

NIH Predoctoral Fellowship Information Session

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Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
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Vicky Prince, Ph.D., Professor, OBA,
BSD Faculty Training Grant Coordinator,
F31 mentor and reviewer

Guests and Recent Awardees

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Kevin Doherty, Director, Fellowships and Writing, UChicagoGRAD
kevdoh@uchicago.edu

Colin Sheehan, Cancer Biology
csheehan3@uchicago.edu

PI: Alexander Muir, Ben May Dept for Cancer Research

Joash Lake, Immunology
jlake1@uchicago.edu

PI: Eugene Chang, Medicine, Gastroenterology

Andy Anderson, Molecular Metabolism and Nutrition
caraa@uchicago.edu

PI: Raghu Mirmira, Medicine, Endocrinology

Objectives

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- The overall goal of the NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) program is to help ensure that a diverse pool of highly trained scientists is available in appropriate scientific disciplines to address the Nation's biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research needs.
- F31 - to provide support for promising doctoral candidates who will be performing dissertation research and training in scientific health-related fields relevant to the missions of the participating NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) during the tenure of the award.
- F30 - to provide support to individuals for combined MD/PhD

Individual Fellowships Available

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- Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellows (F31)
- Ruth L Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellowships to Promote Diversity (F31)
- Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral MD/PhD and Other Dual Doctoral Degree Fellows (F30)

Participating Institutes

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- All NIH institutes participating in the NRSA program



- National Cancer Institute ([NCI](#))
- National Eye Institute ([NEI](#))
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute ([NHLBI](#))
- National Human Genome Research Institute ([NHGRI](#))
- National Institute on Aging ([NIA](#))
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases ([NIAID](#))
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([NIAAA](#))
- National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases ([NIAMS](#))
- National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering ([NIBIB](#)) – F30 Diversity only
- *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ([NICHD](#))
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders ([NIDCD](#))
- National Institute on Dental and Craniofacial Research ([NIDCR](#))
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases ([NIDDK](#))
- National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA](#))
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences ([NIEHS](#))
- National Institute of Mental Health ([NIMH](#))
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke ([NINDS](#))
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities ([NIMHD](#))
- National Library of Medicine ([NLM](#))
- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine ([NCCAM](#))
- Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Research Infrastructure Programs ([ORIP](#))

Eligibility

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- **Citizen or non-citizen national of the United States, or permanent resident.** Individuals on temporary or student visas are not eligible.
- Must have a baccalaureate degree and be enrolled in a PhD (F31) or equivalent program or a formally combined MD/PhD (F30) program in the biomedical, behavioral, health services, or clinical sciences.
- F31 Applicants must be at the dissertation research stage of their doctoral training (Admitted to candidacy).
- Applicants must identify a sponsor(s). Sponsor(s) must have NIH funding or equivalent. (The sponsor is most likely your thesis advisor/PI)
- Applicants must show evidence of both high academic performance in the sciences and substantial interest in areas of high priority to the participating Institutes.

Timeline

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- NIH deadline for all applications (F30 & both F31s):
 - April 8
 - August 8
 - December 8
- Application Process
 - Highly variable, but most will take at least two months
 - Many people involved in submission
 - ✦ Your sponsor (and co-sponsor, if applicable)
 - ✦ Your program chair
 - ✦ Your three referees
 - ✦ Your PI's department grant administrator
 - ✦ University Research Administration (central office)

How to Apply

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- Talk to **your thesis advisor (sponsor/PI)**
- **Talk to your program chair**, who can advise you on preparing your application and will provide a required section on the program's training approach
- Meet with **your PI's department grant administrator**
- Read the [funding opportunity announcement](#) (also called FOA or **guidelines**) for your particular program (F30 or F31)
- Read the individual fellowship [application guide](#)

MSTP F30 Trainees Note:

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- Application for a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award for Individual Predoctoral MD/PhD and Other Dual Doctoral Degree Fellows (F30) is a requirement for your program
- The MSTP office does not manage the pre- or post-award activity, you must work with your PI's lab departmental grant/finance office
- The MSTP office will allocate the F30 funds to offset your tuition, stipend and insurance, MSTP pays the balance
- You must inform the MSTP office if your application is successful
- 50% of the time funded by the F30 must be during the research phase
- PI's departmental grant/finance office will still manage the award after you return to the medical school phase of your training even though you are no longer working in the lab
- Aside from the medical training piece, the F30 & F31 guidelines are mostly the same; this workshop applies to both funding mechanisms

Talk to Sponsor/PI

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- To determine if you and your sponsor/PI are eligible
- To determine if now is the right time to apply
- To determine which NIH institute is most appropriate
- To discuss expectations and timeline
- To obtain contact information for your PI's department grant administrator

Meet with PI's Department Grant Admin.

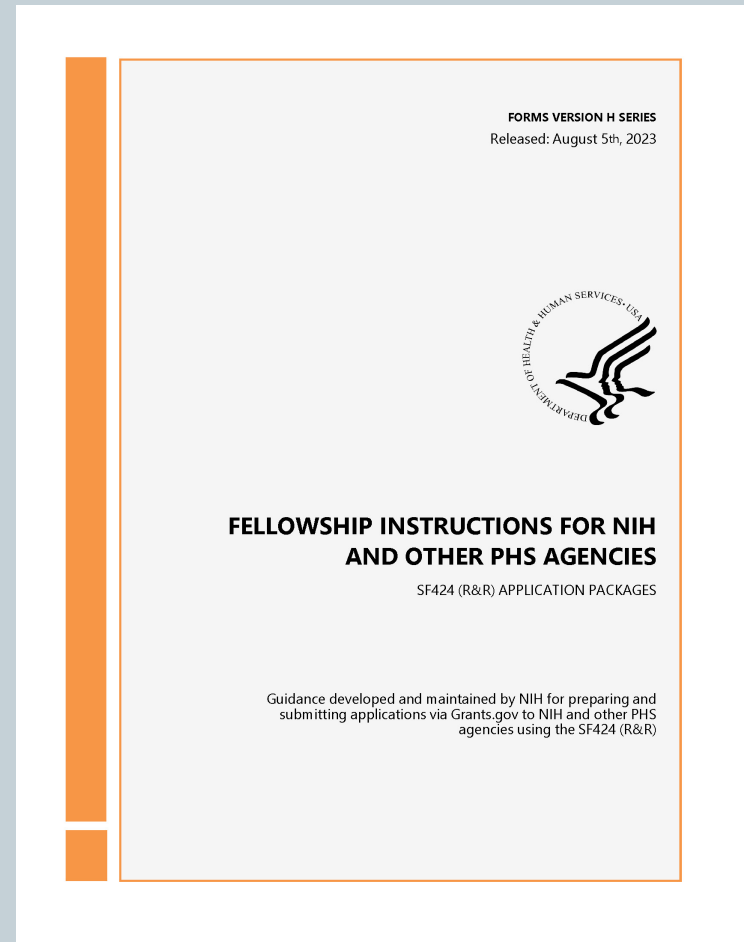
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- Make contact **as soon as** you know you are going to apply
- Discuss expectations and timeline
- The PI's department administrator will help you by
 - Adding the PI role to your NIH eRA Commons account
 - Completing all your forms
 - Uploading the components of your application
 - Routing the application for institutional signature – allow sufficient time for this (~7-10 days)
 - Answering many questions about the process

How to Apply – Application Guide

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- Outlines required elements of the application
- Instructions for
 - Formatting
 - Page limits
 - References
- You do **not** need to download the application package or complete the forms



How to Apply – Application Guide

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- The PI's department administrator will complete all the forms for you using the AURA system (currently using **Form H**)
- The fellowship application guide is part of the general NIH application guide. A link to the supplemental instructions for fellowships may be found in Section F.100, page F-3.
- Formatting requirements are in Section F.110, page F-7.
- Letters of Reference instructions (Section F.110, page F-7)
- Cover letter attachment instructions (Section F.200, pg F-29)
- Fellowship supplemental forms are in Section F430.
- Note that FOA instructions always supersede the standard application instructions
- **Read it all VERY carefully – it is long and complex**

How to Apply – The Basics

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- Follow all instructions for formatting and page limits
- Create your application documents in Microsoft Word (or similar) and convert to .pdf just before submitting
- Do not worry about registering for systems or gathering data for completing the forms. This will be done for you.

Requirements of Sponsor(s)

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- Federal research funding
 - Covering the first two years of the fellowship
 - Preferably NIH R01 or equivalent (other major grants can be acceptable)
- Recent publications
- Established student track record
 - Students with first-author papers
 - Students with fellowships
 - Graduates have continued in science or science-related careers.
- If your sponsor lacks credentials a co-sponsor may help

Required Sections

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- Goals for Fellowship Training and Career
 - describe overall career goals, and explain how the proposed research training will enable the attainment of these goals.
 - Identify the skills, theories, conceptual approaches, etc. to be learned or enhanced during the award.
- Research Strategy
 - Significance
 - ✦ Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
 - ✦ Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.
 - ✦ Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.
 - Approach
 - ✦ Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project.
 - ✦ Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.

Required Sections

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- **Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Information**
 - Explain why the sponsor, co-sponsor (if any), and institution were selected to accomplish the research training goals.
- **Respective Contributions**
 - Describe the collaborative process between you and your sponsor/co-sponsor in the development, review, and editing of this research training plan. Discuss the respective roles in accomplishing the proposed research.
- **Additional Education Information**
 - The chair of the graduate program needs to describe the program's training strategy in detail

Important things to bear in mind

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- **Mentor Statement:** Your sponsor must write a detailed and thoughtful training plan – encourage them to look at funded examples. This part can make or break your fellowship!
- **Training Goals & Objectives:** Describe overall training goals and attainment of goals, identify skills, theories, conceptual approaches, etc. to be learned and how the proposed research will facilitate your transition to the next career stage, if applicable.
- **Line up reference writers early,** don't be shy to ask if they can write a “strong” letter, and keep reminding them to submit your letter
- **Sections such as responsible conduct of research training, vertebrate animals, and data sharing plan are formulaic but critical.** Your mentor and other fellows can provide examples of these sections.

Evaluation Criteria

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- Research training plan
- The applicant
- The sponsor
- Environment and institutional commitment to training
- Training potential

Thinking about the Project

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- Is it an important question?
- Is it feasible?
- Is there a high probability of success?
- Is it conducive to training?
- Can it be linked to public health? This can be indirect

Successful Applications

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- Sponsor has strong publication record (students and self)
- Training plan is comprehensive and well-related to project (this is largely your sponsor's responsibility but you can “encourage” them to do a good job)
- Writing has been reviewed by others and feedback is implemented
- Applicant has excellent academic record and strong letters of reference

Tips for Success

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- Start early
- Write for a cross-section of readers (scientists may be from another field)
- Follow instructions
- Assess final documents for readability and organization

Tips for Success

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- Ask for feedback – and implement it
- Keep everyone in the loop
 - Sponsor
 - Letter writers
 - Grant administrator
- Stand out for excellence, not errors
- Be sure the link to public health is very clear, especially for basic science projects

What if my fellowship is awarded?

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- Let the following people know right away
 - Your sponsor/advisor (they will have also received notice)
 - Your graduate program administrator and OGPA
 - The PI's departmental research administrator

What if my fellowship is awarded?

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- You will have up to six months to begin the fellowship
 - Activation start dates for the F awards must be at the beginning of any given quarter.
 - ✦ January 1
 - ✦ April 1
 - ✦ July 1
 - ✦ October 1

Questions

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