



# The Developing Scholar Award

“Emerging superstar” is a common descriptor of **James M. Otis, Ph.D.**, among those who wrote nomination letters. He is a role model for how to work effectively with others and establish collaborations. Moreover, his energy and commitment to research contribute to the culture of excellence within the Department of Neuroscience. One colleague described him as “an outstanding and creative young scientist who exemplifies the research aspirations and the discovery mission of the university.”

Otis was recruited to MUSC in 2018 and aggressively used his start-up package to launch a high functioning laboratory that has achieved independent NIH funding. In addition to external funding, he is the recipient of several internal grants, including the College of Medicine’s COMETS award, the ARC Pilot Grant, and the COCOA Pilot Grant. Further, he has published numerous papers in high-impact journals such as *Science*, *Nature Neuroscience*, and the *Journal of Neuroscience*.

Recognizing that a keystone for continued scientific progress is advocacy for the next generation of scientists, Otis has cultivated a lab setting that promotes rigorous technical, conceptual, and professional development and provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for investigators of every level.

He is an outstanding teacher with remarkable patience and the ability to convey difficult concepts or experimental approaches with ease. He has been invited to teach a Cold Spring Harbor Labs Cellular Biology of Addiction course and will be teaching a neuroscience elective this fall on methods in big data neuroscience.

Otis earned a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he successfully utilized *in vivo*, two-photon calcium imaging and optogenetics to examine prefrontal control of reward seeking.

Based on his high quality of scholarship and productivity and his immense potential to impact neuroscience both nationally and internationally, the Medical University of South Carolina Foundation is pleased to present James M. Otis, Ph.D., with the Developing Scholar Award on August 17, 2021.