HVTN Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP) Scholar Awards

Request for Applications – Due January 6, 2020

The HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) is pleased to announce that the application period is open for the Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP), supported by the Division of AIDS, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. RAMP scholar awards support African American/Black and Latinx medical students considering careers in HIV vaccine research.

PURPOSE
RAMP aims to increase the participation of members of the African American/Black and Latinx communities in HIV prevention research, both as participants and as researchers. Specifically, RAMP identifies promising medical students from these communities who wish to engage in HIV prevention and vaccine-related research activities. Our goal is to develop future physician-scientists from these communities whose careers are dedicated to the search for a safe and effective HIV vaccine. To achieve this goal, the HVTN created this grant program to select and support competitive U.S. medical students and provide outstanding mentorship and training in an introductory experience with HIV vaccine and related research. These students, under the mentorship of HVTN-affiliated investigators, conduct research projects in areas aligned with the HVTN scientific agenda.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
- 8-10 week research projects
- Structured mentorship by HVTN investigator(s)
- Travel to an HVTN Clinical Research Site
- Opportunity for international travel (countries in sub-Saharan Africa)
- Attendance at an HVTN Full Group Meeting (May 2021 preferred)
- Oral and poster presentations and potential for publication

PROGRAM RESOURCES:
- Up to USD20,000 for an 8-10 week project
- Funding includes salary, materials, and travel
- Career mentoring and access to HIV vaccine research expertise
- Attendance at a maximum of five training webinars through the course of the year, and a professional development workshop at the conclusion of the program.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 6, 2020
PROGRAM OVERVIEW
Each year, the HVTN puts out a call to medical schools and student organizations to recruit a cohort of outstanding students. Interested students are then welcomed to submit an application for an 8-10 week research project working with HVTN-affiliated investigators.

- Projects involve a minimum 8-week onsite experience (i.e., 40 workdays onsite) and must be timed to occur between June 1st, 2020 – August 31st, 2020.
- Onsite experience will be supplemented with webinar training and professional development seminars.
- Following the onsite experience, scholars will continue to work with mentors remotely to complete any data analysis, prepare oral and poster presentations for the May 2021 HVTN Full Group Meeting, and collaborate on any resulting publications.

All projects for the June - August 2020 period will be conducted at an HVTN Clinical Research Site (CRS) located in a country in sub-Saharan Africa. Interested students should review available projects which will posted the week of December 2nd 2019 at www.hvtn.org/RAMP and utilize the RAMP application (available now at www.hvtn.org/RAMP) to demonstrate their interest in the project as well as their capacity to complete the project in the time allotted. Each student applicant is responsible for completing and submitting all application materials by January 6th, 2020.

Applications will undergo competitive review by the RAMP Review Board and the HVTN Scientific Governance Committee. Once selected, scholars will work closely with mentors and site staff to plan their research experiences, finalize logistics and create a mentorship plan. The scholar will then travel to the HVTN CRS to conduct the research project for the allotted time. During the project period, the mentor(s) will oversee the student’s progress throughout the project implementation and also work with the student on professional and career development. In addition to investigator-led mentorship activities, scholars will participate in HVTN-organized training activities designed to develop their skills in research methods, academic writing and working within the scientific community. Students should expect to complete the bulk of their research while onsite at the CRS, but will finalize data analysis, drafting of results, and preparation of oral and poster presentations of their work at their home institution.

The culmination of the project will occur when the scholars present their projects in an oral plenary session and a poster session at the HVTN Full Group Meeting scheduled for May 2021 in Washington D.C.

ELIGIBILITY OF SCHOLARS
This program specifically seeks U.S. medical students who self-identify as African American/Black or Latinx. We acknowledge that there are a number of other racial, ethnic and other minority groups that are underrepresented as researchers in the HIV vaccine community. However, the disproportionate impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the African American and Latinx communities in the U.S, combined with structural barriers that have limited career development opportunities for these students, warrant attention by programs such as RAMP.

To be considered for a RAMP scholar award, a candidate must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. They must be currently matriculated at an accredited U.S. medical school and express an interest in pursuing a future career in research relevant to HIV prevention and/or vaccine research. Students must be in good academic standing at their medical school and must be able to commit to working at their site full-time (approximately 40 hours per week) for the entirety of their project period.
PROJECT SELECTION
Students interested in applying for RAMP scholar awards should visit the “How to Apply” page at www.hvtn.org/RAMP and review all supporting application materials to ensure the program is a good fit. A list of potential RAMP projects will be available the week of December 2nd, 2019 at www.hvtn.org/RAMP.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS
Awarded scholars will be assigned HVTN-affiliated Resource Managers. The Resource Manager will facilitate payment for the scholar and provide additional research support as needed.

Upon selection to a RAMP Project, scholars will be informed of the regulatory requirements of the HVTN and of the host institution for their project and will be expected to complete these.

All projects will include:
- Orientation Conference Call
- Quarterly RAMP Seminar Series
- Kick-off Conference Call with Mentors
- Travel to and from selected HVTN site
- 8-10 week research project at an HVTN site
- Customized trainings and workshops designed for RAMP scholars
- Attendance at an HVTN Full Group Meeting (May 2021 in Washington, DC preferred)
- Poster and Oral Presentation of Results at the Full Group Meeting
- Potential publication of project

After the award is made, the scholar and mentor will develop milestones for the project in the Mentor-Scholar Agreement and send to the RAMP manager for tracking.

All scholars are required to present their results at an HVTN Full Group Meeting in the form of an oral plenary presentation and a poster. Scholars are also expected to attend the entirety of the HVTN Full Group Meeting (Scheduled for May 27-29, 2021 in Washington, D.C.), and work with their mentors to plan appropriate sessions to attend while there. Scholars must inform the RAMP Manager of any scheduling conflicts with the Full Group Meeting.

FUNDING
We anticipate that support will be available for up to 4 scholar grants at a maximum award amount of USD20,000 (direct costs).

A portion of funds from each award will be applied towards the scholar’s salary, which will cover living expenses during the project, including housing, food, local transportation, personal trips, traveler’s insurance, etc. Salaries are expected to be in the range of USD3,500-5,500 per month based on these factors. The salary funds will be distributed to the scholar in installments via check, paid directly to the scholar by HVTN.

The remainder of funds will be applied to purchase research supplies and cover travel to the site, and HVTN Full Group Meeting travel costs. To support the investigators’ research mentorship activities, the mentors may request up to USD1,500. This may be applied to mentor or staff salaries or supplies directly related to the RAMP project.
Project funding through the RAMP Scholar Award can begin any time starting June 1, 2020 and end no later than August 31, 2020. The exact dates of funding will depend on the schedules of the parties involved.

**REVIEW CRITERIA**

The following are the review criteria for the RAMP Scholar Award applications:

- The interest of the medical student in HIV/AIDS research or clinical care, and in potentially pursuing a career in HIV vaccine research.

- Relevant research background or personal experiences such as laboratory research, clinical experiences, strong interest in gaining new research experience, and/or personal experience with HIV/AIDS. Relevant research experience is not a requirement of the program but will be viewed favorably.

- The student’s ability to successfully complete a large-scale project like RAMP. Demonstrated evidence of qualities such as intellectual rigor, independence, curiosity, responsibility, drive and ability to manage multiple priorities.

**APPLICATION**

If interested in applying, please go to [www.hvtn.org/RAMP](http://www.hvtn.org/RAMP) and visit the “How to Apply” page. Applicants must fill out the RAMP Application Form, describing research and career interests, and the scholar’s conceptualization of the how they will successfully complete the project.

The deadline for receipt of applications is **January 6, 2020, by 5:00 PM PST**. All application materials must be submitted electronically, either through the application form or via email to HVTN Awards@hvtn.org. **No paper documents will be accepted.** The application, resume, and transcript(s) should be submitted electronically via the RAMP Application Form. The letter of recommendation should be either emailed directly to HVTN Awards@hvtn.org or uploaded via the application form. The applicants will be notified of receipt of application materials.

*Application Materials*

- RAMP Application Form
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae
- Transcript (unofficial PDF preferred)
  - First year students should provide a medical school and an undergraduate transcript
  - Second, third and fourth year students should provide a medical school transcript
- Letter of Recommendation (from professor, dean, or relevant professional)

**AWARD DATE**

Awards will be announced by mid-February 2020. Funding will be available for students to begin projects as soon as June 1, 2020. HVTN staff will work with students’ medical school leadership to verify academic standing and ensure institutional support for the students’ participation in all aspects of the program.

**INQUIRIES**

Questions regarding the RAMP Scholar Awards can be directed to HVTN Awards@hvtn.org or: