

SDSU-UCSD JOINT DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Transdisciplinary Training Program in the Behavioral and Biological/Biomedical Sciences

A Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Training Grant (T32) funded by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health

What is the T32 training grant and what is its purpose?

The training grant is a 5-year award from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Its purpose is to provide focused academic and state-of-the-art research training in the biological or biomedical sciences to predoctoral public health graduate students in behavioral science majors. The goal is to equip future behavioral and social scientists with sufficient training in the biological/biomedical foundations of disease to understand the role of both behavior and biology in the etiology and control of disease. Individuals may be funded up to a total of 3 years on the training grant.

Who is eligible to apply for a position on the training grant?

Applicants must be US citizens or non-citizen nationals (permanent residents). Students on temporary or student visas are not eligible. Predoctoral students must also meet admission criteria for the SDSU-UCSD Joint Doctoral Program in Health Behavioral Science or in Epidemiology (with a background in behavioral or social sciences), and they must maintain good academic standing in the program. Preference will be given to applicants who hold an MPH or MS degree in public health.

Currently, positions in the training grant are open only to applicants to the Health Behavioral Science doctoral program or the Epidemiology doctoral program. Applicants to the Global Health program should contact the Training Grant Director prior to applying to determine the future availability of training grant positions for this program.

Individuals from underrepresented minority groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

What are the criteria for acceptance into the program?

Criteria for acceptance into the training program include the following: (1) Academic credentials; (2) Strong interest in the biological/biomedical foundations of disease and in integrating biological/biomedical training into a behavioral science program of study; (3) Desire for a research-oriented career; and (4) Desirable personal characteristics, including integrity, perseverance, and communication skills.

What is involved in the training program?

- A. *Coursework:* Programs of study are individualized based on the trainee's interests. Coursework includes:
 - a. The core requirements of the SDSU-UCSD Joint Doctoral Program
 - b. A minimum of 15 elective units in the biological and/or biomedical sciences, including three required courses (6 units): Human Disease, Molecular & Cellular Basis of Disease, and Research Ethics.
- B. *Research Training:* Trainees will be expected to complete rotations in three research labs, at least one of which must be biologically/biomedically-focused.
- C. *Teaching:* Trainees will be expected to teach an undergraduate or master's level course that integrates behavioral and biological principles.
- D. *Written Qualifying Exams:* Qualifying exams require the doctoral student to write a 15-page grant proposal on a research hypothesis determined by the trainee's Advisory Committee. Trainees in the T32 are required to incorporate both behavioral and biological/biomedical elements into this proposal.
- E. *Dissertation:* The trainee is required to incorporate both behavioral and biological/biomedical components into the doctoral dissertation.

A program of study that includes planned coursework and research training experiences will be individualized to the trainee's needs and particular areas of interest (e.g., genetics, infectious disease, cancer, diet and exercise, etc.), with the assistance and input of his/her Advisory Committee. Faculty from numerous departments within SDSU and the School of Medicine at UCSD may serve as faculty mentors for T32 trainees, including faculty in the SDSU

Graduate School of Public Health and Departments of Psychology, Biology, Social Work, and Public Administration, and faculty in the UCSD Departments of Family and Preventive Medicine, Biomedical Sciences, Reproductive Medicine, Endocrinology, Infectious Diseases, Pediatrics, and Psychiatry.

What are the goals to be achieved by the enrolled candidate?

Goals include learning the theories and models driving health behavior and epidemiologic research, the biological and biomedical aspects of health and disease, and quantitative and qualitative research design, and integrating this knowledge into the conceptualization, design, and conduct of research; developing a thorough understanding of the ethical issues involved in the study of human and/or animal populations; ability to conduct literature reviews that stem from biomedical and behavioral principles; ability to assemble and organize research data, perform common data analyses, and independently analyze a variety of data; developing skills in writing and/or contributing to the writing of research proposals, and critiquing those of other investigators; ability to clearly communicate research findings, both orally and in writing; and leading collaborative studies with researchers/practitioners from a variety of disciplines in health behavior or epidemiologic research, using the acquired transdisciplinary training to bridge the gap between these fields.

How do individuals apply to the program and what is the application deadline?

Applicants should indicate their interest in being considered for a position on the training grant when they apply to the SDSU-UCSD Joint Doctoral Program in Public Health. In addition to all of the materials required as part of the standard Joint Doctoral Program application, **training grant applicants must also submit a statement describing their background and interest in the biological or biomedical sciences.** This statement may be incorporated into the personal and professional goals statement required in the Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH) PhD Application.

Application deadlines for the training program follow the deadlines for applications to the Joint Doctoral Program in Public Health. Please see <http://publichealth.sdsu.edu/phdapplication.php> for application instructions and links to application forms. The SDSU and GSPH applications must be received by **December 15**. All remaining application materials, such as GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and transcripts, must be received by **January 15**. Applications will be reviewed beginning in February and applicants will be notified in March.

What is the level of stipend support for trainees supported by this grant?

Predocutorial stipend levels are set by the NIH each year. For 2008-2009, the stipend level was \$20,772. The grant also covers tuition/fees, an allowance toward health insurance, and a small stipend to travel to a professional conference or meeting. Exact amounts for each item are available upon request.

What are the expectations of the trainees?

Trainees must be committed to full-time academic and research training (40 hours/week), with a minimum one-year commitment. Trainees are also expected to develop an external grant (e.g., an individual NRSA doctoral dissertation award or a dissertation grant from other federal, state, or private funding sources) and to apply for such external funding, preferably during their second year and at the latest by the start of their third year of doctoral training, in order to provide them with continued support beyond the training grant.

For more information, contact:

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