



## Interdisciplinary TL1 Mentored Research Training Opportunities for Predocs and Postdocs

### Chicago Kidney Urology Hematology network FOR city-Wide reseArch tRaining and career Development

#### REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Chicago KUH FORWARD is accepting applications from predoctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and clinical residents for mentored traineeships in nephrology, benign urology, and benign hematology research. Successful candidates must begin their training appointment prior on or before May 31, 2026. Applications will continue to be accepted until all slots are filled.

#### ABOUT CHICAGO KUH FORWARD

**Chicago Kidney Urology Hematology network FOR city-Wide reseArch tRaining and career Development (Chicago KUH FORWARD)** provides trainees and early stage investigators the training and resources they need to become successful independent investigators in kidney, benign urology, or benign hematology (KUH).

Chicago KUH FORWARD brings together some of the best researchers and clinicians at top medical research institutions in Chicago to train the next generation of KUH researchers in an environment encompassing a continuum of education, training and career development. Chicago KUH FORWARD offers aspiring trainees access to ideas, successful role models, peer trainees, scientific information, and methodological support to become successful independent investigators. This ecosystem promotes both opportunities for individual development and the growth of interdisciplinary and cross-institutional teams to address important problems in nephrology, benign urology, and benign hematology.

The six Chicago KUH partner institutions include Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Chicago, Rush University, Loyola University Chicago, and the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital at Chicago.

Chicago KUH FORWARD is supported by NIDDK/NIH Institutional Network Awards U2CDK129917 and TL1DK132769. Northwestern University is the primary awardee for both grants. The U2C cooperative component coordinates and provides administrative support for all Chicago KUH FORWARD activities, while the TL1 training component supports the trainees and their research training activities.

#### AWARD EXPECTATIONS

Chicago KUH FORWARD intends to support up to 5 predoctoral-level and 5 postdoctoral-level trainees each budget year of the TL1 grant (June 1 through May 31). Trainees are supported for an initial twelve-month appointment and eligible for a second year of TL1-support which is contingent on satisfactory progress during

their initial appointment.

Appointments are supported by a Ruth L. Kirschstein Institutional National Research Service Award (NRSA). Trainees receive a monthly stipend, tuition support, and funds to purchase training-related items and cover travel expenses to present at scientific meetings or conferences at NRSA levels. Trainees are eligible to receive NRSA childcare support to defray childcare costs provided by a licensed childcare provider. Funds to support trainees who are located at a partner institution other than Northwestern will be passed to the trainee's institution through a subaward agreement issued by Northwestern (primary awardee). Trainees are expected to comply with all applicable NIH policies and their institutional requirements associated with their appointment.

All trainees are required to pursue their research training on a full-time basis at one of the six Chicago KUH FORWARD partner institutions. Full-time is generally defined as devoting at least 40 hours per week to the program or as specified by the recipient institution in accordance with its own policies. Postdoctoral level clinical trainees must commit at least 75% of their time to research and up to 25% on clinical work.

Appointed trainees are required to engage in research relevant to the mission of the Division of Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases (KUH) within NIDDK. This includes basic, translational, and clinical research in any of the following areas (<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/about-niddk/offices-divisions/division-kidney-urologic-hematologic-diseases>):

- Kidney: Chronic kidney disease, end-stage renal disease, diabetic nephropathy, polycystic kidney disease, hypertensive nephrosclerosis, acute kidney injury, kidney donation, congenital kidney disorders, IgA nephropathy, hemolytic uremic syndrome, fluid and electrolyte disorders, kidney repair and regeneration, and normal and abnormal kidney development and physiology.
- Benign Urology: Benign prostatic hyperplasia, urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections, stones, erectile dysfunction, urologic chronic pelvic pain syndromes (including interstitial cystitis and chronic prostatitis), congenital urologic disorders, repair and regeneration of lower urinary tract organs, and normal and abnormal lower urinary tract development and physiology.
- Benign Hematology: Blood and blood-forming organs, hematopoiesis, hemoglobin disorders, iron metabolism, sickle cell disease, bone marrow failure, iron deficiency, Cooley's anemia (thalassemia), and hemochromatosis.

Trainees will participate in an integrated didactic and cross-disciplinary mentored research program personalized to their individual needs and develop an individual development plan that will be updated and discussed at regular progress meetings. Each trainee will have a mentoring team comprised of a primary mentor and one or two secondary mentors who are faculty at a Chicago KUH FORWARD partner institution. Primary mentors will be accomplished KUH independent investigators who are committed to the career development of their mentees and will become NIDDK approved program faculty in Chicago KUH FORWARD. Secondary mentors are established investigators from a discipline different than that of the primary mentor and are invested in and significantly enrich the experience and development of the trainee.

All trainees supported are expected to submit first-author manuscripts based on their mentored research project. Submission of an individual fellowship grant (NIH or other) is a requirement for trainees appointed for a second year.

All trainees are expected to actively participate in professional development and network activities designed to establish a city-wide KUH training community and enhance their knowledge of interdisciplinary research, such as professional development seminars, workshops and symposia, journal clubs, research in progress, peer- and near-peer networking opportunities and program committee meetings.

## ELIGIBILITY

Individuals to be trained must be a citizen or a noncitizen national of the United States or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence at the time of appointment.

Candidates must demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing a scientific research career and receiving interdisciplinary training in basic, translational, or clinical research in a [NIDDK KUH priority research area](#) that is benign or non-cancerous.

### Predoctoral Trainees

- Eligible students must have received a baccalaureate degree and be enrolled in a program leading to a PhD or an equivalent research doctoral degree program at one of the six Chicago KUH FORWARD partner institutions.
- Students in graduate PhD programs must complete their qualifying exam or candidacy equivalent prior to receiving award.
- Students must be in good academic standing and have the approval of their program to enroll in this TL1 program.
- Appointment to Chicago KUH FORWARD is expected to be full-time for a continuous 12-month period. Trainees are eligible for a second and subsequent full-time and continuous 12-month appointment.
- NIH NRSA guidelines set a limit of 5 years (6 years if dual degree, i.e., MD/PhD) of total support for predoctoral training grant funding.

### Postdoctoral Scholars

- Postdoctoral scholars must have received, as of the beginning date of the TL1 appointment, a PhD, MD, or comparable doctoral degree from an accredited domestic or foreign institution. Comparable doctoral degrees include, but are not limited to, the following: D.D.S., D.M.D., D.C., D.O., D.V.M., O.D., D.P.M., Sc.D., Eng.D., Dr.PH., D.N.Sc., D.P.T., Pharm.D., N.D. (Doctor of Naturopathy), D.S.W., Psy.D., as well as a doctoral degree in nursing research.
- Trainees must commit full-time effort to their research training with a primary mentor at one of the six Chicago KUH FORWARD partner institutions.
- Appointment to Chicago KUH FORWARD is expected to be full-time for a continuous 12-month period. Trainees are eligible for a second full-time and continuous 12-month appointment pending satisfactory progress during initial appointment.
- Doctoral level clinicians may spend no more than 25% of FTE in clinical service.
- All appointed Postdoctoral Trainees must agree to a service payback obligation incurred during initial 12 months of postdoctoral Kirschstein-NRSA support. A second appointment year in Chicago KUH FORWARD will serve to meet the payback obligation requirement.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process includes three stages:

1. Pre-application Meeting
  - a. Declare your interest in applying by sending an email to [chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu](mailto:chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu). We will reply to schedule a pre-application meeting. Meetings provide an opportunity for applicants and mentors to receive guidance on the application process and program expectations. Pre-application meetings are brief and held over Zoom.
2. Proposal Submission
  - a. Applicants must complete an online Application Form that includes several proposal components. See section “Proposal Requirements” for instructions on preparing and submitting your application.
  - b. Applications will be accepted throughout each grant budget year (June 1 through May 31) until all training slots are filled. Please contact [Chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu](mailto:Chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu) for the status of open slots.

### 3. Proposal Presentation and Interview

- a. Each applicant will be scheduled for a virtual 30-minute session on Zoom where they will present their proposed research and be interviewed by a faculty review committee. The applicant's mentors do not attend this session. Applicants will be contacted within two weeks of their application submission by a member of the Chicago KUH FORWARD team to schedule this session.
  - i. Presentation: Applicants will deliver a 15-minute scientific presentation on their research proposal to the review committee.
  - ii. Interview: Applicants will have a 15-minute interview with the review committee immediately following their scientific presentation. Questions will be about the applicant's scientific presentation and their personal experience and goals as a scientist.

## PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The application submission is an online process. Each application requires the components listed below. Please save each component as an individual PDF file using the following file naming convention: level\_year\_LastName\_component.pdf, where

- Level = predoc or postdoc
- Year = current calendar year
- LastName = applicant's last name
- Component = the type of supporting document (i.e., biosketch, statement, proposal, mentor, recltr1, and recltr2)

Proposal components include:

1. NIH Fellowship Biosketch
  - a. The biosketch is to be formatted according to the current NIH format for fellowship applications and awards at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>.
2. Personal Statement
  - a. The personal statement addresses reasons for applying, prior research experience, long-term career objectives. Limited to 2 pages.
3. Research Proposal
  - a. The research proposal outlines the applicant's specific scientific objectives and description of cross-disciplinary mentorship team.
  - b. The research proposal is limited to 2 pages and should include the following sections:
    - i. Specific Aims and Hypotheses
    - ii. Background and Significance
    - iii. Experimental Approach and Cross-Disciplinary Mentorship Team
    - iv. Interpretation of Expected Results
    - v. References. This section does not count towards the two-page limit.
  - c. Predoctoral applicants: Upload your Research Proposal in place of "Upload synopsis of thesis project with description of cross-disciplinary mentorship team."
4. Mentor Statement of Commitment and Biosketch
  - a. The primary mentor and co-mentor(s) must provide a statement of their commitment to mentoring the trainees and fulfillment of mentor training requirements of NIH and the TL1 training grant. The statement may be one letter signed by all mentors or individual letters from each mentor.
  - b. A copy of the primary mentors current NIH biosketch is required.
  - c. The letter(s) and primary mentor's biosketch should be combined into a single PDF and uploaded as one file.
5. Two reference letters (Postdoctoral applications only)
  - a. Reference letters are for postdoctoral-level applications only and should be from individuals not

directly involved in the application, but who are familiar with the postdoc applicant's research qualifications, training, and interests. For example, for applicants with a PhD degree, reference letters will be from supervisors/mentors they had during graduate school training. For applicants with a MD degree, reference letters will be from residency or fellowship program directors, and or faculty with whom trainees have conducted research in the past.

- b. Reference letters may be uploaded to the Application Form by the applicant. Alternatively, referees may send letters directly to [chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu](mailto:chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu). If the latter, applicants will need to upload a blank page as a placeholder in the Application Form and confirm receipt of the letters with Chicago KUH FORWARD Program Manager.

## 6. Online Application Form

- a. The above components will be attached to the Application Form as individual PDF files.
- b. The application form is located at [https://redcap.link/KUHFORWARD\\_apply](https://redcap.link/KUHFORWARD_apply)
- c. Applicants may save the Application Form to return later to complete before submitting. No changes can be made to the Application Form after it is submitted.

## EVALUATION

The review committee consists of 3 or more Chicago KUH FORWARD program faculty representing each of the KUH disciplines and different partner institutions. Committee members review each application based on the criteria listed below and consider the impact of lived experiences on the candidate's career choices and academic trajectory, and the likelihood that a TL1 fellowship will enhance the candidate's progression to a productive independent scientific research career in a KUH research field.

Evaluation criteria:

- Clarity of written communication
- Clarity of oral communication
- Motivation for pursuit of an academic research career
- Alignment of trainee interests and proposed research with KUH research priority areas
- The trainee's understanding of the proposed research and the feasibility of their plan to advance the project toward publications
- Commitment of mentoring team to the candidate
- Referees' assessments of candidate's academic & research accomplishments (postdoc only)

## CONTACT

Chicago KUH FORWARD

Website: [Chicagokuh.org](http://Chicagokuh.org)

Email: [Chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu](mailto:Chicago.kuhforward@northwestern.edu)