

2023 ASTRO Medical Student Fellowship Award Guidelines

PURPOSE

The purpose of the ASTRO Medical Student Fellowship Award for Underrepresented Populations (formerly known as the Minority Summer Fellowship Award) is designed to introduce medical students from backgrounds that are underrepresented in medicine (URM) to the discipline of radiation oncology early in their medical education. **For the purposes of this program, races and ethnicities that have been identified as URM coincide with those in the ASTRO Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (HEDI) Council's Diversity Strategic Plan, which "include but are not limited to American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander."** Medical students in all years are encouraged to apply; however, **preference will be given to first- and second-year students.** Non-medical student PhD candidates are welcome to apply, but please note that this funding source is not appropriate to fund PhD work. In an effort to promote radiation oncology as a career choice, the fellowship will provide medical students with an experience designed to expose students to clinical, basic and translational research questions in radiation oncology.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be met for a trainee to be considered for the fellowship program:

- Applicant must be enrolled in a U.S. medical school and be in good standing at the time the application is submitted.
- Applicant must identify a mentor with a successful record of research productivity (more information is below).
- The primary mentor (and the co-mentor, if there is one) must be an ASTRO member.
- Research must be initiated at a North American institution during the summer of 2023 (applicants should discuss the impacts of COVID-19 with their mentor and ensure that the project can take place even under any related constraints at the host medical school).
- The selected institution must have an established research and clinical program and an ACGME-accredited radiation oncology residency program with clinical faculty available to serve as mentors.
- Letters of commitment from both the mentor and the department chair at the selected institution must accompany the application. The letter of commitment from the mentor should confirm that the institution is able to support the project.
- Trainees selected for the fellowship program will be required to apply for complimentary membership to ASTRO.

APPLICATION METHOD AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted in [proposalCENTRAL](#) no later than **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2023.**

- Emailed, faxed or mailed applications will not be considered.
- If you need help creating a proposalCENTRAL account, please read the [instructions](#).
- Once you create a proposalCENTRAL account, log in and click on the "Grant Opportunities" tab, then filter by Grant Maker and select ASTRO from the dropdown menu.

- Finally, click on the link for the Medical Student Fellowship Application, and begin submitting your information.
- If you have any issues, please email your situation to diversity@astro.org.

STIPEND AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The ASTRO Medical Student Fellowship Award will offer students a \$5,000 package that includes a \$3,000 stipend for the eight-week training program (exceptions can be made for a longer program but will need to be approved by ASTRO's HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee), \$1,000 for the completion of a final report, and \$1,000 toward the cost of attending the 2024 ASTRO Annual Meeting.

May 2023: The awardee will receive a direct payment of \$3,000 paid at the beginning of the fellowship upon receipt of a confirmation letter, project timeline and completed W-9 form (awardees will be given more detailed instructions in their notification letters). ASTRO does not pay indirect costs, overhead costs or salary support for the principal or co-principal investigator and has no responsibility for support beyond that stated in this application. This support is not for mentors.

December 2023:

- After the HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee reviews and approves the awardee's final report, the awardee will receive an additional \$1,000. Final reports must be received by **Friday, December 1, 2023** (more details are provided later in the application). **Awardees who submit reports later than the deadline (unless pre-approved by ASTRO) will not receive this additional \$1,000.**
- The awardee must submit an abstract to the 2024 ASTRO Annual Meeting before the abstract submission site closes. Regardless of whether or not the abstract is accepted for presentation, the awardee is expected to attend the 2024 Annual Meeting; complimentary registration will be provided whether or not the abstract is accepted for presentation/inclusion. ASTRO does not cover the abstract submission fee; it is understood that the stipend will help offset that minor cost.

Fall 2024: An additional \$1,000 will be granted to help offset travel expenses to and from the 2024 Annual Meeting. Specifically, the awardee will submit travel expenditures with a completed expense form and itemized receipts after attending the meeting and will be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 (any additional costs are the responsibility of the awardee). ASTRO will waive the Annual Meeting registration fee for an awardee only if the awardee provides the name and control number of the abstract he or she submitted, regardless of whether or not the abstract is actually accepted for presentation/inclusion.

NATURE OF PROJECTS

The fellowship is designed to develop a mentoring relationship that can help cultivate an interest in radiation oncology. Attending the ASTRO Annual Meeting will provide candidates with additional opportunities for professional growth after their fellowship ends. The fellowship project should be designed so that the awardee is involved in a clinical or basic science (biology, molecular science, etc.) research project **and** gains clinical exposure. At least once a week, the fellow will observe in clinical services, participating in all aspects of clinical decision-making, treatment planning, delivery and follow-up. The fellow will be encouraged to attend lectures, seminars, symposia and conferences held at the host university. The mentor plan should outline this clinical exposure experience in detail.

Two different research tracks are described below (there is no established quota for these tracks; awards are granted based on criteria that do not including filling a certain number of spots in each track):

- The **Clinical Research Fellowship** is designed to expose medical students to the discipline of radiation oncology and to enhance skills in clinical research in radiation therapy. At least one clinical research project will be identified in advance with the help of the mentor. Consideration should be made for potential delays created by IRB review of the project application.
- The **Basic Science Research Fellowship** is designed to further the candidate's knowledge in radiation or tumor biology, physics or molecular science as they relate to radiation oncology. The candidate will spend one day a week in the clinical setting; the remaining four days will be dedicated to lab research. The research project must be identified in advance with the help of the mentor.

FINDING A MENTOR

Applicants must have an identified mentor as part of the application. HEDI has identified a few mentors throughout the United States who are interested in working with students applying for the fellowship program, but this list is not meant to be exhaustive. For our list of potential mentors, please visit www.astro.org/MSFMentors. If you are still unable to locate a mentor, please email diversity@astro.org for assistance from the HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee members in finding a radiation oncology program.

MENTOR REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must identify a primary mentor who, together with the applicant, is responsible for the planning, direction and execution of the project. The primary mentor must hold the rank of assistant professor or higher and commit to meeting with the candidate at least weekly. The primary mentor (and the co-mentor, if there is one) must be an active ASTRO member and an accomplished investigator in the proposed research area with a track record of success in training medical students, residents and/or independent investigators. A standard NIH-formatted biosketch of the mentor(s) must be included with the application. A list or description of the mentor's prior trainees, including trainees' names, dates of mentored training, type of research and current positions, should be provided within the mentor's letter of support/recommendation. The reviewers will want to see a successful track record of mentoring other trainees at the same level as the candidate. If the mentor does not have a track record, then consideration should be given to including a more senior co-mentor with such experience. Co-mentors with complementary experience are encouraged, but one person should be identified as having primary responsibility for the candidate's mentoring.

ENVIRONMENT – INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

The mentor plan should describe the facilities and resources that are available to the candidate and include a clear mentoring plan for the fellow. **This should also include a statement/plan ensuring the safety of the candidate during the COVID pandemic, in accordance with CDC guidelines.** The chair of the host department will be responsible for providing resources for implementation of the lab experience as well as support for the analysis and publication of the clinical research experience. The mentor of the host department should meet with the fellow at the completion of the program to discuss and evaluate the experience prior to submission of the fellow's report.

SELECTION REVIEW CRITERIA

The HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee will review and score applications based on the following factors:

1. General qualifications of the applicant. Priority will be given to first- and second-year medical students; however, third- and fourth-year students are still eligible to apply. Applicants from schools without an affiliated radiation oncology residency and/or an affiliated comprehensive cancer center are encouraged to apply.
2. The applicant's personal statement.
3. The quality of the structured research abstract.

4. The mentoring plan, including the clinical exposure, facilities/resources available and opportunities for development of the applicant.
5. Letters of support from the applicant's mentor and department chair.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications by email in **April 2023**.

FINAL REPORT

A final report must be submitted to ASTRO, for potential distribution to the Board of Directors, no later than **Friday, December 1, 2023**. Reports are used to determine the effectiveness and success of the program. If the project has not been completed, the report can address the progress and current status of the project at that time (as well as an expected date of completion); a follow-up report once the project has been completed should also be submitted.

Final reports must begin with a summary statement not to exceed one page. Reports are to be submitted electronically (in a Microsoft Word document or PDF) to ASTRO at diversity@astro.org.

Complete reports must address each of the items listed below:

- An updated structured research abstract.
- Indicate any deviations you have made from your research plan and explain these changes.
- Indicate any issues or delays you have encountered in performing the research.
- Indicate if the results from your studies are being prepared for publication or will be within the next six to 12 months.
- Indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the Medical Student Fellowship program in which you participated. Please include any suggestions for improvement.
- Indicate what influence your experience in the fellowship program has had on your interest in the field of radiation oncology and residency training.

PUBLICATIONS

All scientific posters, publications and oral presentations resulting from the ASTRO-funded projects must acknowledge ASTRO by including a statement similar to the following: "This work was supported by the American Society for Radiation Oncology Medical Student Fellowship Award."

HEALTH EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (HEDI) WORKFORCE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

The HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee is responsible for reviewing applications and selecting awardees. A HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee member will be assigned as liaison to communicate with each awardee on a continual basis to provide informal mentorship, receive updates and keep the awardee connected to ASTRO. To ensure the long-term success and sustainability of this fellowship program, it is the expectation of the HEDI Workforce Diversity Committee that awardees stay in touch with their assigned liaisons and provide continual updates regarding their training, residency, abstracts, publications, etc. This process will help us evaluate the fellowship and justify funding for the program to the ASTRO Board of Directors.

*To help you prepare, an outline of the online application follows. Applications must be submitted in [proposalCENTRAL](#) no later than **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2023**. Emailed, faxed or mailed applications will not be considered.*

2023 ASTRO Medical Student Fellowship Award Application

The application must include all of the following information. Incomplete applications will not be scored. Applications will be scored by members of ASTRO's Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (HEDI) Council Workforce Diversity Committee.

Title Page

- Project Title
- Research Type (select Basic Science or Clinical)
- Anticipated Project Start Date, Anticipated Project End Date

Applicant Data

- Name
- Medical School
- Medical School Year (select: MS1, MS2, MS3, MS4 or Other; if Other, then explain.)
- Please answer yes or no to the following questions as they relate to your medical school:
 - a. Does the main hospital(s) associated with your medical school have an affiliated radiation oncology department(s)?
 - b. Does the main hospital(s) associated with your medical school have an affiliated ACGME radiation oncology residency program?
 - c. Does the main hospital(s) associated with your medical school have an affiliated NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center?
- Other Degree(s)
- Phone Number
- Date of Birth
- Mailing Address
- School email address
- Personal email address

Institution and Contacts

- Identify the place of research where you will conduct your project.
- List the department chair's name and email address.
- List the mentor's name and email address.

Applicant Demographics

- Gender:
 - Female
 - Male
 - Non-binary/third gender
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other / Prefer to self-describe – please indicate
- Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
 - No
 - Yes: Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
 - Yes: Puerto Rican
 - Yes: Cuban
 - Yes: Other (for example, Argentinian, Colombian, Dominican, etc.) – please indicate
- What is your race? (You will be able to select up to two.)
 - White
 - Black or African-American
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (please indicate name of enrolled or principal tribe)
 - Asian
 - Indian
 - Chinese
 - Japanese

- Korean
 - Vietnamese
 - Filipino
 - Other Asian (for example, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, etc.) – please indicate
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander (for example, Fijan, Tongan, etc.) – please indicate
- Country of Citizenship
- Are you from a disadvantaged background? If yes, you will need to certify your disadvantaged background status by submitting at least one of the following documents at the time of application (please note that current financial need is not sufficient to be classified as an individual from a disadvantaged background). Select the type of financial status document that applies to you:
 - A written statement from the applicant’s medical school indicating qualification for Federal disadvantaged assistance during matriculation.
 - Documentation of Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL) or Loans for Disadvantaged Students.
 - Documentation of a scholarship from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the Scholarship for Individuals with Exceptional Financial Need.

Application Documents

1. **Statement of Interest:** Address your interest in the field of radiation oncology and the ASTRO Medical Student Fellowship program. Limited to 500 words.
2. **Structured Research Abstract:** Limited to 750 words. Must contain the following sections:
 - Background and Significance
 - Specific Aim
 - Preliminary Data
 - Research Design and Methods
 - Conclusion
 - Research Assurances: submit IRB approval or statement off pending approval
3. **Mentorship Plan** (written together by the mentor and applicant): Provide a maximum of one page describing a detailed clinical exposure and research plan for the fellow to include:
 - Clinical exposure, averaging at least once weekly.
 - Research timeline and specific tasks to be completed by fellow.
 - Plan for regularly scheduled meetings with the mentor and fellow.
 - Delineation of available resources and environment:
 - Facilities to be used at the institution where the research will be undertaken.
 - Any specific equipment you might need to complete the project.
 - Any other additional information the committee might need to know to ensure the project can be completed successfully.
 - Other education: describe any other educational opportunities, lectures, didactics within the department, cancer center and/or institution available to the medical student.
4. **Letters of Commitment:**
 - Mentor(s)
 - Department chair of the host institution (i.e., the mentor’s department chair). In lieu of his/her own letter, the chair may co-sign the mentor’s letter of commitment.
5. **Applicant Photo**
6. **CV:** Attach your complete curriculum vitae (including all past and current funding from any source). Limited to two pages.
7. **Mentor Biosketch**

Submission Deadline: February 16, 2023

Apply Online: <https://proposalcentral.altum.com>

Questions? Email diversity@astro.org