# **A Remote-First Lab at Stowers Institute**

**Introduction**

The Stowers Institute fosters innovative research and collaboration to answer the question, “*What makes life work?*” My broad research program is poised to help strengthen the Stowers Institute as a leader in furthering fundamental biological and biomedical discoveries, with a unique emphasis on software engineering, bioinformatics, big data, and artificial intelligence.

Remote-first is often the standard in computer science, bioinformatics, and related fields. Thus, I propose establishing a remote-first lab model that balances the flexibility of remote work — which is preferred by the talent pool — with the camaraderie of in-person collaboration. This lab will primarily comprise postdoctoral researchers and graduate students based at Stowers; graduate students will be co-advised by on-site mentors.

The team will gather at Stowers for a dedicated "Togetherness Week" approximately every quarter. This will maintain a strong and cohesive lab culture and foster a deep connection with the lab and Stowers Institute.

**Benefits of a Remote-First Lab Model**

**Enhanced Recruitment and Retention**

1. **Broader Talent Pool:** Remote-first labs can recruit talented individuals regardless of geographic constraints, enabling Stowers to attract top-tier scientists from around the globe.
2. **Flexibility:** A remote-first approach allows team members to work in environments where they are most productive, increasing job satisfaction and reducing turnover.

**Increased Productivity**

1. **Focused Work:** Remote work minimizes distractions, allowing researchers to concentrate on their experiments, analyses, and writing without interruptions common in traditional lab environments.
2. **Customizable Schedules:** Scientists can tailor their schedules to match their peak productivity hours, fostering innovation and high-quality research output.

**Financial Savings**

1. **Reduced Overhead:** With fewer researchers needing full-time space at the institute, operational costs such as utilities, office space, and administrative support are minimized. The U.S. Career Institute estimates companies can save $10,000+ per remote employee. For a lab of, for example, 10, that would equate to $100,000+ in savings.
2. **Shared Resources:** Co-advising arrangements reduce the financial burden of supporting each researcher entirely from one source while leveraging expertise across multiple mentors.

**Togetherness Week: Fostering Lab Culture and Collaboration**

To maintain a strong lab culture, the team will meet in person approximately once per quarter for "Togetherness Week." This initiative will:

1. **Strengthen Relationships:** Face-to-face interactions during this week will deepen connections and trust among lab members.
2. **Facilitate Collaboration:** Group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and shared problem-solving during these weeks will spark new ideas and foster innovative solutions.
3. **Institute Engagement:** Bringing the team to Stowers quarterly ensures alignment with the institute’s mission.

**Long-Term Financial and Institutional Benefits**

**Cost Savings**

1. **Reduced Space Requirements:** A remote-first lab requires less permanent physical infrastructure, lowering long-term facility maintenance costs.
2. **Lower Commuting Costs:** Researchers who work remotely save on commuting expenses, which can be particularly significant for those with long commutes.

**Enhancing Institutional Reputation**

Adopting a remote-first model positions Stowers as a forward-thinking, innovative institution. Moreover, in the same way that the MBL Satellite lab establishes Stowers as a leading research group in Marine sciences, a remote-first model would position Stowers as a leader in computational sciences.

**Implementation Plan**

1. **Recruitment:** Identify postdoctoral researchers and graduate students who excel in remote collaboration.
2. **Co-Advising:** Establish formal agreements with co-mentors to ensure consistent guidance for each researcher.
3. **Quarterly Gatherings:** Schedule Togetherness Weeks at the start of each quarter, covering travel and lodging costs.
4. **Communication Infrastructure:** Leverage advanced tools for video conferencing, project management, and cloud-based data sharing to maintain seamless remote operations.

**Conclusion**

The proposed remote-first lab model at Stowers Institute offers a cost-effective and progressive approach to research. It combines remote work's flexibility and global reach with the essential human connection of quarterly in-person gatherings. By adopting this model, Stowers can attract exceptional talent, reduce operational costs, and reinforce its standing as a pioneer in scientific innovation.

Thank you for considering this proposal. I look forward to discussing how this approach aligns with the Stowers Institute's vision and mission.