South Carolina
Clinical & Translational
Research Institute

Frequently Asked Questions

SCTR College of Medicine Clinician Scientist K12 Program

What is the COM K12 scholars program?
The institutionally-funded COM K12 program provides mentored, protected research experiences to enhance the development and retention of early career physician scientist investigators. The program equips scholars with a supportive environment, start-up research funds, and access to program faculty to provide expertise and guidance in conducting a clinical/translational research project. The goal of the COM K12 program is to increase clinical/translational research capacity through the training of junior faculty to help drive research independence.

The COM K12 program provides protected time at 40% professional effort and scholars receive the same career development opportunities as those in the NIH-funded SCTR KL2 program.

What are the basic requirements to be a COM K12 scholar?
Eligible candidates are junior faculty in the College of Medicine with doctoral degrees who are committed to careers in clinical translational research. They must be starting a basic, translational and/or clinical research project that is based in clinical and translational science. If conducting preclinical research, candidates must demonstrate how their work is clinically relevant.

Candidates must have:
- A full-time faculty appointment (tenure or non-tenure track) in the MUSC College of Medicine at the time of formal acceptance as a scholar.
  - Senior fellows pending faculty appointment are eligible to apply.
- A clinical doctoral degree (MD or DO) or foreign equivalent, or dual degree (e.g. MD/PhD). Those with only PhDs are not eligible, even if they do clinical work.
- Junior faculty – anyone at the Instructor or Assistant Professor level who is within 10 years of having completed a postdoctoral specialty or subspecialty training based on the definition for NIH Early Stage Investigators (https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm).

Candidates must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals, or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence and possess a Permanent Resident Card (I-151 or I-551) or some other verification of legal admission as a permanent resident. Individuals from underrepresented groups, disadvantaged backgrounds, and/or with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Can I apply if I have applied for other NIH funding?
- Applicants who have previously served as the PD/PI on a NIH R03 or R21 grant or non-PHS equivalent are eligible to apply for the KL2 program.
- Applicants may apply if they have a pending application for another PHS mentored career development award (e.g. K07, K08, K23) as long as:
  - They have not received a formal Just-in-Time email for funding consideration
  - The other application is pulled from consideration if appointed to the KL2

Who is not eligible for the KL2 program?
- Individuals on temporary or student visas and/or those who:
- Applicants who:

- o have a formal Just-in-Time notification for: 1) any other PHS mentored career development award (e.g. K07, K08, K23) that duplicates the provisions of the K program, 2) an NIH institute-specific K22 award, or 3) a Pathway to Independence Award (K99/R00).
- o have been or are currently a PD/PI on an independent NIH research grant (e.g. R01); or a subproject leader on a Program Project (P01) or Center Grant (P50), or a non-PHS equivalent to these grants.

Special permission must be obtained for eligible faculty with Veterans Affairs (VA) appointments. Candidates with VA appointments must contact Diana Lee-Chavarria (leeachar@musc.edu) prior to applying.

What are the benefits of the COM K12 program?
The K12 program provides mentored career support for early career faculty as they progress into independent researchers.

Annual Research Funding
- **Salary support** at 40% full-time effort (subject to the NIH Salary Cap) plus fringe
  - Scholar's department/division is responsible for paying for salary costs of the cap, as well as the remaining 60% effort.
- **$20,000** in combined project funds to purchase research supplies and small equipment
  - $5,000 from the College of Medicine; department/division is required to provide $15,000
- **$1,000** towards travel funds to attend a relevant scientific conference

Research Support
- **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** guidance and mentorship
- **Guidance and quarterly updates** with COM K12 program leadership
- **Support to develop an extramural grant application** to fund research at the conclusion of the COM K12 funding
- **Access to SCTR consultation, services and staff**, including SUCCESS Center consults in research navigation, biostatistics, recruitment, REDCap, regulatory issues, grant budgets, and research opportunities and development

What is the length of appointment to the COM K12 program?
Appointment to the COM K12 program is for a period of 2 years (24 months) with the potential for a third year pending satisfactory progress and the submission of an extramural grant.

What are the program requirements for COM K12 scholars?
K12 scholars must devote a minimum of 40% full-time professional effort in this program for the training and clinical research activities. The 40% effort is based on the entire amount of time worked in a typical week and should be proportionate. The remaining 60% effort can be divided among other research, clinical and teaching activities if these activities are consistent with the proposed goals of the COM K12 program.

Scholars must also submit abstracts, journal articles, and publications annually to maintain evidence of scholarly productivity. Productivity and protected time will be reviewed quarterly at scholar progress meetings with the K program directors.

Other requirements:

- Participate in Mock Study Sections. Prior to grant submission candidates will participate in a mock study section coordinated by the Office of Research Development, in time to allow scholars to address issues identified during the process.
- Attend required courses: 1. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR), 2. K Scholars Grant Writing Course, 3. Clinical Biostatistics (if not already completed), 4. Research Methodology/Experimental Design, 5. (Re)Writing Science Seminars, and 6. Leadership Training
- Attend monthly K to Independence meetings. Scholars will present to this group at least annually and prior to an extramural grant submission. This is an opportunity to interact and learn from the experiences of all K Scholars on campus.
- Attendance at the SCTR Annual Mentorship Training Symposium.
- Submission of an abstract and attendance at relevant scientific conferences.
- Submission of an abstract and attendance at the MUSC Translational Research Day (annually).

K12 scholars are required to apply for an extramural grant no later than the end of Year 2. Considerations for a third year of funding are dependent upon scholarly progress, which includes this submission.

What is the program timeline for the first 2 years on the COM K12 program?
Since our goal is for Scholars to become independently funded by the end of their K12 award period (or earlier), we set out these general guidelines on when to complete core requirements:

Year 1	- Obtain all required regulatory approvals - Obtain NIH Prior Approval (through SCTR Business Office) - Complete SCTR Administrative Review - Required courses: 1) Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) 2) K Scholars Grant Writing Course 3) MCR-700 Clinical Biostatistics (or similar), unless previous training in clinical biostatistics has been completed 4) Formal training in Research Methodology/Experimental Design, e.g., CGS-770 Principles, Practices, and Professionalism; other courses subject to approval
Year 2	- Required didactics: 5) (Re) Writing Science Seminars 6) Leadership Training – options listed below: - AAMC – LEAD Certificate program: https://www.aamc.org/career-development/leadership-development/lead. - AAMC – Minority Faculty Leadership Development Seminar: https://www.aamc.org/career-development/leadership-development/minfac - MUSC Emerging Leaders Program: https://horseshoe.musc.edu/everyone/leadership-institute/leadership-programs/emerging-leaders-program - MUSC Advanced Leadership Program: https://horseshoe.musc.edu/everyone/leadership-institute/leadership-programs/advanced-leadership-program - Other activities subject to approval - Submit proposal for review to a K Scholar Mock Study Section - Submit an extramural grant (typically R01, K23, or other federal, state, foundation, or industry grant)

Years 1-2	• Present at the "K to Independence" (K to I) Club • Participate in Mock Study Sections • Complete one or more high quality publications that may form the basis of a grant application • Attend required annual meetings – Mentor Training Symposium and Translational Research Day • Attend relevant conference to present project

What are the expectations for mentors of COM K12 scholars?

Mentors are responsible for helping to develop the skills necessary to promote the independent research career of the scholar mentee. This includes setting aside protected time to meet with the mentee (typically weekly), ensuring that the protected time provided by the K12 (40%) is being met, and having a mutually agreed-upon set of expectations and goals in place at the outset of the mentoring period.

Scholars and mentors should work together before and during the K12 appointment to perform a career development needs assessment and develop a mutually agreed-upon set of expectations and goals, resulting in an Individual Development Plan (IDP). Both mentor and mentee should participate in training opportunities to enhance their skills, including the SCTR Annual Mentorship Training Symposium. The mentor/mentee relationship should be based on trust and mutual respect; open communication and periodic formal performance reviews with the K12 leadership team will help ensure that the expectations of both parties are being met.

COM K12 mentors will:
- Promote all ethical standards for conducting research, including compliance with all institutional and federal regulations as they relate to responsible conduct in research.
- Provide the mentee with the required guidance and mentoring, seeking the assistance of other faculty and departmental/institutional resources when necessary. Mentor must provide access to formal opportunities/programs in complementary areas necessary for a successful career.
- Encourage the interaction of the mentee with fellow scientists both intra- and extramurally and encourage the mentee's attendance at professional meetings to network and present research findings.
- Ensure that the research performed by a mentee is submitted for publication in a timely manner and that she/he receive appropriate credit for the work she/he performs. Mentor will acknowledge her/his contribution to the development of any intellectual property and will clearly define future access to tangible research materials according to institutional policy.
- Make available to the mentee, as appropriate, data from previous or ongoing projects that are related to the mentee's area(s) of interest and encourage the mentee to submit manuscripts for publication both during and after the award period. Mentor will ensure that mentee receives appropriate credit for the work she/he performs
- Play a fully involved role in the COM K12 program by participating in quarterly progress meetings, K to Independence (required when mentee is presenting), and the Mock Study Section.
- Be a supportive colleague to mentees as they transition into the next stage of their career and throughout their professional life.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the mentor to ensure that the scholar mentee has sufficient opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to become an expert in the agreed-upon area of investigation.

What are the expectations for a COM K12 scholar's department/division?
- Ensure that the protected time (40%) supported by this award is being met and used towards candidate's research efforts, training, and scholarly pursuits.
- Contribute $15,000 to the candidate's annual research supply budget (total research supply budget is $20,000).
- Pay any over-the-salary-cap costs as well as the remaining 60% effort.

How do I apply for the COM K12 program?

All applications will be submitted online using the InfoReady application portal. Before submitting an application, the candidate must get a Study ID from SPARCRequest**. Applicants have the *option* of submitting a Letter of Intent outlining their interest in applying to the program and proposed research project.

Detailed information about the application process and specific requirements can be found on the **"Application FAQs"** document on the COM K12 webpage.

**Please see this step-by-step video for detailed instructions on the steps to obtain a Study ID:
https://musc.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=19628ac0-4fad-4a5f-9fb8-ac330167142d

What if I have other questions?

Check the COM K12 program webpage (https://research.musc.edu/resources/sctr/funding-opportunities/clinician-scientist-scholars/k12-program) for additional information, instructions, and FAQs about the K12 program.

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