

Translational Research

SCHOLARS



PROGRAM

Preparing future independent investigators in clinical and translational science



Institute for Translational Sciences

PURPOSE: The overall goal of the Translational Research Scholars Program (TRSP) is to help prepare scientists to become independent investigators in clinical and translational sciences and to improve understanding of disease mechanisms, prevention and treatment. A more concrete goal is to complete the program with a successful grant proposal.

Scholars form a peer group, and benefit from interactions within the group as they pursue the common goal of becoming skilled and funded researchers.

The program focuses on preparing an initial successful grant application in a structured and mentored environment. It also provides more advanced training for success in funded research, productive grant management, and planning for a successful competitive renewal application.

Scholars pursue individual, defined programs of education and skills development under the guidance of mentors of their own choosing. TRSP is not a degree program, but simultaneous enrollment in the Clinical Science Graduate Program is an option. The endpoint of the program is attainment of independent funding from the NIH or other funding agency.

SCHOLAR CANDIDATES FROM A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES MAY INCLUDE:

1. Junior faculty with the background and training for successful clinical/translational research careers who are planning their initial grant applications (e.g. K23 or K08).
2. Junior faculty in various UTMB career development (K12) programs (see Collaborating Programs).
3. Junior faculty who have received initial grant funding and are interested in successful progress in funded research, productive grant

FOR INFORMATION:

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management, and planning for renewal.

4. Senior faculty planning their first grant applications.

REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

- Approval from department chairman and/or division chief, with commitment for continued support and a faculty appointment.
- At least 50% of time guaranteed for research for at least one and preferably three years.
- Research mentor(s).
- Research should be in clinical or translational science.

ASSOCIATE SCHOLARS MAY INCLUDE:

1. Junior faculty with interest in clinical/translational research but limited protected time.
2. Senior clinical fellows in their last year of clinical training who are taking time away from clinical duties and, thus, are able to spend ~50% of their effort in research and grant preparation, and who are expected to move into junior faculty positions at UTMB.
3. Ph.D. research fellows or postdoctoral fellows who are making plans to prepare their own clinical/translational grant applications in the upcoming years.
4. Graduate students in Clinical Science or other graduate programs in the final year of study or recent graduates expected to become UTMB junior faculty.

ADMISSION: Applicants are reviewed by the Program Executive Committee based on prior qualifications, research and training experience of the mentor, department support and potential for success. Application forms available at www.its.utmb.edu

The Translational Research Scholars Program (TRSP) is part of UTMB's Institute for Translational Sciences Educational Program, supported in part by a Clinical & Translational Science Award from the National Institutes of Health (UL1TR000071). Scholars are supported by the collaborating programs or their home departments.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

1 TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES: These are twice monthly working group meetings held in conjunction with other career development programs, covering topics such as academic advancement, scientific writing and grantsmanship. Some are research seminars where scholars present their proposed research and progress in data collection and preparing and revising grant applications or manuscripts. Scholars benefit from feedback from peers, mentors and faculty. New Scholars present their development plans for discussion.

Academic advancement seminar topics are organized jointly by faculty and scholars to include selected didactic presentations on new and emerging topics in clinical and translational research.

2 SCIENTIFIC WRITING FOR TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH: High standards are set in scientific writing and communication skills, which are important for success in research. Therefore, all Scholars are expected to take this 12-hour course. Follow-up activities on writing research articles and grant proposals are included in the Seminar Series.

3 OTHER COURSES AND CONFERENCES: Related UTMB research conferences and courses that contribute to career development are strongly suggested:

- “Translational Research: Tools and Techniques”
- “Navigating the IRB and Investigator Responsibilities”
- Topics in Translational Research Seminar Series
- “Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Workshop”
- “Grants For Lunch”
- Other UTMB workshops on being a good mentor or mentee, the peer review process, responsible conduct of research and grant writing.

4 CLINICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM: Scholars may choose to enroll in this degree program (see separate Fact sheet), unless they already have an M.S. or Ph.D. degree. Degree candidates may emphasize training in clinical investigation, health informatics, biostatistics or health services research.

5 SCHOLAR’S RESEARCH AND LEARNING PLAN: TRSP will provide guidelines and a “Research and Training Plan” form for the Scholar and mentor to use to describe and document the Scholar’s research and learning plans and for tracking the progress of the Scholar.

6 INDIVIDUAL FUNDING PLAN: Scholars and mentors are expected to create a specific funding plan, which includes a timeline for one or more competitive grant applications, including specific aims and targeted funding sources. The funding plan and grant submission activities of each Scholar are submitted to the Program and reviewed yearly by the Program Executive Committee.

7 GRANT APPLICATIONS: Scholars preparing grant applications (e.g. K23, K08) will have access to additional help from the Directors of the Program and Members of the Oversight Committee. They will help scholars identify other junior faculty with K awards who are willing to share their applications. These applications are particularly useful in illustrating approaches to write the requisite plans for educational activities, a long term career plan, and the mentor’s record of funded research, training experience and resources.

8 A MENTORED RESEARCH PROJECT is generally conducted in the mentor’s research setting. The project should aim to complete pilot data for a grant proposal, and be structured to include regular meetings, realistic monitored timelines, and specified end products. When they present in the seminar series, Scholars benefit from constructive comments from peers and faculty.

9 SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH ARTICLES AND RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSALS: The goal is to complete the program with research publications and external grant funding. All Scholars submit (and resubmit if necessary) grant proposal(s) to NIH or other appropriate agencies. Proposals are developed over at least 6 months, to allow time for pre-review by mentors and other program faculty. A member of the TRSP Executive Committee may function as a secondary mentor to assist with grant preparation.

10 ADVANCED SCHOLARS: These have completed the first stage of the program with a funded grant application and are encouraged to continue in a second stage of the program. This promotes progress in funded research, productive grant management, and planning for a successful competitive renewal application. They also serve as role models and share their progress toward completion of their funded projects at the twice monthly Seminar Series, which they continue to attend when time permits. Their participation facilitates discussion of topics such as mentoring junior investigators and reviewing articles and grant applications. They may also assume more advanced roles as co-mentors and will eventually become mentors for future Scholars.

DURATION OF INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS DEPENDS ON PAST EXPERIENCE AND ASSESSED NEEDS. SOME SCHOLARS MAY BE IN THE PROGRAM FOR AS LITTLE AS 1-3 YEARS, WHILE OTHERS BENEFIT FROM A PLAN THAT EXTENDS BEYOND INITIAL GRANT FUNDING.

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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UTMB CTSA Career Development Award
CTSA NIH-KL2TR000072
UTMB Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in
Women’s Health Program-BIRCWH
NIH-K12HD052023
Rehabilitation Research Career Development Program
NIH-K12HD055929
UTMB Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence
Center NIH-P30AG024832
UTMB Women’s Reproductive Health Research (WRHR)
Career Development Center of
Excellence NIH-KL2 HD001269