

Summary of the Postdoctoral Training Program at UT Southwestern

Objectives

Postdoctoral scholars are recognized as crucial participants in keeping UT Southwestern at the forefront of biomedical research. The objectives of the Postdoctoral Training Program are to extend the traditional best practices of postdoctoral training in biomedical sciences and to make available new initiatives to improve training. The ultimate goal is to provide a structured program to aid the transition of each trainee to career independence through the development of research and professional skills.

Qualifications for Postdoctoral Training

A Postdoctoral scholar is an individual who has recently earned a Ph.D., M.D., or equivalent doctoral degree and performs research in a specialty area under the supervision of a faculty mentor. The term postdoctoral scholar includes an individual who holds the position of “Postdoctoral Fellow” or “Postdoctoral Researcher” with such positions being equivalent in terms of rights and responsibilities but differing in regards to the source of financial support for stipend or salary and fringe benefits. Postdoctoral training presupposes that the appointee is capable of independently executing original research under the guidance of the postdoctoral mentor. Appointment as a postdoctoral scholar is limited to six years including postdoctoral training received at other institutions, either inside or outside the U.S.

Organization of the Program

The program is coordinated by the Postdoctoral Affairs Office of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. All postdoctoral scholars are registered in a certificate program that is comprised of multiple tracks, each of which is intended to be completed in two years’ time. Postdoctoral Scholars register for three hours of coursework in the fall and spring semesters and two hours of coursework in the summer term. The program is organized along the lines of continuing professional training and is graded on a pass/fail system. Certificates are offered in a variety of tracks, each of which includes required coursework. A certificate shall be awarded upon completion of 15 credit hours of training. Beginning postdoctoral scholars are enrolled in the Research track, which has requirements for coursework in Responsible Conduct of Research, Career Advancement, and writing an Individual Development Plan. Additional certificate offerings, from which postdoctoral scholars choose, include Advanced Research, Scientific Management, Cancer, and Educational Techniques.

Benefits of the Program

In addition to providing postdoctoral scholars with unique experiences in specialized research and advanced coursework activities, the program benefits include:

- Base pay for postdoctoral scholars, set by the Dean of the Graduate School, is competitive by following the guidelines stipulated by the National Institutes of Health
- Postdoctoral scholars paid full-time by UT Southwestern are afforded medical insurance provided by the University of Texas System. Plans with additional medical coverage for family members, dental insurance, and vision insurance are available,
- Postdoctoral scholars paid full-time by UT Southwestern receive retirement benefits,
- On-site childcare,
- Free membership at the Bryan Williams, M.D. Student Center,
- Free student computing services and software downloads,

- Discounts on public transit passes and parking rates,
- Support from the Graduate Career Development Office.

Professional development opportunities for postdocs include:

- Attending career development seminars or workshops sponsored by the Career Development Committee of the Postdoctoral Association, Postdoctoral Affairs Office, Quest for Careers, and the Graduate Career Development Office
- Personal appointments with Graduate Career Development Office staff to help identify and develop the practical skills required for a range of science careers, job search preparation, career exploration, and to help postdocs assess and reflect upon personal values, strengths, and skills,
- Leadership training for the Postdoctoral Association Executive Board
- Participation in clubs, such as Science Policy Education and Communication Club (SPEaC), Future Leaders in Pedagogy (FLiP), the Consulting Club, or the Biotechnology Club
- Networking within the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), The Association for African-American Scientists (TAAAS), or Out in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (oSTEM) organizations,
- Women in Science and Medicine Advisory Committee (WISMAC) Mentoring Series for Female Graduate Students and Postdocs and a Postdoc Lean-In Circle.

Questions may be addressed to: SGSPostdocOffice@utsouthwestern.edu