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“I am honored and delighted to be named as a 2021 Allen Distinguished Investigator. This award will support the ongoing work of our team that advances understanding of the evolution of neural circuits through a comparative, ecologically grounded lens. With this award, we hope to forge a new frontier of transformative neuroscience techniques for cephalopods, a challenging but exceptionally interesting group of animals with extraordinary nervous systems. The work we have planned includes a connectome-level map of the octopus arm ganglia, reconstruction of circuits underlying oscillatory locomotion in cephalopods, and imaging of octopus brain activity during hunting and feeding behavior.

Transformative approaches and diverse perspectives take many forms and are found in many places. SFSU is a primarily undergraduate, Hispanic-serving urban university that prides itself on its social justice mission and its role in providing an outstanding education to all students, particularly those from systemically excluded groups. Institutions like ours are often overlooked when funders focus only on prestigious names and places. I am especially pleased to learn that this is the first year that the Frontiers Group has made an ADI award to a faculty member at a non-R1 or a Minority Serving Institution. The generous support provided to Allen Distinguished Investigators will go not only to funding work in my own laboratory, but will also support inclusion and diversity more broadly in the Department of Biology.

I am immensely grateful to the Foundation for their support of our work here at SFSU.”

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