

## **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges Exploration Grant Program**

On Thursday, September 17, 2009, the AIDS Research Institute (ARI), in collaboration with UCSF's Corporate and Foundation Relations, hosted a forum to explore the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges Exploration Grant Program. The Gates Foundation found this forum a great example of how an institution can foster dialogue and make investigators aware of funding opportunities, and they will be featuring a video of the Grand Challenges forum on their website in the coming days.

At the forum, Andrew Serazin, a program officer from the Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges Exploration Program, provided context for the initiative and answered questions from participants. Researchers from UCSF who had received Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Exploration Grant awards described their projects and shared lessons learned through the process. The panel provided attendees with both information about their experiences working with the Gates Foundation and mentorship around their research ideas. Erik Lium, interim director of UCSF Contracts and Grants, also provided guidelines on proper submission and useful tips. Notes from the forum can be found at <http://ari.ucsf.edu>, with thanks to Elizabeth Gallagher.

The Grand Challenges Exploration Grant Program fosters innovation in global health research. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has committed \$100 million to encourage scientists worldwide to expand the pipeline of ideas to fight our greatest health challenges.

The grant program is open to anyone from any discipline, from student to tenured professor, and from any type of organization – colleges and universities, government laboratories, research institutions, non-profit organizations and for-profit companies. The initiative uses an agile, accelerated grant-making process with short, two-page applications and no preliminary data required. Applications are submitted online, and winning grants are chosen approximately four months from the submission deadline.

Initial grants of \$100,000 are awarded two times a year. Successful projects have the opportunity to receive a follow-on grant of \$1 million or more.

**The deadline to submit an application to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges Exploration Grant Program is Monday, November 2, 2009.** The Grand Challenge Explorations website is: <http://www.grandchallenges.org/explorations>.

Under existing UCSF policy, **proposals must be submitted to the applicable division of the Office of Sponsored Research at UCSF** for compliance review by 9:00 AM four working days prior to the agency deadline – in this case, **Tuesday, October 27**.

For more information on the grant process and to view the video, please visit <http://ari.ucsf.edu>.