

# Collaborative Grant Review and Mentoring for Clinician-Researcher and Clinician-Educator Trainees



Geriatric Medicine and Training

at Emory University/University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Southeast Center of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine

## SUMMARY

### Target Audience

Senior fellows and junior faculty physicians

### Purpose

To advance the training of clinician-researchers or clinician-educators through a partnership between two geriatrics programs

### Program

Mentoring, advanced training in research and clinical education, and salary support for up to four scholars per year

### History

Started in 1998, to capitalize on synergies between the programs at Emory and UAB

### Operating Costs

Estimated at \$550,000 in 2008 for scholars' salaries and pilot projects; fellow recruitment; leadership and mentoring; administration; travel; conferences

### Outcomes

65 geriatric medicine fellows and 27 junior faculty scholars have participated

### Available Materials

Program overview; website

### For More Information

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## Program Overview

Emory University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Schools of Medicine, which comprise the joint Southeast Center of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine, collaborate to provide a program of financial support and mentoring for the advanced training of senior fellows and junior faculty physician-scholars preparing for careers in geriatric medicine as clinician-researchers or clinician-educators.

The joint Center of Excellence (CoE) was developed to capitalize on the institutions' geographic proximity, mutual areas of research expertise, and other synergies that enhance the capabilities of both institutions to serve the educational and research needs of future academic geriatricians. The joint CoE seeks to foster interdisciplinary and interinstitutional research programs that offer trainees access to a broader range of mentoring, training, and research opportunities than each institution could provide individually.

The goals of the joint program are to:

- provide salary support that gives scholars protected time for research or for clinician-educator training
- provide rigorous training in grant writing, research, and advanced level clinical education
- provide mentoring, oversight, and evaluation of a pilot research project for the duration of the grant project (and beyond, if requested)

The CoE provides funding for the following activities:

- **Training Support Grants**— one year of salary support of up to \$50,000 plus benefits for senior



geriatric medicine fellows (PGY 5 and 6) and physician junior faculty, to ensure at least 50% protected time for scholars to obtain research training or to obtain advanced level training in clinical education.

- **Pilot Project Grants**— up to \$20,000 for scholars to conduct one-year pilot research projects that will yield preliminary data for scientific presentations, publications, and subsequent major grant proposals. Educational or quality improvement projects may be proposed by trainees pursuing careers as clinician-educators.
- **Combination Grant Program**— applicants for Training Support Grants may incorporate a pilot project into their application. Salary support for the trainee must be within the limits specified for Training Support Grants (50% FTE or \$50,000 plus benefits). The Pilot Project Grant limit of \$20,000 applies to the pilot project portion of the combination application. Expenses in this case are defined as everything except the trainee's salary and benefits.

### ***Program Operations***

Potential applicants are recruited through university-wide funding announcements, fellowship recruitment, and ongoing promotion at the joint CoE quarterly research seminars held alternately at UAB and Emory. A research advisor is provided at each site to assist the applicant with formulating the research questions and developing a proposal utilizing a standardized format and process. Applicants are encouraged to utilize potential mentors at both sites during this initial process, to provide a greater range of perspectives and mentoring. Up to four new scholars are accepted each year. Scholars with meritorious projects may be granted additional funding after the initial one-year period.

Applicants can request up to 50% of protected time by submitting a letter from their program director that provides assurance of protected time.

All proposals are reviewed by at least two selected reviewers from the alternate university and all members of the Joint CoE Steering Committee. Reviewer feedback is provided in a letter to each applicant and revised proposals are encouraged.

Once the research proposal is accepted, a joint mentoring committee is established for each scholar. Mentors are generally senior academic geriatricians or other faculty with a strong interest in aging who can provide professional development guidance. Each scholar selects a senior faculty member from Emory or UAB to serve as their primary mentor.

Quarterly progress reports to the Joint CoE Steering Committee are required of all scholars. Scholars are also expected to attend the joint CoE Quarterly Research Seminars and associated training (didactic and discussion groups) and social activities (joint scholar/mentor dinners prior to each quarterly session). The informal social interactions with senior faculty and potential mentors from both universities at the quarterly joint sessions provide a supportive environment for potential and current clinical fellows and scholars.

### ***Staffing Requirements***

The following personnel are needed:

- A Program Director and six faculty from Emory and UAB who sit on the Joint Steering Committee
- Partially funded (10-15% effort) Research Advisors
- Business Administrators at each site
- Curriculum/Evaluation Coordinators at each site

### ***Program Costs and Funding Sources***

The program is funded through the Hartford CoE grant, with matching funds from Emory and UAB. Estimated per year costs for the next cycle are: scholars' salary support and Pilot Projects: \$300,000–350,000; fellows



recruitment: \$35,000; leadership and mentors: \$100,000; administration: \$32,000; travel, conferences, etc.: \$83,000.

### ***Process and Outcomes Data***

As of September 2008, the joint CoE has provided research opportunities and mentoring to over 65 geriatric medicine fellows and funding for 27 junior faculty scholars. To date, 20 of the junior faculty scholars are currently practicing in an academic setting and at least eight of these have developed their academic careers in geriatrics research.

Success is measured by career development, publications, presentations, intramural and extramural grants, and other related achievements of the Joint CoE scholars and other participants.

### ***Implementation Lessons***

- The joint CoE discovered within the first two years of operation that a research advisor was needed to assist in the initial proposal development process for both potential clinician-educators and clinician-researchers. Partially supported (10% effort) research advisors for each site were recruited from within the faculty of each university. The advisors continue to provide oversight to the ongoing research process as part of the Joint CoE Steering Committee.
- The continued support and mentorship from all joint CoE faculty and mentors are imperative at the earliest points in a fellow's or junior faculty member's research and/or clinical educator development.
- A collaborative program between two universities can improve the quality of the training through effective planning, partnering, and frequent communication. The joint CoE stays in touch daily by e-mail, meets monthly by conference calls, and meets quarterly for joint training sessions at the Quarterly Research Seminars.

### ***Available Materials***

#### Tools/Resources

- Overview of Joint CoE Training Programs, including details on the programs and application process

#### Website

- Joint CoE Homepage, which features an overview of the grant program, including proposal development process, review criteria and research areas  
<http://www.aging.uab.edu/SubChannel/Training/scegm.aspx>

### ***For More Information***

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This document is part of a compilation of approaches to geriatrics recruitment, career development, and programmatic expansion, based on the work of the John A. Hartford Foundation "Centers of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine and Training." For more information, visit [www.afar.org/recruitment](http://www.afar.org/recruitment) or [www.jhartfound.org](http://www.jhartfound.org).

