

Obama to Unveil Initiative to Map the Human Brain

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The New York Times:

President Obama on Tuesday will announce a broad new research initiative, starting with \$100 million in 2014, to invent and refine new technologies to understand the human brain, senior administration officials said Monday.

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“The underlying assumptions about ‘mapping the entire brain’ are very controversial,” said Donald Stein, a neuroscientist at Emory University in Atlanta. He said changes in brain chemistry were “not likely to be able to be imaged by the current technologies that these people are proposing.”

Emphasizing the development of technologies first, he said, is not a good approach. “I think the monies could be better spent by first figuring out what needs to be measured and then figuring out the most appropriate means to measure them.” he said. “In my mind, the technology ought to follow the concepts rather than the other way around.”

However, supporters of the initiative argued that it could have a similar impact as the Sputnik satellite had in the 1950s, when the United States started a significant nationwide effort to invest in science and technology.

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