



New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science

Advancing clinical and translational science to develop new therapies and treatments and improve health care

NJ ACTS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM For predoctoral students and postdoctoral trainees

2020 Request for Applications

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 partner universities, 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. In Fall 2019, funded by the NIH CTSA, we developed the NJ ACTS Fellows program.

NJ ACTS Fellows 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 2020-2021 TL1 cohort, **3 predoctoral and 3 postdoctoral fellowship slots** are available.

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 Individual Development Plan (IDP) to guide training and acquisition of translational science knowledge and skills will be developed with input from the Fellow, the Fellow's NJ ACTS Academy Mentors (see *below*) and the program leadership. A personalized program will be incorporated into the Fellow's primary training plan in order to enhance and enable his/her career trajectory.

Rigorous, individualized training in translational research methodology, interdisciplinary professional skills and multidisciplinary mentoring structure the program. Focused learning, skill-building, and

experiential learning activities in topics such as 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 Fellows program offers a distinct platform for its Fellows - and their mentors - to encounter 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 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.
- ◆ For postdoctoral applicants: stipend commensurate with current NRSA level (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-070.html>).
- ◆ Additional tuition support is available for fellows who wish to pursue certificate or master's programs in clinical translational sciences.
- ◆ Up to \$1,500 for travel (including remote or in-person participation in relevant conferences) and \$2,000 to the Fellow for training/research-related expenses pertinent to the program.

Princeton applicants: Proposals should be routed in Coeus for approval. For predoctoral applicants, the budget for stipend and tuition will be commensurate with the current NRSA level for predoctoral trainees and fellows. Please contact Bianca Freda (biancaf@princeton.edu) for any questions on the award provisions.

Program requirements

Successful participation in the program requires:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ An NJ ACTS-specific Individual Development Plan (IDP) to guide training and acquisition of translational science knowledge and skills.
- ◆ Completion of the program's core curriculum (approximately 10-15% of the Fellow's time each year during a 2-3-year training period.) The core curriculum includes didactic training, seminars, workshops, career development skills as well as participation in local and national retreats, meetings and events. Successful participation in additional didactic training will qualify the Fellow for a Certificate in Clinical Translational Research.
- ◆ A minimum of 24 contact hours of experiential learning chosen from a variety of program opportunities, customized to each NJ ACTS Fellow.

Additionally, Fellows are expected to publish their findings in well-respected scientific journals and prepare applications for fellowships (pre- and postdoctoral trainees) or independent funding (postdoctoral trainees) prior to program completion.

Eligibility criteria

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

- ◆ Be a current predoctoral student or postdoctoral trainee at Rutgers, NJIT or Princeton University
- ◆ Be a US citizen or a Permanent Resident of the US
- ◆ Have a strong science background, as demonstrated by performance in didactic courses, prior research experience and letters of reference
- ◆ 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 review of the applications
- ◆ Be involved in a research project with strong translational potential and be committed to applying the knowledge acquired during the TL1 training program to moving the current research project along the translational research spectrum
- ◆ Have joined a laboratory 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
- ◆ Not currently hold or be a prior recipient of an externally funded research fellowship in current position
- ◆ Current Fellows may apply for an additional 6 months of funding, though sufficient justification must be provided as priority will be given to new applicants. On a funds-available basis, an additional 6 months of funding may be administratively provided for applications with a competitive score on an external application (e.g., F30) that is under revision.

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.

Application instructions (2-step process)

1. Please email your intention to apply to the program by June 19 to wz241@gsbs.rutgers.edu

Include in the subject line: **LOI: CTSA TL1 fellowship program 2020**. In the email, indicate if you are a predoctoral or postdoctoral applicant, your department/school, and your area of research study.

2. Please submit your complete application by July 3, 2020:

- The Application Form which includes:
 - Applicant information
 - Applicant education
 - Honors and Awards
 - Prior research experience
 - Thesis (predoctoral) or Research (postdoctoral) proposal - (no more than 3 pages single spaced): Highlight how this research project has the potential for 1) a significant impact on the prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment of disease and/or 2) improving healthy environments/lifestyles.
Research that addresses heterogeneity of disease and treatment response (i.e. research that considers individual differences in people's genes, environments, and lifestyles) will be viewed highly.
 - Publications.
 - Personal statement - (no more than 250 words): Explicitly detail how the additional training provided by the NJ ACTS fellowship program will add value to your current research studies and enhance your career goals. This section will weigh heavily in the review process.
 - Regulatory approvals #s (if applicable): 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.

- Most recent transcript (i.e. graduate or professional school). Unofficial transcripts are acceptable.
- Letters of Reference: 2 (for predoctoral applications) or 3 (for postdoctoral applications). 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. 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 trainee's progress through the program
- If the applicant is a current Fellow, the research preceptor must provide a compelling need for an additional period of funding.

Submission process

Completed applications should be sent to the Program Director, Dr. Kathleen Scotto (Kathleen.scotto@rutgers.edu) and the Program Administrator, Dr. Wayne Zhou (wz241@gsbs.rutgers.edu), by 5:00 pm EST on or before July 3, 2020.

Key Dates

- ◆ LOI (strongly recommended): **June 19, 2020**
- ◆ Applications due: **Friday, July 3, 2020 (by 5PM)**
- ◆ Letters of reference due: **July 10, 2020**
- ◆ Interviews: mid-late **July 2020**
- ◆ Earliest award start date: **August 2020**

Selection Process

Upon committee review of the applications, the most promising candidates will be contacted and invited to interview with members of the TL1 Selection Committee. Final selections will be based upon the initial application as well as written evaluations from each interviewing faculty member and the program's Executive Committee.

Please direct all questions to:

Wayne Zhou, Ph.D.
School of Graduate Studies- Biomedical and Health Sciences Rutgers, State University of New Jersey
Email: wz241@gsbs.rutgers.edu

Academy of Mentors

For a current list of faculty members of each participating institution in the Academy of Mentors, please see: <https://rutgers.box.com/s/dihz2k3t914mqxzhmx24tu5juyibcmu2>.

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