

SYNERGY Scholars Mentored Career Development Program

**Sponsor: Dartmouth SYNERGY
Center for Clinical and Translational Science**

LETTER OF INTENT: April 15, 2013

APPLICATION DUE DATE: June 3, 2013 Application must be received no later than 5:00 pm.

AWARD START DATE: September 1, 2013

I. Background

Dartmouth SYNERGY Scholars is a Mentored Career Development Program, modeled on the NIH K12 Scholars Program. The program combines didactic training, mentoring, exposure to multidisciplinary research, and ongoing evaluation to prepare junior investigators for careers in Clinical Translational Research (CTR). The SYNERGY Scholars Program Committee anticipates that two slots will become available as of September 1, 2013

The overall goal of the SYNERGY Scholars program is to develop future researchers and facilitate collaborative translational research studies within all our institutions and affiliated health centers. The Program Committee anticipates that providing funding for such studies will accelerate the process of translational and clinical research, thereby having a positive impact upon our overall clinical and translational research enterprise.

II. Award Provisions

Junior investigators will participate in an integrated didactic and mentored research program, similar to an individual K23/Clinical Research Career Development Award. This award will provide funds to cover 75% of the individual's salary, but no more than \$100,000, plus fringe benefits annually, as well as up to \$25,000 per year to cover travel, supplies, research assistant salary, and tuition expenses.

III. Eligibility Criteria

Only applications from individuals with doctoral level degrees are accepted. Applicant must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and must hold a doctoral or other terminal degree and a regular faculty appointment at Dartmouth College to be eligible for this award.

An individual who has been approved for hire into a faculty role, but has not yet started as an employee at Dartmouth, is eligible as long as there is documentation to support the hire and an anticipated start date.

The applicant must be able to devote a minimum of two years to the SYNERGY Scholars program (see Section IV). Each applicant's department chair or supervisor must provide a supporting letter guaranteeing that the individual will have no more than 25% time committed to non-research (e.g., clinical) duties during the period of the award.

An individual who has served as a PI on a federally funded individual investigator award or as a PI on a program project grant is not eligible for this program.

IV. Additional Application and Award Details

- Note that the typical duration of the Mentored Career Development award is **2 years**, initially awarded as a one year grant, but renewable annually based on performance. Extensions beyond 2 years are possible, but rare.
- The Career Development program places special emphasis on clinical/translational research (see section VII for definitions), which must be reflected in the research, training, and "team mentorship" plans. "Team mentorship" means that each applicant must identify **mentors from at least two different disciplines** to supervise his/her research progress during the period of the award (see sections VI and VII below for guidance). Additional consultants may also be named, as needed and appropriate. A proposed schedule of meeting times between the scholar and his/her mentors must be provided. The Mentors must be identified in the **Application**.
- Each application must include a 6 page research proposal developed in consultation with the applicant's mentors.
- Applications from women and under-represented minorities are encouraged.
- Awardees may take additional courses related to their research interests and career development (to be described in the "plan for didactic training" as part of the application). These can be courses offered at Dartmouth or elsewhere, if they are relevant to the applicant's research. In all cases, applicants should describe how additional training will enhance their specific research program.
- Successful completion of **Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training** is required of all SYNERGY scholars (<https://www.citiprogram.org/>). GCP is the international ethical and scientific quality standard for the design, conduct, performance, monitoring, auditing, recording, analysis, and reporting of clinical trials that involve human subjects.
- All scholars must complete the SYNERGY Certificate Program in Clinical and Translational Science.
- Completion of all assignments is a program requirement.
- Awardees will also be required to participate in at least one additional career development opportunity per year (e.g., leadership seminar, writing workshop).
- SYNERGY Scholars will be required to present oral progress reports twice each year and to submit a written report annually.
- Each scholar and his/her mentors must attend periodic progress report meetings, and must also provide upon request written updates on the scholar's academic career accomplishments and feedback on the program and mentorship, both during the program and throughout the scholar's career.

- Scholars must work with administrators in their home departments as well as SYNERGY administrators to ensure successful management of SYNERGY Scholar funds (\$25,000 per year) for the costs of tuition, research expenses, travel, and supplies.
- All SYNERGY Scholars will be expected to apply for independent research funding from NIH or other extramural agency by the end of the first year of support, and certainly no later than the middle of the second year of support. Application to NIH is strongly encouraged.
- In order to receive a SYNERGY Scholar Award, scholars and their mentors must sign the "SYNERGY Scholar Compact" indicating their agreement to all Award requirements and expectations.

V. Application

Each applicant must submit electronically an Application and his or her current NIH 4 page biosketch **no later than 5:00 pm on June 3, 2013. Late applications will NOT be accepted.** The Application includes the name, title, and department of the applicant; title and brief abstract for the research project; the proposed training plan; the applicant's personal statement; and the **names of 2 or more proposed Mentors** and proposed meeting schedule (see Sections VI and VII below for more on mentor selections). **Applicants must submit a 6 page research proposal, along with three letters of reference (two of which should be from the applicant's mentors, and one from the Department Chair) and all mentors' NIH biosketches.** The research proposal should represent a well-developed scientific initiative in clinical or translational investigation and include Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Preliminary Studies, if any, and Research Design and Methods (limit 6 pages in all), plus Literature Cited consistent with NIH K Career Development Awards. Information regarding Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animal involvement, and/or Human Embryonic Stem Cells should also be included.

Because of page limitations, the proposal does not require the full detail of an NIH grant, but must be thorough enough to be evaluated in terms of overall design, significance, statistical approach, and human subjects' issues, modeled after NIH research grant instructions. The proposed research must meet the NIH definition of patient-oriented research, so that the focus of the research can be translational, mechanistic, therapeutic, clinical trials oriented, physiological, behavioral, or epidemiologic in nature. The Application should be sent to the attention of the SYNERGY Scholars Program Committee via email: SYNERGY@Dartmouth.edu.

VI. Emphasis on Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Research

The SYNERGY Scholars program seeks to promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research initiatives. Consequently, applications that reflect a strong multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary flavor will be viewed very favorably.

VII. Team Mentorship

Each application must specify at least **two Mentors** to oversee the candidate's progress in patient-oriented research. As the ideal candidate will propose science that is multi or interdisciplinary, the mentors should be chosen to reflect the disciplines needed to gain independence in the proposed research area. For example, a lab-based researcher and an endocrinologist might be chosen to supervise a project on early diabetes drug development. The

Mentors should be chosen from the large pool of senior investigators at Dartmouth who have established reputations in clinical/translational research and mentorship.

The Program Committee will review the credentials of the proposed mentors for appropriateness. Criteria used in their review will include scientific productivity, grant funding record, and mentoring history. If the committee decides that a mentor is unsuitable, the applicant may be required to meet with SYNERGY program leaders to discuss how to proceed. In some instances, the Program Committee may recommend that a more senior mentor join the mentoring team, or propose additional mentors. Applicants may send specific questions on mentor selections via email to attention of the Program Committee at SYNERGY@Dartmouth.edu.

A specific schedule for meetings between the scholar and mentors must be included in the application package, detailing individual meetings between each mentor with the scholar, and plans for joint meetings involving all mentors with the scholar. The strongest applications will specify frequent (e.g., weekly) team mentoring meetings in which all mentors meet simultaneously with the scholar. Meetings with other advisors/consultants are expected to take place less frequently. In addition, the Mentors must be available to report on the candidate's progress to the full Program Committee meetings. Finally, written feedback and evaluations are required periodically of both scholars and mentors.

VIII. Miscellaneous Issues

There is no need to present a formal budget; applicants should describe in general, how funds will support their proposed research as well as tuition costs, travel, supplies, etc. **The applicant will need to ensure that the \$25,000 will cover planned expenses or include a letter of support that provides evidence of support for additional funding.**

Appendices are not permitted.

The Program Committee reserves the right to request additional information at any point during the review process.

IX. Application Procedures and Deadlines

The application must be submitted no later than **5:00 pm on June 3, 2013**. Submit via email to SYNERGY@Dartmouth.edu, with "Synergy Scholars Program" as the subject. Attach the application as a single PDF file with file name of "SYNERGY-PIname.pdf".

The application must include:

1. The name, title, and department of the applicant.
2. A candidate statement describing personal career goals and training plan (2 page limit).
3. Title and brief abstract for the research project (1 page).
4. A 6 page research proposal (NIH format).
5. If a previous K-award application has been submitted to NIH, please include the Summary Statement from the most recent review.
6. A brief (less than 1-page) letter from the Department Chair addressing:

- a. The candidate's prospects for development into an independently funded clinical/translational scientist.
 - b. The Department's assurance that at least 75% of the candidate's time will be protected for research career development and devoted to her/his role as a SYNERGY Scholar.
 - c. The dollar amount requested for the candidate's salary and percent effort to be devoted (must be less than or equal to 75%).
 - d. Names of the proposed mentors and proposed meeting schedule (1 page).
7. A brief letter from each of the mentors indicating commitment to the candidate, as well as their experience serving as a mentor. The primary mentor should submit a 1 page discussion of the mentoring plan, including, e.g., frequency of meetings, access to research material, candidate support and expectations; the secondary mentor should submit a brief letter of commitment (less than 1 page).
8. Mentors' NIH biosketches.

The SYNERGY Scholars Program Committee will announce the candidates selected as Scholars by July 19, 2013.