

Postdoctoral Scholars Program 2021 Frequently Asked Questions – Updated 7/8/21

1. The RFP notes that “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” – does this mean if I submit a request for postdocs in my department and we received postdocs in the last round, that I cannot make a competitive application?

ANSWER: There is a preference for enabling the award of postdoctoral scholars to researchers (mentors) or research groups (departments, research teams) that have not received awards in the past – in order to enhance the capacity of the entire University to recruit and support more postdoctoral scholars. However, departments that have received an award, but are proposing new (additional) scholars to be paired with new mentors in different areas of research can be competitive, as can researchers who have received a postdoc but show a strong track record of mentorship and evidence of the ability to successfully recruit and support additional postdocs. Whether or not a research program or a researcher has received a postdoctoral award before, to be competitive, an application must successfully respond to all the review criteria, as noted in the Review and Evaluation section of the RFP.

2. Does the \$1.4M for the Postdoctoral Scholars Program include the funding set aside for the Future Professors Program?

ANSWER: \$1.4M is the amount specifically dedicated every two years for the Postdoctoral Scholars Program only – this does not include funding for other postdoc programs, such as the Syracuse University Future Professors Fellowship Program.

3. We have a research professor that is not a full-time appointment. They have a current grant and a supplement that will be funded, and would like to apply through their department for a postdoc. How this would be received by the reviewers?

ANSWER: There is not a stated prohibition for part-time faculty mentors. However, each individual postdoc request will also be reviewed based on the robustness of the research program of the mentor, in tandem with the department plan for growing postdocs. If the faculty member is well funded and has a good publication history, they may be competitive. But they also must show a history for mentorship and/or a training philosophy that can be supported, and it will be evaluated comparatively with other applications.

4. If a department is requesting three postdocs, should they be combined into one application? And does the five pages limit include the CVs for each Co-PI?

ANSWER: Each applying unit submits one proposal for up to three postdocs. The limit for the proposal narrative is five pages, whether the request is for one postdoc or three. However, the CVs are included in a separate file. Up to five pages for each listed mentor should be included. The CVs of multiple

mentors should be combined into one single PDF file, which is then uploaded in the CV section of the application. Thus, the length of the CV file will vary, based on the number of mentors.

5. What is a general statement of training philosophy? Do you happen to have any examples I could share with them?

ANSWER: We do not have a standardized statement for a training philosophy; however, this is also commonly referred to as a postdoctoral mentoring plan – similar to what the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other federal funders require for any proposal that requests funding for a postdoc. There are many resources available online for guidance in creating a postdoctoral mentoring plan, such as this template for a [NSF postdoctoral mentoring plan from Harvard](#), and a [NSF postdoctoral mentoring plan template from ASU](#). The requirements for the Syracuse University Postdoctoral Scholars application is shorter than the required NSF postdoctoral mentoring plan, so this section of the application will need to be shorter than the example templates, but the language and activities in the examples provide ideas on how to frame a “training philosophy” for a postdoc for those mentors who do not already have mentoring experience.

6. Are postdoctoral scholars allowed to teach classes?

ANSWER: The goal of the program is to support and grow the research enterprise of the University, and as such the focus of the postdoc positions should be on research. However, it is recognized that for many departments and disciplines teaching is an expectation of professional development of a postdoctoral scholar. In such cases, the teaching expectations of a proposed postdoctoral scholar should be a maximum of 50% of the standard load for a tenured/tenure-track faculty in the home department.

7. May CUSE Grant funding be used to provide some of the required cost share for postdoctoral awards?

ANSWER: No – CUSE funding may not be used as cost share for any other intramural program offered by the Office of Research.

8. How do you define a postdoctoral scholar?

ANSWER: A person who is seeking an appointment to conduct academic research after the completion of their PhD or other terminal degree.

9. In the description of the impacts from the last round of funding from this program, should we focus on individual impacts for the investigators’ programs? Or should we emphasize department-wide impacts?

ANSWER: The application should focus on both the impact on the mentoring faculty members’ research programs—as evidenced through joint publications, proposals submitted and grants received, academic presentations, and other relevant products—and the impact on the department or other academic unit.

The impact on the department may further be demonstrated through inclusion of other relevant activities in the department enabled by the successful hiring of a postdoc in the previous round. All of this information will be included for consideration in review criteria number 2.

10. We have people in the department who are members of clusters. If someone applies for this program as part of a cluster, and the postdoc is in our department, will it hurt the chances of our department getting a postdoc? That is, does the home department of the postdoc matter in decisions about allocating resources? Or are decisions solely by the applying unit?

ANSWER: The review of applications will include primarily the consideration of strong mentorship available for the proposed scholar. Though there may be more than three postdoctoral scholars proposed to be hired in one particular department—through a combination of proposals from a cluster and from a department—the balance of scholars across the University will also be considered before awards are made. All proposals must include the provision of required cost sharing for each position, whether from a school or college, a department, and/or an individual faculty member. Thus, proposals for postdoctoral scholars for a cluster or an interdisciplinary institute or center may likely require cost sharing commitments from multiple departments, schools or colleges, or individual faculty.

11. Is a faculty member allowed to serve as a mentor for more than one postdoctoral scholar? For example, might a faculty member serve as a Co-PI on a departmental proposal for a postdoc, and also serve as a co-mentor on a cluster proposal for a second postdoc?

ANSWER: No, a faculty member may propose to serve as the mentor (whether sole mentor or co-mentor) for one postdoc through the 2021 Postdoctoral Scholars Program. This limitation does not include mentorship of existing postdocs, or postdocs who may be funded through other sources.

12. Does the \$35k award include fringe benefits? Can you tell me if these are full year or academic year positions? And is each position for a two-year commitment?

ANSWER: Each postdoctoral scholar award is for a two-year (calendar year) appointment. As noted in the RFP under “Funding, Project Period, and Cost Share Requirements” the award of \$35,000 is intended to provide approximately 50% of a postdoctoral scholar’s annual salary plus fringe benefits. For example, for a new award, if the hiring salary of a postdoc is \$50,000 for FY 2022, with fringe of \$18,150 (36.3%), the total committed salary and fringe would be \$68,150. The department would provide a general ledger report with proof of the salary for the postdoc, and the reimbursement amount from the Office of Research would be \$35,000 for FY2022. No more than \$35,000 will be reimbursed for a postdoc in one year and no more than \$70,000 over two years; however, the reimbursement amounts may be less than \$35,000 in a given fiscal year as they will be prorated for appointment periods of less than 12 months in one fiscal year.

13. There are multiple junior faculty in my department interested in the postdoc program. In all four faculty that would make 2 “teams.” They have indicated that they would like to use setup-funds

to supply the cost share. I can see in the FAQs document that CUSE grants are not allowed, but nothing regarding set-up funds? Could you please clarify?

ANSWER: There is no restriction on using set-up funds or start-up funds for new faculty—these are allowable to use as cost share on their own or in addition to any departmental contributions. Usually we see combinations of sources of support, but the distribution is not mandated in anyway.

14. Two of us have an NSF project and full funding for a doctoral student for two years. We were unable to find a qualified student for the position but have a potential post-doctoral scholar. The NSF funding is not enough to cover the two-year salary for a post-doc. Therefore, we would like to utilize the SU's 2021 Post-doctoral Scholar Program. To offer a competitive salary, we may need a minimal supplement from the department and/or the college (TBD), but most of the cost share will come from our current grant. Under these circumstances, who is the "submitting unit" as defined by the RFP: the two faculty members, our department, or the college?

ANSWER: The submitting unit should be the department and should be coordinated as part of a departmental application. Each department is limited to three proposed postdocs. Please note that there is no guarantee that a postdoc for your project will be funded so you should not rely on this postdoc position to conduct your NSF funded research.

15. I would like to know if an application for a single post-doc can be submitted, or do we need to show that future hires will be secured. There is a language in the RFP ("how proposed scholars will increase the number of postdocs in a unit with current postdocs") that seems puzzling.

ANSWER: The intent of the program is to grow postdoctoral scholars at Syracuse University. As part of a departmental application, the proposed individual postdoc should be part of a larger plan to increase capacity for mentoring postdocs both within individual research programs and for the department as a whole. The individual postdocs can be proposed to fit a particular need of an existing research program at this time, but there should be evidence of the ability to host/mentor future postdocs, and for growth within the department.

16. What fringe rate should be used for the postdoctoral salary calculations?

ANSWER: The funding from the Office of Research will be provided as a Fund 11 account. Please use the correlated fringe rates.