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2020 AHA Predoctoral Fellowship

Application Deadline: August 14, 2019

Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. CDT on the deadline date. The system will shut down at 5 p.m. CDT. Early submission is encouraged. Your institutional Grants Officer (GO) has the final responsibility of submitting your completed application to the American Heart Association. It is important that you check with your GO for his/her internal deadline.

Reference Report Deadline: August 28, 2019

Award Activation: January 1, 2020

In some cases, an awardee may be granted a delayed start date of up to six months to accommodate professional obligations, such as an ongoing fellowship or pending visa approval.

Program Description and Eligibility

Statement of Purpose

To enhance the integrated research and clinical training of promising students who are matriculated in pre-doctoral or clinical health professional degree training programs and who intend careers as scientists, physician-scientists or other clinician-scientists, or related careers aimed at improving global cardiovascular health.

Science Focus

The AHA funds basic, clinical, behavioral, translational and population research, bioengineering/biotechnology and public health problems broadly related to fulfilling our mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

Disciplines

AHA awards are open to the array of aspiring academic and health professionals. This includes but is not limited to all academic disciplines (biology, chemistry, mathematics, technology, physics, etc.) and all health-related professions (physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, dentists, pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists, statisticians, nutritionists, etc.).

Clinical, translational, population, behavioral, and basic scientists are encouraged to apply. AHA maintains dedicated Peer Review Committees by science type and subject.

AHA strongly encourages applications by women, underrepresented minorities in the sciences, and those who have experienced varied and non-traditional career trajectories.



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Target Audience

At the *time of application*, the applicant must be:

- enrolled in a post-baccalaureate Ph.D., M.D., D.O., D.V.M., Pharm.D., D.D.S., DrPH, or Ph.D. in nursing or equivalent clinical health science doctoral degree program, who seeks research training with a sponsor prior to embarking upon a research career.
- a full-time student working towards his/her degree.

At the *time of award activation*, the candidate must have completed initial coursework and be at the stage of the program where he/she can devote full-time effort to research or activities related to the development into an independent researcher or a related career aimed at improving global cardiovascular health.

Sponsor

It is imperative that the fellow receives counsel and direction from a sponsor who is an established investigator (as outlined in the peer review criteria for the sponsor/training plan below) interested in the progress of the project.

A fellow must have primary responsibility for the writing and the preparation of the Fellowship application, understanding the sponsor will play a significant part in providing guidance to the applicant.

AHA does not require but strongly encourages institutions to develop and use Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for AHA training programs. IDPs provide a structure for the identification and achievement of career goals. The student's career goals as stated in "Part A - Personal Statement" of the fellow's biosketch and the sponsor's training plan must be complementary to one another and focused specifically on the individual. A standardized training plan will not be viewed favorably.

Citizenship

At the *time of application*, must have one of the following designations:

- U.S. citizen
- Permanent resident
- Pending permanent resident (any resident who has an approved I-765 form and has submitted an I-485 application with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)
- E-3 Visa - specialty occupation worker
- H1-B Visa - temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- F-1 - student visa
- J-1 Visa - exchange visitor
- O-1 Visa - temporary worker with extraordinary abilities in the sciences
- TN Visa - North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Professional
- G-4 Visa - family member of employee of international organizations



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- DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. This status requires additional AHA approval to apply. Send an email to Apply@Heart.org with an explanation of your status and a statement of support from your sponsor.

Applicants are not required to reside in the United States for any period before applying for American Heart Association funding. An awardee must maintain one of the designations listed above throughout the duration of the award.

Eligible Sponsoring Institution

American Heart Association research awards are limited to U.S.-based non-profit institutions, including medical, osteopathic and dental schools, veterinary schools, schools of public health, pharmacy schools, nursing schools, universities and colleges, public and voluntary hospitals and others that can demonstrate the ability to conduct the proposed research.

Applications will not be accepted for work with funding to be administered through any federal institution or work to be performed by a federal employee, except for Veterans Administrations employees.

Budget

AHA does not pay indirect costs on fellowships.

Annual Stipend – matches the NIH scale for predoctoral fellows

2019: \$24,816, plus \$4,200 per year for health insurance. Note: Stipend may be used to further supplement health insurance cost, however, the health insurance allowance may not be used for any other purpose.

Project Support

\$2,000 per year, in addition to the stipend. (No limit on any line item (travel, computer, equipment, etc.). International travel is permitted and does not require prior AHA approval.

Award Duration

One or two years

If applying for only one year of support, select the ONE YEAR form for this program before beginning the application in Grants@Heart.

Total Award Amount:

\$31,016 - \$62,032

Restrictions

- An applicant may submit only one AHA Predoctoral Fellowship application per deadline.
- An AHA Predoctoral Fellowship student may hold only one AHA award at a time.
- This award is not for individuals of faculty/staff rank.



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- An AHA Predoctoral Fellowship awardee may not hold another AHA award concurrently. However, the student may apply for an AHA Postdoctoral Fellowship in the last year of the AHA Predoctoral Fellowship.
- The awardee may not hold a comparable award as a source of supplementation. An applicant who receives AHA funding, but has an ongoing training grant from another source, may defer the start of the AHA award up to six months to complete the existing fellowship. Prior AHA approval is required.
- The sponsor/co-sponsor may sponsor supervise no more than two AHA-funded Predoctoral Fellows and two AHA-funded Postdoctoral Fellows (pre-doctoral and postdoctoral) at the same time concurrently. Fellows who are part of an AHA Strategically Focused Research Network are excluded.
- Submission of an application to the AHA with identical or significantly similar content as a submission by another investigator is prohibited. Also, the submission of an application to the AHA with identical or significantly similar content from a sponsor to a grant program and his/her fellow to fellowship program is prohibited. In such cases, both applications may be removed from funding consideration. If a grant application is submitted by the sponsor of a fellowship application, both applications may be funded if there is no duplication of aims.

Peer Review Criteria

An applicant is prohibited from contacting AHA peer reviewers. This is a form of scientific misconduct and will result in removal of the application from funding consideration and institutional notification of misconduct.

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on the following criteria. Please address these in your proposal. Each criterion will account for one-third of the overall score.

Criterion 1 – Evaluation of the Applicant

1. Does the applicant have potential for a research career?
2. Are the applicant's career plans specified in the application?
3. Is this supported by the applicant's academic record and the assessment provided by the three letters of reference?
4. Does the applicant have prior research experience and/or publications?
5. Is there a clear rationale supporting the need for the proposed training?
6. What is the sponsor's assessment of the applicant?

Criterion 2 - Sponsor/Training Plan and Environment

Because the applicant receives only a stipend from the award, additional monetary support **MUST** come from the sponsor's laboratory. Therefore, the proposal will likely be related to the sponsor's currently-funded work. The sponsor should clarify the role the applicant played in developing the proposal, the relationship of the proposal to ongoing work in the sponsor's laboratory, and how the



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project will contribute toward the applicant's training and career development.

Sponsor and Training Plan

1. Is the sponsor an independent investigator?
2. Does the sponsor have the experience to direct the proposed training, as evidenced by a track record regarding productivity, funding and prior students?
3. Does the sponsor have adequate current funding to support the applicant?
4. Does the sponsor demonstrate familiarity with the applicant's career and developmental goals and provide a comprehensive training plan that supports progress towards the applicant's career plans, which should be outlined in the Personal Statement section of the applicant's biosketch?

Environment

1. Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success of the training experience?
2. Is there evidence of institutional commitment?

Criterion 3 – Evaluation of the Proposal

This section should provide a summary of the proposal, no longer than five pages: A thoughtfully planned, systematic proposal aimed at clearly answering an investigative question in cardiovascular and/or stroke health research. It should be completed in collaboration with the proposed sponsor.

Note: The proposal will be assessed on the scientific merit, but equally as an integral part of the candidate's development into a career aligned with AHA's mission.

A new fellow may not have had adequate time to generate preliminary data; therefore, applicants may present preliminary data generated by the sponsor. The assessment of preliminary data, whether generated by the sponsor or the applicant, should be put into perspective so that bold new ideas and risk taking by beginning investigators are encouraged rather than stymied.

1. Is the proposed work appropriate for the applicant, given his/her academic background, experience and career interests? Does the proposal contain the right balance of challenge, importance of the research question, and feasibility in relation to the applicant's experience and training?
2. Does the proposed project summary:
 - Include a specific hypothesis and describe the applicant's role on the proposal;
 - Provide a concise account of the subject matter, an overview of each part of the proposal, specific project aims and the methodology;
 - Reflect the significance of the proposal.
 - For all applications that include vertebrate animals or human subjects, applicants must explain how relevant biological variables, such as sex, are factored into the research design, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, strong justification from the scientific literature, preliminary data, or other relevant considerations, must be provided for applications proposing to study only one sex.



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3. **Impact:** How effectively does the applicant describe for an audience without a science background how this proposal will impact the AHA's mission? Consider the AHA's Strategic Value Proposition that includes: addressing overall health and wellbeing, anchored in cardiovascular and brain health; focusing on breakthrough science and technology; changes in systems and policy; and engaging with individuals to transform communities. Does the science accelerate the discovery, interpretation and application of scientific knowledge to enhance and treat CVD and stroke? Evaluation of this criterion should be influenced by the lay summary section of the application and any lay reviewers' impressions.

Interim Reporting

AHA requires both the awardee and sponsor to submit annual progress reports that include narrative description of accomplishments related to the research and training, as well as an inventory of any abstracts and publications produced.