

Syracuse University Postdoctoral Scholars Program 2021 Request for Proposals (RFP)

DEADLINE: Monday, July 12, 2021, 5:00 PM

Purpose

Postdoctoral scholars are the next generation of educators, researchers, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and societal leaders. Postdoctoral scholars significantly contribute to the generation of scholarly research output of a university from the research they conduct. As such, data on an institution's postdoctoral scholars is often used as an indicator of research activities. For example, the number of postdoctoral scholars is one of the major metrics used by Carnegie for classification of research universities. Postdoctoral scholars are not only important for research excellence, but they are also an integral part of the driving force for high-quality college education. For instance, postdoctoral scholars are most often the trainers of graduate and undergraduate researchers; they work closely with tenure-track faculty to design research studies, set up research protocols, maintain research equipment and provide day-to-day training of graduate and undergraduate students. The provision of such hands-on experiential learning by postdoctoral scholars has been demonstrated to be an effective path to increasing the success of undergraduate students.

The number of current postdoctoral scholars at Syracuse University is critically low in comparison to current expectations for a R1 research university. Thus, the primary goal of the program is to provide financial incentive for programs/departments/schools/colleges to increase the number of postdoctoral scholars; the funding proposed for this program must be strategically leveraged to achieve this primary goal. A second goal of the program is to reward productive faculty by providing a financial incentive to grow their research program. Through this program, programs/departments/schools/colleges may allocate postdoctoral scholars funds to faculty members who generate a significant amount of extramural grants, contracts or academic scholarship. In addition, the growth of postdoctoral scholars on campus should increase mentoring capacity for undergraduate and graduate research.

To further strengthen our identification as a student-focused and very-high-research-activity (Carnegie R1) university, Syracuse University will invest up to \$1.4 M over two years to support up to 20 new postdoctoral scholars through its Invest Syracuse Initiative. This document provides guidelines for the Postdoctoral Scholars Program.

Eligibility

Applications for Postdoctoral Scholar funds are open to research programs, departments, schools or colleges (herein referred to as the applying unit), but not to individual faculty. Each applying unit must designate a leader to apply, such as the dean, associate dean for research, department chair, program director or their designee. In each case, the applying unit must state their plans for using the funds to *increase the total number of postdoctoral scholars in the unit*, not to replace funds paid for postdoctoral scholars currently in the unit.

Each applying unit may apply for up to three awards, with the promise that the unit will grow the number of postdoctoral scholars in the unit. Each requested postdoc must be proposed for a specific subunit with one or more named mentors (Co-PIs) at the time of submission. As such, the submitting PI (dean, department chair, director) may wish to run a preliminary competition to identify which postdoctoral positions to include in their proposal.

Units that were prior recipients of 2019 Postdoctoral Awards are eligible to apply in this round. However, preference will be given to requests for postdoctoral scholars in research programs, labs, departments and/or for mentors that were not awarded in the prior cycle. Additionally, recipients of 2019 Postdoctoral Awards are required to describe the results of their award in a supplemental document.

Funding, Project Period, and Cost Share Requirements

To maximize the impact of the program, cost sharing from the receiving unit is required. Twenty (20) awards will be made for \$35,000 per postdoctoral scholar per year for two years (\$70,000 total per scholar). This amount is intended to provide *approximately* 50% of a postdoctoral scholar's annual salary plus fringe benefits; however, actual salaries are expected to vary across appointments. As such, any additional salary and fringe benefit costs above \$35,000 per year will be the responsibility of the applying unit. The applying unit is responsible for securing funds, either from the home college or department or through an individual PI's grant funds, to provide the necessary cost share for the postdoctoral scholar. Evidence of appropriate cost share plans will be a key evaluation criterion.

Evidence of success with 2019 postdoctoral awards will be a key consideration for the evaluation of applications from prior recipients.

Proposal contents

Online application form

- 1) Access the application page at <https://syracuse.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1841867>
- 2) On the right-hand side, under Application Tools, click "Apply"
- 3) Click the Syracuse University Login button and use your NetID and password to log into the Application Portal
- 4) Complete the **application details screen** (name and email will pre-fill):
 - PI appointment title (department chair, program director or institute director, school or college dean or associate dean for research), tenure status, department/center/institute, school/college, departmental budget administrator name and email
 - Co-PI names, emails, primary appointment title, school/college, department/center/ institute. All mentors listed in the proposal are to be listed as Co-PIs
 - Number of postdoctoral scholars proposed as new hires
 - Funding request, cost share amount, total budget
 - Unit(s) providing cost share (department, school or college)
 - Proposal title
 - Proposal abstract of no more than 100 words

Upload Files

- 1) **Proposal Narrative** – Upload a single PDF of the proposal narrative, *up to five pages in length*. The proposal should make a strong case as to why the applying unit needs the funds to hire postdocs, how such appointments will enhance research productivity and scholarship in the unit and how such funds will be used to grow the number of postdoctoral scholars in the unit or to begin postdoctoral scholars appointments in the unit. Proposal narratives must be formatted as follows: 11 point or larger font; 1" margins; single-spaced. Required proposal narrative contents include:

- *Description of the mentor’s research program for the postdoctoral scholar(s):* Include a description of the research area(s), mentor’s name(s) for the postdoctoral scholars and the current and recent funding record and research productivity of the mentor’s programs. A description of working experience with postdoctoral scholars will be positively evaluated. For instance, how many postdoctoral scholars the mentor(s) have worked with, and the placement of their previous postdoctoral scholars. Provide a general statement of training philosophy if no previous experience in mentoring postdocs exists. The department chair/director/ADR/dean may need to work with the faculty mentor(s) of the postdoctoral scholars to develop this section of the narrative.
- *Need for the postdoctoral scholars:* This section should explain how hiring the postdoctoral scholar(s) will enhance the competitiveness of the program and the applying unit and should include a plan stating how this will be leveraged into future funding.
- *Recruitment plan:* This section should describe how the applying unit will recruit the postdoctoral scholars, including plans for recruitment from a diverse pool of candidates.
- *Budget and budget justification:* In this section, please provide a brief budget with anticipated postdoctoral salaries and fringe benefits. Provide detailed information for the cost share dollar amount, duration and sources of funding. Costs for supplies and other research needs are the responsibilities of the mentor/department/school, and thus are not allowable for expenditure from the funds.
- *Table of postdoctoral activity in the unit:* As the primary goal of the Postdoctoral Scholars Program is to increase the number of postdocs at Syracuse University, please include a table indicating the number of postdocs in the unit for the past three years and the proposed scholars for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022). If no postdoctoral positions have been occupied during a given year, enter “N/A” in the cell. For recipients of postdoctoral awards in 2019, indicate the number of positions awarded. Units with no data to enter in prior years will not be penalized for a lack of postdoctoral scholars. Data from this table will be used to indicate units who have grown postdocs in recent years, as well as to show how proposed scholars will *increase the number of postdocs in a unit with current postdocs*, rather than simply support the replacement of existing lines. This information will also be used to measure growth in subsequent years of the program.

Table of Postdoctoral Activity:

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022*
Number of postdocs on payroll (use 1 for a value for appointments of 8-12 mo.; use 0.5 for a value for appointments 3-7 mo.; do not enter value for appointments < 3 mo.)				
Names of postdocs on payroll				
Number of postdocs awarded in first year of the first year of the postdoctoral program (if applicable)				

*Indicate total of continuing appointments and proposed additions through this program.

- 2) **Curriculum Vitae of the mentors** – Provide a single PDF of all CVs, *up to five pages in length for each mentor*, detailing the items below. CVs from any extramural agency format (e.g. NIH, NSF, DOD) may also be used. The CVs should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials (do not include meetings attended, seminars given or personal data), including the following elements:
 - Education history (degrees)
 - Relevant employment history
 - Awards and Honors
 - Brief summary of teaching, scholarship and research expertise
 - Mentor history: numbers of graduate students (master and Ph.D.) and postdoctoral scholars
 - Peer-reviewed publications, books, patent, juried exhibitions, performances, competitions and other scholarly and creative research output.
- 3) **Letter of Commitment** – Include a letter of commitment from the units committing the cost share (department, center or institute, school or college) and signed by the chair, director, associate dean for research or dean as appropriate. State clearly which unit(s) will be providing the cost share, including dollar amounts and duration.
- 4) **Results of Prior Postdoctoral Award** – For recipients of 2019 Postdoctoral Awards, provide a single page description of the results from postdoctoral award(s) received, including: names and dates of hires; department, center or institute of hire; current mentors; and a summary of research results including proposals submitted, awards received, publications (including in press and in process), presentations made and other significant activities.

Proposal Submission

- **DEADLINE: Monday, July 12, 2021, 5:00 p.m.** Early submission is highly encouraged.
- Submit electronically at <https://syracuse.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1841867>
- An email acknowledgment of receipt will be sent once the application is received.
- For the 2021 Postdoctoral Scholar Program, routing approvals *are not required*. The letter of commitment as signed by the unit(s) committing cost share (chair, director, associate dean for research, dean) will indicate administrative approvals. College budget directors will receive lists of all applications submitted from their units after the proposals are compiled and reviewed for compliance.

Review and Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated by a review panel comprised of senior administrators and faculty leadership. To avoid conflicts of interest, applicants cannot serve as review panel members. Each reviewer will be asked to score the proposal based on the following criteria:

1. The quality of mentors' research program—as measured by extramural funding, quantity and quality of publications/books or other scholarly products—and previous experience in training postdoctoral scholars, or training philosophy if no previous experience (35%);

2. The need for and commitment to grow postdoctoral scholars at the applying unit, as reflected in cost share amount and the plan for growing postdoctoral scholars in the unit. For units with 2019 postdoctoral awards, this also includes the success of prior appointments (25%);
3. Potential to leverage Postdoctoral Scholar funds for extramural funding that can be used for additional postdoctoral scholar hires. For units with 2019 postdoctoral awards, this also includes the results from prior appointments (25%);
4. The commitment to recruit high-quality postdoctoral scholars, including the quality of the recruitment plan and methods to recruit from a diverse pool of candidates (15%).

Awards Announcements and Requirements for Release of Funds

The award period for 2021 Postdoctoral Scholars Program begins at the date of award (anticipated on or near September 1, 2021), and postdoctoral hires may be made soon after an award. Awarded units will have until June 30, 2022 to make the initial offer; however, the start date can be as late as September 1, 2022. Award announcements will be sent to the PI and copied to their associate dean for research and dean (depending on the applying unit) and their relevant college and departmental budget administrators.

Funds will be distributed from the Office of Research on a reimbursement basis to the hiring unit after the new postdoctoral scholar is put on payroll. *As a reminder, this program is to support the addition of new postdoctoral scholars—not to provide funding for existing postdocs or to hire into existing postdoctoral lines (replacement hires).* To request reimbursement hiring departments must submit a general ledger report to the Office of Research that shows the salary commitment for the new position. with the actual expenditure shown. Specific request details will be contained in award letters.

A brief project report must be submitted by the PI to the Office of Research at the end of each year during the award period detailing the activities of the awarded unit to grow postdoctoral scholars. Specific requests for reports with links to electronic forms will be sent no later than 30 days before the report deadline.

Questions

For questions about your Postdoctoral Scholars Program proposal, please contact Christina Leigh Docteur cdocteur@syr.edu. For questions regarding use of the Syracuse University Application Portal, please contact Jeff Falchi jtfalchi@syr.edu.