Early Career Grant Program: Memorandum of Understanding

The purpose of this MOU is to identify the roles and responsibilities of the SoM Early Career Grants Program Participants, Participant’s Mentor, and Participant’s Department or Division.

Program Mission: The Early Career Grants Program is designed to assist Duke investigators in securing a first NIH K award or early R award funding. This program educates participants in effectively communicating ideas for an NIH grant reviewer audience. Some attention will be paid to evaluating application content; however, this should be viewed as complimentary to the assistance and review provided by the participant’s department, peers, colleagues, and mentors.

Program Structure: The program consists of strategy sessions for application guidance, and structured reviews of grant sections by experienced senior Duke Faculty.

Expectations for Program Participants (to be initialed by Participant):

Prior to Program orientation, and with the aid of the Participant’s Department, the Participant is expected to have recruited a mentoring team (2-4 mentors) to guide the Participant throughout the duration of the application and award time period.

Prior to Program orientation, the Participant is expected to have his or her Specific Aims vetted by leadership within their Department or Division, ideally in a formal concept review. The Vice Chair for Research (in most Departments) offers this service. The project aims and preliminary data should be deemed sound, sufficient, and ready to be incorporated into a grant application. The participant should be well suited to the project and ready to commit the time to write the grant application.

During the Program and prior to grant submission, the Participant is expected to contact the NIH PO or PD at the NIH Center/Institute most likely to support the proposed project to discuss how project aims fit within the mission of the Center/Institute. Project aims should be revised to reflect the outcome of these discussions.

Program Participants are expected to be present and prepared for the program sessions. The number of Participants per workshop is limited, and new workshops cannot be added to accommodate participant schedules.

During the Program, the Participant may change their submission plans as they assess the readiness of their application. Changes in plans are completely acceptable and should be communicated to the Program Assistant.

If the Participant’s application is funded, he or she agrees to provide the grant to the Office for Faculty Mentoring as an example for future program participants. Participants understand that all sensitive information will be redacted before distribution, and that anyone with access will have a confidentiality form on file with the Office for Faculty Mentoring.
As the primary Mentor, I have read the “Expectations for Program Participants” above and agree to support the Participant in adhering to these commitments.

The mentor team and I have vetted the participant’s project aims and find them to be scientifically sound and are felt to be competitive for peer review.

The participant’s hypotheses and general research plan have had feedback from other investigators outside the immediate mentor team during a concept review or works in progress meeting.

I have evaluated the participant’s candidacy (relevant experience, productivity, and career development plan) relative to the participant’s career goals and NIH expectations, and find them to be suitable for the grant mechanism and likely to lead to research independence.

As the primary Mentor I recognize the Program is at least a 4-month commitment with significant necessary time for writing, career reflection, review of feedback, and scientific contemplation. These commitments will be seen as a priority throughout the duration of the Program.

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Participant Signature      Date

_________________________________________________
Participant Printed Name

________________________________________________     _________________
Primary Mentor Signature       Date

_________________________________________________
Primary Mentor Printed Name

Cathleen Colon-Emeric
Associate Dean for Faculty Mentoring Signature 

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Associate Dean for Faculty Mentoring Signature     Date

Cathleen Colon-Emeric
Associate Dean for Faculty Mentoring Printed Name