

Meeting the Moment



MIND & LIFE
INSTITUTE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Mind & Life bridges science
and contemplative wisdom
to foster insight and inspire
action toward flourishing.

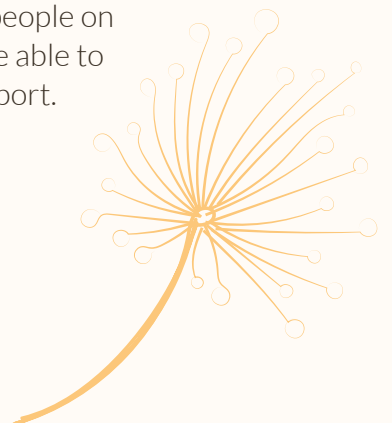
President's Letter

2020 was a year of sweeping change and unprecedented challenges. The global pandemic, climate-induced natural disasters, and calls for racial justice revealed deep fissures in our society. Mind & Life responded in kind, meeting the moment by expanding access to our signature programs, launching new initiatives, engaging inspiring speakers, and sharing powerful insights at the intersection of science, contemplative wisdom, and action.

I'm proud to say that we emerged stronger, with greater reach, and with programs that respond directly to the pain and promise of our times. Guiding our efforts was a new [strategic plan](#) with a special focus on addressing pressing societal issues related to disconnection—disconnection from oneself, one another, and the natural world.

Faced with a new remote reality, our team pivoted swiftly, transitioning our Summer Research Institute and Contemplative Research Conference into robust virtual gatherings that served record numbers of participants. We also launched new digital offerings to inspire a growing audience of 'engaged seekers' to be agents of positive change: the Mind & Life podcast explores frontiers in contemplative science, while our Inspiring Minds series brings together thought leaders and contemplatives in lively conversation on the role of the mind in human flourishing.

These programs—along with a special online “Conversation with the Dalai Lama on Resilience, Compassion, and Healing for Today”—delivered valuable wisdom for our times to well over a million people on six continents. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to offer all of these opportunities for free or with scholarship support.

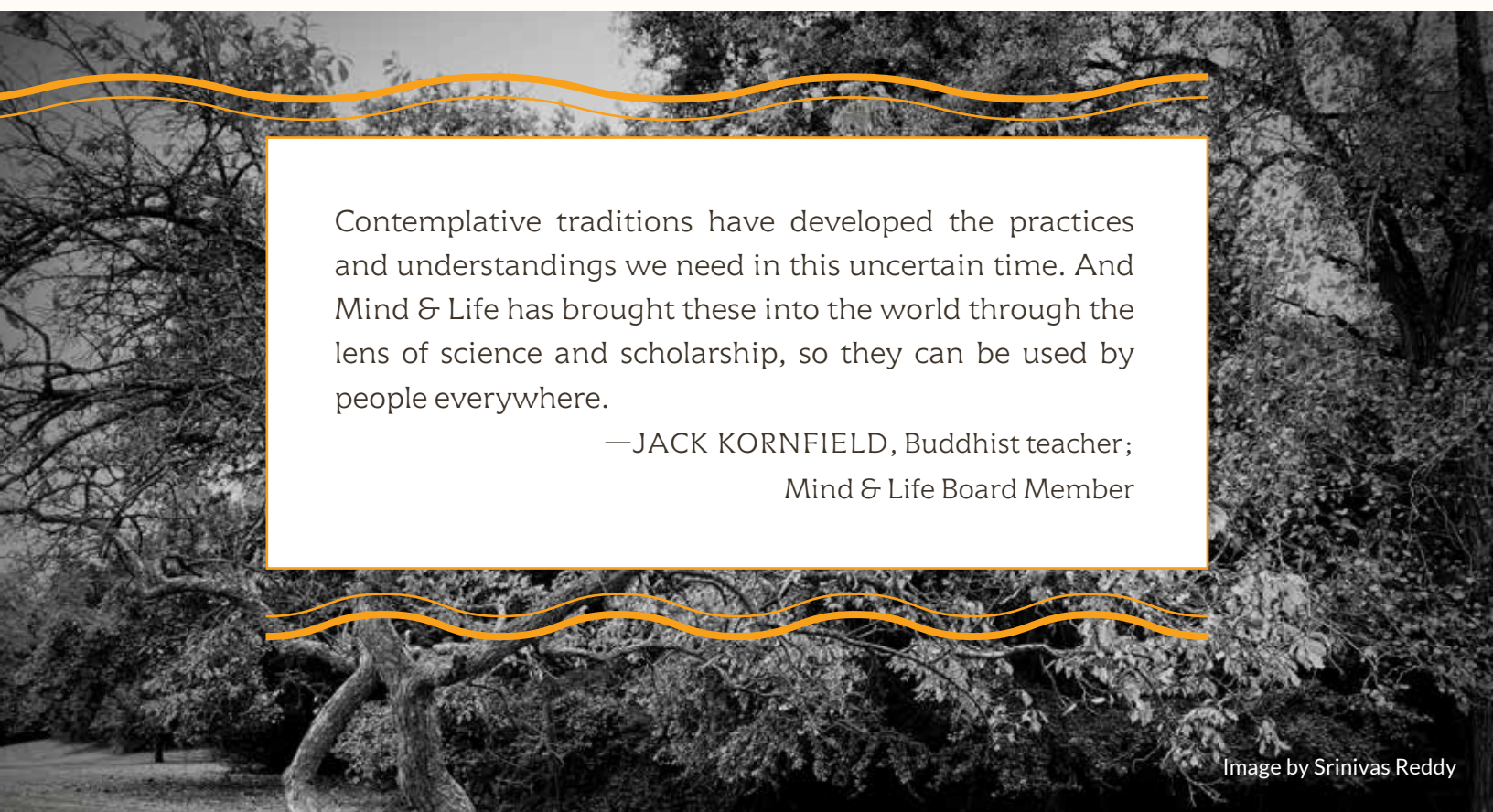


Throughout the year, we leaned into our commitment to engage in an on-going practice of anti-racism in our organization, recognizing that this work will never truly be complete. Our commitment to [equity, diversity, and inclusion](#) (EDI) is reflected in new institutional norms, hiring policies, and a Land and Peoples Acknowledgement. Our EDI principles inform the advisory bodies we create, the speakers we select, the content we deliver, and the grants we make, with one-third of our 2020 grantees identifying as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). At all levels of our organization, we humbly embrace the learning opportunities presented by this work.

The times we face have tested each of us, revealing where the real work lies in healing our relationships and nurturing understanding of our shared humanity. Looking ahead, you can count on Mind & Life to continue fostering insights that deepen understanding of the mind and inspire action toward flourishing for all.



Susan Bauer-Wu
President



Contemplative traditions have developed the practices and understandings we need in this uncertain time. And Mind & Life has brought these into the world through the lens of science and scholarship, so they can be used by people everywhere.

—JACK KORNFELD, Buddhist teacher;
Mind & Life Board Member



Focus Areas

Mind & Life's grantmaking, events, and digital offerings fall into three main focus areas, corresponding with our commitment to nurturing individual, societal, and planetary flourishing.

Personal Well-being

We seek to better understand the role of contemplative practices in helping people develop healthy mental habits—and resilience. Mind & Life-supported dialogue and research examine the impact of negative emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety in our lives, and how to nurture positive emotions, including love, compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness.

Compassionate Communities

We explore how the inner workings of the mind influence the formation of the views, behaviors, and social systems that separate us, and the role of contemplative practice in creating more compassionate communities. Our efforts include taking steps to diversify the field of contemplative science.

Human-Earth Connection

We investigate how the union of contemplative wisdom and science can lead to greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all life—and action—to support and sustain both individuals and the earth's living systems. Areas of study include how contemplative practice influences how people experience and respond to climate change, and the role of earth-honoring practices in reawakening our collective responsibility as stewards of our planetary future.



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In 2017, we started looking deeply at how to advance the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our organizational structure, processes, and programs. Below are examples of how we took our EDI efforts to the next level in 2020.

- 1.** We began the yearlong Mindful of Race leadership training with Ruth King for 11 members of the staff leadership, Board of Directors, and Steering Council.
- 2.** We published our [Land and Peoples Acknowledgement](#), including it in all of our events and inviting attendees to reflect on their own location.
- 3.** Our staff completed a workshop series on gender identity and sexual orientation led by national consultant Jessica Pettitt, resulting in changes to our demographic intake forms and the addition of personal pronouns in email signatures and digital platforms.
- 4.** We created a more relational and explicitly inclusive orientation process for individuals providing service to Mind & Life, such as grant reviewers and program planning committees.
- 5.** We introduced changes in our grantmaking policies and event guidelines that increased the diversity of our grantees, program planning committees, and event presenters and participants. Over a third of our 2020 event participants and grantees identified as BIPOC.

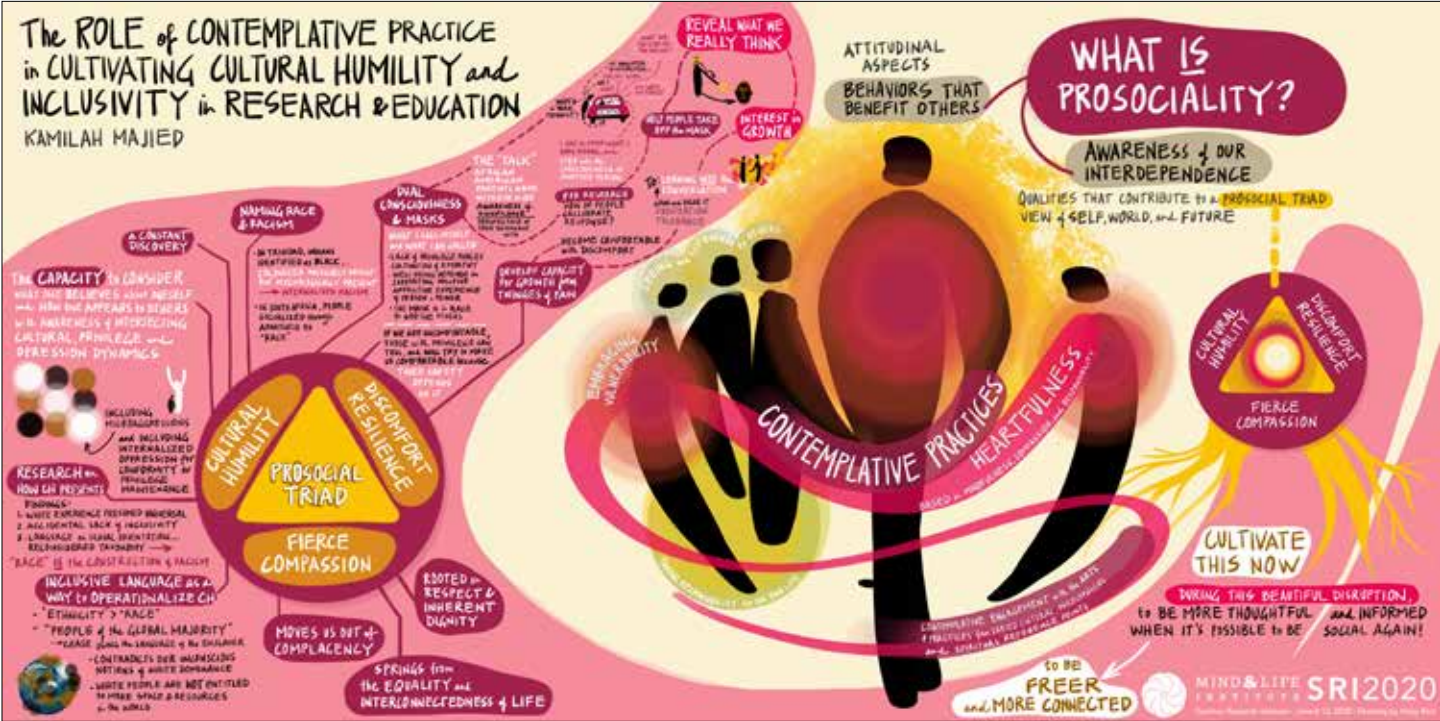




The Dalai Lama speaking from his home in Dharamsala, India at our June 2020 Conversation.



Participants join us on Zoom for our 2020 Summer Research Institute (SRI).



An artistic representation of Kamilah Majied's SRI presentation from scribe Kelly Bird.



Image from 2020 blog post on the work of Mind & Life grantee and Fellow Eric Garland (far right).



Mind & Life podcast host Wendy Hasenkamp.



Broadcasting Insights

In 2020, we dramatically expanded our digital offerings—leveraging Mind & Life’s extensive network of innovative thinkers—to reach a growing global audience of “engaged seekers” eager for insights to help them navigate today’s challenges and contribute in meaningful ways to positive change. Throughout, we engaged in difficult conversations on social change, healing, and identity, and offered applications and action steps to do the inner work necessary for personal and collective well-being.

GROWING SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

as of December 2020



FACEBOOK

232,234

followers



TWITTER

53,825

followers



INSTAGRAM

7,571

followers



LINKEDIN

9,296

followers

Podcast

Launched in April 2020, the [Mind & Life podcast](#) explains interdisciplinary perspectives on the mind in a way that is accessible and exciting, inspiring people to put scientific insight into action—from **changing everyday mental habits to rethinking the systems that shape our experience in the world**. The podcast challenges the mainstream media's oversimplification of mindfulness and meditation by providing a deeper, more integrated understanding of ourselves and the world through thoughtful conversation.

By the end of its first season, the show ranked in the top 10-15% of all podcasts, and received accolades such as being named by Vox as one of nine podcasts to help soothe COVID anxiety.

Buddhist scholar Thupten Jinpa, civil rights expert John Powell, and contemplative neuroscientist Amishi Jha were three of the twelve guests featured on the podcast in 2020.



THUPTEN JINPA



JOHN POWELL



AMISHI JHA

These wonderful talks always make me feel more informed and hopeful afterwards. Each episode gives me information that helps me to be more able to understand—and cope with—the monumental changes our planet and most of human society are experiencing right now.

—PODCAST LISTENER

Conversation with the Dalai Lama

Over 1.4 million livestream viewers tuned in to our online event ["Conversation with the Dalai Lama on Resilience, Compassion, and Healing for Today"](#) in June 2020, one of his first live virtual public programs. The global leader spoke to the **urgency of managing destructive emotions, the primacy of recognizing our essential oneness, and the role of education in equipping emerging generations to do both.** "Fear makes us more vulnerable," said the Dalai Lama, who has long spoken to the impact of negative emotions like fear and anger, which can distort our ability to think clearly. He also reinforced the connection between mental attitudes and racial injustice.



Thinking 'my group,' 'their group' on the basis of religion, on the basis of color, on the basis of social status—all this is old thinking. We have to think [in terms] of one humanity.

—THE DALAI LAMA

Inspiring Minds

In October 2020, we launched [Inspiring Minds](#), an online conversation series that brings together thought leaders and contemplatives to engage with one another and the audience in exploring the role of the mind in human flourishing. Monthly episodes, which include both an artistic offering and experiential contemplative practice, **explored the role of mindfulness in racial healing, the use of yoga as a tool for social change, and the science of embodied wisdom.** Across the first three episodes, we had over 2,000 live views and almost twice that many views of the recordings. Through our generosity registration model, where the program is offered freely with an option to donate, we received support from hundreds of people who had never before donated to Mind & Life.

Meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg, Mindful of Race founder Ruth King, and sitarist Srinivas Reddy, among others, joined us for Inspiring Minds in 2020.



SHARON SALZBERG



RUTH KING



SRINIVAS REDDY

It was an inspiring reminder to take action first by exploring and holding space for our inner experience whether it be while we are doing tai chi, meditation, or are listening to music, or while hearing the news and experiencing strong reactive states. Knowing the body as a vessel that holds this moment's experience, that houses its own wisdom and is in constant flow, is a good beginning.

—INSPIRING MINDS PARTICIPANT



Influencing the Field

During a time of isolation and unrest, Mind & Life events for investigators in contemplative science and related fields—as well as a growing cadre of changemakers—**offered true connection and the opportunity to explore and reflect on themes with deep relevance for our times.** By moving our 2020 research conferences online—and expanding scholarship support—we were able to dramatically increase access across the globe. Presentations and panels were available live and as recordings, with translations and transcripts, and we maintained our signature blend of research, networking, and contemplative practice and arts.

[SEE FULL LIST OF EVENTS](#) ➤

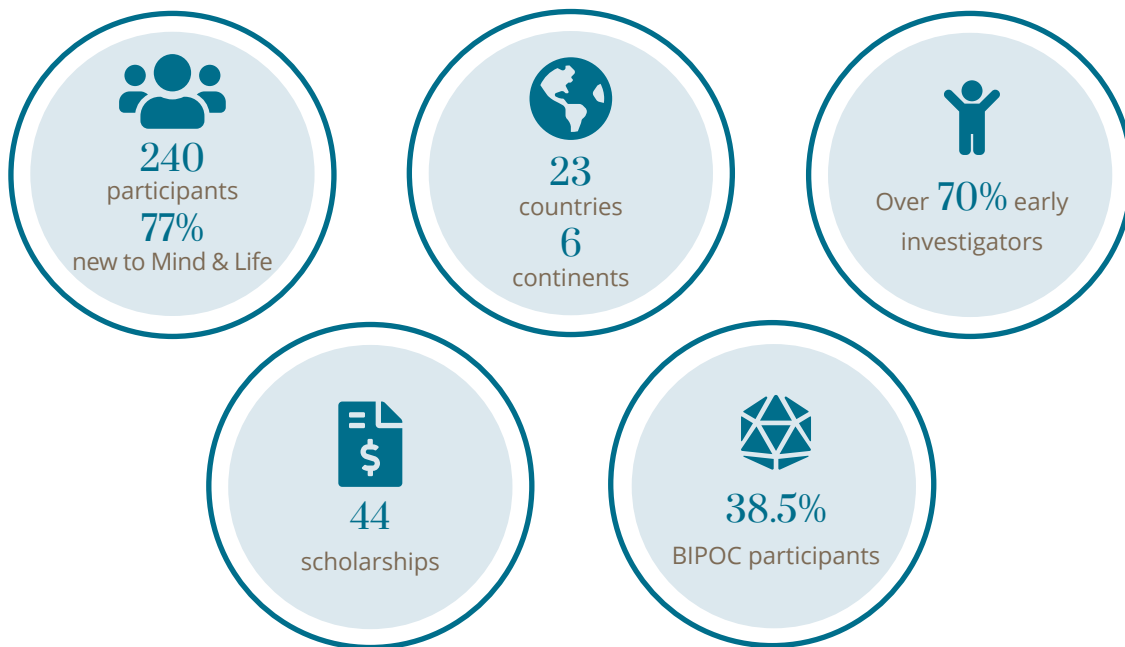
Held against the backdrop of a global pandemic and worldwide protests against police brutality and systemic racism, in June, the 17th annual Mind & Life Summer Research Institute, “[Cultivating Pro-Social Development Across the Lifespan: Context, Relationships, and Contemplative Practice](#),” asked participants to reflect on recent events and their roles in contributing to individual and societal healing.

Our November event, “[The Contemplative Research Conference: State of the Field—Discoveries, Opportunities, and Challenges](#),” brought our expanding community together at a time of global uncertainty around the U.S. presidential elections. This research conference included the latest scientific findings on the mechanisms and effects of meditation and engaged international participants in addressing societal challenges and finding solutions.

Increasing Access

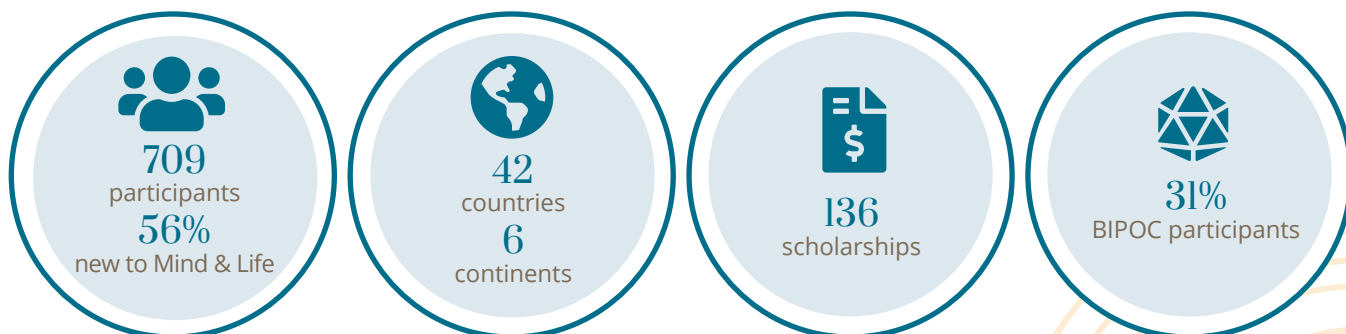
THE 17TH ANNUAL SUMMER RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SRI):


Cultivating Pro-Social Development Across the Lifespan: Context, Relationships, and Contemplative Practice



THE CONTEMPLATIVE RESEARCH CONFERENCE (CRC):

State of the Field—Discoveries, Opportunities, and Challenges





[Throughout the conference], I continued to get a feeling of openness and being part of a group rather than being pushed aside based on my ethnicity, experience, age, or gender.

—CRC PARTICIPANT

The fact that today I can point to a whole body of knowledge directly tied to contemplative neuroscience is in large part thanks to Mind & Life's foundational support of this field.

—AMISHI JHA, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



Supporting Leading-edge Research

Mind & Life grants support rigorous research across a range of disciplines to investigate the human mind. Since 2004, our grantees have **helped lay the foundations for the field of contemplative science, leading to groundbreaking insights** in such areas as education and mental health. With humanity more divided than ever, our grantmaking increasingly seeks to bridge contemplation, research, and action to cultivate inner knowing and strengthen awareness of our interconnection.

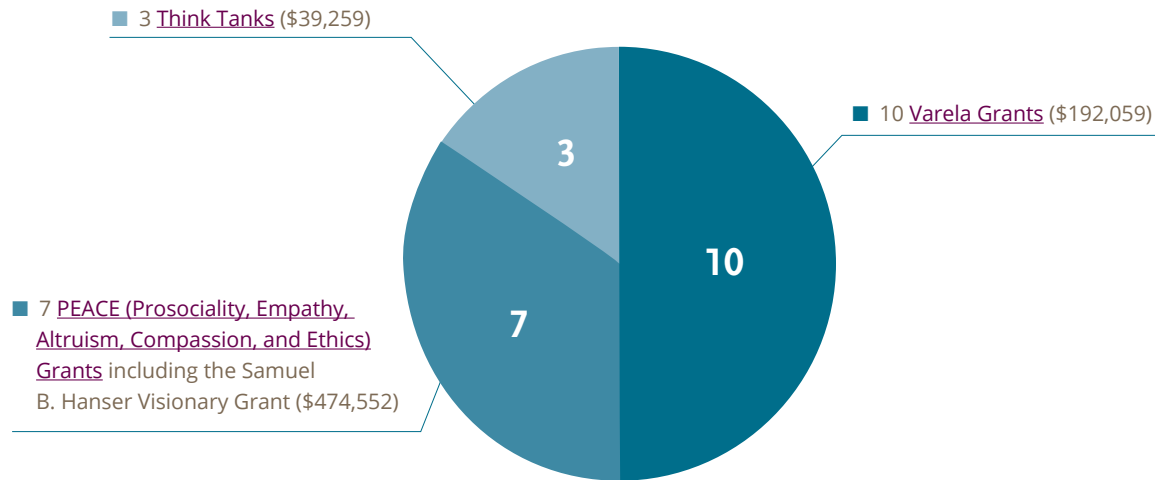
In 2020, across our three grant programs, we supported twenty research projects in five countries totaling \$705,870. One-third of our grantees identify as BIPOC.

With an increasing orientation to our [three focus areas](#), Mind & Life grantmaking influences the field of contemplative science by encouraging investigators to pursue relevant questions for positive change at the individual, societal, and planetary levels.

Our support for leading-edge research includes acknowledging those who have made significant contributions to the field and in service to Mind & Life's mission. This year we were pleased to announce [Peter Wayne](#) as recipient of the Catherine Kerr Award for Courageous and Compassionate Science and [Robert W. Roeser](#) as recipient of the Mind & Life Service Award.

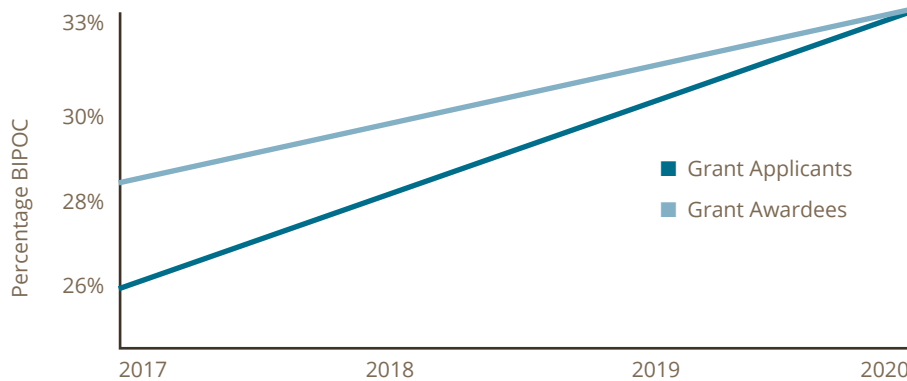
2020 Grants Awarded

20 GRANTS, TOTALING \$705,870



GRANTEE RACIAL DIVERSITY

In the last 4 grant cycles (2017-2020), the racial diversity of applicants to Mind & Life research grants (i.e., Varella and PEACE grants) has increased: from 26% BIPOC in 2017 to 33% in 2020. Importantly, the racial diversity of grant awardees closely followed the same trend: from 29% BIPOC in 2017 to 33% in 2020.



Grant Highlights

VARELA GRANTS

- ⦿ Conscious Connected Breathing for Chronic Low Back Pain
 - ⦿ Contemplative Ecological Education in Early Childhood
 - ⦿ Contemplative Training and Research with Law Enforcement
 - ⦿ Music-Based Mindfulness Intervention for Black Americans
-


PEACE GRANTS

- ⦿ Does Loving-kindness Propel Increased Neural Integration?
 - ⦿ Mindfulness-Based Trauma Recovery for Refugees
-

THINK TANKS

- ⦿ Compassionate End-of-Life Care for Transgender Elders
- ⦿ Establishing an International Society for Contemplative Research

[SEE FULL LIST OF FUNDED GRANTS](#) ▶



Mind & Life has been a really amazing sponsor for taking ideas that we have for how contemplative practice works, and how it benefits people, and supporting us in investigating these questions. I can't say enough good things about how it's transformed my work and the trainees in my lab.

—DAVID CRESWELL, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

Donor Recognition

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to the many generous supporters of the Mind & Life Institute, and we are humbled by the dramatic expansion of our donor base during what was a very challenging year for all. In 2020, **the number of donors to Mind & Life increased fourfold**—an indication of the relevance and importance of our work to a growing global audience of engaged seekers.

[SEE FULL LIST OF 2020 DONORS ▶](#)

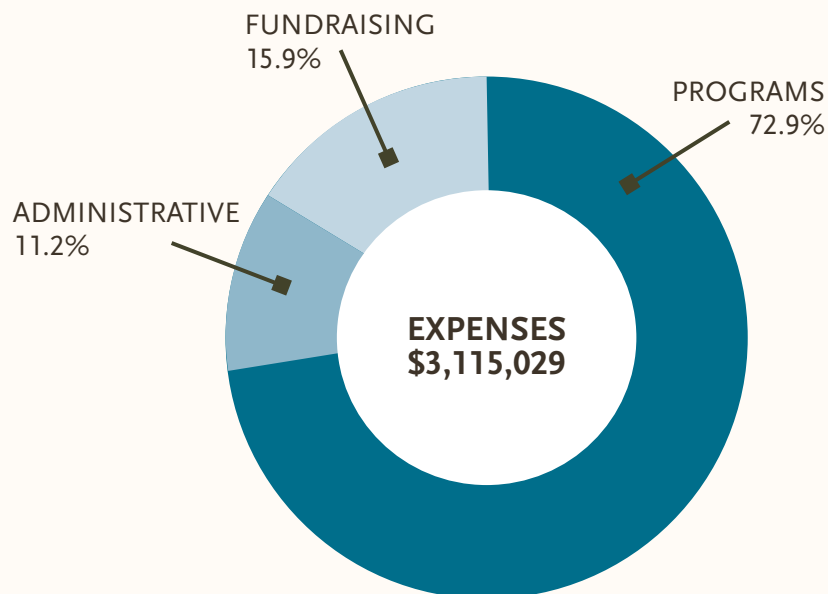
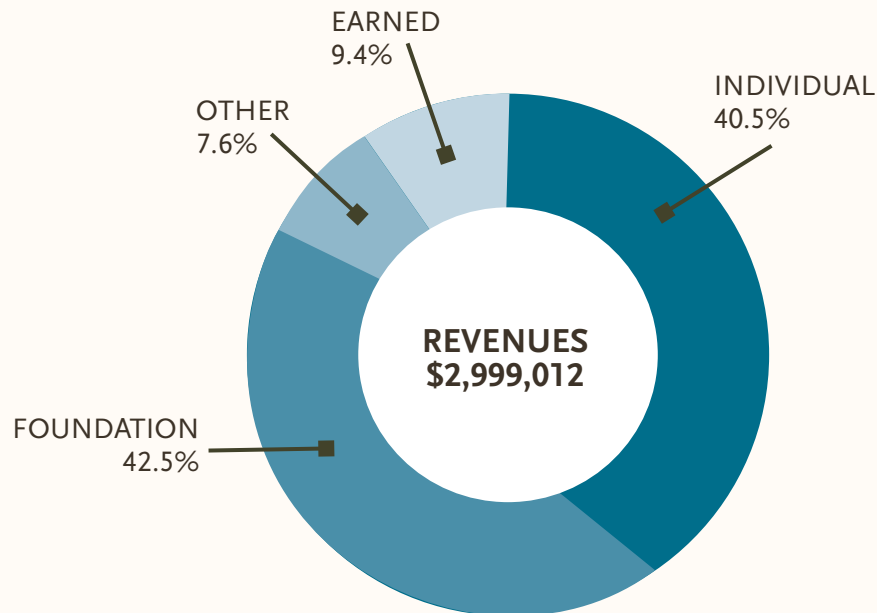
Our donor honor roll increased by 353%,
from 173 donors in 2019 to 784 donors in 2020.



Through meditation, one's spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental conditions manifest into a more joyous, productive, and peaceful life. Mind & Life gets this message out using science as a tool to reach and educate. Now, through its digital educational offerings, my hope is that even more people will explore these practices for their own lives and for our collective future.

—MIND & LIFE MONTHLY DONOR

Financial Summary



SEE 2020 FINANCIAL
AUDIT REPORT [▶](#)



MIND & LIFE
I N S T I T U T E

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Sona Dimidjian
Raymond (Rip) Gellein
Barry Hershey
Carolyn Jacobs
Connie Kemmerer
Jack Kornfield
Thupten Jinpa Langri
Aaron Stern

2020 STEERING COUNCIL

Sarah Bowen
Nilanjana (Buju) Dasgupta
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*Lisbeth Nielsen
Bobbi Patterson
Robert Roeser
Ed Taylor
Fadel Zeidan

**serving in her personal capacity*

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