Request for Application

Integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV):

iTHRIV Scholar Career Development Awards

October 9, 2019

The integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV) Scholar Career Development Program aims to train the next generation of translational researchers in principles of data science, the conduct of rigorous and reproducible science, and to promote team science as a means of enhancing innovation and discovery in health-related research. iTHRIV announces the call for applications for this mentored career development (KL2) award. Proposals that demonstrate potential to integrate team science and data science in clinical or translational research are preferred.

The iTHRIV, funded through a Clinical Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the NIH, is a transformational cross-Commonwealth collaboration that leverages the latest advances in data science to accelerate innovation in health-related research and facilitate team science. Partners within iTHRIV include Carilion Clinic, Inova Health System, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Tech, as well as affiliates the Center for Open Science and the UVA Licensing & Ventures Group. iTHRIV seeks to support highly qualified early career faculty for activities related to the development of a successful clinical or translational research career.

Type and amount of commitment required from the nominee’s home unit (department/college):

• 75% salary/fringe support (total up to $120,000/year) for two and possibly three consecutive years (deviations from this will be considered by special request on a case-by-case basis; request must be noted in the Letter of Intent)
• $50,000/year in research-related expenses including supplies, Scholar travel, Scholar training and/or tuition, etc. for each year of the award

Eligibility:

• Applicants must have a terminal research or health-professional doctoral degree (or its equivalent), including but not limited to M.D., D.O., Ph.D., D.VM., D.N.P., or equivalent.
• Applicants must have a full-time faculty appointment at Virginia Tech (including joint appointments with Carilion Clinic) at the time of the award; the position cannot be contingent on obtaining this award. (In the University setting, faculty holding at least a 9-month appointment are eligible)
• Applicants must be a U.S. citizen or non-citizen national, or have documented permanent resident status.
• Applicants and their home departments must commit 75% effort to mentored research and career development activities (deviations from this will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval during the application process). A letter of support from the applicant’s department chair must include a statement of commitment to 75% protected time (or to the agreed upon amount) and a clear description of other activities (including the percent effort allocated to clinical responsibilities, on-call time, teaching, service, and/or administrative activities).
• Applicants who have previously received a career development award or a national independent research award (as PI) covering more than 2 full calendar months of support in a year (e.g. NSF, NIH, AHA) are NOT eligible.
• Applicants must identify at least one scientific mentor; the primary scientific mentor must provide a letter of support of the application. More than one scientific mentor is permitted and encouraged as appropriate for the proposal.

Program description:
The iTHRIV Scholar Career Development Program aims to train the next generation of both clinical and translational researchers in principles of data science, the conduct of rigorous and reproducible science, and to promote team science as a means to enhance innovation and discovery. The iTHRIV Scholars Program is supported in part by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) under Award Number KL2TR003016. Scholars are selected annually to participate in the program, including two Scholars under the NIH KL2 award. Early career faculty candidates pursuing a career in clinical research or translational research from all departments in all Colleges at Virginia Tech including the VTC School of Medicine, are encouraged to apply. Members of under-represented racial and ethnic groups and candidates with disabilities are also encouraged to apply.

In anticipation of a diverse cohort of Scholars, representing a mix of backgrounds, prior training, and research focus, the program is based in a common curriculum of clinical and translational research competencies, interwoven with data science principles, and professional development activities. iTHRIV Scholars will be expected to participate in weekly training sessions (currently Tuesday afternoons from 1-5 pm) with their peers. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory for participation in the program. Each Scholar will furthermore enhance the skills specific to his/her research and career development through an individualized learning plan.

Individualized training may be accomplished through various methods including:

1) The composition of a personal mentorship team. Mentors identified by the candidate are required to describe their commitment to the mentoring relationship, including a description of mentoring time and regular interactions with the candidate. The program also includes the addition of iTHRIV-appointed career development mentors to enhance the mentoring support for Scholars. Applicants are encouraged to list up to three additional areas of expertise (or individual faculty members) that would be welcome contributors to the proposed project or augment the applicant’s career development plan.

2) Translational experiences, which are individually selected by Scholars to broaden the Scholars’ perspective and ability to communicate with stakeholders outside of their immediate scientific field.

3) Coaching to achieve professional development goals.

4) Opportunities for individualized course work.

iTHRIV provides training in research informatics, data analysis and visualization, prediction modeling, open data resources and data sharing, the ethics and governance of big data, principles of commercialization, and scientific rigor and reproducibility. Applicants may consider the use of tools from the Center for Open Science (https://cos.io/) to enhance the reproducibility of their work.

During the award period, Scholars are expected to pursue an extramural mentored career development award and/or independent research funding with the goal of obtaining significant extramural funding by the end of two years. If funding is not achieved within the 2-year award period, the applicant’s home department or school must guarantee a funded 3rd year of 75% protected time to achieve extramural funding (exceptions must have prior approval) along with the additional support of $50,000. A letter of
support from the applicant’s department chair confirming this commitment is required at the time of application. If a national career development award or major independent research grant is funded before the end of the iTHRIV award, the Scholar would be encouraged to continue to participate in iTHRIV Scholar programming and financial support will transition to the extramural award (as allowed by the external award). An annual progress report is required of all Scholars.

This program will not support any application with a focus on global health and/or research located outside of the United States. This program will not fund any research work or travel outside of the United States and Canada. Conducting research in the United States with foreign samples and data is allowed.

The iTHRIV Scholar Career Development Program encourages applications with an emphasis on interdisciplinary team science. Proposals that incorporate, or have the potential to integrate, data science methods are preferred, and demonstration of the potential for using data to improve health is encouraged.

**Instructions for Proposal:**

**Letters of Intent** (LOI) are **required** and should be electronically submitted by **December 2, 2019** to Dr. Leanna Blevins ([leannab@vtc.vt.edu](mailto:leannab@vtc.vt.edu)) by using the attached template.

**Complete applications** are due on **February 3, 2020**. A complete application must include:

- iTHRIV Scholars Career Development Application Coversheet
- NIH Biosketch and other support for the applicant
- NIH Biosketch and other support for the applicant’s scientific mentor(s)
- NIH Biosketches for key contributors to the applicant’s proposed research
- Proposal
  - **A. Career Development Plan** (6 page limit)
    - Describe applicant background
    - Career goals and objectives
    - Mentoring plan and proposed career development activities
  - **B. Specific Aims** (research question(s)) (1 page)
  - **C. Research strategy** (6 page limit)
    - Include plan to assure scientific rigor and reproducibility (applicants may wish to consider resources offered by the Center for Open Science ([https://cos.io/](https://cos.io/))
  - **D. References cited**
  - **E. List up to three additional areas of expertise (or individual faculty members) that would be welcome contributions to the proposed project or augment the applicant’s career development plan.**
- **Budget and Budget Justification**
- **Letters of support** (6 page limit total for all letters)
  - **A. Department chair** (required; must include statement confirming protected time; participation in 4-hour weekly events, and guaranteed 3rd year of funding as described above)
  - **B. Primary scientific mentor** (required; must include commitment to attend monthly luncheons and other mentoring activities)
  - **C. Consultants and contributors to the project** (required from consultants and contributors named in application)
- **Description of Institutional environment and commitment** (1 page)
Applications should be sent electronically to Dr. Leanna Blevins at leannab@vt.edu on or before February 3, 2020. No applications will be received after this date with the exception of candidates being recruited to Virginia Tech or Carilion who are strongly recommended by their department head and, upon confirmation of commitment to the institution, must submit an application and be granted a waiver by the selection committee.

Key Dates:
Letter of Intent Due: December 2, 2019 (required)
Applications Due: February 3, 2020 (required)
Interviews by Invitation: Between February and March, 2020
Notification of Awards: By April 1, 2020
Award Begins: July 1, 2020

Selection Criteria:
NIH Scoring criteria will be used to evaluate submitted proposals. Each of the following areas will be scored using the NIH nine-point scale:
• Overall impact
• Candidate
• Career development plan/career goals & objectives/plan to provide mentoring
• Research plan
• Mentors/consultants/collaborators
• Environment and institutional commitment to the applicant
• Additional Review Criteria:
  o Human Subjects
  o Vertebrate Animals
  o Biohazards
  o Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research
  o Potential for Integration of Data Science and Team Science Principles
  o Approach to Scientific Rigor and Reproducibility

Evaluations will be returned to applicants with the intent of providing feedback that will be helpful for all applicants (whether or not the proposal is funded) for future competitive proposals.

Support for Applicants:
For questions, please contact Dr. Leanna Blevins at 540-526-2191 or email leannab@vtc.vt.edu.

References for proposal content and selection criteria:
1. NIH Biosketch format, template: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.html
2. NIH Research Career Development Program: https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/career-development

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