

2025-2026 Clinical Research Training Program (CREST) Pilot Grant Award

Overview

The Clinical Research Training Program (CREST) seeks to cultivate a cohort of well-trained, diverse clinician-scientists who can strengthen research capacity at SUNY Downstate and reduce health disparities in Brooklyn. The Office of Diversity Education and Research is pleased to announce **Phase II of CREST**. The goal of Phase II is to implement a **Pilot Studies** program that will serve as a catalyst for generating preliminary data that can be used in preparation for NIH funding.

Pilot Grant Program Details

- To further develop scholars who will pursue careers as independent clinical research scientists, **CREST Phase II** will provide pilot award funding of up to \$50,000 through a mentored clinical/translational research experience.
- This research experience will allow the recipient to continue working toward establishing their own independent research program as a clinical research scientist leading to applications for individual mentored career development (K) or research grant (R series) awards from NIH.
- CREST will fund up to 4 awards for a single 12-month period.
- Applicants should propose a research project in an area that aligns with the goal of the CREST program to reduce disparities in health and promote health equity – this includes focusing on health services research, translational science approaches, community-engaged research, implementation science, public health, and population health research.
- It is expected that funded pilot projects will lead to peer-reviewed scientific publications and successful NIH applications for career awards or research project grants.

Eligibility Requirements

- Clinical fellows and junior faculty (ideally within seven years of their first faculty appointment) with **clinical doctorate degrees** (e.g., MD, DO, DDS, DNP, PhD with clinical responsibilities) are eligible to apply.



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The SUNY Downstate Clinical Research Scholars Training (CREST) program will provide a formal didactic curriculum and structured mentored clinical research experience to physicians and nurses with doctoral degrees, who are from groups underrepresented in biomedical science.

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- CREST Phase II will solicit applications, review and select pilot projects from scholars who have completed Phase I of the program or who have received prior rigorous research training. Applicants must submit evidence of prior training to ensure candidates have a strong foundation for research.
- Applicants must have a CREST mentor at Downstate (can be appointed) as one of the mentors on their pilot project but are encouraged to also work with mentors outside of the institution.
- Multi-PI (MPI) project proposals are not permitted. Only one individual can be named as PI for the proposal. Co-investigators and collaborators are permitted.

Application Process – Letter of Intent Deadline: February 23, 2026, 11:59 PM ET

A letter of intent must be submitted first to Lakia Maxwell (Lakia.Maxwell@downstate.edu), which includes:

- Descriptive title of proposed study
- Name, address, and telephone number of the PI
- Names of the Primary Mentor and other key personnel
- Short Abstract (up to 500 words)
- NIH Biosketch (up to 5 pages)

Applicants will be selected from the Letter of Intent to submit full applications, which will be due by **March 15, 2026**.

Selection Criteria

Pilot studies will be reviewed by peer-review committee of faculty internal (and external if necessary to avoid conflicts of interest) to Downstate. They will make recommendations to the CREST Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Board who will make the final funding decisions. Reviewers will provide written critiques including advice on whether a resubmission is encouraged. Review criteria will include:

- Significance of the research question, strength of the scientific premise, and feasibility of the study
- Appropriateness of the approach, scientific rigor and transparency, and consideration of sex as a biological variable
- Qualifications of the investigator and mentor
- Plans for obtaining extramural funding
- Letter of support from Department Chair, including plan for career development