D.4. MENTORED CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (KL2)

D.4.1. SPECIFIC AIMS

Our CTSA career development program (KL2) will train a diverse group of scholars in state-of-the-art clinical and translational research methods. We will provide skilled and personalized mentoring, and we will create a community of scholars in which to develop collaborations across our Integrated Home. We expect our scholars to complete the KL2 program equipped and inspired to become independent investigators, making contributions across the entire spectrum of clinical and translational research.

Duke has an extensive foundation of established investigators to serve as mentors and mature infrastructure for providing substantial education, training and career development opportunities. In Section D.1, we defined a new vision for clinical and translational research education at Duke that builds on our strengths and focuses on core competencies, team science, customized lifelong learning, mentoring, and the use of technology to streamline research. We will build on this foundation through a CTSA-sponsored 3-year career development award that will exemplify training for the future of clinical and translational scientist.

In addition to directly supporting trainees, we will use CTSA resources to expand access to the programs we develop for CTSA trainees to facilitate the success of junior faculty across our Integrated Academic Home for clinical and translational research. In so doing, we will create a Community of Scholars: a cadre of successful clinical and translational researchers linked by common experiences in training and faculty development.

In designing the KL2, we are struck by the fact that in spite of Duke’s commitment to developing clinical and translational investigators, the number of faculty researchers at Duke from underrepresented minority (URM) backgrounds remains low. Increasing diversity within the Duke faculty is an important institutional goal for a number of reasons. First, racial/ethnic/cultural differences affect risk of disease and response to treatment, and understanding and incorporating these differences in health care is paramount to achieving improved patient outcomes. Furthermore, to inform and address the health challenges of a diverse population, it is necessary for the workforce to both reflect that diversity and to have the appropriate knowledge and skills. The knowledge and skills necessary are broad, but the workforce must be capable of conducting the full spectrum of T1 to T4 research, from translating laboratory discoveries into new therapies, to the study of genetic and molecular mechanisms that explain disease or treatment phenomena, to testing strategies for improving health care delivery to work toward elimination of health disparities and improvements in minority health.

Although our KL2 will not restrict the race/ethnicity of its scholars or the focus of their research, we will use this opportunity to enhance both our institution’s focus on diversity in the scientific workforce (at least 50% of awardees will be URM) and our ability to advance disparities/minority health research. Duke is also committed to inclusion of individuals with disabilities. However, to provide an appropriate scope and to build on existing strengths and relationships, our initial targeted recruitment effort will be with URM candidates.

We propose the following specific aims for the KL2 program:

**Aim 1: Support a 3-year mentored career development award to 3-4 junior faculty/year, targeting URM.** We will develop scholars who will have the experience and capabilities needed for a successful long-term research careers.
Aim 2: Compile and provide a core curriculum for the KL2 scholars. The core curriculum will include tailored training in research methods, career development, ethical conduct of research, and health disparities research. This program will be expanded in years 3-5 to create a “Community of Scholars” of all Duke institutional K award trainees.

Aim 3: Facilitate the scholars’ conduct of clinical and translational research. Each awardee will participate in the School of Medicine’s “Path to Independence” Program and compete for next level research funding (K or R or equivalent) during their CTSA support. At the end of the KL2 career development award, each Scholar will be expected to have completed the core curriculum, conducted at least one translational research project, submitted original papers for peer-reviewed publication, submitted a meritorious application for the next stage of funding, and have become an active member in the Community of Scholars in our Integrated Home. Thus, our KL2 will contribute to fostering and preparing the next generation of translational investigators, with an emphasis on enrollment of URM scholars as well as training for all scholars in the arenas of health disparities and minority health research.