South Central 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, may apply to the South Central Affiliate: Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION, ELIGIBILITY & PEER REVIEW CRITERIA

Objective
To help students initiate careers in cardiovascular and stroke research, and to provide stipend support for students conducting doctoral dissertation projects.

Science Focus
Research broadly related to cardiovascular function and disease, stroke, or to related basic science, clinical, 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.

Academic Degree
Predoctoral Ph.D. students

Target Audience
Applicants must:

1. Be a doctoral student in any of the basic or clinical biomedical sciences, social or behavioral sciences, epidemiology or public health.
2. Be enrolled in an accredited, non-profit institution in Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma or Texas.
3. Show evidence of potential for a research career.
4. Show a sincere interest in pursuing a career in cardiovascular research.

Only those students who have well-developed research proposals and by June 30, 2010, will have completed their required course work, which is usually evidenced by having passed their qualifying examination, will be considered. Predoctoral fellowships are not to support individuals while they are completing their course work or studying for their qualifying examination or for individuals of faculty/staff rank or individuals who already have a science-based Ph.D.

An individual pursuing a second doctoral degree (e.g., an M.D., D.O., D.V.M or Pharm.D. seeking a Ph.D.) is eligible to apply. M.D. applicants that are now in a Ph.D. program are eligible to apply.

Sponsor
It is 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. So each fellow supported by the AHA must have a sponsor. The sponsor must be a doctorally prepared faculty member at the institution where the research is to be conducted and have demonstrated success in the field of cardiovascular and/or stroke sciences. The sponsor must be the applicant's major professor. No exceptions are allowed, including within interdisciplinary programs.
Because the fellow receives only a stipend from these awards, additional research support for the proposed project MUST come from the sponsor's laboratory. Therefore, the proposed project will likely be related to the sponsor's funded research. The sponsor should clarify the role that the applicant played in the development of the proposal, the relationship of the proposed project to ongoing research in the sponsor's laboratory, and how the project will contribute toward the training and career development of the applicant.

**Percentage of Effort**
Must devote full-time effort to research or activities directly related to their development into independent researchers, as opposed to patient care or teaching responsibilities.

**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 award.

**Location of Work**
Awards are limited to non-profit institutions such as 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:** $23,000
Institution may supplement stipend

**Fringe Benefit:** $1,000 for health insurance

**Project Support:** $1,000

**Maximum Annual Amount:** $25,000

**Duration:** One to 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 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

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 should notify the AHA if an applicant contacts them.

Restrictions

- An investigator may sponsor only one affiliate Predoctoral Fellow at any one time.
- Sponsors may not support other Predoctoral students through an affiliate Grant-In-Aid.
A laboratory may not submit fellowship and grant applications with overlapping aims to the affiliate in the same review cycle. However, fellowship applicants may submit an application with aims that relate to his/her sponsor's funded research project.

Awardees may not hold a comparable award simultaneously.
Awardees may not hold another AHA award concurrently.
Awardees are responsible for all required taxes on the stipend.
Awardee may apply for Postdoctoral Fellowship in final year.
An applicant may submit only one affiliate application per deadline.
The same or similar application submitted for the fourth time will be administratively withdrawn.

Interim Reporting
Assessment of annual progress reports from fellow and sponsor, including research and training accomplishments, abstracts and publications.

Evaluation
Publications, citations by others, ability to attract ongoing research funding, research career advancement, and contribution of association support to career advancement.

Success Rate (July 2009 award activation)
# Applications Reviewed: 49
# Applications Awarded: 11
Success Rate: 17.82%

* 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).