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The Santa Fe Institute Announces The Omidyar Challenge to Establish the Omidyar Fellows Program

SANTA FE, NM (October 15, 2008) – The Santa Fe Institute (SFI) announced today its acceptance of a $7.5 million challenge grant from eBay founder, Pierre Omidyar. As a member of the SFI Board of Trustees, Omidyar has awarded the challenge grant to establish the Omidyar Fellows Program.

The Omidyar Fellows Program will aim to attract the brightest and most creative thinkers to spend two to three years as postdoctoral fellows at the Santa Fe Institute. Consistent with SFI’s multidisciplinary approach, the fellowship program will draw scholars from across the social, physical and natural sciences with the common denominators being intense curiosity, creativity and a desire to delve deep into the major questions facing science and society. This new grant will elevate the stature and prestige of the Santa Fe Institute’s existing postdoctoral fellows program, and enable the Institute to continue to develop and support its world-class infrastructure.

Mr. Omidyar is known for a philanthropic philosophy that views broad, individual participation as the key driver of achieving public or private goals. Under the terms of this gift, the Institute will have three years to raise $7.5 million in matching funds.

The Omidyar gift brings SFI two-thirds of the way toward meeting the $50 million goal of its 25th Anniversary Campaign. SFI Trustees and core supporters provided the leadership gifts in the Campaign, and the balance is expected to be raised by reaching out to new donors that are dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems facing science and society.

The Santa Fe Institute is a private, not-for-profit, independent research and education center founded in 1984, for multidisciplinary collaborations in the physical, biological, computational, and social sciences. Since its inception, the Santa Fe Institute has been the acknowledged leader in multidisciplinary scientific research and the founding institution of complexity science. Complex systems research attempts to uncover and understand the deep commonalities that underlie artificial, human, and natural systems. This research relies on theories and tools from across the sciences.
Led by Dr. Geoffrey West, the Santa Fe Institute’s multidisciplinary approach to inquiry continues to transform the scientific landscape. Top thinkers from around the world reside at and visit the institute, attend workshops, work remotely from their home institutions, and collaborate with the Institute across disciplines. This unique distributed community continues to tackle some of the most compelling problems of our time, including understanding the theoretical foundations of conflict, disease, climate change, and economic instability.

The postdoctoral fellows program provides unparalleled research training, and as the postdoctoral graduates move onto academic positions elsewhere, they inform the research of other universities with the Santa Fe Institute’s approach to science.

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