

Harvard Professor and Entrepreneur Tim Springer Donates \$210 Million to the Institute for Protein Innovation

The gift further positions the emerging nonprofit to transform biomedical research with novel protein tools and expertise

Sources: Ken Fasman; Tim Springer

Media contact: Trisha Gura, 617-651-8329, trisha.gura@proteininnovation.org

BOSTON, March 29, 2023 — The [Institute for Protein Innovation \(IPI\)](#), a nonprofit research organization, announced today a \$210 million gift from Tim Springer, Ph.D., veteran entrepreneur and professor at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital, who founded IPI in 2017 with Andrew Kruse, Ph.D. The gift will advance protein science and accelerate research to improve human health.

The philanthropic gift—made by Springer, his wife Chafen Lu, Ph.D., and their children—adds to previous gifts of \$40 million to IPI from Springer himself. It establishes an endowment that redefines IPI's capacity to scale, enabling it to more rapidly achieve three ambitious objectives: providing high-quality [antibodies](#) and other protein-based tools to the scientific community, advancing protein science through investigator-driven research, and augmenting the education of life scientists.

“This gift is unmistakably transformative,” says Ken Fasman, Ph.D., President and CEO of IPI. “Thanks to Tim's commitment, IPI will be able to take on more challenging problems in protein science that academia and industry cannot or will not. We now have the potential to impact biomedical research at a greater scale and duration.”

While companies have painstakingly developed therapeutic antibodies as blockbuster drugs, these efforts have not extended to research antibodies, which are used to recognize and attach to biomolecules to discover new biology, understand biological mechanisms and pinpoint the molecular origins of human diseases. As a result, innovation that could lead to additional drugs has suffered. Issues with antibody quality and reproducibility continue to hamper life sciences research, and many patients are left without an understanding of their diseases that could lead to transformative therapies.

“I founded IPI on the premise that a foundry for protein tools, and most importantly antibodies, would help scientists make discoveries, and possibly new therapeutics, for years to come; my gift will help realize this vision,” says Dr. Springer. “IPI is my legacy project and recognizes the role that monoclonal antibodies have played in my discovery and basic research.”

In its first and largest effort to date, the Institute built a high throughput [platform](#) that generates synthetic antibodies, specifically binding to secreted and cell surface receptors—the targets of most therapeutics. Eventually, IPI antibodies could allow researchers to more precisely link genes to diseases, helping the life sciences realize the full potential of the Human Genome Project.

“Knowledge about proteins is critical to connect a gene to its function in the body, and Tim’s pioneering support makes it possible for IPI to harness the full power of protein science to extend the successes of genomics in understanding human disease,” says Dr. Fasman, who led the Human Genome Database’s informatics team from 1992 to 1996.

Dr. Springer’s philanthropic investment in IPI stems from his [early career](#) as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of César Milstein, who invented a technique to generate monoclonal antibodies that later won him and Georges Köhler the Nobel Prize.

At Harvard Medical School, Dr. Springer later used monoclonal antibodies to discover and study cell surface receptors. The work most recently [earned](#) him, along with Erkki Ruoslahti and Richard Hynes, the prestigious Albert Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research for their discovery of [integrins](#), involved in the recognition, attachment and trafficking of cells in the body.

Dr. Springer’s efforts also kickstarted the launch of his first company, LeukoSite, in 1992. Its monoclonal antibody inhibitor resulted in the blockbuster drug vedolizumab, known commercially as Entyvio. In 1999, Millennium Pharmaceuticals, now owned by Takeda Pharmaceutical Company, acquired LeukoSite for stock that later appreciated to \$3 billion.

IPI is Dr. Springer’s effort to back the science that served as the backbone of his career. This philanthropy was made possible by his entrepreneurial success, including his acclaimed role as a founding investor in Moderna in 2010. Springer has previously endowed professorships and chairs at Harvard Medical School, Boston Children’s Hospital and the University of California, Berkeley.

By founding and continuing to support IPI, Dr. Springer has built the infrastructure for the Institute’s sustainability that will enable leadership to continue to prioritize scientific impact as its mission, including designing antibodies to target proteins that have so far eluded scientific understanding. IPI’s nonprofit model will allow for the characterization and distribution of those antibodies to life sciences communities.

IPI Surfacing Symposium

To celebrate its new chapter of growth, IPI will host its first symposium, IPI Surfacing, on Thursday, June 15, 2023, on the Harvard Medical School campus. Registration is open for the daylong event, convening top experts on cell surface receptor biology.

Learn more and register for IPI Surfacing [here](#).

About the Institute for Protein Innovation

The Institute for Protein Innovation is pioneering a new approach to scientific discovery and collaboration. As a nonprofit research institute, we provide the biomedical research community with synthetic antibodies and deep protein expertise, empowering scientists to explore fundamental biological processes and pinpoint new targets for therapeutic development. Our mission is to advance protein science to accelerate research and improve human health. For more information, visit proteininnovation.org or follow us on social media @ipiproteins.