First recipients of the France-UT Austin Endowed Excellence Fund

Published on Monday July 1, 2019
View online: https://www.france-science.org/First-recipients-of-the-France-UT.html

For the first call for proposals, the France-UT Austin Endowed Excellence Fund will support six collaborative research projects on topics jointly supported by the Make Our Planet Great Again initiative and the Planet Texas 2050 program at UT Austin. This achievement marks an important milestone in France-Texas academic cooperation.

Inaugurated in January 2018 by Ambassador Gérard Araud and the President of the University of Texas at Austin, Gregory Fenves, the Dr. Cécile DeWitt-Morette Endowed Excellence Fund, was created to strengthen and sustain scientific cooperation between UT Austin and French research and higher education institutions. This initiative, supported by the Office of Science and Technology and the Cultural services of the Embassy of France in the United States, adds to the already existing four other funds signed with top-tier American universities (Berkeley, University of Chicago, MIT and Stanford).

For its first call for projects, launched in February 2019, the France-UT Austin Fund focused its support on research related to common scientific concerns, at the intersection of the Make Our Planet Great Again initiative and Planet Texas 2050.

The MOPGA (Make our Planet Great Again) initiative, initiated by President Macron in June 2017, aims to develop and promote international scientific cooperation on climate change issues such as sustainable development, energy transition and biodiversity conservation.

The Planet Texas 2050 initiative recently launched by UT Austin is a major community oriented project focused on the urban, energy and water challenges Texas will encounter by 2050, associated with a forecasted doubling of its population. This project involves fourteen departments of the University and covers a very wide spectrum of disciplines ranging from basic sciences to humanities and social sciences.

Through their interdisciplinary and thematic overlaps, these two initiatives fit particularly well with the spirit of the Cécile Dewitt-Morette fund.

The six projects selected by the Executive Committee of the France-UT Austin Fund are:

1. "Sedimentary systems under modern sea level rise: reviewing the stepped transgression model using geological records from last glacial maximum and ancient systems", project led by C. Olariu (UT Austin) and S. Berné (Univ. of Perpignan)

2. "Understanding the relationship between air pollution, noise exposure, personal transport behavior and health in Paris, France", project led by J. Fao (UT Austin) and B. Cellars (INSERM, Sorbonne Univ.)

3. "Population, climate change and sustainability: a major challenge facing economics, demography and public policy", project led by D. Spears (UT Austin) and S. Zuber (CNRS Paris 1)

4. "Structural change assessment in plant-pollinator interaction networks", project led by N-M. Tran (UT Austin) and F. Massol (CNRS, Univ. of Lille)
- "Predicting river channel changes during floods from high-resolution topographic data", project led by J. Johnson (UT Austin) and M. Tal (Aix Marseille Univ.)

- "Poroelastic monitoring of carbon dioxide storage sites", project led by N. Espinoza (UT Austin) and M. Vandamme (Ecole des Ponts ParisTech)

This first outcome of the France-UT Austin Fund marks an important milestone. This project, supported by President Gregory Fenves and Dr Dan Jaffe, Vice President for Research, was initiated nearly three years ago to structure and increase scientific cooperation of excellence between France and Texas.

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