2022-2023 NJACTS Fellowship Program

Overview

NJ ACTS – The highly prestigious NIH Clinical Translational Science Award (CTSA) was granted to Rutgers University and its partners in 2019 to encourage and enable the development of innovative solutions that will improve the efficiency, quality and impact of the process for turning observations in the laboratory, clinic and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and the public. Rutgers, with its academic partners Princeton University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology, industries, hospital systems and communities, has created the New Jersey Alliance for Clinical Translational Science (NJ ACTS). In addition to its commitment to the growth of the clinical and translational research infrastructure across New Jersey, NJ ACTS is dedicated to the training of the clinical/translational scientists of the future. Funded by the NIH CTSA, we developed the NJ ACTS Fellows program in Fall 2019.

NJ ACTS Fellowship Program -This program equips its Fellows with enhanced knowledge, skills, and abilities that provide a broad introduction to clinical and translational research *concurrent* with their current pre- or postdoctoral research program. The goal of the fellowship is to enhance career development beyond that encountered in traditional pre-and postdoctoral programs by focusing on the knowledge and expertise needed to conduct translational team research across disciplines. Fellows will gain a broader understanding of challenges and opportunities in translational science as well as a deeper knowledge of the extensive research, professional, and technical resources within NJ ACTS and the national CTSA consortium designed to support and further their professional learning.

For the 2022-2023 cohort (July - June), **3 predoctoral and 3 postdoctoral fellowship slots** are available.

Fellowship Application: Key Dates

- Letter of intent due: **Thursday, March 31, 2022 (by 5PM)**
- Applications due: **Thursday, April 22, 2022 (by 5PM)**
- Letters of reference due: **April 29, 2022**

- Interviews: **by mid-June 2022**
- Award notifications: **mid-late June 2022**
- Earliest award start date: **July 1, 2022**

Program Value

This competitive program offers 'precision training', customized to each Fellow over a 2-3-year period against a backdrop of didactic learning, seminars, workshops, and experiential learning opportunities provided across the academic partners – Rutgers University, Princeton University, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. An NJ ACTS-specific *Precision Training Plan* to guide training and acquisition of translational science knowledge and skills will be developed with input from the Fellow, the Fellow's primary research mentor, NJ ACTS Academy Mentors (see *below*) and program leadership.

Rigorous, individualized training in translational research methodology and interdisciplinary skills, together with a multidisciplinary mentoring program, form the basis of the program. Focused learning, skill-building, and experiential learning activities in topics such as leadership, scientific communications, team science, current healthcare systems challenges, boundary barriers across disciplines, clinical research, and informatics will inform the translational science principles that NJ ACTS Fellows acquire.

As part of NJ ACTS, the Fellowship program offers a distinct platform for its Fellows and their mentors to interact with others outside their primary area of research, engage with domain experts, and explore translational science challenges and successes within and outside the academic research environment.

Award provisions

The NJ ACTS Fellowship Program (TL1) program supports 6 Fellows/year (3 predocs, 3 postdocs). **One year** of financial support is provided and includes:

- For predoctoral applicants: one year of stipend, health benefits, and tuition consistent with applicant's school/institution policy. (Note: Tuition not relevant for Princeton applicants).
- For postdoctoral applicants: stipend and tuition commensurate with current NRSA level (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-21-049.html).
- Additional tuition support is available for fellows who wish to pursue certificate or master's programs in clinical translational sciences (https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/gsbs/prospective/ms_cts.html)
- Up to $1,500 for travel (including required remote or in-person attendance at the annual ACTS conference)
- $2,000 to the Fellow for training/research-related expenses pertinent to the program.

Princeton applicants only: please note that the award provisions and application process differ from what is written here. Please refer to https://ctsa.princeton.edu/funding/training-awards *for the relevant Princeton funding information and instructions. For questions and if interested in*

*applying, contact NJ ACTS Manager, Research and Administration, Bianca Freda
at biancaf@princeton.edu*

Program requirements

Successful participation in the program requires:

o A 2-3-year commitment. The 3-year period is recommended, as it allows flexibility to schedule the didactic and experiential learning opportunities and avoid disruption of the Fellow's primary degree/research program; shorter commitments may be permitted if the fellow progresses more rapidly through the program. Therefore, preference will be given to predoctoral applicants who are currently in Years 1-3 and postdoctoral applicants in Years 1-2.
o Adherence to the Fellow's customized NJ ACTS-specific Precision Training Plan to guide successful training and acquisition of translational science knowledge and skills.
o Satisfactory completion of mandatory online Research, Ethics, and Compliance (CITI) training.
o A minimum of 24 contact hours of experiential learning chosen from a variety of program opportunities, customized to each NJ ACTS Fellow.
o Completion of the program's core curriculum (approximately 10-15% of the Fellow's time each year during a 2-3-year training period). In addition to participating in NJ ACTS meetings, seminars, and workshops, fellows are expected to complete (or demonstrate satisfactory completion prior to the start of the fellowship) the following coursework (or demonstrate satisfactory knowledge in the area) by the end of their participation in the program:
    ▪ Team Science
    ▪ Grant writing
    ▪ Biostatistics
    ▪ Communicating Science
    ▪ Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

(Any substitution for a similar course must be done in consultation with and prior approval by program leadership.)

Fellows who compile 18 approved credits of eligible and approved coursework will receive a Rutgers Certificate in Clinical and Translational Research. Fellows may also opt for a Master of Clinical and Translational Sciences (30 credits) by participating in additional required courses or electives. Didactic content and modalities continue to be developed by the program to provide optimum precision training options.

In addition to the program's requirements, Fellows are expected to publish their findings in well-respected scientific journals and present their research at NJ ACTS and national conferences; attend required NJ ACTS meetings/workshops and attend the annual meeting of the Association of Clinical and Translational Sciences. Fellows are also expected to prepare applications for fellowships (pre- and postdoctoral trainees) or independent funding (postdoctoral trainees) prior

to program completion. In most cases, these expectations are already aligned with their research studies and development plans.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the NJ ACTS fellowship program, applicants must:

- Be a current predoctoral student or postdoctoral trainee at Rutgers, NJIT or Princeton University
- Be a US citizen, permanent resident of the US or non-citizen national
- Have a strong science background, as demonstrated by performance in didactic courses, prior research experience and letters of reference
- Have joined a research team and be able to articulate a mature and complete proposal of the PhD project (for PhD or PhD-phase students) or agreed research project (postdoctoral applicants) by the due date of the application
- Have a research Preceptor or co-Preceptor who is a member of the NJ ACTS Academy of Mentors (see below) or fulfills the requirements of an Academy Mentor and is accepted into the Academy prior to application review
- Be involved in a research project with strong translational potential and be committed to applying the knowledge acquired during the fellowship program to moving the current research project along the translational research spectrum
- Be able to demonstrate a commitment to complete the program within the prescribed 2-3-year period

Application process (2-steps)

Our Commitment to Diversity

We are committed to becoming an inclusive learning community that fosters respect, belonging, and value for all with zero tolerance for bias, racism, and other negative 'isms'. We strive to provide an inclusive academic environment where all members of our community can thrive and achieve their fullest potential.

Applications are strongly encouraged from women and individuals from groups that are underrepresented in medicine and translational research including, but not limited to, ethnic minorities and individuals with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Please see NIH's statement regarding NOT-OD-20-031 for more information.

The entire application process is submitted securely online, including attachments. Please follow the steps below to successfully apply to the program.

1. **<u>Complete and submit the online intent to apply form by Thursday, March 31, 5PM</u>**

A completed intent to submit by the deadline is <u>required</u> to submit a full application.

Use the link provided below to initiate the intent to apply to the program that includes basic information used to ascertain the anticipated pool of applicants and assign reviewers:

<u>https://redcap.link/5jymd5zc</u>

Submission of this will initiate a custom application link to you via email to submit a full application.

2. **<u>Submit your application by Friday, April 22, 5PM</u>**:

<u>In addition to basic contact and demographic information, the application includes:</u>

- <u>NIH fellowship biosketch</u> (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm)

Note: the personal statement section must address: 1) what has inspired you to pursue a career as a researcher in your field and 2) how NJ ACTS resources will accelerate or transform your research and/or contribute to your career in the translational realm. Include your long-term career aspirations.

- <u>Project description</u> (thesis if predoctoral, research if postdoctoral) – no more than 2 pages single spaced. Include:
  - Brief description of your project
  - Specific aims
  - Progress to date
  - Given where your research is situated within the NIH-defined translational science spectrum, define and describe potential pathways that might advance its translational reach, including opportunities, current barriers/challenges, and potential benefit to improve health environments and lifestyles.

- Primary research mentor NIH biosketch and current Other Support

  Biosketch instructions: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm

  Other support instructions: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm

  The mentor's other support should indicate active extramural funding that runs concurrently with the applicant's NJACTS fellowship period of participation.

- <u>Names and contact information of referees</u>: 2 (for predoctoral applications) or 3 (for postdoctoral applications).

These will be submitted directly to the program team by the referees with unique links generated within the online application.

One letter must be from the thesis (or research) mentor stating the applicant's qualifications as well as the mentor's commitment to guarantee completion of the TL1 training program.

A strong emphasis on the program is mentorship. The primary research mentor's letter must articulate the mentoring plan and briefly discuss any formal mentorship training that has been undertaken. The letter must also address how the applicant's success will be propelled and enriched by completion of the program as well as the mentor's assurance that program completion will occur within the applicant's current training period. The letter should also specifically address how the primary research mentor's area of focus and research interests might be advanced by the collaborative opportunities and resources provided by NJ ACTS.

If the primary mentor is not a Preceptor in the Academy and does not qualify at this time for that status, **a Preceptor from the Academy must act as co-mentor** *and provide a letter stating his/her commitment to support the applicant's progress through the program, if selected.*

- Research regulatory approvals **(only if the protocol names the applicant as PI):** This does not apply if the applicant is named on the protocol but not as PI. IRB and IACUC approvals are not necessary at the time of application; however, they must be in place prior to the award start date. As these approvals must also be obtained from a separate NIH panel, applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the process immediately.

Selection process and review criteria

To offer these fellowships across NJACTS as broadly as possible, while more than one application from one research team can be submitted, no more than one will be funded. Preference will be given to applicants from research groups that have not already hosted an NJACTS Fellow.

After formal evaluation by the review panel, the most promising candidates will be contacted and invited to interview with members of the NJ ACTS Fellowship Selection Committee. Final selections will be based upon the initial application as well as evaluations by the reviewers, and program leadership.

*All review criteria are weighed equally:

Distinct value: ability of program to add value and opportunities that are otherwise not within reach of applicant: Is the program unique enough in the context of other opportunities within applicant's primary area of research, organizational location, mentor, funding, and interest to add value to the applicant's training? Or is this similar to opportunities already available to applicant and thus would diminish the full usefulness that the program seeks to offer its trainees?

<u>Professional merit</u>: applicant's proficiency in current primary area of research, demonstrated by quality of proposed or ongoing research study; publications/presentations; related academic activities and scholarship; strong academic track record; applicant's ability to work as a constructive team member, receive constructive feedback, maintain appropriate level of collegiality with peers

<u>Academic potential</u>: academic potential of applicant to engage in and contribute to translational research: student's/postdoc's project lends itself to translational science; personal statement and/or reference letters reflect independent thinking, intellectual curiosity, identify strong skill set for time management

<u>Mentor capacity and commitment</u>: <u>primary mentor's ability and commitment to applicant:</u> sustainable and robust funding preferably from a federal or other extramural funding source e.g.; recommendation letters demonstrate commitment to applicant to allow time for completion of program elements; mentor willingness to incorporate translational science into primary research to the extent possible; mentor's availability to the applicant as needed for successful program completion; articulated enthusiasm for the applicant's participation in the TL1 program; strength of mentor's training record; mentor's own interest in translational science

<u>Career alignment for translational science</u>: <u>applicant's ability to extend into translational science that would be meaningful to the</u> <u>applicant's research career</u>: evidence of previous ability, skill-building, knowledge-seeking indicating strong capability to grow outside of primary area of research; appropriate stage of training – is there enough time for applicant to learn and apply translational science principles or integrate into research as reflected in personal statement and reference letters, accomplishments to date

Mentoring Training Resources

Active mentoring is a key component of the fellow's success in the program and it is expected that the primary research mentor demonstrates a genuine interest and knowledge of best practices that foster a supportive environment and successful mentorship for the applicant. For more information:

<u>Mentor Training Resources</u>

NJ ACTS partners offer faculty mentoring resources: These include:

<u>Rutgers University</u>

https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/rutgers-office-faculty-development
https://facultyaffairs.rbhs.rutgers.edu/faculty-development/mentoring/

<u>Princeton University</u>

Princeton offers faculty members a variety of learning and professional development opportunities, including access to mentor training and resources, through the Office of the Dean

[of the Faculty](#), the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#), the [Faculty Advancement Network](#), and the [McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning](#).

NJIT

https://www.njit.edu/ite/faculty-mentoring-program

Additionally, through a partnership with educators at the University of Rochester Clinical and Translational Science Institute, mentors may participate in a course for research mentoring. The courses are available to anyone at Rutgers, Princeton or NJIT including mentors of the KL2 Scholars and TL1 Fellows:
https://clic-ctsa.org/education?search=mentoring

Academy of Mentors

The Academy is comprised of faculty from Rutgers, Princeton, and NJIT based on 1) their recognized expertise in a key clinical/translational discipline; 2) their demonstrated commitment to clinical/translational research; and 3) their passion for contributing to the education and training of the next generation of clinical/translational sciences.

The Academy membership consists of two categories:

Preceptors are those faculty who have the qualifications to act as Thesis Mentors to our students or as Primary Research Mentors to our postdoctoral trainees (including expertise, funding, and training record; or, for more early-career faculty, strong potential for excellence in training). Preceptors are expected to play an active role during the award by fostering the Fellow's career development as a translational/clinical scientist. They are expected to act as advocates for the Fellow at the departmental, institutional, and professional levels and provide scientific guidance for the proposed project.

Advisors are those faculty who may not have all of the qualifications to act as Preceptors for these fellows but who bring a critical skill set to their training (e.g. expertise in human disease, epidemiology, design and execution of clinical trials, biostatistics, informatics, career development, etc.). Industry partners who will contribute to educating our trainees about key issues in drug development, regulatory considerations and commercialization also fall into this latter category.

All research preceptors for TL1 Fellows must be members of the NJ ACTS Academy of Mentors, or under consideration, by application deadline. (Preceptors who are not currently members of the Academy should apply for membership prior to the NJ ACTS fellowship application deadline.)

In addition to the primary research preceptor, each Fellow will identify at least one AOM member whose translational or clinical research expertise is pertinent to the research project and will supplement that of the primary research preceptor.

For a current list of faculty members of each participating institution in the Academy of Mentors, please see: [Academy of Mentors](#)

For faculty interested in joining the Academy of Mentors, please contact:

Anda Cytroen, Executive Director, Research Training and Development, SGS-BHS
Email: anda.cytroen@rutgers.edu

Program leadership and staff

Kathleen W. Scotto, PhD
Program Director, NJ ACTS Fellows Program
Rutgers, State University of New Jersey
Email: kathleen.Scotto@rutgers.edu
Phone: 973-972-5455

Daniel A. Notterman, M.D., M.A.
Co-Director, NJ ACTS Fellows Program
Princeton Lead, NJ ACTS
Princeton University
Email: dan1@princeton.edu

Rutgers University administrative point of contact:

Anda Cytroen, MPH
Email: anda.cytroen@rutgers.edu

Princeton University administrative point of contact:

Bianca Freda, MPH
Email: biancaf@princeton.edu