

## Cancer Research Postdoctoral Fellowship – Application Guidelines

**Application Due Date:** April 8, 2019

**Earliest Start Date:** June 1, 2019

### Program Description

The VCU Massey Cancer Center is inviting applications for Cancer Research Postdoctoral Fellowships being offered under two separate tracks:

**Cancer Laboratory Research Track:** All theoretical and experimental research projects relevant to the study of cancer and the search for cancer causes, mechanisms, therapies and prevention are welcomed under this track.

**Cancer Prevention & Control (CPC) Track:** Research projects related to topics in cancer prevention and control including (but not limited to) cancer policy and economics, communication and decision making, survivorship, disparities, community-engaged research, and behavioral interventions will be acceptable for the CPC track.

The purpose of these fellowships is to provide mentored research training to promising scientists and physician scientists who have the potential to become productive, independent cancer research investigators and successfully compete for peer reviewed extramural funding.

- The applicant should identify which track they are applying for.
- The applicant should identify a primary mentor who is an active investigator in the area of the proposed research training and is committed both to the applicant's research training and to the direct supervision of his/her research.
- **The mentor has to be a member of the Massey Cancer Center.**
- The project outlined in the research strategy should be written by the candidate.
- The awards will be issued for a 2-year period. The second year funding will be contingent upon proof of adequate progress during the first year.

### Eligibility

- By the time of award, the individual must be a citizen or a non-citizen national of the United States or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence.
- Applicants should have a recent PhD or MD/PhD with no more than 2 years of postdoctoral training complete for the laboratory research track and no more than 2 years of postdoctoral experience for the cancer prevention and control track.
- Must be able to commit full-time effort to research during each year of the grant period, verified by the Letter of Support from Mentor.

### Funding

The fellowship provides 2 years of salary/stipend and provides for other training related expenses at appropriate NIH levels commensurate with experience.

A budget is not required but applicants should take note of the following budget guidelines.

- Salary/stipend support is allowed only for the applicant
- Travel costs are allowed for purposes specifically related to the proposed research project
- Publication costs and meeting-related poster printing costs are allowed for purposes specifically related to the proposed research project
- Reasonable coursework and training expenses related to the career and professional development of the applicant allowed
- Laptops are an allowable purchase
- Visa costs are not allowed
- Professional membership dues are not allowed

### Research Project – (2 pages excluding figures and tables)

A clear and concise outline of the hypotheses, specific aims, and the scientific approach that will be taken to address each specific aim must be included in this section.

The applicant should describe the background leading to the proposed research, the significance of the research, the proposed approach (design and methods) for achieving the specific aims, the rationale for the proposed approach, potential pitfalls, and expected/alternative outcomes of the proposed studies. It may be beneficial to include pertinent preliminary data to demonstrate feasibility. The section should present a well-defined research project.

### **Research Experience and Career Goals – (1 page)**

The applicant should describe current research experience and a plan illustrating the applicant's training and career goals; how the applicant intends to develop the skills and experience necessary to achieve career advancement during the grant term; and how the applicant plans to transition to research independence beyond the grant term. The applicant should also address their long term goals, i.e., anticipated timeline for publications, future grant applications and career milestones.

### **Mentoring/Training Plan – (1 page)**

The applicant and mentor should jointly develop a mentoring/training plan for the 2-year grant period. The training plan should be individualized for the applicant, keeping in mind the applicant's strengths and any gaps in needed skills, and should be designed to enhance research training. The training plan should be coordinated with the applicant's research project. It should outline and justify new training opportunities, any relevant coursework, and professional development activities. Training in professional development skills, e.g. grant-writing, presentation skills, primary data collection/secondary data analysis and/or lab management, is strongly encouraged. How the training plan will facilitate the applicant's transition to the next stage of his/her career should be made explicit.

The mentoring plan should specifically address a timeline for how the applicant plans to apply for peer-reviewed funding (K-award or equivalent) during or soon after the grant period. It is expected that the mentored training experience will provide:

- A strong foundation in research design, methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to the proposed research
- The enhancement of the applicant's ability to conceptualize and think through research problems with increasing independence, as well as presenting and publishing the research findings as first author
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops
- Skills needed to transition to the next stage of the applicant's research career

### **Mentor's Letter of Support**

The letter should explain the mentor's commitment to mentoring the applicant according to the mentoring plan included in the application.

- The mentor is expected to provide an assessment of the applicant's qualifications and potential for a career as a productive, independent researcher.
- Describe the provided space and resources to support the applicant to successfully complete the research project.
- The mentor should briefly discuss the research, mentorship, leadership and other relevant experience that he/she possesses to effectively mentor postdoctoral level researchers, including evidence of successful mentoring outcomes as demonstrated by examples of previously mentored postdoctoral trainees and their current titles/positions.

### **Review Criteria**

- Does the proposed research question have significant potential to impact cancer research?
- Is the proposed research plan of high scientific quality, and is it well integrated with the proposed training plan?
- Is the research project consistent with the applicant's stage of research development?
- Is the proposed timeframe feasible to accomplish the proposed research training?

- Does the mentor demonstrate an understanding of the applicant's training needs as well as the ability and commitment to assist in meeting those needs?
- Are the mentor's research qualifications (including recent publications) and track record of mentoring individuals at a similar stage appropriate for the needs of the applicant?
- Based on the mentor's description of his/her active research program, is the applicant's proposed research project sufficiently distinct from the sponsor's funded research for the applicant's career stage?
- Does the applicant demonstrate the potential and commitment to effectively leverage his/her research project to obtain independent funding for continued cancer research?
- Does the applicant present a clear, convincing, and feasible plan for developing the necessary research, scientific, clinical, management, and leadership skills to achieve career advancement during the grant term?
- Has the candidate demonstrated the potential to succeed in a research career, by publishing papers and presenting data at research conferences as a student and fellow?

### **Post-Award Requirement**

Year 1: Fellow must provide a brief written progress report 60 days before the end of the budget period and will be required to present their research at an MCC seminar. The date and time will be chosen by mutual agreement.

Final Year: Fellow must submit a detailed progress report 30 days after the end of grant period that includes:

1. A summary of research performed during the award year and evaluation of the results. The summary should be technical, but targeted to a general scientific audience. It should be sufficiently detailed such that the fellow's research activities over the award year are clearly articulated. Figures and references may be included if appropriate. The report must be signed by both the fellow and the sponsor. The report should not exceed three pages.
2. A bibliography of publications and list of extramural applications submitted /awarded.
3. Fellow will be required to conduct a seminar as part of the MCC seminar series.

### **Required Attachments:**

**Applicant's CV**

**Mentor's Biosketch**

**Mentor's Other Support**

Please submit your applications to [mccsubmission@vcu.edu](mailto:mccsubmission@vcu.edu) a single PDF file consisting of the following documents:

- Title Page (Include title of project, chosen track, name of applicant and name(s) of mentor(s))
- Research Project
- Research Experience and Career Goals
- Mentoring/Training Plan
- Mentor's Letter of Support
- Required Attachments

For questions, please contact Morgan Hembarsky at [mhembarsky@vcu.edu](mailto:mhembarsky@vcu.edu) or at 828-3114.