

Concept Clearance:

Reissuance of Lasker Clinical Research Scholars Program (Si2/R00), [PAR-23-156](#)

The NIH Lasker Clinical Research Scholars (Lasker Scholars) Program is a career development program for independent clinical researchers. The program aims to develop leaders in clinical research by supporting selected researchers during their development in fully independent positions. It allows them to take advantage of the NIH Intramural Research Program (IRP) environment and resources, while simultaneously establishing themselves as peer-reviewed, NIH funded investigators.

The NIH funds research and research training at extramural institutions, as well as within the IRP, to support the development of clinical treatments for disease and to improve human health. However, these efforts can be hindered by barriers to clinical and translational research. Such barriers include limited research time for clinical investigators, increases in the length of time to independent careers, and access to hospital facilities and patient enrollments.

As one effort to address these barriers, the NIH created the Lasker Scholars program in 2011. The program supports a small number of exceptional clinical researchers, starting in the early stages of their independent careers. The program is described in the following website: <https://www.nih.gov/research-training/lasker-clinical-research-scholars>.

The program represents an unprecedented intramural–extramural partnership involving the IRP, the Extramural Research Program, and the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation to support top-notch clinical scientists. The program combines a period of research experience as a tenure-track Investigator in the IRP (5-7 years) with additional years of independent financial support, either by continuation in the IRP or with R00 support at an extramural institution. For applications submitted since 2015, the R00 component provides 3 years of up to \$500,000 per year in direct costs. The individual NIH Institutes and Centers have the option whether to participate each round, depending upon their projected resources and needs.

Since the inception of the program in 2011-2012, there have been 43 current and past Scholars, including physicians, nurses, and dentists, selected from 148 applicants. 11 NIH Institutes support one or more Scholars, the largest number being supported by NCI. The program started slowly, with one Scholar selected from the 2011-12 candidates and one from the 2012-13 candidates, but since then has averaged more than 4 Scholars per cohort.

The Council of Councils discussed the program at its meeting on September 17, 2021. The Council was supportive in principle to the concept of a dedicated pathway for developing clinical researchers through the NIH. The Council approved re-issuing the NOFO for two more years, with a required formal review of the program.

We thank the Council for its consideration. On June 29, 2023, the program was reviewed by a Working Group of the FACA-approved Advisory Committee to the Deputy Director for Intramural Research. The committee was chaired by Aviva Abosch, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Chair in the Department of Neurosurgery, University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nancy A. Keegan and Donald R. Voelte, Jr. Chair in Neurosurgery, UNMC. The committee was provided with the following materials:

- Overview and details about the program
- Summary of all Scholars, including research abstracts and top 2 publications

- Bibliometric analysis of individual Lasker Scholars who started in the program 2012 through December, 2020, conducted by NIH Office of Portfolio Analysis, DPCPSI in May, 2023
- Bibliometric comparison of Lasker Scholars to extramural clinical Early Stage Investigators (2012-2020), conducted by NIH Office of Portfolio Analysis, DPCPSI in May, 2023
- Summary of Individual Scholar activity on clinical protocols, through May, 2023
- Results of a survey of Scholars' perceptions about the program, conducted March, 2021
- List of Lasker Scholars who are proceduralists
- Letter of support from the Lasker Foundation
- During the review meeting, the committee also heard scientific presentations from two tenured Scholars (Drs. Jessica Gill and Andrea Apolo), and engaged in an open discussion with a panel of six current Scholars.

The committee stated in its report: "The committee felt strongly that continued support for the NIH Lasker Clinical Research Scholars Program is crucial." It recommended: "We strongly support continuing and even expanding the NIH Lasker Clinical Research Scholars Program."

We are asking the Council of Councils to vote for continuation of the NIH Lasker Clinical Research Scholars program.