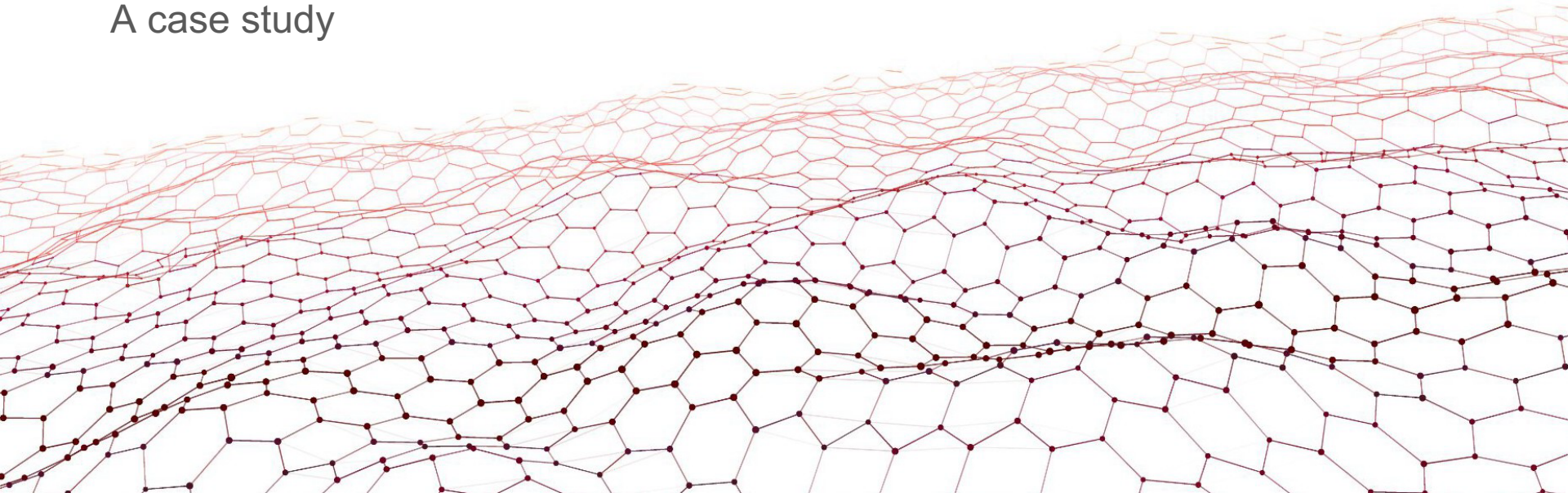


# Spotlight on a leader in the global biomedical research community

Van Andel Institute + Science Custom Publishing  
A case study



# Van Andel Institute Business Challenges

Van Andel Institute (VAI) is a research institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan that has quietly become one of the best places to do epigenetics research in the world. But VAI wanted to let their scientific chops become more widely acknowledged, and to put a spotlight on Grand Rapids as a pretty fantastic place for a scientist to live.

*Science* custom publishing collaborated with VAI to solve these challenges:

1



**Raise awareness of the  
Institute in the global  
biomedical research  
community for recruitment**

2



**Establish an enduring record  
of discoveries, collaborations,  
and progress in improving  
human health**

3



**Showcase Grand Rapids as a  
cosmopolitan and welcoming  
city to set down roots**

# The approach:

## Amplify VAI's leaders, collaboration, & hometown

1

### Science Supplement: Grand Plan

To showcase the cutting-edge medical research at VAI, *Science* custom publishing collaborated with VAI on a print and online supplement about how advances in epigenetics are driving progress in neurodegenerative disorders, metabolic disorders, and cancer, aided by a deliberate emphasis on collaboration found at VAI. Reprints of recent epigenetics articles and/or abstracts published in *Science* journals that exemplify advances made possible through the collaborations.

2

### A mix of features and research

To create an informative mix of engaging content for the supplement, VAI and *Science* custom publishing collaborated to produce three custom articles: a Q&A with the head of epigenetics, an in-depth science article about cutting-edge work at VAI, and a playful article about scientists living the good life in Grand Rapids.

3

### Hearing is believing: Podcast

To cross-promote the supplement and engage another segment of *Science*'s audience of researchers, *Science* custom publishing recorded a 10-minute podcast segment. This conversation between Senior Editor Erika Berg and an epigenetics leader at VAI would run as part of the popular podcast from the journal *Science*.

# The Campaign

A literature search was performed to identify articles from the *Science* family of journals with authors from VAI from multiple departments to exemplify the fruits of collaboration. Researchers at VAI were interviewed about their science, but also about their lives in Grand Rapids, crafting three feature articles that expanded on the supplement's theme.

To amplify the message, a podcast featuring a VAI epigeneticist was recorded and included in the weekly *Science* podcast. Art was selected to emphasize VAI's excellence in epigenetics, but there was also a playful tone, such as with an article about Grand Rapids shaped like the state of Michigan.



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Epigenetics is a growing field that investigates how environmental factors impact gene expression. Scientists now know that epigenetic changes play key roles in many diseases, such as cancer, Parkinson's and diabetes. In this Science supplement, ...more

## A GRAND PLAN

How a visionary approach to collaboration is accelerating progress in epigenetics, neurodegenerative disease, metabolism, and cancer research

Scientists ❤️ Grand Rapids for everyone  
with cool, diverse and innovative arts and white sand beaches and deep forest trails a short

There's a lot to love—and discover—about Grand Rapids, Michigan. With about 1 million people across its metro area, the state's second largest city has in the past decade experienced an economic and population boom, signaling to the world that something special is found here.

It's why Van Andel Institute's founding family resided early calls to establish the institute in a large, modern well-tended brown place outside of Grand Rapids. They knew the city was the right location for VAI to thrive.

Founded in 1996 through a generous endowment by Jay and Betty Van Andel, VAI has steadily grown under the leadership of Chairman and CEO David Van Andel to become a major (MacArthur) Hall for leading-edge biomedical research. The institute sponsored the emergence of the Grand Rapids Medical Education District, a district that includes several major hospitals and Michigan State University College of Human Medicine.

It takes more than good green opportunities to create a welcoming home, however—and Grand Rapids has a great deal to offer. "Grand Rapids has so many things that big cities offer, but the pace and quality of life are much better," says VAI investigator Yvonne Foulds-Mattellard, noting that she can readily get from her home to her lab at Michigan's only rush-hour-free zone in Grand Rapids—within 15 minutes or so.

VAI Chief Scientific Officer Peter Jones says that the city's appeal is particularly strong for faculty and staff with children, who have access to affordable homes in convenient locations. "This is a marvelous place to bring up a family," he says. In fact, in 2021, 161 West & World High School ranked 120 on its roster of best places to live in the US, with housing costs below the national average and an excellent school including On Top High School, which was ranked #1 in the state and #11 nationally in 2022.

Living in a smaller city doesn't necessarily require sacrifices in terms of access to entertainment and culture. Van Andel Ave headquarters to town and houses elite hockey and basketball teams. In addition to major arts hubs like the Grand Rapids Museum and the DeVos Performance Hall, the city also supports an extensive network of local arts and venues. "My young boys choose, and we go to see the Broadway shows that come through," says VAI investigator David Jones. "We're an arts 'Hamilton' town."

And in 2012, Grand Rapids was crowned "Beer City USA" in recognition of the more than 40 breweries in the area there more than just beer on tap, as the city is also home to multiple craft distilleries. Christopher Lee, Michigan's wine region manager, Tuscany Vine and Old Mission Peninsula just two hours north.

Nearby, Lake Michigan is home to a number of beautiful waterfront spots with easy driving to the city. There are even more other lakes nearby, as well as regional lakes and hiking trails outdoors year-round. For fishermen, the 4,800-mile North Country Trail, which spans eight states, runs right past Grand Rapids, for those craving a trip to the big, Redwood and Chicago are both only a few hours away. And for longer distance explorations—either by work or fun—Grand R. Ford International Airport is close by and has direct services to more than 30 North American cities.

Grand Rapids only continues to expand. A major redevelopment of the downtown waterfront to include more green space and an open-air music space, a new baseball stadium, and entertainment venues are currently in progress.

Given the wealth of offerings and amenities, Foulds-Mattellard has quickly become a strong advocate for Grand Rapids. "It's beautiful," she says. "I love it."

READ MORE

## A GRAND PLAN

How a visionary approach to collaboration is accelerating progress in epigenetics, neurodegenerative disease, metabolism, and cancer research

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### A grand plan

How a visionary approach to collaboration is accelerating progress in epigenetics, neurodegenerative disease, metabolism, and cancer research.

## Creating an epicenter for epigenetics research

A sponsored supplement to *Science*

**VAN ANDEL INSTITUTE**

# The Results

VAI benefited from its partnership with *Science* custom publishing by enhancing its recruitment efforts through increased visibility among an audience of scientific scholars and staking its claim as an epicenter of epigenetics research.

Total  
campaign impressions

**150k**

Print + Online  
Distribution

**40.4k**

Podcast Downloads

**34.7k**

Targeted email opens

**23.4k**

# Get in touch

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