

CPRIT Applicant FAQs

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: *Predoctoral candidates:* Doctoral students officially enrolled in SBMI, SPH, or GSBS engaging in cancer research. Fellows can be located at any SPH campus. This program is **not** restricted to US citizens and permanent residents. Note: We are looking for students who have completed their preliminary/candidacy exams but have not yet defended their proposals. The latter is to assure that there is an opportunity to interject learning from the summer and other novel ideas into the dissertation.

Postdoctoral candidates: Researchers must have a doctoral degree (e.g., PhD, MD, DrPH, DO) by the start date and must work in a UTHealth lab or research environment or have one in mind. Note: We are looking for postdocs whose time remaining in a postdoc position will provide an opportunity to interject learning from the summer and other novel ideas into the dissertation.

Q: What are fellows' responsibilities?

A: Because we are assured of funding only for 1 year, we are compressing Program activities, with two summer courses—an integrative seminar that will focus on tools of innovative thinking and team science and an adjacent SPH survey course of molecular and omics topics taught by a GSBS faculty member. A 2-CH seminar in Fall and Spring will continue exercises to encourage use of the tools for innovative thinking and transdisciplinary collaboration. These activities will also emphasize dissertation progress, publication, and preparation for a career in cancer prevention research. Postdocs are required to enroll in the [Postdoctoral Certificate Training Program](#) at UTHealth if they are based on the Houston campus.

Fellows present their research annually to our Executive Committee, illustrating the innovative approaches they've applied and reporting on their progress. All predocs have a primary mentor and a program mentor. Expectations of primary and program mentors for predocs and postdocs can be found [here](#).

Q: Will a different mentor be assigned?

A: We respect the mentor-adviser relationship that is already in place. The program mentor we will assign will be based on a conversation with you and your mentor and offer new perspectives (see the Mentor roles document).

Q: Is there a location requirement for the preceptor and primary mentors?

A: The primary mentors can be located at another campus—but this would require a strong justification. A co-mentor could be elsewhere, and the “mentor provocateur” would be selected after acceptance and could be elsewhere.

Q: For the application, what writing samples should I submit?

A: The best writing samples are first-authored published works. Beyond that, a completed and well-revised work can be used, including class assignments. Two first-authored abstracts submitted for conferences can count as one writing sample.

Q: For the application, may I submit unofficial transcripts?

A: Unofficial transcripts will suffice during the review of your application. If accepted to the fellowship, official transcripts will be required before you can be appointed. If you believe your official transcript will not arrive before the deadline, we suggest submitting unofficial transcripts with your application. Request official transcripts from your university as soon as possible. After selection, a delay in the receipt of official transcripts may postpone your appointment. This could cause you to not receive the benefits listed, such as in-state tuition and/or your tuition and fees paid for by the fellowship.

Q: I attended a university outside of the US. May I submit my transcript from this university?

A: If you have attended a foreign university, your transcript needs to have been evaluated by an outside service and translated into English. If your application to GSBS, SBMI, or SPH contains this transcript, you can request an official version be forwarded to us. We will consider as official transcripts sent through the UHealth application process and forwarded to us directly.

Q: Do letters of recommendation need to be sent directly by the recommender?

A: Although we will accept letters sent directly by you, this practice is *strongly discouraged*. Similar to submitting unofficial transcripts, if you are selected for the fellowship, we will need to receive the letter of recommendation directly from the recommender before you are officially appointed for the fellowship. After selection, a delay in the receipt of letters of recommendation sent directly by the recommender may postpone your appointment. This could cause you to not receive the benefits listed, such as in-state tuition and/or your tuition and fees paid for by the fellowship.

Q: Do applications and all supplemental application materials need to be sent electronically?

A: This is the preferred route. Submit the application and all supplemental materials electronically to: CPRITFellowships@uth.tmc.edu. Please follow the directions listed on the application regarding the naming convention of files. Official transcripts may either be emailed (if your institution participates in this practice) or sent directly to:

Attn: Kandace Parks
University Center Tower
7000 Fannin Street UCT 2510J
Houston, TX 77030

Q: I was selected for an interview. How should I prepare?

A: Interviews are conducted by groups from the Executive Committee, as well as current fellows. Expect broad questions, e.g., what is an innovation (in any field) that you admire and why? If you received a research grant, what would you do? What is the most innovative thing that you have done—in any aspect of your life? Why have you applied for this particular training program? ...etc. It would also be worthwhile figuring out how to state your project and career goals succinctly in case you are asked to restate them.

Some resources to review include [Dr. Ness' TEDtalk](#) and [Dr. Ness' online course in innovative thinking](#). This Massive Open-Online Course (MOOC) is hosted on the edX platform and worthwhile to

review since this fellowship is based on her method of innovative thinking. All applicants invited for an interview will have an orientation session with Dr. Mullen prior to the interview.

Mentor Roles

UTHealth-CPRIT Cancer Prevention Research Innovation Training Program Primary Mentor

The role of a primary mentor does not differ significantly from mentoring best practice. As articulated by the AAMC and endorsed by this training program,

Effective mentoring is crucial for graduate school trainees as they begin their scientific careers. Faculty mentors must commit to dedicating substantial time to graduate students to ensure their scientific, professional, and personal development. A relationship of mutual trust and respect should be established between mentors and graduate students to foster healthy interactions and encourage individual growth. Effective mentoring should include teaching the scientific method, providing regular feedback in the form of praise and constructive criticism to foster individual growth, teaching the “ways” of the scientific enterprise, and promoting students’ careers by providing appropriate opportunities. Additionally, good graduate school mentors should be careful listeners, actively promote and appreciate diversity, possess and consistently exemplify high ethical standards, recognize the contributions of students in publications and intellectual property, and have a strong record of research accomplishments and financial support.

This program asks the Primary Mentor to

Attend an orientation that explains the Program goals; tools of innovative thinking and the evidence for them; and expectations of trainees, mentors, and Program directors.

Ensure that mutually agreed upon expectations and goals are in place at the outset of the training period for each trainee through an individual career development plan, which should be substantially completed within 90 days of the appointment date, with updates semi-annually with the progress report. Expectations include

Complete an original dissertation that contributes to innovation in cancer prevention;

Complete PH 5020, Innovative Thinking in the first 3 months of the initial appointment and assist in teaching the course annually, thereafter;

Complete a research ethics course;

Enroll in the Integrative Seminar (PH1498 Pre/Post-Doctoral Seminar) all the fall, spring, and summer terms during all the years the trainee is supported by the fellowship;

Take other courses as appropriate to the degree program and suggested by the Primary and Program Co-Mentor;

Meet the requirements of the requirements for their doctoral degree, making timely progress;

Prepare and submit at least 1 first-authored and 1 co-authored manuscript per year;

Make at least 1 poster/paper presentation at a national meeting during the fellowship;

Keep up to date all training and certification required by UTHealth and UT MD Anderson (if applicable), and submit certificates to CPRITFellowships@uth.tmc.edu;

Acknowledge CPRIT funding on papers, other publications, and presentations made while or owing to the support of the training program; (NB: This can read “Trainee was partially supported by Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas Training Grant #RP140103.”)

Support the trainee’s research and supplementary travel.

Meet with the trainee at least weekly and formally review progress at least quarterly.

Submit written progress notes to accompany the trainee's semi-annual progress report.

Traditional Co-Mentors

Doctoral training programs use Co-Mentors (dissertation committee members). They are typically selected because they are familiar with the area of the trainee's research and contribute from this perspective. The traditional training program aims for its predocs to make an independent contribution to *the field*, and it thus makes sense to have experts in the field, including those for Program supported trainees. Some graduate student committees use an 'outside' member, but these are often selected to maintain quality control and common standards across different disciplines within a graduate school.

Some programs require Co-Mentors who advise the trainee to foster inter-disciplinary training as desired by the particular program. The intent is often to help the trainee use a new research approach(es), technique, model system, type of analysis, etc. to address a problem. Even in such cases there is typically some conceptual similarity between the Co-Mentors.

Program Co-Mentor (Mentor *Provocateur*)

In contrast, CPRIT Co-Mentors are *not* intended to be experts in a trainee's field of research nor to direct the trainee's research in the same sense as the Primary Mentor. Rather they should be

Well-rounded investigators who: (1) are critical, thinkers, (2) have good listening and communication skills, and (3) a track record of innovation in their research and teaching.

Investigators with a perspective substantially and intentionally different than the primary mentor, and ideally from a discipline or background that has not frequently been coupled with the expertise of the primary advisor in interdisciplinary training programs.

Provocateurs who can challenge assumptions (conscious or otherwise) the trainee may make in defining or approaching the doctoral research, even if the assumptions are widely held in the discipline of the primary mentor, and stimulate the trainee to consider alternate approaches, especially those not previously used in similar research.

In some instances the Program Co-Mentor's suggestions will likely turn out to be naive, "off the wall", or not very helpful other than to provoke the trainee to consider conceptualizing a problem differently and/or reinforce any assumptions he/she has made. The intent is for the Program Co-Mentor to stimulate the trainee to think in novel, creative ways about defining or approaching a research question(s) during his/her training.

Also important is what these mentors are not to be. They are not meant to be co-equal with the Primary Mentor in terms of advising the trainee about the course of the research or to have 'veto' authority over aspects of the research. Again, their goal is to provoke and stimulate the trainee to different ways of thinking but not to unduly or unilaterally direct the trainee's research.

The goals of this training grant, i.e., teaching creativity and stimulating novel, innovative research and the role of Program Co-Mentor must also be considered in the context of a trainee just beginning a re-

search career, i.e., neither the Primary Mentor, Program Co-Mentor, or training grant leadership should have unreasonable expectations about trainees' abilities to rapidly become novel, innovative thinkers but should anticipate a more gradual transition.

Mentor *Pro Tem*

The Mentor *Pro Tem* is assigned to each trainee at the time of appointment. The job of this mentor is to facilitate the identification of a Program Co-Mentor. This individual will typically be a member of the training grant Executive Committee or someone with a good understanding of the aims of the Program and the role of the Program Co-Mentor. The process typically involves several discussions with the trainee, trainee reconnaissance (e.g., finding and reading c.v.'s and key papers of several candidates) and a meeting with the fellow, the Primary Mentor, and the traditional Co-Mentors. The Program Co-Mentor should be selected by the 4th month after a trainee is appointed.