UAMS | Translational Research Institute

Request for Full Applications (RFA)
2023 Mentored Research Career Development Scholar (KL2) Awards

The UAMS Translational Research Institute (TRI) is pleased to invite applications for the 2023 Mentored Research Career Development Scholar (KL2) Awards. The KL2 Program provides support for early career faculty who are committed to an academic career in multidisciplinary clinical or translational research. The KL2 Program is a two-year program of intensive training in clinical and translational science, combining an innovative educational program with strong mentorship.

Program Description

The KL2 Program is a core element of TRI's efforts to develop a thriving translational research ecosystem that catalyzes discoveries into health solutions for rural and underrepresented populations. Our mission is to develop new knowledge and approaches that will measurably address the complex health challenges of rural and underrepresented populations. The KL2 program aims to increase the quality and quantity of translational scientists conducting innovative research on health issues that impact residents of Arkansas and the U.S.

The awards are designed to support the career development of junior faculty who are committed to a research career in clinical and translational science. The KL2 is a two-year program that provides intensive training and mentorship to assist them in becoming independent researchers. This highly competitive program is geared towards promising junior faculty who have a demonstrated record of high achievement and a clear vision of their career goals. Scholars are selected using a rigorous, multi-stage application process.

KL2 scholars are funded by the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Program and will receive salary support up to $95,000 (including fringe) per year. Scholars are required to dedicate a minimum of 75% effort to the program; therefore, the sponsoring department or college may be required to supplement support to meet the salary requirement. Salary supplementation may be from a variety of sources, but must be in accordance with NIH Grants Policy on Research and Career Development Awards.

Up to $25,000 of non-salary support will be provided per year, which can be used for research, tuition, travel expenses, educational materials in support of the scholar's career development plan, or other costs related to the research project.

The KL2 Program has three main components: mentorship; a career development plan; and a research project.

Mentorship: Strong mentorship is a critical component of the KL2 Program. Each scholar has a 3-4 person mentoring committee led by a primary mentor. The primary mentor makes a commitment to the scholar's successful career development and supervises their research project. The scholar and primary mentor meet at least weekly throughout the 2-year program.

An ideal primary mentor has expertise in the scholar's area of research, a strong record of extramural research funding, a history of successful mentoring, and sufficient available time to oversee the scholar's research and career development. Primary mentors are required to participate in mentorship training and quarterly meetings with the program directors.

Each of the other 2-3 members of the mentoring committee plays a unique role in supporting the scholar's research and career development. They have complementary expertise and are able to assist the scholar in learning techniques and skills. At least one member of the mentoring team should be from a different department, division, and/or discipline than the scholar. Awardees that are supported by the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute have at least one faculty member from the institute on their mentoring committee. Scholars may also receive consultation and focused mentorship from other subject matter experts.

Career Development Plan (CDP): The CDP should serve as a blueprint or map which articulates the activities and milestones on the scholar's path to becoming an independent researcher. The CDP outlines the scholar's goals and the role the KL2 Program plays in meeting them. The CDP gives specific timelines for all of the scholar's KL2 activities and identifies the personalized training and education plan to gain the needed skills, knowledge, and experience to advance to the next step in their career. Scholars may participate in the many seminars, workshops, and programs TRI offers. The CDP may include planned participation in lab meetings or journal clubs, attendance at research conferences, formal coursework on clinical and translational science topics, participation in additional training experiences in clinical or basic science (either at UAMS or externally), and/or informal educational activities such as guided readings or workshops. Scholars are expected to obtain an extramural career development K grant or an independent research R grant by the completion of the program. The CDP should identify which specific grant application the scholar will submit during the second year and explain how the current research plan supports that submission.

Research Project: Scholars conduct a clinical or translational research project that is supervised by the primary mentor. The research project is designed as a pilot project to set the stage for an individual K-award application, or to establish a foundation for a R-award application. The research project must be feasible within the available KL2 funds and the CDP timeline. The research project should be aligned with the CDP such that it allows the scholar to demonstrate newly learned techniques and skills. It also should provide an opportunity to collaborate and publish with mentors.

Translation: Defined by NCATS as the process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and communities – from diagnostics, preventions, and treatments to medical procedures and behavioral changes. Translational Research: Defined by NCATS as the endeavor to traverse a particular step of the translational process for a particular target or disease. Translational Science (TS): Defined by NCATS as the field of investigation focused on understanding the scientific and operational principles underlying each step of the translational process. TRI conceptualizes translational research as occurring on a bi-directional continuum of T1 through T4 research that addresses human health questions and creates human health interventions. Scholars may also conduct a T0 (basic science) research project with an emphasis on career development leading to T1-T4 research. Scholars may conduct projects on any content area, but TRI prioritizes investigators whose interests align with the TRI mission. Learn more about Translational Research [here](#).

Program Requirements:

Scholars in the TRI Mentored Research Career Development Scholars Program are required to participate in certain activities. Consider these requirements carefully prior to submitting your application. Failure to adhere to the responsibilities will result in suspension of the project and ineligibility for future support from any TRI program. Requirements include:

- Committing to the required two-year program. Awarded KL2 scholars are not allowed to relinquish the award or terminate their participation early. For example, but not limited to, accepting a Project Lead position on a Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence award (COBRE).
- In-person orientation meeting. Date/time will be announced following the notice of award.
- Mentorship Contract specifying expectations between Scholars and mentors. Scholars must meet

with primary mentors at least weekly. View sample contract [here.](#)
- Core Competency Self-Assessment to identify and prioritize training and educational activities.
- Bi-directional mentorship evaluations.
- KL2 Training and Education including monthly Research Fundamentals seminars, monthly Work in Progress meetings, and other training activities related to translational research.
- Participation in Annual Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) Meeting. More information can be found [here.](#)
- NIH required Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training. More information can be found [here.](#)
- Publication of manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals (at least four by end of year two)
- Obtaining an extramural K or R level grant.

Scholars must submit reports and respond to data requests including:

- Quarterly reporting of progress on planned research tasks, career development activities, and mentorship meetings.
- Final research report and a final expenditure report are due within 60 days following the close of the grant term.
- Program evaluation interviews and surveys.
- Surveys of post-KL2 career and academic accomplishments for up to 15 years following completion date.

Additional Expectations:

- **TRI Acknowledgments:** Scholars must acknowledge support of TRI in any news releases, articles, presentations or manuscripts during or as a result of participation in the program. Notification must be provided to TRI.
  - o **Citation language:** "Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Center For Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under award number KL2 TR003108. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health."
- **Changes in Scope:** Changes in the scope of work, mentor changes, and significant budget changes must be approved in writing by the Program Directors, and subsequently approved by NCATS. The Scholar must notify TRI in writing if they are unable to complete the project and must terminate the award. Scholars are not allowed to end the program early.

Program mentors must participate in activities including:

- An 8-hour mentorship training program (only mandatory for primary mentors)
- Mentorship Competency Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection
- Bi-directional evaluation between mentor and mentee
- Regular meetings with mentee
- Quarterly meetings with program directors and mentee (only mandatory for primary mentors)

Eligibility requirements

- A doctoral-level degree in a health discipline applicable to clinical or translational research. These degrees include, but are not limited to, M.D., Ph.D., Pharm.D., DNP, Dr.PH. or D.O.
- U.S. citizenship or; status as a non-citizen national or permanent resident. Individuals on temporary or student visas are not eligible.
- Full-time faculty at UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital and its Research Institute or the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System at rank of Instructor or Assistant Professor.

- Ability to devote 75% professional effort to the program for a minimum of two years. (In very rare instances, exceptions are approved by NIH for physicians with large clinical efforts)
- Support of a mentoring team approved by the program.
- Approval of the candidate's department chair.
- Candidates are not allowed to have served as principal investigator on an NIH R01, a subproject of a Program Project (P01) or Center (P50, P60, U54) grant, have a career development grant (K23, K08, K01), or another equivalent grant award.
- Applicants must not have an individual NIH K award submission pending
- Applicants who are dually employed by UAMS and the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) *may* be restricted from receiving a KL2 scholar award, depending upon the extent of commitment (percent effort) to the CAVHS.

The TRI Mentored Research Career Development Scholars Program welcomes and encourages under-represented and minority individuals, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from NIH-defined disadvantaged backgrounds to apply.

Selection Process

Scholars are selected using a highly competitive process that includes: Letter of Intent, Full Application, and Interview. Dr. Mario Schootman is available to assist applicants. He will conduct two workshops in which he will provide specific guidance and resources for planning and writing the proposal. Note: These workshops take place before the Letter of Intent is due so that the information can benefit applicants at the very start of the planning process. Dr. Schootman will also provide individual coaching to assist in preparation of full applications.

Important Dates:

Item:	Date/Timeframe:
Letters of Intent Due	January 27, 2023, 5:00 pm CT
Invitation to Submit Full Applications	February 3. 2023
Individualized Support	February 6, 2023 - March 23, 2023
Budget and Justification Due for TRI Review	March 7, 2023, 5:00 pm CT
Submission Due to Regulatory Body (IRB, IACUC, IBC).	March 24, 2023, 5:00 pm CT
Applications Due	March 24, 2023, 5:00 pm CT
Potential Awardee Interviews with Directors	April 10-28, 2023
Awardees Notified	First week of May
Prior Approval Documents Due to the TRI Research Quality Officer, when applicable	June 1, 2023, 5:00 pm CT
Project Award Dates	July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025

Letter of Intent:
Candidates must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) by January 27, 2023. LOIs will be evaluated by program leadership to determine if the applicant is eligible and appropriate for the KL2 program. **Candidates will only be invited to submit a Full Application if their LOI demonstrates that they could feasibly submit a competitive full application**. Reviewers will consider the qualifications of the candidate, the strength of the mentorship team, and the career development plan. LOIs that lack a meaningful Career Development Plan will not be viewed favorably.

The LOI submission must include:

- A 3-page narrative that includes
    - Completed LOI Cover Page found [here](#).
    - **Summary of the Career Development Pla**n which describes your short and long-term career goals and how the KL2 program will help you achieve them. This summary should articulate your planned "next step" after the KL2 program and how your planned training and research activities align with it. Provide a high-level timeline for what you hope to accomplish during the 2 years.
    - **Summary of the Mentoring Plan** which identifies your primary mentor and the 2-3 other members of your committee. This summary should describe each mentor's specific role in your training and research activities. Briefly describe their expertise and qualifications. Explain how frequently you plan to meet and what support they have committed to provide.
    - **Research Specific Aims** (no more than 1 page) which describe the project's innovation and potential impact on human health.

    The narrative section should have 0.5-inch margins, and no longer than three pages. Acceptable fonts are Arial, Tahoma, or Calibri with a font size of 11 point. Figures and Tables may use smaller font, but no smaller than 9 point.

    - Biosketch for the applicant and each mentor; using the most current NIH format,
    - 1-page letter from the primary mentor which describes their mentoring experience and their role in mentoring the applicant. The letter should indicate the mentor's availability to meet with the candidate and any resources or support the mentor plans to provide.

    Combine the documents into one PDF in the order listed below, and name it using the following naming convention: [Applicant last name].KL2.LOI.2023
    - LOI Cover Page
    - Narrative
    - Primary Mentor Letter
    - Biosketches
    - Applicants CV

    Email the PDF to Dr. Greene CJGreene@uams.edu no later than 5:00 pm January 27, 2023.

Full Application:
Selected candidates will receive an invitation to submit a full application which includes a link to TRI's online grant submission system *Apply*. Full applications are due March 24, 2023 by 5:00 pm.

The invitation to submit a full application will provide specific instructions. Candidates will need to upload documents such as the budget and biosketches. Much of the narrative will be entered directly as text.

The following is an outline of the full application requirements.

1. Demographic and contact information
2. Biosketch for applicant, and each mentor using the current NIH format, found [here.](#)
3. Other Support Documents for the candidate and mentorship team, found [here.](#)
4. Completed Table A, found [here,](#) which includes:
    - Summary of each mentor's training experience, with primary mentor listed first.
    - Detailed information on each proposed mentor's post-doctoral mentees over the last 10 years.
5. Career Development Plan. See [here](#) for suggestions on development of a good plan.
    - Five-page maximum.
    - May differ somewhat from the LOI summary.

- Should reflect that the entire mentorship team has contributed to the plan's development.
- Brief summary of accomplishments and career path to date. This should include a critical self-appraisal of training needs and a description of how the mentor and mentoring committee will meet these needs.
- Description of overall career goals, both short- and long-term.
- Identification of specific learning and training goals with an explanation of how each experience will contribute to the path to becoming an independent researcher and how it will add to previous training and experiences. Planned activities should include specific didactic coursework and, if appropriate, plans to pursue an MS, MPH, PhD, or Graduate Certificate in Clinical and Translational Sciences (GC-CTS). Applicants no longer requiring formal career development/research training are not appropriate candidates for this award.

6. A Mentoring Plan (three pages maximum), which should provide more detail than the summary in the LOI. It should include details on planned communication methods, meeting frequency, and how conflicting advice will be managed. It should further describe the primary mentor's qualifications to serve in that role, as well as each mentor's background and expertise with clearly defined roles and how they will contribute to the candidate's growth as a researcher and/or the candidate's research project. The mentoring plan should address meeting frequency and content.

7. A Research Plan (five pages maximum) that explicitly explains how the research project aligns with future goals and other training activities. The plan should describe the significance of the proposal both in terms of scientific advancement and its contribution to the career development plan. A brief overview of the methodology must contain sufficient detail to demonstrate feasibility. A detailed timeline must include the alignment of project tasks with manuscript and grant preparations.

8. Letters of Recommendation, which should include:
   - Letter from the Primary Mentor: This letter should detail his/her support of and commitment to the proposed research and training plan. This letter must include the mentor's assessment of the candidate's qualifications, in particular motivation and potential for future success. The letter should address the role and expertise of each member of the mentoring committee, a mentor-mentee meeting schedule, and confirm that adequate space, facilities, and resources will be made available for the successful completion of the project. The letter should describe how the proposed research fits into the mentor's research program, including a description of the mentee's specific role in the research. This letter should not exceed three pages. It should contain specific commitments to provide support and resources described in the application.
   - Letter of recommendation from each member of the mentoring team. Each letter should not exceed two pages. The letter should describe the mentor's unique role on the mentorship team and the career development plan. The letter should confirm any commitments of support and resources described in the application
   - Letter of recommendation from the chair of the candidate's department. This should include assurances that research and career development activities will account for at least 75% of the scholar's time and that other responsibilities will be restricted to no more than 25% of the scholar's time. The letter should also comment on plans for further career development of the candidate after the end of the KL2 Scholar Award, and should address the candidate's motivation and likelihood to become an independent investigator. This letter should not exceed two pages.
   - Letter of financial acknowledgement. This letter is to be signed by both the department chair and financial administrator stating that a financial analysis has been completed and that they are both aware of the financial impact to the department. The letter must include acknowledgement that any equipment purchased with program funds become property of the TRI at the end of the award.

9. A budget using the forms found here and a budget justification.

   - A budget should be provided for both year one and two.

- All applicants must have their budgets reviewed by TRI's Director of Business Operations, Laura Wilson, before submission.
- Applicants should send their draft budget and justification to [Laura Wilson](#) via email by March 7, 2023 in order to ensure enough time for review.
- Once your budget has been reviewed and deemed properly filled out with all expenses allowable, you will receive an email from Laura stating that your budget is cleared for submission.
- Please attach a copy of that email to your application after your budget justification.
- The budget must include funds to travel to the ACTS Translational Science Meeting every March/April. Total travel costs for all meetings attended cannot exceed $2,500/year.
- Note that any TRI biostatistics, nursing, or coordinator support that is required for conduct of the study must be included within the budget.
- Any equipment required for the project must be justified. Computers and other office supplies are not allowed.

10. Description of potential impact and benefits of the project. Questions will be similar to the Impact Questionnaire [here.](#)
11. Proof of appropriate regulatory submission.
    - Projects must be submitted to the IRB and/or the relevant regulatory body for approval by March 24, 2023 by 5:00 pm.
    - Attach proof of submission or non-human subjects research determination.
    - For projects that involve animal research, submit a copy of an email from IACUC certifying that your request has been submitted for review.

Review Process and Criteria:

- Applications will be independently peer-reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel of UAMS affiliated researchers. Written reviews are based on NIH K-application review criteria. An NIH-style study section will be conducted.
- Proposals will be evaluated based on: 1) candidate qualifications; 2) career development plan; 3) mentors and mentoring plan; 4) research plan; and 5) environment and institutional commitment (see [here](#) for more information).
- Note: the research plan will be evaluated on how well the timing, tasks, and scope align with the career development plan and the planned training activities.
- Applications with the highest priority scores will be recommended for funding.

Interviews:
KL2 Program Leaders will conduct interviews with potential candidates whose applications were discussed in the study section. Candidates will be invited to interviews between April 10-28, 2023 dates. The interviews are brief (approx. 30) and are not meant to be evaluative. The interviews provide an opportunity to clarify concerns or questions raised in the study section, to answer the candidate's questions, and to observe strengths that may not have been noticed in the written application.

Final Selection:
KL2 and TRI Leadership will make the final selection of scholars based on recommendations from the review committee and institutional priorities. We anticipate offering three awards which will be funded through NCATS.

In the event that there are additional qualified and merited applicants, and institutional funds are available, TRI may elect to award additional Institutional Scholar appointments for the 2023 Cycle. Additional awards may be provided by the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, UAMS College of Medicine, CAVHS and/or Arkansas Children's Research Institute. More information about the difference between KL2 scholars and Institutional scholars can be found on our [website](#) and on the [FAQ page](#).

Required Pre-Reviews and Approvals:

Depending on the details of the project, there may be required pre-reviews and/or approvals needed. For example, all cancer related studies must receive Protocol Review and Monitoring Committee approval before proceeding with an IRB submission. Program staff will notify applicants of any relevant requirements as part of the invitation to submit a full application.

Combined BERD/CIRC Consultation:

- Scholars are required to have a joint consultation with Biostatistics, Epidemiology, and Research Design (BERD) leadership with respect to design and the Comprehensive Informatics Resource Center (CIRC) leadership for statistical approaches and informatics approaches. These consultations will take place between award notice (May) and the start date (approximately July 1, 2023).

NCATS Prior Approval:

- Before research projects can begin, applications may be required scientific review and approval by NCATS.
- Awardees are required to submit all requested Prior Approval documents to the TRI Research Quality Officer, Mtonya Hunter-Lewis by June 1, 2023.
- More information will be provided to awardees upon notification of award.

Official Notice of Award:

Following official NCATS approval or notification, TRI's Director of Business Operations will remit the Notice of Award.

TRI Mentored Research Career Development Scholars Program Contacts:

If you have any questions regarding this RFA, please contact Chaz England. For more information about the TRI Career Development Scholars Program, you may contact the following or review the TRI KL2 site.

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