Founders Affiliate Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Description and Eligibility Criteria

Award Activation: Jan. 1, 2011

If your research will be conducted in one of the following states, you may apply to the Founders Affiliate: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION, ELIGIBILITY & PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

Objective
To help trainees initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke research while obtaining significant research results under the supervision of a sponsor or mentor; supports individuals before they are ready for some stage of independent research.

Science Focus
Research broadly related to cardiovascular function and disease and stroke, or to related clinical, basic science, bioengineering or biotechnology, and public health problems, including multidisciplinary efforts.

Disciplines
Proposals are encouraged from all basic disciplines as well as epidemiological, behavioral, community and clinical investigations that bear on cardiovascular and stroke problems.

Target Audience

- M.D., Ph.D., D.O., D.V.M. or equivalent doctoral degree at time of award activation
- The Founders Affiliate limits fellows to no more than five years postdoctoral research experience at the time of award activation. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this restriction.

Sponsor
It is particularly important for the new fellow to receive wise counsel and direction from a senior investigator interested in the conduct and progress of the research project during the research-training period. Each fellow must have a sponsor.

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

- U.S. citizen
- Permanent resident
- Pending permanent resident. Applicants must have applied for permanent residency and have filed form I-485 with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and have received authorization to legally remain in the United States (having filed an Application for Employment Form I-765).
- E-3 -- specialty occupation worker
- F1 - student visa
- H1-B Visa -- temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- J-1 Visa - exchange visitor
- O-1 Visa -- temporary worker with extraordinary abilities in the sciences
- TN Visa -- NAFTA Professional
Exception: Postdoctoral fellowship applicants who are outside the United States at the time of application must provide visa documentation prior to award activation.

Awardee must meet American Heart Association citizenship criteria throughout the duration of the award.

Location of Work
The award may be completed at any accredited institution in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Such institutions include: medical, osteopathic and dental schools, veterinary schools, schools of public health, pharmacy schools, nursing schools, universities and colleges, public and voluntary hospitals and other non-profit institutions 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 with the exception of Veterans Administration employees.

Budget/Annual Award Amount

Trainee Stipend/Salary: Commensurate with years of postdoctoral research and clinical experience at time of award activation:
0 years = $ 37,000
1 year = $ 39,000
2 years = $ 42,000
3 years = $ 43,000
4 years = $ 45,000
5+ years = $ 47,000
Institution may supplement stipend

Fringe Benefit: $1,000 for heath insurance

Project Support:
Travel: $3,000 (must be taken from the stipend)

Total Annual Award Amount: $38,000 - $48,000

Duration: Two years

This award does not allow indirect costs, dependent allowance or tuition.

Peer Review Criteria

To judge the merit of the application, reviewers will comment on following criteria. Please be sure to address these. Each criterion will account for 1/3 of the overall score.

Criterion 1 - Evaluation of the Investigator

Does the trainee have potential for a research career?

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

Sponsor/Training Plan

1. Is the mentor an independent investigator?
2. Does the mentor have the experience to direct the proposed research training, as evidenced by their track record regarding productivity, funding and prior trainees?
3. Does the mentor have adequate current funding to support the fellow's project?
4. Does the mentor provide a comprehensive training plan that will facilitate the applicant's progress towards his/her research career goals?

Environment

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

Criterion 3 - Evaluation of the Proposal

Significance: Does this study address an important problem broadly related to cardiovascular disease or stroke? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods and technologies that drive this field?

1. Approach: A new fellow may not have had adequate time to generate preliminary data. Applicants can 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. Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, feasible (as determined by preliminary data or the expertise available in the mentor's and/or collaborator's laboratories) and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

2. Innovation: Is the project original? Applicants should never contact reviewers regarding their applications. Discussing scientific content of an application or attempting to influence review outcome will constitute a conflict of interest in the review. Reviewers are directed to notify the AHA if an applicant contacts them.

Restrictions

- This award is not intended for individuals of faculty/staff rank.
  (Exception: M.D. or M.D./Ph.D. with clinical responsibilities who hold a title of instructor or similar due to their patient care responsibilities, but who devote at least 80 percent effort to research training.)
- Postdoctoral fellowship awardees must resign an award if promoted to a staff or faculty position. Since the fellowship is considered a training award, a staff or faculty appointment cannot be held. An awardee may defer the date of promotion to complete the fellowship.
- Awardee must devote at least 80 percent effort to research, or activities directly related to research.
- At the time of award activation, the Fellow cannot be pursuing a doctoral degree. Applicants in this situation should be referred to the AHA predoctoral fellowship.
- Awardee may not hold another association award concurrently.
- The fellow cannot hold a comparable award as a source of supplementation.
- An applicant may submit only one affiliate application per deadline.
- The same or similar application submitted for the fourth time will be administratively withdrawn.*
- The Founders Affiliate allows a maximum of two years of AHA postdoctoral fellowship support per individual.
- Founders Affiliate Restriction: A sponsor may have no more than two association-funded fellows (pre-doctoral or postdoctoral) at any time.
The Founders Affiliate limits fellows to no more than five years postdoctoral research experience at the time of award activation. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this restriction.

Applying to National and an Affiliate

If eligible, an applicant may simultaneously submit an application to an affiliate and to the national award program. The proposed research plan may need to be adjusted based upon different length of award and dollars available. The deadline dates may be different for each submission. If both are funded, the applicant must choose one award.

Success Rate (July 2009 award activation)

# Applications Reviewed: 223
# Applications Awarded: 27
Success Rate: 12 percent

*An applicant who is unsuccessful in a competition may resubmit the same or similar application three times (the original plus two resubmissions).*