgone outcomes, providing insight into maladaptive decision-making in depression.



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