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Advance  
Rhode Island  
Clinical & Translational Research  
Cite: U54GM115677

## Advance-K Scholar Career Development Program

*Request for Applications (RFA)*

June 23, 2025

The Advance-K Scholar Career Development Program was developed in 2019 in partnership between the Division of Biology and Medicine at Brown University and Advance RI-CTR, with the goal of preparing the next generation of clinical and translational researchers to conduct rigorous and reproducible science, and to enhance innovation and discovery in health-related research. This mentored career development program trains and supports highly qualified junior faculty in the preparation of individual, extramural career development award (CDA) applications (NIH K series or equivalent), and connects them to resources, mentorship, and other career development opportunities to promote development of a successful research career.

Advance RI-CTR is a partnership between [Brown University](#), [The University of Rhode Island](#), [Care New England](#), [Brown University Health](#), [VA Providence Healthcare System](#), and the [Rhode Island Quality Institute](#). It serves as a central hub to support clinical and translational researchers in Rhode Island through funding, research resources and services, and professional development opportunities in order to fuel discoveries that improve overall health in the state.

In this year-long program, selected faculty (known as Advance-K Scholars) will participate in bi-weekly sessions and engage in structured writing activities. **Scholars are expected to submit an extramural CDA application by the end of the 12-month program period.**

### I. Eligibility:

To be eligible for the Advance-K Program, applicants must:

- Possess a research or health-professional doctoral degree (or equivalent), including but not limited to M.D., D.O., Pharm.D., DNP, and/or Ph.D.
- Have a faculty appointment at Brown University or the University of Rhode Island at the start of the Advance-K program.
- Commit a minimum of 20% effort to mentored research and career development activities (deviations from this will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval during the application process). A letter of support from the applicant's department chair must include a statement confirming they are or will be a faculty member at the start of the program, and a commitment to at least 20% protected time (or to the agreed upon amount) during participation in the Advance-K program. The chair must also commit to 75% protected time if the applicant is successful in securing a K Award.
- Not be a former PD/PI on an NIH research project (R01), program project (P01), center grant (P50), sub-project of program project (P01), sub-project of center grants (P50), other major individual career development award (e.g., K01, K07, K08, K22, K23, K25, K76, K99/R00). Current and former PDs/PIs of a NIH Small Grant (R03), Exploratory/Developmental Grant (R21), Dissertation Award (R36), or SBIR/STTR (R41, R42, R43,



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R44) remain eligible, as do PIs of Transition Scholar (K38) awards and individuals appointed to institutional K programs (K12, KL2).

- Identify at least one scientific mentor. The primary scientific mentor must provide a letter of support of the application. More than one scientific mentor is encouraged.
- Meet the eligibility criteria of the award for which they are applying. Note: Most NIH K Awards require applicants to be a U.S. citizen or non-citizen national or have documented permanent resident status at the time of award. U.S. citizenship is required for VA CDA's.

## II. Program description:

The Advance-K Scholar Career Development Program aims to train the next generation of clinical and translational researchers to conduct rigorous and reproducible science and prepare mentored CDA applications that will ultimately advance health in Rhode Island and beyond. Up to ten Scholars are selected annually to participate in the program. Junior faculty candidates pursuing a career in clinical research or translational research from all departments at Advance RI-CTR partner institutions are eligible to apply. Members of under-represented racial and ethnic groups and candidates with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Advance-K Scholars will follow a common curriculum of grantsmanship, professional development, and clinical and translational research competencies, along with a customized set of activities to meet individual learning goals. Advance-K Scholars will be expected to participate in 2-hour bi-weekly training sessions on Wednesdays (3 – 5 pm) throughout the duration of the year-long program. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory for participation in the program. Each Scholar will enhance the skills specific to his/her research and career development through an individualized learning plan. Scholars are expected to submit an application for individual funding (K01, K08, K23, or CDAs from the VA or foundations) by the end of the 12-month program period.

Individualized training will be accomplished through various methods including:

1. *Development of a Mentorship Team.* Primary mentors identified by the candidate are required to describe their commitment to the mentoring relationship (as per Selection Criteria below), including a description of mentoring time and regular interactions with the candidate. The program assists in identifying additional mentors to enhance the mentoring support for Scholars. Applicants are encouraged to list up to three additional areas of expertise (or individual faculty members) whose guidance would benefit the proposed project or the applicant's career development plan.
2. *Individual Meetings with the Advance-K Leadership Team (Drs. Sharon Rounds, Ghada Bourjeilly, Ulrike Mende, and Audra Van Wart)* to discuss sensitive and other issues related to the research project and training plan, relationship with the mentoring team, and overall progress in Advance-K.
3. *Project development support* consisting of referral to local technical and scientific experts as needed, and/or consultation with the Advance RI-CTR BERD (Biostatistical Consulting, Epidemiology and Research Design Services) Core and the Advance RI-CTR BIBCE (Biomedical Informatics, Bioinformatics, and Cyberinfrastructure Enhancement) Core.



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4. *Bi-weekly Advance-K sessions* focusing on grant preparation, budget development, Responsible Conduct of Research, mentorship, and/or other professional development goals. Each Scholar has at least one opportunity to present their Research and Training plans to the cohort.
5. *Opportunity to network with other junior faculty clinical scholars*, via the bi-weekly sessions, e-mails, and program Slack channel, leading to collaborative ties and sharing of grantsmanship resources. This also includes opportunities to network with current and former K awardees at Brown and URI.
6. *Grantsmanship training and advice*, including editorial feedback and line editing of draft proposal components by the Leadership Team and Steering Committee as the applications are developed, as well as working with applicants and mentors to prepare effective and appropriate biosketches, training plans, and letters of support.
7. *Participation in appropriate Advance RI-CTR, university, and industry-sponsored workshops* (e.g., Research Design, RCR, IRB preparation, grant-writing)
8. *Mock Study Section Review* of the final draft proposal, including written NIH style critiques and a live mock study section discussion in front of the cohort that includes participation from the Mentor or Co-Mentor.

During the award period, Scholars are expected to submit an individual extramural mentored career development award, as well as complete the occasional assignment and periodic surveys to evaluate both Scholar progress and the program.

*Greatest consideration will be given to applications with strong institutional and mentorship support. All applications specifically require:*

***Mentorship Support:***

- *Mentor commitment to provide the Scholar with guidance toward proposal development (including review of drafts) through a planned series of meetings and additional discussion and guidance as needed, and participation in periodic Advance-K activities (such as a mock study section).*
- *Mentor commitment to participate in the NRMN-based mentor training provided by Advance RI-CTR, should the Scholar's extramural proposal be funded.*

***Institutional Support:***

- *Chair statement of commitment to at least 20% protected time for participation in the 2-hour bi-weekly Advance-K sessions, project development and grant writing.*
- *The chair must also commit to 75% protected time if the applicant is successful in securing an extramural career development award.*

### **III. Instructions for Proposal:**

**Complete applications** are due by August 25, 2025. A complete application must include:

- Advance-K Scholars Career Development Application Online Cover sheet [applicant information and application checklist, found at the submission link].
- NIH Biosketch and list of current/pending funding for:



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- The applicant
- The applicant's scientific mentor(s), which should highlight prior experience mentoring junior faculty and trainees
- Proposal
  - Provide a statement indicating the status of any current, past or upcoming K/CDA submissions/re-submissions, and their relationship to the current proposal.
  - Research Plan for the CDA Award (in NIH format, 2 page limit):
    - Specific Aims: describe the goals and objectives of the research project.
    - Significance and Innovation: provide information relevant to the proposed project's scientific premise and the scientific impact of the proposed research. Briefly indicate technical and conceptual innovations of the proposed research.
    - Approach: outline how each aim will be accomplished
    - Timeline: include approximate completion dates for each Specific Aim
  - Career Development Plan (1 page limit)
    - Long term career goals and objectives
    - How you envision the CDA will help you achieve these goals, including the expertise and skills you seek to gain.
- Letters of support
  - Department Chair (Required; Must indicate commitment to development of the Principal Investigator's career, including a statement confirming protected time for participation in 2-hour bi-weekly events, project development, and grant writing, 2 page limit)
  - Primary scientific mentor (Required; Indicate current relationship with mentee; Must include commitment to attend periodic Advance-K activities, provide expert guidance on development of Scholar's proposal, and complete Brown's NRMN-based mentor training if the Scholar receives an extramural mentored career development award, 2 page limit)
  - Consultants and contributors to the project, IF APPLICABLE (required from consultants and contributors named in application, 1 page limit for each letter)

Applications should be submitted electronically **on or before August 25, 2025** via the following link: [https://brown.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_06S842WQRWEFHvw](https://brown.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_06S842WQRWEFHvw)

For questions on the application or Advance-K program, you may contact Audra Van Wart, Associate Dean for Training and Program Development ([audra\\_van\\_wart@brown.edu](mailto:audra_van_wart@brown.edu)) or Ulrike Mende, Professor of Medicine ([UMende@brownhealth.org](mailto:UMende@brownhealth.org)).

A pre-application information webinar will be given by Leadership on July 23, 2025 at 12 pm. Register here: <https://forms.gle/KhhAZSdPpnZSyVJE8>

#### IV. Key Dates:

Call for applications: Monday, June 30, 2025

Pre-application Info Session (Zoom): Wednesday, July 23, 2025, 12 - 1 pm



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Applications Due: Monday, August 25, 2025

Possible Phone Interviews: Between September 22 - 25, 2025

Notification of Acceptance: By Monday, September 29, 2025

Welcome event: *Tentatively* Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 4 – 6 pm

Program Begins: Wednesday, October 22, 2025. \*Applicants will be expected to meet approximately biweekly on Wednesdays from 3 – 5 pm.

Program Ends: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 (No biweekly sessions in July/August)

#### **V. Selection Criteria:**

Reviewers of the applications will include the Steering Committee of the Advance-K program and select members of the Advance RI-CTR Professional Development Core Steering Committee.

Candidates will be selected based on:

- Strength of the potential scholar to become a leader in clinical and translational research, judged by scholarly record, research plan, career development plan, mentorship and institutional support, and career potential.
- Overall strength of the application, and the probability that an NIH or other CDA application can be submitted within 12 months.

NIH scoring criteria for CDA applications will be used to evaluate submitted proposals:

- Overall impact
- Candidate
- Career Development Plan
- Research Plan
- Mentors/consultants/collaborators
- Institutional commitment to the applicant