

NIGMS Undergraduate and Pre-Doctoral Diversity Programs RFI

Responses due by Oct 31, up to 500 words per topic.

- 1. The potential challenges and opportunities created by changing NIGMS R25 programs to NRSA training (T) grant activity codes, and strategies for overcoming any potential challenges.*
 - Advantages: Under NRSA training grant activity codes, funding will not only provide stipend support to undergraduate students (similar to salary support of current R25 programs) but could also be applied towards tuition.
 - Challenges: Distributing the funds under one unified T grant activity code might alter how funding is provided to specific projects and/or student populations. This might impact the allocation of financial resources to important initiatives.
- 2. The potential advantages or disadvantages of having a single, unified NIGMS-funded undergraduate or pre-doctoral diversity program vs. multiple NIGMS-funded diversity programs at a given institution.*
 - Advantages: Having a single, unified NIGMS-funded undergraduate or pre-doctoral diversity program could enable students at institutions that lack established research programs to enroll in a program at a nearby school.
 - Challenges: There is the possibility of intimidation associated with applying for research programs or awards on a larger scale that is more sizeable than the intimidation associated with applying for those provided by your school. The awards provided by the school may be tailored to allocate funding more effectively for the unique needs of the institution. Undergraduate institutions should be able to have multiple options for students to pursue at a smaller level.
- 3. Strategies that could be used to build effective intra- and inter-institutional networks that minimize unnecessary duplication, leverage existing resources, and create synergies to more efficiently and effectively promote the development of a well-trained and diverse biomedical research workforce.*
 - Strategies: Availability and visibility of these networks is crucial for institutions. This can be accomplished by harnessing existing systems of contacting and advertising to students, such as communication through a central individual (potentially a pre-med/ pre-graduate advisor) especially at institutions where there is not a large minority presence and these programs are not as well advertised. Both networking and funding opportunities should be advertised regularly to engage students. Another strategy could be through the use of mentorship programs within institutions with a diverse group of mentors advising potential applicants.
- 4. Any other comments or recommendations regarding NIGMS programs that support the training of students from UR groups.*
 - Outcome evaluations at regular intervals can maintain engagement at the student, faculty, and institutional levels. In addition, progress assessment can stimulate conversation at all three levels.
 - In a recent survey sent to APSA members, where 252 responders comprised primarily of MD/PhD students, but also included faculty and undergraduates,

“diversity of training class” was ranked the least important in the question that asked “Please rank the importance of the following [9 items] in your decision to pursue a particular training program (MD/PhD, DO/PhD, MD, DO, other) towards a career as a physician-scientist.” “Financial support during training” was ranked as the most important, followed closely by “integration of clinical and research experiences” and “success of previous trainees.” By providing support for undergraduate students to pay tuition, distributing the funds under one unified T grant activity code can increase the diversity of the physician-scientist trainee pool and workforce by decreasing the financial burden faced by prospective trainees.

- In the same survey (above), respondents were asked “Which of the following do you find to be the most deterring from pursuing a career as a physician-scientist,” and were given 10 options. Out of the 250 who responded to this question, 2% chose “lack of diversity.” Out of the 28 Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino respondents, 11% chose “lack of diversity” as the most deterring from pursuing a career as a physician scientist. This suggests that the lack of diversity in the physician-scientist trainee pool and workforce can be deterring for prospective trainees. Mentorship programs, increased research opportunities for undergraduates, and increased funding could motivate diverse groups to pursue physician-scientist training. Close to 50% of respondents to this survey said that they began research between the ages of 18-21, suggesting that undergraduate research training is associated with pursuing a career as a physician scientist. Diversity in faculty advisers in addition to financial resources can promote the early immersion in research associated with physician-scientist training.

https://www.research.net/r/UPT_Diversity_Programs