

Rheumatology Future Physician Scientist Award

The mission of the Rheumatology Research Foundation is to advance research and training to improve the health of people with rheumatic diseases.

Award purpose: The purpose of this pre-doctoral scholar award is to enhance the research training of promising students who are enrolled in a MD or DO training program, including individuals enrolled in combined degree programs (e.g., MD/PhD, DO/PhD program, MD/MPH, DO/MPH or equivalent) and who intend careers as physician-scientists. This grant mechanism aims to support the nation’s top emerging physician scientists and promote their interest in investigative careers in rheumatology. This award will support research projects in scientific health-related fields relevant to the mission of the Rheumatology Research Foundation. The research training experience is expected to tangibly enhance the individuals’ potential to develop into a productive, independent physician-scientist in the field of rheumatology.

Award Duration: 1 year with option for competitive renewal for 1 additional year

Award Amount: Up to \$30,000 per year in direct costs

All applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET on the deadline day at [Proposal Central](#).

Application Open
October 1, 2025
Application Deadline
December 1, 2025
Notification
February 16, 2026
Award Term Begins
July 1, 2026

Eligibility

All award recipients must abide by Foundation [Awards and Grants Policies](#) at all times.

Eligibility

The Foundation encourages applications from MD, DO, MD/PhD or DO/PhD combined program, or MD/MPH or DO/MPH students (or equivalent) prior to or early in the research training phase so that they can substantively benefit from the mentored research training opportunities.

- The applicant must meet all eligibility requirements as outlined in the [Awards and Grants Policies](#).
- The applicant must have a baccalaureate degree and show evidence of high academic performance in the sciences and commitment to a career as an independent physician-scientist. Applicants should demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing a career in rheumatology research.
- This program is specifically designed to support an individual enrolled (or taking a leave of absence to conduct research) in a health professional doctoral degree (MD, DO) program that would make the awardee eligible for future training as a rheumatologist. Thus, the applicant must be enrolled in an MD or DO program and plan to devote protected time for research training for a period of no less than 1 year (i.e., 1-2 years off for research during medical school, completion of dual degree [MD/PhD, DO/PhD, MD/MPH or DO/MPH, etc.]). The entirety of the award period must be devoted to full-time research. This award will not support full-time clinical training. MD/DO program-required preceptorships during research training are allowed as long as >75% of time is spent on the proposed research project.
- The applicant must have identified a research project and a primary mentor. The primary mentor must be a faculty member actively engaged in basic, translational, clinical, or health services research with a strong record of peer-reviewed research relevant to rheumatology, musculoskeletal biology, or immunology. If the mentor is not a rheumatologist, please provide a written statement of their proximity related to the field.
- The primary mentor must be a member of the [American College of Rheumatology](#) (ACR) or the [Association of Rheumatology Professionals](#) (ARP) at the time of the application and for the duration of the award. Once awarded, the applicant will be expected to become a member of the ACR. Student memberships are free of charge and can be obtained [online](#).

If you have questions about your eligibility, please inquire by email to foundation@rheumatology.org or 404-365-1373 before preparing your application.

Review Criteria

Each application will be reviewed on the following criteria:

- Aptitude and potential for success of the candidate as a researcher
- Commitment to a career in rheumatology
- Scientific merit of the research training plan
- Quality of the mentor and research environment

Award Terms & Funding

The award will be paid directly to the sponsoring institution and will be disbursed in two equal installments each award year. Up to \$30,000 per year may be allocated towards student stipend, tuition fees, travel to scientific meetings (most notably ACR convergence), and relevant research expenses (e.g. animal costs, patient samples, reagents, computer hardware or software). The total amount of the award will be a maximum of \$30,000 per year. Financial support will be provided as outlined below.

	Year 1	Year 2 <i>(Based on competitive renewal)</i>
Payment 1	July 2026 Up to \$15,000	July 2027 Up to \$15,000
Payment 2	January 2027 Up to \$15,000	January 2028 Up to \$15,000

Additional Award Terms:

- Recipients of this award must remain in good academic standing and be pursuing their training on a full-time basis throughout the duration of the award funding.
- Recipients must have a primary mentor who is engaged in rheumatology-related research (see above). The primary mentor must be a faculty member actively engaged in basic or translational research with a strong record of peer-reviewed research relevant to rheumatology and a fellow member of the ACR or ARP. If the mentor's work is not directly rheumatology-related research; please write a statement of proximity/relation of their work to the field.
- Recipients are expected to attend the American College of Rheumatology's (ACR) Rheumatology Research Workshop and/or [ACR Convergence](#) and submit an abstract in the first or second year of the award.
- The recipient must provide the Foundation with a progress report identifying accomplishments towards the aims of the proposal in the first year. Request for competitive renewal for an additional 1 year of funding will be included in the year 1 progress report for review by the Scientific Advisory Council. Applications for renewal will be reviewed based primarily on training and research progress made during the initial funding period. Failure to submit required reports by the deadline may result in institutional penalties, including funding delays and/or grant cancellation.
- At the close of the award term, the recipient must provide the Foundation with a final report describing completion of deliverables accompanied by a final financial reconciliation.
- The award must be relinquished if overlapping funding is obtained during the award period such as an NIH Individual Research Fellowship (e.g., F30 award or similar) or appointment to an institutional training grant (e.g., T32 grant or similar).

Application Instructions

Before starting the online application, you will be required to create a Professional Profile in ProposalCentral, if you have not already. To do so, visit [this link](#) to begin creating your account.

All files must be saved as a PDF. Documents that do not have a required template should be formatted with at least ½ inch margins, 11-point Arial Font, and single-spacing (does not apply to figures and tables). All applications and documents must be written in English and avoid use of jargon. If terms are not universally known, spell out the term the first time it is used and note the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. The acronym may be used thereafter.

Note: The Foundation does not require an official signature from an authorized institutional research office at the time of application. However, many institutions require an application to be reviewed prior to submission. Please check with your research office for your institution's requirements.

Applicant

You will be asked to confirm your eligibility and provide contact information in this section. In addition to the applicant information requested above, you will be asked to upload the following document:

Applicant Biosketch in NIH Format

Limit to 5 pages; should include any pending support and follow NIH guidelines. Download the NIH format Biographical Sketch template by clicking [here](#). Biosketches formatted in SciENcv will also be accepted.

Mentors

The applicant must identify a primary mentor who will supervise the proposed mentored research. The primary mentor should ideally be a rheumatologist or rheumatology professional specializing in the area of the proposed research training and be committed both to the applicant's research training and to direct supervision of his/her research. This individual would be required to meet regularly with the applicant during the tenure of the award.

You will be asked to upload your mentor's biographical sketch ([NIH format](#), five-page limit) in this section. An applicant may have more than one mentor; however, the primary mentor must be a faculty member actively engaged in basic or translational research with a strong record of peer-reviewed research relevant to rheumatology and a fellow member of the ACR or ARP. Applicants with more than two mentors (e.g., a mentoring team) need only to identify the primary and secondary mentors. Additional mentors may be listed in the application, but biosketches are not required for these individuals.

Mentor(s) Biosketch in NIH Format

Limit to 5 pages per biosketch; should include any pending support and follow NIH guidelines. Download the NIH format Biographical Sketch template by clicking [here](#). Biosketches formatted from ScienCv will also be accepted.

Budget & Justification

Applications must include an itemized budget indicating the expected amount to be allocated towards student stipend, tuition fees, travel to scientific meetings (most notably ACR convergence), and relevant research expenses (e.g. animal costs, patient samples, reagents, computer hardware or software).

Required Documents

Please ensure that the proposal includes the following information:

Project Proposal (Limit 5 Pages)

- Description of the applicant's current and future research interests
- Experimental hypothesis
- Specific aims of the proposed project and address how each aim will be accomplished during the project period
- Study design
- Description of the research environment
- Description of how the proposed project relates to applicant's ultimate career goals

Mentor's Statement (Limit 2 pages)

The primary mentor must provide a statement of support including the following (as applicable):

- Details of their previous experience as a mentor
- Description of how they will provide mentoring to the applicant and promote rheumatology as a career
- The roles of any additional mentors mentioned in the application
- Agreement to participate in the project and confirmation regarding availability of time to commit to the project and resources to support the project
- Features of the applicant's training program that are relevant to the success of the applicant and proposed project (should include required courses, available seminars, oversight and monitoring by the program, financial resources, teaching and clinical requirements, qualifying exams, etc.).
- Features of the institutional environment that are relevant to the success of the applicant and proposed project
- Description of applicant's qualifications and track record of productivity

Program Director's Statement (Limit 1 page)

The Program Director, Department Chair, or Division Director must provide a statement of support confirming the status of the applicant (i.e., student in a specific program, on leave from medical school, etc.) and their time to commit to the project.