Duke Specialized Program in Research Excellence (SPORE) in Brain Cancer

Career Enhancement Program

Request for Applications

The NCI-funded SPORE in Brain Cancer at Duke University is requesting applications for pilot projects from promising new and early stage investigators with translational potential for funding through the SPORE Career Enhancement Program (CEP).

Purpose

The CEP of the Duke University SPORE in Brain Cancer supports promising individual or collaborative pilot research projects that have a translational potential and are likely to generate new knowledge with a high probability to impact the diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention of adult and/or pediatric brain tumors. In accordance with NIH provisions, all funded CEP projects that have strong translational potential may become full projects in the SPORE. Although both clinical and laboratory research projects are eligible for funding, the translational emphasis of the program requires that the hypotheses in all projects have the potential to impact the incidence and mortality of brain cancer or improve the quality of life for brain cancer patients. These projects, however, do not have to reach a human endpoint during the project period. The resources of the Duke SPORE in Brain Cancer, including the SPORE Biospecimen, Pathology, and Immune Monitoring Core, are available to all investigators and those interested in utilizing these resources should consult with the appropriate Core leaders. Innovative projects are encouraged. We particularly wish to encourage women and minority investigators, investigators from minority and other area institutions, as well as individuals who have not previously worked in the brain tumor field to apply. Applications for scientific teams and scientists exploring new areas of investigation are encouraged. Duke is an equal-opportunity employer, and we value diversity in all of its many facets and meanings. Applications from all genders, ethnicities, and races are strongly encouraged.

Eligibility*

This program typically supports junior faculty or established investigators who wish to further develop or refocus their careers on translational research in brain cancer. This program does not support pre- or post-doctoral fellows, either pre-clinical or clinical. However, advanced post-doctoral or clinical fellows who provide a letter from an institution stating that the candidate will be joining its faculty within the year are eligible for this program. Investigators supported by NCI career development awards (K series) may also be eligible for support through this program. An applicant should not have previously received funding through the Duke Brain SPORE CDP and/or CEP.

* We are also offering SPORE Developmental Research Program (DRP) grant awards. The DRP typically supports promising individual or collaborative pilot research projects that have a translational potential and are likely to generate new knowledge with a high probability to impact the diagnosis, treatment and/or prevention of adult and/or pediatric brain tumors. Faculty (or equivalent position at Duke University or at their institutions, universities or research organizations) who have innovative projects are encouraged to apply. Please see the DRP RFA and apply for that award if it is more applicable.

Application Process

The CEP project application process will occur in two stages.

Stage 1: In response to this announcement, interested investigators will submit a 1-2 page summary for each proposed project. References are not included in the page count. The summary should be written like an expanded Specific Aims page for a grant. The summary should include a brief statement of significance of the problem being addressed (not that all brain tumors have a poor prognosis), a background, hypothesis and specific aims, brief outline of research approach, 1-2 figures showing preliminary data (if available), and a brief statement of the brain tumor relevance and translational potential of the proposed research. An NIH biosketch of the principal investigator(s) should also be included. Up to 5 meritorious applications will be selected to proceed to Stage 2. All projects selected for full submission will need to undergo a full statistical review by
Stage 2: Applications that are deemed to have met the criteria of the SPORE CEP and are meritorious enough to be competitive will be invited to give a brief presentation and submit a full application. A complete application should be made on the NIH PHS398 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html), should follow the NIH R21 format, and should include: a Face page, a detailed NIH budget** for two years with budget justification, an Abstract of the project (no narrative needed), Biographical sketches of Principal Investigator and other key personnel, a Specific Aims page, and a Research Strategy. The Research Strategy should be a maximum of 6 pages, including the specific aims, but excluding references, and should have the following components:

- **Significance**: Explain the importance of the problem or the critical barrier to progress in translational cancer research that the proposed project addresses.
- **Innovation**: Explain how the project challenges and seeks to shift current translational research or clinical practice paradigms.
- **Investigator(s)**: Describe the qualifications of the project leader and his/her prior involvement in brain tumor research and the qualifications of any co-investigators.
- **Approach**: Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

** Please note, if you are a Duke faculty or staff member, there are no indirects. Preliminary data can be included at any appropriate place in the Research Strategy. Standard NIH sections on Resources, Human Subjects (including the Inclusion of Women and Minorities and Children consistent with institutional and NIH provisions) and Vertebrate Animals will also be required if applicable.

Final Selection Process

Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two reviewers using the criteria of Significance, Innovation, Investigators, Environment, and Approach, as defined in the NIH-style review system, and a preliminary score will be rendered using the 1-9 scale. Each application will then be discussed by the Oversight Committee. Additional criteria that will be considered include the following:

- Compatibility with the goals and objectives of the Duke SPORE in Brain Cancer, other Duke SPORES, and the DCI.
- Potential for translation within a five-year period.
- Potential for development into a full SPORE project or into an independently funded project such as an R01.

Funding

Funding decisions will be made by mid-August, and communicated directly to the Principal Investigator. Successful pilot projects will be funded September 1, 2015 - August 31, 2016, at a maximum of $100,000 per year, renewable for a second year.

Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animals

All necessary IACUC, IRB, and any other institutional approvals will be required to be on file prior to an award. Therefore, given the short, one-/two-year term of this award, applicants are encouraged to ensure that these approvals are sought after in a timely fashion, e.g., at the time of the application. This will expedite award distribution and start of the project.

Application Deadline

The Stage 1 deadline for all applications is by noon on June 15, 2015. Late applications will not be accepted. All applications will be submitted electronically to Kendra Congdon, Ph.D., Scientific Program Administrator, at kendra.congdon@duke.edu.

Notice of Award and Award Management

The project application, review and award process will be completed within approximately three months of the announcement. Award notification will be made by written communication from the Principal Investigator of the SPORE in Brain Cancer. The SPORE administrative office, working with the CEP leadership, will handle all matters related to the administration of the award.