

## **ASH Minority Medical Student Award Program Application**

### **General Principles for the Prospective Mentor**

#### **A. Program overview**

The American Society of Hematology (ASH) created the Minority Recruitment Initiative in 2003 to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in hematology. MMSAP is a part of this initiative, and is designed to introduce minority medical students to both hematology and hematologic research. The program has grown since its inception as a summer research experience typically between the first and second years of medical school to a more flexible program with three options:

#### **MMSAP Summer (8-12-week summer research experience)**

The summer research experience is an opportunity for medical students completing their first or second year of medical school to conduct an 8 –12-week hematology research project under the guidance of an ASH member. Most applicants for MMSAP summer are first year medical students. This is because the summer between the first and second years of medical school is typically the last significant opportunity to dedicate a summer break to a research experience.

#### **MMSAP Flex (8-12-week research experience over 12 months)**

The flexible research experience provides an opportunity for students in their first, second, or third year of medical school to take up to a year to complete an 8-12-week hematology research experience (approximately 320-480 hours) under the guidance of an ASH member. Flex option applicants are strongly encouraged to conduct research at their home institution. Applicants for this option must include a plan in their application that outlines how they will integrate their research project with their course work and/or clinical rotations.

#### **MMSAP Year-long (Full-time year-long research experience)**

The yearlong research experience provides an opportunity for students to take a year off from medical school during what would otherwise be their second, third, or fourth year of medical school to engage in hematology research full-time under the guidance of an ASH member. Applicants for this program typically have prior research experience, although this is not a requirement.

Program participants will have the opportunity to present the results of their project in person at the ASH annual meeting in December. Attendance at the ASH Annual Meeting & Exposition provides students with outstanding opportunities for networking with national and international leaders in the field of hematology.

**B. Connecting with potential mentees**

As a potential mentor in the MMSAP, it is important in this competitive application process that reviewers get a strong sense that you and your prospective mentee have directly connected with each other, either in person or by phone, and that you have had follow-up discussions of the proposed research project. Your involvement is critical in both helping the student develop and conduct a hypothesis-based research project and in providing them with an intellectually stimulating hematology research experience. Students are expected to develop self-contained research projects that can be completed within the allotted time for the research experience (Eight-to-12 weeks for summer/flex applicants or within one (1) year for yearlong applicants.) Research proposals should be written in the student's own words. It is important that the applicant understand the project to a sufficient degree that they are able to write up the project in their own words in a way that is convincing, and have an understanding of the hypothesis as well as the methods proposed to test it. If the project involves a clinical trial, biospecimens, or other activities that require IRB approval or approval by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee or similar regulatory body, it is important that the approvals be obtained in advance of the start date of the project. The date of approval needs to be clearly indicated in the application. In addition to helping the student develop their research project and supervising them in the lab, you will be expected to guide them in preparing their oral presentation to be delivered at the American Society of Hematology annual meeting in the December that follows the completion of their research project.

**C. Assisting the applicant in development of their proposal – what criteria do the reviewers use to score applications?**

**1. Research (Academic Potential)**

- a. Is this a well written proposal with a clearly defined role for the student?
- b. Can the project be completed within the allotted time for the research experience? (8-12 weeks for summer/flex applicants or within one year for year-long applicants.) If not, will there be preliminary results available for the student to present at the Promoting Minorities in Hematology event during the ASH annual meeting?
- c. Is this a significant problem in hematology and will the student's participation in this project potentially lead to further interest in hematology for the student?

**2. Mentor's NIH Biosketch**

- a. Does the mentor have a sustained record of NIH grant support or support from relevant scientific grant awarding agencies?
- b. Does the mentor have relevant publications in competitive journals?
- c. Is the mentor's biosketch included? If both a junior and senior mentor will be supervising the student, are biosketches for both mentors included?

3. Research Mentor/Mentor's Letter (refer to D below)

- a. Is there a mentoring plan in place? How frequently will the mentor meet with the student? If the prospective mentor is a junior faculty, is there a more senior co-mentor or a mentoring team assembled?
- b. Is there a strong research environment? Will the student have the opportunity to attend journal clubs, hematology/oncology grand rounds, etc.?
- c. Does the mentor provide information on their prior mentoring experience?
- d. Is there evidence of interaction between the student applicant and mentor in the design of the research proposal? Is there evidence the mentor has reviewed the student's research proposal and provided feedback on content as well as spelling and grammatical errors?

D. Your (Mentor's) Letter of Endorsement

This is a very important component of the MMSAP application. It is important that your letter detail your record of mentoring students, medical students, residents, fellows, and post-docs. If there is more than one mentor involved, it is important that they each provide a separate letter of support detailing their specific role. You should include specific comments about your interactions with the student as well as your assessment of the student's academic and leadership qualities. Comments regarding the perceived interest of the student in a potential career in hematology can also be included.

**\*\*\*For MMSAP Flexible Option Applicants Only**

If the MMSAP applicant is applying for the MMSAP flexible option, research mentors must include a statement in their Letter of Support that they have discussed and agreed to the student's ASH presentation date. MMSAP flexible applicants can select their award year or the subsequent year for their presentation date.

E. The Review Process

The review process is competitive. All applications are reviewed by members of ASH's Committee on Promoting Diversity using an NIH Study Section format and the NIH scoring system. Applications are scored as described above, using the following criteria: strength of the applicant, evidence of the applicant's engagement in leadership positions and community service, strength and feasibility of the research proposal, role of the mentor on the research project and in cultivating the student's interest in hematology, mentor's track record of mentoring, and commitment to the successful completion of the student's project.

F. Helping Your Mentee Make the Most of Their MMSAP Experience

As with any successful research project, planning is essential to optimize the time you will spend working with your mentee during your experience. We highly encourage MMSAP awardees to have active discussions prior to the start of their experience with

their research mentors. It is important that you connect with your mentee as soon as possible after they receive word of their award, especially given the limited eight-to-12-week time frame for summer/flex recipients. This will give the student adequate time to plan and initiate the steps required for the project to be successful. During the interval they are waiting to start their project, you are encouraged to meet one-on-one with your mentee to discuss their project and to connect them with your laboratory personnel. Although MMSAP awardees will also be assigned a career mentor who will meet with the student separately, you are still encouraged to provide advice to the student.

For students taking part in the MMSAP flexible/yearlong experience, it is important for you to connect with your mentee to review their start date, their research schedule, and approximate weekly lab hours. Similar to students in the MMSAP summer program, MMSAP flexible/yearlong students may not start in the lab right away. Having the opportunity to meet in person to further discuss their project and be connected with your laboratory personnel will be helpful to them.