

Trinity College Dublin and AIB join forces in the battle against COVID-19 Bank pledges €2.4 million to dedicated COVID-19 Research Hub at the University

Trinity College Dublin and AIB have today (**April 8th**) announced a collaboration to establish a research hub at the University to urgently accelerate the college's immunology project tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by SARS-coronavirus-2.

The AIB COVID-19 Research Hub, located within the Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute, will play a critical role in the delivery of the Trinity COVID-19 Immunology Project. The hub will involve immunologists and infectious disease clinicians from St James's Hospital in Dublin.

AIB, as foundation partner, has committed €2.4 million to advance the project. The hub will continue to accept contributions from other public and private sources.

The research will focus on addressing:

- Design of new drugs and vaccines to combat the virus
- The critical problem of supply and validation of commercial antibody testing kits
- The development of rapid antibody testing to identify current and previous COVID-19 infection in healthcare workers, and eventually the wider community
- The investigation of the immune response in infected and recovered COVID-19 patients to establish whether previous infection prevents re-infection, including serial sampling of patients at St James's Hospital and other collaborating hospitals.

AIB CEO Colin Hunt said:

"In the face of this unprecedented medical, societal and economic crisis, it is imperative that we mobilise all the resources at our disposal in a strategic way. We are investing in a national and international endeavour to save lives. Trinity ranks in the top 1% of research institutions globally in medicine and biological sciences and its immunologists collaborate with the best internationally. This is an ambitious and pioneering project involving skilled researchers and cutting-edge technology that merits every assistance in developing solutions for the short, medium and long-term. The hub will also involve the expertise of Professor Luke O'Neill and immunologists and infectious disease clinicians from St James's Hospital. Time is of the essence and our support for the Research Hub begins now".

Trinity College Dublin Provost Patrick Prendergast said:

"The solution to the COVID-19 crisis will probably be found in university laboratories in the months ahead following collaboration between leading researchers across the globe. Trinity is one of the world's leading universities when it comes to research into immunology and immunity and has the research expertise to play a major role. Donations such as this are a generous, practical and timely contribution to the fight against this terrible virus."

Professor Kingston Mills, co-lead on the project, said:

“Our project will study, in detail the immune responses to the virus in infected and recovered patients. This will provide key information for the design of vaccines and immunotherapeutic drugs for controlling the often fatal inflammation in COVID-19 patients, and will assist in developing and validating new assays for detecting antibody responses to the virus, thereby identifying those that are ‘immune’ and therefore safe to return to work.”

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Trinity Media Relations Contact

Catherine O’Mahony

Media Relations

Trinity College Dublin

Email: omahonc7@tcd.ie | Tel: 0868263837

AIB Media Relations Contact

Paddy McDonnell

Email: paddy.x.mcdonnell@aib.ie Tel: 0877390743

Additional notes for editors:

The Trinity COVID-19 Immunology Project will be a collaboration between Trinity Translational Medicine Institute and the Clinical Research Facility based on the St. James’s Hospital campus.

It will be led by Professor Kingston Mills, director of Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute, and Professor Aideen Long, director of Trinity Translational Medicine Institute. This project will involve scientists and immunologists working on basic and applied research and infectious disease consultants, immunologists, respiratory disease physicians and intensive care specialists working with COVID-19 patients. Consultant Immunologist Niall Conlon and Consultant Physician in Infectious Diseases Colm Bergin (St James's), Professor of Translational Immunology Padraic Fallon and consultant Cliona Ni Cheallaigh will all play key roles.

The project will also benefit from Trinity’s global network of collaborations and contacts in universities such as M.I.T. in Boston, and Utrecht University in The Netherlands, and with Public Health England in the UK, so that knowledge is shared and breakthroughs on COVID-19 are as effective and swift as possible.