

2027-2029 K12 Mentored Career Development Award: Request for Applications

Letter of Intent Deadline: Monday, October 26, 2026 / 5pm EST

Application Deadline: Monday, December 7, 2026 / 5pm EST

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Overview

The CTSI K12 Mentored Career Development Award (formerly KL2) offered through Wake Forest University School of Medicine provides two years of support for early-career faculty involved in translational research to expand their skills and competencies under the guidance of an experienced, multi-disciplinary mentoring team, within the context of a learning healthcare system and rapidly evolving academic research environment.

CTSI K12 Research Scholars will receive:

- 75% salary support for two years*
- up to \$25,000/year to support educational and research needs
- an Individual Development Plan
- a multi-disciplinary mentoring team
- priority access to CTSI resources including biostatistical and research design support, study coordinator support, and research navigators.



K12 Scholars will become members of the CTSI [Translational Research Academy](#) and actively participate in its ongoing and diverse educational, networking, and mentoring opportunities. K12 Scholars will also become members of the K12 Peer-Mentoring Group that meets once a month.

Award Date

The K12 Award will begin on **July 1, 2027**, and end on **June 30, 2029**, and are dependent on accurate and timely submission of supplemental documents required by NIH (at least 30 days prior to start date of the K12 Award). We expect to fund up to three K12 Research Scholars from the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in the Winston-Salem, Charlotte, or Midwest markets.

* Per NIH guidelines, up to \$120,000 in salary support is allowed per year for each scholar. Fringe is not included in the \$120,000 cap. A scholar can have a base salary up to \$160,000 with 75% effort allocated to the grant and still stay within the \$120,000 cap (\$160,000 x 75% = \$120,000). If the base salary is over \$160,000 then the portion that exceeds the \$120,000 salary support will be cost-shared to the scholar's department.

K12 Information Sessions

Learn more about the K12 program, the application process, and ask questions at one of the K12 Information Sessions hosted virtually by K12 Program Director, Dr. Nichole Allred, and K12 Program Co-Director, Dr. Deepak Palakshappa. The virtual meetings will be on **Tuesday, September 1, 2026**, from **4-5pm** and **Tuesday, September 22, 2026**, from **12-1pm**. If you are interested in attending one of these meetings, please register here <https://redcap.link/2027K12infosession> to receive a calendar invite.

Eligibility

K12 awards support mentored research career development for investigators who have recently completed professional training and who are commencing basic, translational, and/or clinical research.

- Applicants must be U.S. citizens, noncitizen nationals, or legal permanent U.S. residents.
- Applicants must have a research or health professional doctoral degree (e.g., MD, PhD, DO, DVM) or equivalent.
- Applicants should be early career faculty (Instructor/Assistant Professor level) with a faculty appointment at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in the Winston-Salem, Charlotte, or Midwest markets.
- Applicants must be able to commit to 75% effort for 2 years of research training. K12 Scholars in surgical specialties may have less than 75% of full-time professional effort, but not less than 50%, protected time for this program, if sufficiently justified and programmatically approved.
- Clinical faculty from all health professions (nursing, pharmacy, veterinary medicine) are encouraged to apply.
- Women and underrepresented minorities are encouraged to apply.
- At the time of their appointment, scholars must be on the Tenure Track or on the Non-tenure Track and include Investigation and Inquiry as one of their Areas of Distinction.
- At the time of their appointment, scholars cannot be classified as contingent faculty.
- At the time of their appointments, a scholar must not have a pending application for any other mentored career development award (e.g., K07, K08, K22, K23, K99) that duplicates any of the K12 provisions. However, scholars who successfully secured a K12 award are encouraged to apply for another K or R award as early as immediately after being reappointed for their second year of the K12.
- Appointed scholars are encouraged to apply for individual mentored K awards (e.g., K07, K08, K22, K23) and independent awards (e.g., R01, R03, R15, R21, R34, or equivalent application from another Federal agency); if successful, scholars may be required to reduce effort on the mentored career award to a minimum of six-person months and hold concurrent support from their mentored career award and a competing PHS research grant on which they are the PD/PI or component lead or terminate the K12 appointment depending on Program requirements (See NOT-OD-08-065).
- Former or current PDs/PIs on any major NIH research project grant (does not include smaller NIH research grants and awards) or equivalent non-PHS peer reviewed grants or project leaders on sub-projects of program project (P01) or center grants (P50) are NOT eligible to participate as scholars.

For questions on eligibility, please contact CTSI Director of Education Programs, Susie Newcomb at Susan.Newcomb@advocatehealth.org.

Expectations

CTSI K12 Scholars must commit **a minimum of 75% of full-time professional effort to their research and educational program for at least two years**. K12 Scholars in surgical specialties may have less than 75% of full-time professional effort, but not less than 50%, protected time for this program, if sufficiently justified and programmatically approved.

K12 Scholars will become members of the CTSI [Translational Research Academy](#), a 2-year program of formal and informal educational opportunities, networking, mentoring, and research support designed to promote the careers of promising, early-career clinical and translational researchers. Scholars will develop competencies in general research skills, academic career development, and scientific leadership. Education opportunities of special importance to the learning healthcare system will be provided in areas such as team science, innovation, entrepreneurship, biomedical informatics, and implementation and dissemination science. The 90-min long sessions are held virtually twice monthly on Tuesday afternoons. The TRA Fall Kickoff, CTSI Research Scholar Showcase, and TRA Graduation are in-person events held in Winston-Salem.

K12 Scholars will attend the virtual K12 Peer-Mentoring Group that meets once a month. K12 Scholars will participate in the annual CTSI Research Scholar Showcase, held annually each spring.

A full mentoring committee meeting is required every 6 months. Continued progress in meeting pre-defined research and educational goals must be demonstrated. The K12 Scholar's Individual Development Plan (IDP) must be updated and sent to the mentoring committee prior to each meeting and updated again after each meeting to include goals for the next 6 months

Departments of K12 applicants must agree to support dedicated research effort in the year following CTSI K12 support. K12 Scholars in the Winston-Salem market are eligible for the [Early Career Faculty Salary Support Program](#) following the K12 award. K12 Scholars are expected to submit applications for externally funded grants at the beginning of their second year to support their research and further career development following the K12. In accordance with NCATS requirements, the academic productivity of K12 Scholars will be tracked for a period of 15 years.

This is an institutional career development award granted to Wake Forest University Health Sciences and is non-transferable. Scholars who leave the institution will not continue to receive K12 funding from this grant. **No K12 funds can be carried over from year 1 to year 2 of the award.** Each year of funding is contingent upon satisfactory participation in the CTSI K12 activities and progress toward the Scholar's individual career goals, and continued support from the Scholar's mentors and department.

NIH Definition of Clinical and Translational Science

The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) strives to develop innovations to reduce, remove, or bypass costly and time-consuming bottlenecks in the translational research pipeline in an effort to speed the delivery of new drugs, diagnostics, and medical devices to patients. Translation is the process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic, and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and the public — from diagnostics and therapeutics to medical procedures and behavioral changes. Translational science is the field of investigation focused on understanding the scientific and operational principles underlying each step of the translational process. NCATS studies translation on a system-wide level as a scientific and operational problem. The NCATS approach is not to focus on specific diseases, but on what is common among them and the translational science process. NCATS does this by developing new approaches, technologies, resources, and models; demonstrating their usefulness; and disseminating the data, analysis, and methodologies to the community.

<https://ncats.nih.gov/translation>

Letter of Intent

All prospective applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) form prior to the submission of their full K12 application. The LOI form will require the following:

- Your name, credentials, academic title, department, email address, and telephone number
- Title of proposed K12 research project
- A 3-5 sentence summary of your proposed research project
- Primary mentor's name, credentials, academic title, and department
- Name, credentials, academic title, and department of your mentoring team members

The LOI must be submitted through REDCap no later than **October 26, 2026, at 5pm** EST using the following link: <https://redcap.link/2027K12LOI>. The LOI is used to identify reviewers needed for the full application. The LOI is non-binding, is not scored, and is not shared with reviewers.

You will receive a confirmation email that the LOI was received. If necessary, feedback will be provided regarding eligibility by **November 2, 2026**. However, all applicants are encouraged to read through this entire RFA to determine their eligibility for the K12 and should read through the [K12 Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Application Requirements



Failure to adhere to application guidelines may result in the application being disqualified.

1. Cover Page

The cover page should include: the title of the proposed K12 research project, applicant's name, credentials, academic title, and department along with the name, credentials, academic title, and department of each mentor.

2. Abstract (30 line limit)

The abstract is a concise summary of your proposal that highlights the significance, the hypothesis, and major objectives of the project, the procedures to accomplish the objectives, and the potential impact of the work.

3. Response to Prior Critiques (1 page limit, for resubmissions only)

If you are resubmitting a previously submitted K12 application, a 1-page response to prior critiques can be included here (recommended).

4. Background and Career Goals (1 page limit)

Provide details on the applicant's educational and professional background and future career goals.

5. Educational Plan (3 pages limit)

Describe proposed educational activities and discuss how these will facilitate the conduct of the proposed research and the development of desired research, leadership, and career development competencies. Options can include, but are not limited to, formal degree programs, selected graduate courses, experiential internships, short courses, conferences, online courses, and self-study.

Applicants who do not hold a research degree are strongly encouraged to enroll in a formal program. Applicants who are not selecting participation in a formal degree program should justify the merits of the

proposed educational plan in lieu of the research degree, and their training should be described in the K12 application.

The Educational Plan should be formulated to enhance the Scholar's competencies in the following domains:

- Critical thinking and research question formulation
- Biostatistics and study design
- Responsible conduct of research and regulatory environment
- Research implementation
- Scientific communication
- Proposal preparation
- Community engagement and cultural diversity
- Biomedical informatics
- Team science and team leadership
- Research in the Learning Health System context

Details and application deadlines for two Wake Forest University School of Medicine degree programs focused on translational research:

- [Translational and Health System Science](#)
- [Molecular Medicine and Translational Science](#)

6. Research Plan (5 pages limit)

The Research Plan should summarize the clinical or translational research project to be conducted. This project should address a problem of compelling clinical or translational relevance, ideally from a multidisciplinary perspective. The Research Plan should include:

- **Specific Aims**
- **Background and Rationale** – including significance of the problem to be studied
- **Approach**
- Identification of a **Primary Mentor** (or mentors) and his/her role(s) in the project
- **Specific Plans** to extend the proposed work via external funding

7. Overall Timeline (1 page limit)

Timeline should include education, training, and research.

8. CV for the Applicant

Applicant's current CV.

9. NIH Biosketch for the Applicant

Applicant's NIH Biosketch created using the new [SciENCv system](#).

10. NIH Biosketches for all Mentors

Mentors' Biosketches should be created using the new [SciENCv system](#). Combine all mentors' biosketches into one PDF with the primary mentor's biosketch first. Do not include Biosketches from consultants.

11. Letters of Support from all Mentors

Letters should delineate prior experience in research mentoring, commitment to the mentee as well as the outlined mentee career development goals, endorsement of the proposed educational plan, and commitment to meet K12 mentor expectations (including participation in bi-annual mentoring committee meetings). Combine all mentor letters into one PDF with the primary mentor's letter first. Do not include letters of support from consultants.

The primary mentor's letter, in particular, should convey commitment to providing independent research funding sufficient to support the mentee with specialized resources and the environment necessary to complete the proposed project and the following:

- Work in the mentee's long-term interest
- Meet frequently (at least every other week)
- Serve as an internal advocate
- Help mentee network outside of Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Atrium Health, and Advocate Health
- Provide resources to ensure project success
- Critically review mentee's scholarship
- Participate in K12 Mentoring Committee meetings
- Participate in mentor development activities

12. Letter of Support from applicant's Department Chair (or Section Head if applicable)

This letter should be from the applicant's Department Chair or Section Head. It must agree to protect 75% of the applicant's time, if the grant is awarded. For applicants with a base salary greater than \$160,000, the Letter of Support should confirm the department's agreement to cost-share any portion of the applicant's salary that exceeds the \$120,000 annual cap of the K12 award.

Additionally, the letter should indicate a commitment to provide adequate protected research time in the third year for the Scholar to continue their research effort. Under current Wake Forest University School of Medicine policies, K12 scholars in the Winston-Salem market only are eligible for [Early Career Faculty Salary Support](#) in the third year if they have at least 25% of their research time covered by extramural grants.

13. Budget

The budget must request funding for each year of support. Use the budget template that was attached to the LOI confirmation email. Include your full salary (not NIH cap) and latest faculty fringe rate (currently 18.5% for Wake Forest Winston-Salem faculty, 17% for Atrium Health Charlotte faculty, 22.9% for Midwest faculty.)

Prepare a budget that reflects salary support for 75% effort (plus fringe benefits) for the Scholar. Surgical specialties may have less than 75% of full-time professional effort, but not less than 50% protected time for this program, if sufficiently justified and programmatically approved.

A scholar can have a base salary up to \$160,000 with 75% effort allocated to the grant and still stay within the \$120,000 cap ($\$160,000 \times 75\% = \$120,000$). If the base salary is over \$160,000 then the portion that exceeds the \$120,000 salary support will be cost-shared to the scholar's department.

Other Direct Costs: The K12 budget may include funds to support the scholar's research projects and career development activities. Applicants may request a maximum of \$25,000/year to cover the following expenses: (a) tuition and fees related to career development; (b) research expenses such as supplies, equipment, and technical personnel to supplement those provided by the mentor; (c) up to \$2,500 per year for scholar travel to scientific meetings and research training workshops; and (d) statistical services. Salary support for mentors excluding laboratory- or research-related expenses is not an allowable budget item.

14. Budget Justification

Provide a justification for all requested budget items including justification for effort less than 75%.

15. References

Scientific research papers and peer-reviewed presentations relevant to your research proposal, that you need to cite as references. These citations do not count against page limits.



All files must be uploaded as a PDF, except for the Excel budget spreadsheet. Failure to adhere to application guidelines may result in the application being disqualified.

The following required documents should be 11pt Arial font with half inch margins.

1. Cover Page
2. Abstract
3. Response to Prior Critiques (if applicable)
4. Background and Career Goals
5. Education Plan
6. Research Plan
14. Budget Justification
15. References

Other Required Documents if Selected for the K12 Award

Candidates who are selected for the K12 Award will be required to submit supplemental documents required by NCATS prior to the start date of the K12 Award. These include:

- IRB or IACUC protocol for the proposed research project (approval can be pending)
 - Informed Consent document, if applicable
 - Human Subjects section, if applicable
 - Clinical Trial information, as indicated (Investigator's Brochure, package insert, IND or IDE documentation, IND exemption, or IDE waiver)
 - Inclusion Plan for Women, Minorities, and Children, if applicable
 - Targeted Enrollment Table or Inclusion Data Record, if applicable
 - Data and Safety Monitoring Plan (DSMP) and Board (DSMB), if applicable
 - Date of most recent CITI certification and other education in the protection of human subjects for applicant and primary mentor.
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K12 Application Deadline

LOI deadline is October 26, 2026, at 5:00 pm EST

The LOI must be submitted through REDCap using this link: <https://redcap.link/2027K12LOI>

K12 application deadline is December 7, 2026, at 5:00 pm EST

Applications must be submitted through REDCap using the link received after submitting your LOI.

Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be screened for eligibility by K12 Director, Nichole Allred, PhD, K12 Co-Director, Deepak Palakshappa, MD, MSHP, and CTSI Director of Education Programs, Susie Newcomb, MA, PhD. Eligible applications will receive three reviews by Wake Forest University School of Medicine faculty.

Applicants will be evaluated on:

- Past academic performance and research productivity
- Scientific merit, feasibility, and clinical/translational impact of the proposed project
- Potential of the project to lead to successful extramural grant applications
- Educational plan
- Strength and commitment of the proposed mentoring team
- Commitment of the department to the scholarly and professional development of the applicant

Applicants will be scored according to the 9-point NIH scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor)

Applicant Notification

All applicants will be notified of their application status by **February 1, 2027**. Top candidates will receive an external review and be invited to present an in-person, 10 minute “chalk talk” to the K12 Core Faculty and CTSI Executive Council members on **Thursday, April 8, 2027** between **1-5pm**. Presenters will have 10 minutes to discuss their research plan, expected results, and envisioned future directions, followed by 10 minutes Q&A with the committee. The final selection decision will be made by K12 Core Faculty and finalists will be notified by **April 15, 2027**.

Applicant Resources

All applicants are strongly encouraged to read through the [K12 Frequently Asked Questions](#) web page. For any other questions you may have, please contact CTSI Director of Education Programs, Susie Newcomb at Susan.Newcomb@advocatehealth.org.

Learn more about the [CTSI Scientific Editing Services](#). To request grant writing and editing assistance, please complete the [CTSI Service Request Form](#). Requests for biostatistical consultation or grant editing assistance must be submitted no later than **October 26, 2026**, preferably at an earlier date, to allow time for feedback.
