



2025 Institutional Award for Undergraduate Student Training

Key Dates

RFP posted:	March 4, 2024
ProposalCentral open:	July 1, 2024
Proposal deadline:	Wed., Sept. 11, 2024
Award notification:	Dec. 2024
Award start:	Jan. 1, 2025

Purpose

To encourage students from all disciplines to consider research careers.

This is an institutional award, made to qualified institutions that can offer a meaningful research experience that supports the mission of the American Heart Association to undergraduate college students.

Eligibility

The program director is the applicant for this award. At the time of application, the program director must:

- possess a demonstrated track record of providing mentoring to student researchers;
- be a full-time faculty member at the level of assistant professor (or equivalent) or above;
- provide a detailed description of institutional support that is available to sponsors and students;
- list potential sponsors, along with brief details about their background and nature of work;
- outline how potential student awardees will be identified and recruited;
- provide the procedure that sponsor/student teams will follow to compete for AHA funds granted to the institution;
- submit a plan for obtaining annual feedback from current and former trainees to assess the quality and effectiveness of the fellowship experience.

Program Structure

This is an institutional award to qualified research institutions that can offer a meaningful research experience to undergraduate college students. A program director applies on behalf of the institution, with an internal selection process outlined, in which the sponsor/student pairs apply together for one of the awards from the institution.

- The institution must include a student recruitment plan that is open to students at any school. A sponsor/student team may be located at any non-research undergraduate institution if there is a letter from the sponsoring institution assuring support for the project and responsibility for the student's work.
- Preference should not be given to current students of the sponsors' laboratories.
- The institution is strongly encouraged to recruit students from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in science (Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander).
- The institution may apply for support for two to five students per year. The request must be justified by the institution, based on how many students they can effectively manage.
- This is a three-year award that supports two to five students per institution, per year. Renewal is based on satisfactory interim reporting from students, sponsors, and the program director.
- The American Heart Association permits the use of a large language model (LLM – e.g., ChatGPT) or an artificial intelligence tool to generate and/or edit content in research proposals submitted for funding. This information must be disclosed at the time of submission. Disclosure of this information does not impact peer review. Should this information not be disclosed accurately, and use of these tools is identified, the proposal may be administratively withdrawn.

Hyperlinks to data/figures/additional information are not permitted in the Research Plan nor any other proposal documents. This includes use of the Precision Medicine Platform for applications and peer review purposes.

Sponsor

All applicants (excluding fellows) are to include a statement in the Personal Statement section of their biographical sketch that explicitly states how they contribute to a safe, inclusive, and diverse work environment.

In addition, mentors on Fellowships, Career Development Awards, and Diversity Supplements should complete recognized training specific to sexual and gender-based harassment.

- Up to five sponsors may be identified, commensurate with the number of students proposed to be supported.
- A sponsor must demonstrate that the student will be provided with a meaningful experience in research that supports the mission of the American Heart Association within the 10-week period allotted for the award.
- A sponsor/mentor may supervise no more than four AHA-funded fellows (predoctoral and/or postdoctoral) and no more than two AHA-supported student fellows (undergraduate and/or medical/graduate students) at any time. This restriction does not apply to co-sponsors. Fellows who are part of an AHA Strategically Focused Research Network are excluded.
- Sponsor must provide a detailed description of available support, projects available for the student to work on, and the nature of research activities of each project, which will be submitted to AHA by the Program Director at the time of award activation.
- Sponsor must possess a track record of supporting trainees.
- The program director may serve as a sponsor.

Student Trainee

The program director will submit the list of student trainees at award activation; this is not part of the application.

- To be eligible for this program, an undergraduate student must be classified at junior or senior academic status at the time of award activation or may complete the fellowship immediately following graduation.
- A student who was previously supported by an AHA student fellowship may apply for an additional fellowship in a subsequent year. However, a student who has been supported by two AHA undergraduate fellowships is no longer eligible to apply. An application for a second undergraduate fellowship should be well-justified.
- Student must be enrolled full-time or a recent graduate of an undergraduate degree program at a four-year college or university.
- At the time of application, the student must be a United States citizen, or foreign national holding a student, exchange, or permanent resident visa, including an F-1, H1, H1B, J1, PR, or TN. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status requires additional AHA approval to apply. Send an email to Apply@Heart.org with an explanation of the student's status and a statement of support from the sponsor.
- Students are not required to reside in the U.S. for any period of time before being supported by applying for American Heart Association funding.
- Students may not hold funds from AHA Scholarships in Cardiovascular Disease given by AHA Professional Councils at the same time as they

are supported by an AHA Institutional Award for Undergraduate Student Training.

Budget

AHA does **not** require use of the NIH salary cap.

Trainee Stipend/Salary: \$6,000 per student for the 10-week research experience. Institution may request support for two to five students per year. Maximum stipend support: 5 students per yr x \$6,000 per student x 3 yrs = \$90,000

Travel: Up to one conference @ \$3,000 per student = \$45,000 maximum

Travel support is for attendance at a national conference. (Attendance of AHA Scientific Sessions is strongly encouraged, and students are encouraged to explore Scientific Sessions early-career day workshops.) International travel is permitted and does not require prior AHA approval.

A faculty mentor **MUST** attend with the student. If a student does not attend/participate in a scientific conference during the term of his/her research experience or within six months following the completion of the research experience, the \$3,000 will be forfeited by the program director/institution.

Administrative Coordination: \$10,000 per year x 3 yrs = \$30,000 maximum
Program Director may request up to \$10,000 per year at their discretion. The funds may support the program director and/or other administrators.

No mentor support, laboratory supplies, or indirect costs are allowed.

Award Duration: Three years

Total Stipends: \$36,000 - \$60,000

Total Award Maximum: \$165,000

Annual payment will be made to the institution for disbursement to the students. Faculty sponsor and institution assume fiscal responsibility. The institution may supplement the award amount. The award does not constitute an employee-employer relationship between the student and the American Heart Association. Direct use of award funds to pay tuition is prohibited.

Interim Reporting

After each year of the award, the documents listed below are to be submitted to the AHA by the Program Director. Continued funding of the award and eligibility for subsequent awards will be contingent upon meeting these reporting requirements.

- From each student: Up to a one-page narrative on experience, lessons learned, and future educational and career plans.
- Student awardees from years one and two are expected to submit an annual update of their educational and career progress, at least until the award has ended. It is in the best interest of the institution to make students aware that they will be asked for an annual update of their academic and/or career activities through the end of the award.
- From each sponsor: Up to a two-page narrative on the training experience, including research and training accomplishments, abstracts, and publications.
- From Program Director: Up to three pages outlining methods used for identifying and selecting sponsors and students; the extent to which the awarded slots were filled, and a reporting of how many students were minorities. Preference should not be given to current students of the sponsors' laboratories.
- At the end of the three-year award, the Program Director is to submit a final report that summarizes the experience from the standpoint of the institution. The final report should include a review of each student's educational and career progression.

Peer Review Criteria

Applicants should never contact reviewers regarding their applications. Discussing the content of an application or attempting to influence review outcome will constitute a conflict of interest in the review. Reviewers must notify the AHA if an applicant contacts them.

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact/priority score to reflect their assessment of how well the proposed program supports the mission of the American Heart Association, and the likelihood of the program to provide a meaningful 10-week research experience, in consideration of the following review criteria. Reviewers will comment on the following three criteria, each of which will account for one-third of the overall score.

Assessment of the Program Director

The program director is the applicant for this award.

Does the program director have the scientific background, expertise, time commitment, and administrative and training experience to

provide strong leadership, direction, management, and administration of the proposed research training program?

Student Trainee Recruitment Plan

1. Does the application contain a recruitment plan with strategies to attract well-qualified student candidates, both from within the sponsoring institution or from any four-year college or university?
2. Are there well-defined and justified student selection criteria?
3. Is there a well-defined plan for recruiting underrepresented minorities?
4. Is a procedure in place that sponsor/student teams will follow to compete for the AHA funds granted to the institution?

Training Program and Environment

All applicants (excluding fellows) are to include a statement in the Personal Statement section of their biographical sketch that explicitly states how they contribute to a safe, inclusive, and diverse work environment. In addition, mentors on Fellowships, Career Development Awards, and Diversity Supplements should complete recognized training specific to sexual and gender-based harassment.

1. Are the research facilities and environment conducive to preparing trainees for successful careers in biomedical research? Is the level of institutional commitment to the training program, including administrative and research training support, sufficient to ensure the success of the program?
2. Do the proposed research projects that students could be imbedded in/exposed to provide opportunities for trainees to acquire state-of-the-art scientific knowledge, methods, and tools that are relevant to the goals of the training program?
3. Are sufficient numbers of experienced proposed sponsors with appropriate expertise and funding available to support the number and level of trainees proposed in the application? Do the proposed sponsors have strong records as researchers, including recent publications and successful competition for research support in areas directly related to the proposed research training program? Do the proposed sponsors have strong records of training undergraduate and graduate students? For each proposed sponsor/student team from a non-research undergraduate institution, is there either:
 - a. An established collaboration (such as shared papers) and a letter from the sponsoring institution assuring support for the project and responsibility for the student's work,
 - b. For new collaborations, a letter from the sponsoring institution as outlined above?

4. Does the program provide appropriate inter- or multidisciplinary research training opportunities?
5. Are there planned activities and educational opportunities for the cohort of student trainees?
6. Is the proposed training program likely to ensure trainees will be prepared for research-intensive and/or research-related careers?
7. Does the program propose a rigorous evaluation plan to assess the quality and effectiveness of the training? Are effective mechanisms in place for obtaining feedback from current and former trainees?

Renewals

For subsequent awards, the peer review committee will consider the progress made in the last three-year funding period, including on the Recruitment Plan. Does the application describe the program's accomplishments over the past funding period(s)? Is the program achieving its training objectives? Has the program evaluated the quality and effectiveness of the training experience, and is there evidence that the evaluation outcomes and feedback from trainees have been acted upon? Are changes proposed that are likely to improve or strengthen the research training experience during the next project period?

Training Record

1. How successful were past trainees in completing the program?
2. Has the training program ensured that trainees are productive in terms of research accomplishments, presentation and/or publication of research conducted during the training period, and subsequent training appointments and fellowship or career development awards?
3. Have past trainees continued research training/career tracks, such as enrollment in graduate or professional school, honors, awards and scholarships?