

2025 Presidential Fellowship in Collaborative Neuroscience

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Current second- and third-year graduate students, both domestic and international, proposing a project on any subject related to neuroscience are eligible. Each applicant should have at least two UVA faculty mentors.

Q: The project has previously received funding from the Brain Institute. Am I eligible to apply?

A: Projects that are currently receiving funding or have received funding within the past two years from the Brain Institute (through prior seed funding programs, trainee support, etc.) are not eligible.

Q: What is the fellowship's financial support and how can it be used?

A: The fellowship provides \$38,000 to each awardee. This funding may be used for living support (wages or stipend), tuition, fees, and/or health insurance and may be divided across these expenses dependent on mentor(s), department, and School needs/preferences. The awardee is guaranteed minimum living support of \$38,000 during their fellowship year, and the remaining expenses must be covered by a different source (e.g., the mentor(s), department, or School).

Q: How are applications reviewed?

A: Each application will have three reviewers who will score each category below (1-9, NIH-style) and provide a short summary of strengths and weaknesses:

- **Overall Impact:** Provide an overall impact score to reflect your assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.
- **Candidate's Preparedness & Potential:** Discuss the candidate's preparedness for the proposed research training plan. Consider the context, e.g., the candidate's stage of training and the opportunities available. Assess whether the candidate possesses qualities (such as scientific understanding, creativity, curiosity, resourcefulness, and drive) that will improve the likelihood of a successful research training outcome. Discuss whether the training plan described identifies areas of needed development and contains appropriate, realistic activities and milestones to address those needs.
- **Research Project:** Assess the rigor and feasibility of the research training project and how completion of the project will contribute to the development of the candidate as a research scientist. Significance: Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific premise for the project? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? Approach: Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented?
- **Collaboration:** Does the project require a collaborative approach? Are the mentors well-suited to the project? Does combination of mentors or disciplines enable studies that the student could not accomplish alone?

New for 2025, applications will be reviewed by an internal review panel from across neuroscience disciplines with approximately eight members, each of whom is an established graduate mentor and/or whose students have previously been awarded Presidential Fellowships in Collaborative Neuroscience fellowships. This review process is intended to promote more consistent reviews across applicants, in addition to enabling review panel discussion of any applications with varied scores.

2025 Presidential Fellowship in Collaborative Neuroscience

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are resubmissions permitted?

A: If the student still meets the eligibility criteria (see above), then they may apply to the 2025 opportunity; the project proposed may be the same as in previous years but is not required to be. The application for new and resubmitting applicants is the same and as described in the RFA. Reviewers will not see the previous application. Note that the application components have changed from previous cycles.

Q: Will applicants receive feedback?

A: All applicants will receive anonymized feedback from the review panel.

Q: What is the annual Presidential Fellows in Collaborative Neuroscience event?

A: This event occurs in the late Spring/early Summer and celebrates the successes of the outgoing cohort and welcomes the incoming cohort. Each member of the outgoing cohort gives a ~10-minute presentation on their research project. Fellows and their mentors are expected to attend the two events bookending the fellowship term. Other members of the UVA neuroscience community are invited to attend. In 2025, this event will be on May 30, 10am–noon, at the Corner Building (1400 University Ave.).

Q: International students are typically ineligible to apply for NIH fellowships. How can international students fulfill the requirement to apply for additional funding?

A: Candidates ineligible for NIH fellowships are encouraged to find fellowships or grants for which they are eligible (e.g., industry- or foundation-sponsored opportunities). The Office of Citizen Scholar Development maintains an [Awards Database](#), and UVA subscribes to [GrantForward](#), a searchable database with information on funding opportunities for all disciplines and project types. If there are no reasonable student-led opportunities, applicants may describe plans for development of mentor-led grant applications that will benefit the candidate.

Q: What should be included in the Candidate's Research Strategy/Project Description?

A: The Research Strategy/Project Description should be an organized description of your proposed project and the rationale for pursuing it. This document should include Scientific Premise, Approach, and a Timeline.

Scientific Premise should provide the context for the proposed research training project and include information on findings serving as the scientific foundation for the proposed project. This section should describe the rationale for the project, including unaddressed areas for research and why this area of research is interesting and important, and how achieving the proposed project goals will advance biomedical research in the candidate's chosen field. **Approach** should describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. This section should include the experimental design and methods proposed and how they will achieve robust and unbiased results and discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If in early stages, this section should include strategies to establish feasibility. The **Timeline** should include the planned activities relevant to the research project over the fellowship term. This can include coursework, professional development, mentoring, etc. if those activities are critical to the success of the project.

2025 Presidential Fellowship in Collaborative Neuroscience

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What should be addressed in the Candidate's Goals & Preparedness Statement?

A: The statement should be written by the candidate and describe both Overall Training Goals and Candidate's Preparedness. The **Overall Training Goals** should include training goals for proposed fellowship term and long-term goals for a career in the biomedical research workforce. Candidates should describe how the fellowship goals relate to the career goals and can include their motivation for pursuing a career in the biomedical research workforce. **Candidate's Preparedness** should include the educational, scientific, and professional experiences that prepare the candidate for the proposed project. This section can address how relevant activities and experiences contributed to the candidate's scientific development and preparation, including coursework, research experiences, conference attendance, internships, and employment.

Q: What should the *Prior Commitment to Training and Mentoring* section cover?

A: This section should demonstrate past commitment to effective training, mentoring, and career development. Describe the individualized training and mentoring offered for 2-5 recent PhD-level trainees. Describe the impacts of the individualized training and mentoring on each former trainee's scientific, educational, or career development. For early-stage mentors, examples may include informal training and mentoring activities conducted as a student or postdoctoral fellow. For this application, this section should be included within the Personal Statement of each mentor's biosketch.

Q: What should be included in the Jointly Written Recommendation Letter?

A: This letter should affirm that any candidate expenses not covered by the fellowship will be covered by a different source (e.g., the mentor(s), department, or School). In addition, this letter should provide (i) an overall assessment of the candidate's preparedness and (ii) likelihood for success in the proposed project and a productive career in the biomedical research workforce. This can include examples of personal characteristics (e.g., skills, abilities, traits, attitudes) and/or examples of scientific or intellectual contributions that are likely to contribute to success in the proposed project and beyond.

Q: What sections should the Joint Mentors Commitment Statement include?

A: This statement should include sections for the Mentoring Approach & Candidate Mentoring Plan and the Commitment to Candidate's Research Plan. The **Mentoring Approach & Candidate Mentoring Plan** should describe the mentoring approach and the specific mentoring plan for the candidate to ensure career advancement in the biomedical research workforce. The mentoring plan should be tailored to the overall training goals outlined by the candidate and go beyond simply providing access to research environments. Effective mentoring plans may include areas such as enhancing the candidate's understanding of scientific research, promoting the candidate's professional development, maintaining effective communication, aligning expectations, fostering independence, and promoting equitable, inclusive, and accessible training environments. The **Commitment to Candidate's Research Plan** should contain confirmation of the mentors' commitment to the candidate's research training. This plan should include a description of the frequency, duration, and nature of meetings with the candidate throughout the fellowship year and (optional) beyond.

Q: Why have the application components changed from previous years?

A: The application was updated to better align with the [NIH Fellowship Instructions \(SF424 \(R&R\) - Version I\)](#).