Midwest Affiliate Predoctoral 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 Midwest Affiliate: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION, ELIGIBILITY & PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

Objective

To help students initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke research by providing research assistance and training.

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 disciplines, as well epidemiological, behavioral, community and clinical investigations that bear on cardiovascular and stroke problems.

Proposals from candidates who are clinically active M.D., D.O., Ph.D. or equivalent degreed investigators pursuing clinically oriented cardiovascular and stroke-related research are encouraged for all Midwest Affiliate research programs.

Target Audience

Post baccalaureate, predoctoral M.D., Ph.D., D.O., D.V.M. (or equivalent) students who seek research training with a sponsor/mentor prior to embarking on a research career. Full-time students working towards their degrees.

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

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

Location of Work
American Heart Association research awards are limited to non-profit institutions. 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 Administrations employees.

Budget/Annual Award Amount

Trainee Stipend/Salary: $23,000
Institution may supplement stipend

Fringe Benefit: $1,000 for health insurance
If necessary, the predoctoral fellow may also have medical insurance payments deducted from his/her stipend and/or project support.

Project Support: $2,000

Total Annual Award Amount: $26,000

Duration: One or two years; may submit an application to compete for a third year of funding*, if eligible. 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 a third 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

1. **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?

2. **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?

3. **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

- Not intended for individuals of faculty/staff rank.
- Awardee may not hold another association award concurrently.
- An applicant may submit only one affiliate application per deadline.
- Awardee must devote substantially full time to research.
- The fellow cannot hold a comparable award as a source of supplementation.
- The same or similar application submitted for the fourth time will be administratively withdrawn.**
- Midwest Affiliate: Sponsor may have no more than two association-funded fellows (pre-doctoral and postdoctoral) at any time.
- Midwest Affiliate allows a maximum of three years of AHA pre-doctoral fellowship support per individual.

**Applying to National and an Affiliate**

If eligible, an applicant may simultaneously submit applications 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 (Jan. 2010 award activation)
# Applications Reviewed: 116
# Applications Awarded: 25
Success Rate: 21.55 percent

* Fellows who wish to compete for a third-year of fellowship support and meet the eligibility criteria must submit a new fellowship application according to the program guidelines. New applications are allowed in the final year only. This is a new, competitive application, not an application for renewal. To apply for this one year award, be certain you select the one-year electronic application in Grants@Heart.
**An applicant who is unsuccessful in a competition may resubmit the same or similar application three times (the original plus two resubmissions).**