

CAROLINA PROGRAM ON HEALTH AND AGING RESEARCH (CPHAR)

Program Focus, Desired Outcomes and Core Requirements

Program Goal and Focus

The CPHAR program goal offers advanced interdisciplinary research training and directed research experience to qualified predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows from multiple aging-related disciplines in the area of aging, health, and health care research. The program augments traditional disciplinary training through a balanced program in theory, analytical, and substantive content covering public health, social science, and clinical perspectives. All trainees in this program become affiliated (as fellows) with the UNC IOA. Predoctoral students will have first been admitted as candidates for doctoral degrees in one of several collaborating academic departments of UNC. They are typically selected for CPHAR at a point just prior to the formulation of a dissertation proposal, and our intention is to provide the final two years of their support. Postdoctoral fellows are appointed for one year, with the expectation of renewal for a second year if their individual training program milestones are met.

CPHAR explicitly introduces its trainees to the life course perspective, which views the aging individual in the context of his or her biography as it has unfolded in changing social and historical contexts. The interdisciplinary mentorship teams, the organization of our three required seminar series, and the course in aging and health required of all predoctoral trainees, ensure that this philosophy is implemented. We seek to produce scientists committed to an 'integrative approach' in keeping with recent recommendations of the NIH Committee on Future Directions for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (2001) that NIH should provide "training initiatives to nurture and regularize the hybrid (multidisciplinary) careers of a new generation of scientists, facile in working across social, behavioral, and biomedical levels of analysis." In addition, the program also supports training of scientists who are culturally competent and who understand the importance of both basic and applied research. The program also supports working in an environment of broad inter-organizational research collaboration on the campus and linking to community and health services organizations. Given these goals, our graduates should be capable of assuming a variety of scientific roles in aging, from basic research scientist and academic positions, to regulatory and applied science positions.

The **desired outcomes and core body of knowledge for the PREDOCTORAL training program** are that the trainees upon completion of the training program will demonstrate competence in:

1. Using and developing appropriate theories relevant to health and health care issues among older adults;

2. Incorporating both a disciplinary and an interdisciplinary perspective into aging and health research;
3. Analyzing the congruence between research problem, method, and outcome, using theoretical and empirical resources;
4. Designing research addressing important issues in health, health care and aging;
5. Developing and using appropriate measurements in health and aging research;
6. Using research protocols (including data collection, interventions when appropriate, and analysis techniques);
7. Presenting scientific findings in different formats, including papers, posters, and publications;
8. Learning and committing to responsible conduct of research and knowing the ethical issues in the conduct of health and aging research with human subjects;
9. Applying knowledge of diversity issues in the conduct of research in health and aging;
10. Translating research and providing implications of research for policy and practice.

Desired outcomes and core body of knowledge for POSTDOCTORAL training *incorporate all ten of the above objectives, as well as areas 11-16 below.*

11. Analyzing research design issues from several perspectives, e.g. bio-behavioral, social, physiological;
12. Synthesizing theoretical and empirical support from at least two disciplines in addressing a problem involving health or health care and aging;
13. Generating a complex or innovative conceptualization to address a concern for health or health care utilization of older adults;
14. Applying an interdisciplinary orientation in the design of research using a theory-based approach, and the grant-writing skills needed to secure research funding;
15. Collecting data (including secondary analysis), implementing protocols, and using appropriate advanced analysis techniques;
16. Reporting scientific findings for publication and preparing research proposals for extramural funding.

Core Requirements for both Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Trainees

CPHAR mentoring

We require that each predoctoral and postdoctoral fellow have a CPHAR mentor and a CPHAR mentoring team involving at least one other faculty member from our mentor list. One member of this team must be a member of the CPHAR Steering Committee. For predoctoral fellows, the mentorship team must include faculty beyond the student's departmental committee and departmental expertise (i.e., adding at least one different

discipline to the mentor team). The mentor is selected in consultation between the candidate and the Program Director, during the process of preparing the application. Typically, the applicant's departmental supervisor is a CPHAR mentor and this discussion will include him or her. If not, a faculty member from the CPHAR mentor list will be consulted to serve as a mentor. For postdoctoral fellows, there should be more than one discipline represented on the mentoring team. These provisions are to ensure some additional breadth in the training received. The initial mentor is selected based on discussions at the application stage between the applicant and the Program Director. The applicant then works with the person who has agreed to be a mentor, to engage other members of the team. The selection committee and the CPHAR Executive Committee must accept the mentor team.

In addition to the requirement to work constructively with the CPHAR mentor team, **ALL CPHAR FELLOWS** are subject to the following across the board-training program:

1. Participation in the IOA Seminar Series
2. Participation in Research in Progress (RIP) Seminars
3. Annual attendance at *Short Course on Ethics in Health Services Research*
4. Presentation each spring at *The Aging Exchange*
5. Presentation at the Gerontological Society of America meetings and at the North Carolina Conference on Aging
6. Attendance at the annual *Challenges in Geriatric Practice* conference
7. Attendance at *Women's Health Research Day*
8. Community Participation in the Institute on Aging

Additional Core Requirements for PREDOCTORAL TRAINEES ONLY:

1. Completion of a three-credit course, "Health and Aging" (618)
2. Departmental Requirements (Predoctoral fellows are enrolled in doctoral programs in specific departments and have departmentally specific advisory committees. In practice, there is always at least one member of the departmental supervisory committee on the CPHAR mentorship committee. Predoctoral fellows must meet all requirements for their individual program at the departmental level and requirements of the UNC Graduate School. In addition, they must complete the additional CPHAR requirements listed above, which we consider value-added to their disciplinary training.)

Additional Core Requirements for POSTDOCTORAL TRAINEES ONLY:

1. Participation in a Writing Seminar
2. Participation in the Research Stimulus Program monthly seminars of the IOA

Typical Program for Postdoctoral Trainees

Postdoctoral fellows have greater flexibility than predoctoral fellows because they do not have to meet any departmental program requirements. We thus individualize their program to some extent. The typical postdoctoral fellow will follow, however, this program:

1. Active publication from the doctoral dissertation;
2. Participation as a research team member in an ongoing project, which is typically with the mentor or a member of the mentor team;
3. Research development activities to secure funding to support oneself after completion of the postdoctoral fellowship;
4. Supplemental coursework for advanced methodological, statistical or theoretical knowledge or to fill gaps in knowledge.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Trainees

Evaluation for Predoctoral Fellows

A Research Education Plan or Proposal is the basis for monitoring and evaluation. As part of their application, predoctoral fellows outline their proposed activities in a Research Education Plan, including activities required to complete their doctorate, and the additional CPHAR-related activities. Upon acceptance, this educational plan is formalized in consultation with the mentor and others on the mentor team, milestones are established, and these milestones form the basis of evaluation by the mentor team twice yearly. The fellow prepares a progress report, which is reviewed by the trainee's mentor committee. The lead mentor then sends the report with an evaluative recommendation to the Director. This is vetted by the Executive Committee (Director and two Co-directors). Continuation of funding is contingent on satisfactory progress.

Evaluation criteria for predoctoral fellows include: attainment of milestones required in their own departmental program, including completion of comprehensive exams and successful defense of doctoral dissertation proposal; completion of the required course in Aging and Health and any additional courses taken following entry to the program, publications, papers, and posters.

Evaluation for Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral fellows must submit a more detailed research program proposal as part of their application. This is developed in conjunction with the mentor who is identified as part of the application process. There is greater flexibility in the activities of postdoctoral fellows because they identify new opportunities not necessarily known to them at the time of application, and they are not subject to the requirements of their specific departmental doctoral program. Postdoctoral fellows may be required or advised to take supplementary courses (formal graduate courses or short courses through the Odum Institute) to fill knowledge and competency gaps in relation to multidisciplinary, multi-methods, and participatory research methods skills. Upon acceptance, the research proposal is formalized in consultation with the mentor and others on the mentor team, milestones are established, and these milestones form the basis of evaluation by the mentor team twice yearly. The fellow prepares a progress report, which is reviewed by the trainee's mentor

committee. The lead mentor then sends the report with an evaluative recommendation to the Director. This is vetted by the Executive Committee (Director and two Co-directors). Continuation of funding is contingent on satisfactory progress.

Evaluation criteria for postdoctoral fellows include: attainment of milestones noted in their proposals (which may include taking seminars or short-courses); publications, papers and posters; involvement in ongoing research activities; and development of a research or research support proposal.

Responsibilities of Mentors

All fellows, at the predoc and postdoc level, receive ongoing evaluation from their CPHAR mentor committees and through their attendance and participation at CPHAR weekly seminars and bi-weekly Research in Progress seminars. Indeed, much of the activity in the latter consists of explicit critique of draft papers and workshop paper and poster presentations or 'job talks'.

In addition, the CPHAR mentor and all other members of the fellow's mentor team should formally review the fellow twice annually. In the case of fellows in their first year of funding, the second such review should lead to a recommendation as to whether the fellow should continue to be supported by the program. This recommendation is conveyed in writing (e-mail is acceptable); along with the fellow's progress report and a brief note from the lead mentor, to the program director. It will then be reviewed by the CPHAR executive committee, which will determine whether funding, or remedial action, is to be provided. The review should take into account the fellow's research plan and any amendments thereto, as well as the extent to which, in the view of the mentor team, the fellow is realizing desired program outlines - **see "desired outcomes" on pages 1-2 above, as well as "core requirements" on pages 2-3.**

Measurement of any outcomes for the fellows, (e.g., process outcomes noted above) is the responsibility of mentor teams on a continuous basis, with formal semiannual assessments in terms of these goals and objectives as well as program plan milestones.

Training Program Evaluation

There are a number of key indicators of whether the proposed training program is a success:

- First, whether the program is able to recruit qualified trainees at either the predoctoral or post-doctoral levels;
- Second, whether predoctoral trainees complete their degrees and defend their dissertations on schedule;
- Third, whether trainees at either level (predoctoral or postdoctoral) actually conduct research that addresses questions of importance to the field of health care and aging;

- Fourth, whether those who complete the training program choose to enter the field of health care and aging research.

We collect information on an annual basis pertinent to each of these four indicators, and this is made available for review by the Steering Committee. Data on these issues is summarized annually in the CPHAR progress reports to NIA and in the progress report, which is part of this application.

In addition to monitoring these four key indicators of overall training program impact (ongoing by the program director and formally by the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee), each year we conduct in-depth interviews with our trainees during which we will ask for an assessment of the training experience they have received. We will also continue to conduct 'exit interviews' with our graduates. We have found this type of interview extremely valuable as a way of improving the content and structure of the program in the first funding period for CPHAR. Moreover, we maintain active contact with all of our graduates, keeping them on our listserv for program announcements. Many of them have provided informal feedback on the program and its evolution. Some return to present seminars and others continue research partnerships with other fellows.

Now that we are past our formative years, and as our graduate pool increases, we intend to survey (via e-mail and follow-up telephone interview) our graduates at two years, and again at four years, after they complete the program. In addition, we will institute an annual meeting of the CPHAR mentors who have actively served as mentor or member of a mentorship team, for the purpose of formative evaluation of the program, as well as to provide a mentoring workshop for the less experienced mentor team members.

Space/Resources available to Pre and Postdoctoral Fellows

Post-doctoral fellows have standard faculty-sized offices, sole occupancy, locked doors, window, individual telephones, and full IT support. Pre-doctoral fellows have generous carrel space in a dedicated work area, shared telephone, and full IT support. The IOA absorbs costs for telephone and IT support, provides desktop or laptop computers to each predoctoral and postdoctoral fellow, other research equipment (such as tape recorders for interviewing), and use of the Institute van for research. The IOA has one large conference room and two other meeting rooms, ample parking, a well-staffed library and information center, and excellent computer and other office resources.

The IOA budget fully supports the required attendance of all fellows at the following events so that these costs need not come from the fellows' stipends:

- North Carolina Conference on Aging (fees, travel, hotel)
- Required campus events that are part of the curriculum (Geriatric Symposium of the Program on Aging, Center for Research on Women's Health Research Day)
- Additional travel support and assistance with poster presentations
- Gerontological Society of America annual meeting

The Institute on Aging:

- Supports the IOA/ECRA seminar series (which serves as the weekly CPHAR seminar series) with honoraria and travel for out-of-state speakers
- Supports the required core course, *Health and Aging, for all* predoctoral fellows
- Supports the bi-weekly Research in Progress seminars

Other Centers and Institutes, as noted below, provide access to our trainees for program participation that we require or recommend for our trainees:

- The Howard Odum Institute for Social Science Research provides, at no cost, an ongoing program of research and statistical training, which virtually all our fellows can access (<http://www.irss.unc.edu/odum/jsp/home.jsp>).
- The Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research provides an annual two-day workshop in ethics for health services research at no cost to our fellows (<http://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/>).
- The Center for Research in Women's Health and the Program on Aging provide annual research meetings that our trainees are required to attend (<http://www.cwhr.unc.edu/index.pl>).

UNC *Postdoctoral* Scholar Policies

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill annually hosts approximately 1000 Postdoctoral Scholars on its campus. Postdoctoral Scholars are placed in many different departments and centers at the University, and they are associated with the University primarily with the goal to continue their academic training. However, some aspects of their relationship with the University more resemble those of employees. Given the hybrid nature of their association, the University has developed these policies to better outline the University's and the Postdoctoral Scholar's obligations and expectations in various contexts.

For the latest information on Postdoc policies, visit: <http://postdocs.unc.edu/?q=node/20>