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Program Providing UC San Diego Postdoctoral Scholars with Academic Career Training Renewed

Increased funding by NIH expands number of postdocs who receive critical training and mentoring in biomedical sciences

Postdoctoral researchers, fresh from completing their formal education and beginning their independent careers in earnest, are fundamental to the advancement and success of science. In recognition of the Institutional Research and Academic Career Development Award (IRACDA) program at the University of California San Diego, which provides mentored training to postdocs in biomedical sciences, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has not only renewed its grant funding, but lengthened the term and increased the number of supported postdoctoral scholars.

The \$5.9 million grant over five years (up from three) will provide training in research, teaching and other critical skills to 15 young scientists (up from 12). “This is clear recognition by the NIH that the San Diego IRACDA program has been very successful,” said JoAnn Trejo, PhD, professor of pharmacology at UC San Diego School of Medicine, associate dean for health sciences faculty affairs and director of the San Diego IRACDA program.

“Our mission is to increase the diversity of academic faculty by providing essential skills, experiences and tools to a diverse group of postdoctoral scholars developing their independent university research and teaching careers.”

Trejo said San Diego IRACDA has trained 72 scholars in the past thirteen years, roughly two-thirds from underrepresented populations and two-thirds of them women. All IRACDA alumni have found jobs in science; 65 percent have obtained faculty positions at academic institutions.

Trejo attributed success placing fellows in academic positions, particularly in an increasingly competitive job market, to strong institutional support.

“Research universities not only propel science forward, they are the originating founts for educating, training and producing the scientists who do the work, who make the discoveries that benefit us all,” said UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “The San Diego IRACDA has long played a critical role, both in providing invaluable training to young scientists and in boosting academic faculty diversity moving forward. The NIH renewal is much-deserved validation of their efforts.”

Seven new IRACDA fellows will begin their three-year terms, which include NIH-defined stipends, health benefits and financial support for research and professional development, in September.

For more information about San Diego IRACDA, visit iracda.ucsd.edu/SD_IRACDA

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