

## Request for Fellowship Proposals for Award Year 2026

December 15, 2025

### Overview of Funding Opportunity

The UC Cancer Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) is a systemwide, faculty-directed cancer research program that provides competitive intramural research awards for topics in any discipline that address any aspect of cancer, including its origins, detection, prevention and cure. Funding for this opportunity is provided through [33 bequests to UC](#) for cancer research.

CRCC Fellowships support mentored research spanning all areas from basic research to applied clinical and community-based research. Research must be directly relevant to cancer. Relevance and impact should be articulated in relation to theoretical and/or practical problems in cancer in any discipline, and may include the likely impact of the research on communities disproportionately at risk or afflicted by cancer. The CRCC funds meritorious research in any discipline with high relevance to and impact on cancer prevention, education or treatment. The CRCC is particularly interested in projects in public health and/or population sciences, including those addressing cancer health disparities and community-based awareness.

The CRCC Fellowship provides one-year grants to predoctoral students and one- or two-year grants to Postdoctoral Scholars pursuing cancer research on the 10 UC campuses. Predoctoral students must have advanced to candidacy and have an anticipated graduation date 12-18 months after the award start date. Postdoctoral Scholars must be within the first three years of their postdoctoral appointment at the award start date. Mentors must be full-time, independent faculty on one of the 10 UC campuses.

The award term is September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2027 for one-year awards and September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2028 for two-year awards. For more information, visit the [CRCC programs website](#).

This Request for Proposals (RFP) contains information regarding due dates, eligibility and exclusion criteria, budget guidelines, application components, and the review process and program contacts. Letters of Intent (LOIs) and applications must be submitted in compliance with this RFP and instructions.

*Proposals must be submitted through the PI's campus Office of Research (C&G or SPO). The PI is responsible for obtaining all required signatures and following campus proposal submission procedures.*

### Key Dates:

RFP Release:	Monday, December 15, 2025
Letter of Intent Due ( <b>required</b> ):	Thursday, January 22, 2026 ( <b>12 pm NOON Pacific Time</b> )
Notification of LOI Decision:	by Wednesday, February 11, 2026
Full Proposal Due:	Thursday, April 2, 2026 ( <b>12 pm NOON Pacific Time</b> )
Notification of Review Outcome:	Tuesday, June 30, 2026 (expected)
Award Start Date:	September 1, 2026

### **Predoctoral Fellowship Award**

1. Maximum total direct costs: \$80,000
2. Stipend, tuition and fees amount per year: \$75,000
3. Duration: 1 year
4. Allowable direct costs:
  - a) Stipend, tuition and fees: The fellowship will provide \$75,000 that must be budgeted to cover full student tuition and fees, with the remaining funds to be paid as a monthly stipend to the student. Documentation of the institution's tuition and fees structure should be included in the budget justification.
  - b) Institutional allowance: The applicant may request an institutional allowance to help defray the cost of expenses such as health insurance, medical liability or other special insurance, courses and educational materials, research supplies, project-related travel, and travel to scientific conferences. These costs will be covered up to \$5,000 per year. The institutional allowance is a fixed amount, and the institution is not required to account for these expenses on an actual cost basis.
5. Requirements:
  - a) The proposal must reflect the predoctoral applicant's own original dissertation research and is expected to enhance the individual's potential to develop into a productive, independent scientist in cancer research. The project must not replicate the aims of any existing grants or applications held by the applicant's advisors or mentors.
  - b) The applicant must be enrolled in a doctoral program at UC at the time of application submission. Predoctoral fellows must remain in good standing, enrolled full-time (not in absentia status) throughout the fellowship, and engage full-time in the proposed research.
  - c) Eligibility ends if the awardee successfully defends their dissertation and completes their degree requirement before the funding period concludes.
  - d) When a predoctoral applicant has multiple mentors, one must be identified as the primary mentor for programmatic purposes. This individual should be designated as the dissertation advisor in SmartSimple, while others are listed as research advisors.

### **Postdoctoral Fellowship Award**

1. Maximum total direct costs: \$95,000 for one year or \$190,000 for two years
2. Salary/benefits amount per year: Up to \$90,000
3. Duration: 1 year or 2 consecutive years
4. Allowable direct costs:
  - a) Salary/benefits: Salary and benefits must adhere to the Postdoctoral Scholar (PX) Experienced-based Salary scale and comply with all applicable Provisions of the PX Collective Bargaining Agreement. The mentor is responsible for supplementing salary and benefits if the Postdoctoral Scholar's salary level exceeds the awarded amount.
  - b) Institutional allowance: The applicant may request an institutional allowance to help defray the cost of expenses such as professional development, research supplies, project-related travel, and travel to scientific conferences. CRCC will cover up to \$5,000 per year for these costs. The institutional allowance is a fixed amount, and the institution is not required to account for these expenses on an actual cost basis.
5. Requirements:
6. The proposal must reflect the Postdoctoral Scholar's own original research project that builds upon their prior experience and furthers their development as a productive,

independent scientist in cancer research. The project must not replicate the aims of any existing grants or applications held by the applicant's advisors or mentors.

- a) The applicant must have secured a full-time position in one of the following titles by full application submission: Postdoctoral Scholar Employee/Fellow/Paid-Direct. Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) Local 4811, and the University of California, this is a represented position.
- b) The applicant must be employed by the applicant's institution in one of the above-mentioned titles no later than the award start date. Postdoctoral Scholars must remain full-time trainees throughout the fellowship.
- c) Eligibility ends when a Postdoctoral Scholar accepts and begins a non-mentored staff or faculty-level role, even if this occurs before the funding period concludes.
- d) When a Postdoctoral Scholar has multiple mentors, one must be identified as the primary mentor for programmatic purposes. This individual should be designated as the research advisor in SmartSimple, while others should be listed as mentors.

### **Overview of the Application and Selection Process**

The LOI is a requirement for the application process. The LOI submission deadline will be strictly enforced, and no application may move forward without an approved LOI. Applicants must submit their LOIs using the online SmartSimple application system. LOIs will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness, compliance with program requirements, and alignment with program priorities. The CRCC may invite only a subset of applicants to submit full proposals. No feedback or comments will be provided on the LOI.

Only those with approved LOIs will be provided access to submit a full application in SmartSimple. Full proposals must be submitted online and in accordance with the instructions, templates and guidelines provided in SmartSimple and must conform to the requirements of this RFP. It is the applicant's responsibility to check the program website for any updates or clarifications prior to submitting the full proposal.

Full proposals undergo a competitive peer review and ranking process by the CRCC and are scored on merit and cancer relevance/impact, mentorship/training, and applicant qualifications, as outlined herein. Program funding varies on a year-to-year basis, but it is expected that \$2 million will be available. Funding decisions are based on ranking and availability of funding and are final.

### **Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria**

*Adherence to eligibility requirements will be evaluated at the LOI stage, as well as during the full proposal review. Please review these criteria and the attached FAQs ([Appendix 1](#)). If questions about eligibility remain, please contact [UC Research Initiatives \(UCRI\)](#).*

1. Eligible Principal Investigators (PIs): Proposals must be submitted by a full-time predoctoral student or Postdoctoral Scholar at one of the 10 UC campuses who serves as the PI for the award. Predoctoral students must be enrolled in a degree program (PhD, MD/PhD or equivalent); Postdoctoral Scholars must have a doctoral degree (PhD, MD or equivalent) at the time of award start. PIs must have identified and consulted with a mentor who is committed to

their training and who is an independent faculty member employed 100% time on UC-administered payrolls at a UC campus. Awarded proposals will be administered by the campus department or unit identified in the proposal. A letter from the PI's mentor is required at the full proposal stage for verification of the applicant's appointment, percent time employed, and (for predoctoral students) anticipated graduation date.

2. Proposal Eligibility: Each applicant may submit only one proposal per year.
3. Exclusion Criteria: Applicants who have previously received Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) funding must be in compliance with all reporting requirements to be eligible to receive CRCC funding.

### **Budget Guidelines**

1. Budget Request: The maximum award request is \$80,000 for predoctoral students and \$190,000 for Postdoctoral Scholars. All budget line items must directly support the research, training, and dissemination activities in the proposal and must be justified in relation to the scope of work. Costs to supplement other awards are not allowed.
2. Duration of a Grant: Grants are awarded for a one- or two-year period, September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2027 or September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2028, respectively. The CRCC expects that the funds provided will be used for one or two full years of research, training, and dissemination by the PI. The CRCC will not provide funds for a partial year of research. The funds may not be transferred to another researcher. The PI should not accept the award if there is a likelihood of leaving the University of California within the award period.
3. Overlap: CRCC funds may not be used to support overlapping projects. **Overlap** is defined as research that is substantially the same as research described in a pending or funded proposal. See FAQ #7.
4. Allowable Costs: CRCC funds may be used to support the applicant's salary, stipend, tuition and/or fringe benefits. Travel expenses are allowed only for the PI for conference travel to present research results and/or data collection directly related to the proposed research.
5. Non-allowable Costs: The following costs may not be charged to a CRCC Fellowship award: salary support for faculty, regular or visiting academic (either research or teaching) staff, clerical assistance; subcontracts; clinical trials; patient care costs; office supplies, books, periodical subscriptions; patent execution costs; membership fees; fundraising costs. CRCC grants do not provide indirect cost recovery.

### **Letters of Intent: Components, Review and Selection**

All applicants must submit an LOI using SmartSimple. LOI instructions are available [online in SmartSimple](#) and [Appendix 2](#) of this document. LOIs must be submitted by the deadline listed on page 1.

The LOI must include the following information:

1. PI name, title, departmental and campus affiliation, and PI ORCID;
2. PI biosketch: Not to exceed five (5) pages. Please use the NIH fellowship template. Include intended career goals and career trajectory in the Personal Statement;
3. Mentor biosketch: Not to exceed five (5) pages. Please use the NIH template with the following modifications: list current and pending grants; if applicable, describe the need for funding to support the trainee (applicant PI) in the Personal Statement. Only upload the primary mentor's biosketch. If the applicant has more than one mentor, additional mentors may be added when the full proposal is submitted;
4. Abstract (2400 characters/~350 words): Provide a brief description of the proposed scope of research and activities and how they will prepare the applicant for a career in cancer research (this is the body of the "Letter of Intent"; do not submit a separate letter);
5. Specific Aims (2400 characters/~350 words): Describe the aims to be accomplished during the award period, including methods to be used;
6. Cancer Relevance and Impact: Briefly describe the project's relevance to and impact on cancer prevention, education or treatment;
7. Topic/Discipline: Applicants are asked to select the topic or discipline most closely aligned with their research; and
8. Common Scientific Outline Code: Applicants are asked to code their research according to the [Common Scientific Outline \(CSO\)](#) classification system.

LOIs must include required elements and will be evaluated for eligibility to submit full proposals in accordance with the criteria outlined in the Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria section above. LOIs will be evaluated for responsiveness to this RFP in three areas: 1) eligibility and completeness; 2) compliance with program requirements; and 3) alignment with the program goals and funding priorities. The CRCC may invite only a subset of applicants to submit full proposals. Information provided in the LOI will also be used to assist in planning for the full review. All applicants will be notified of the LOI outcome, but no feedback or comments on the proposed research will be provided.

### **Full Proposal: Content, Review and Selection**

Proposals must adhere to all the requirements to be forwarded to the peer review stage. Applicants selected to submit a full proposal will be notified in February. Instructions for the full application will be made available in early February 2026 in SmartSimple. *Proposals must be submitted through the PI's campus Office of Research (C&G or SPO). The PI is responsible for obtaining all required signatures and following campus proposal submission procedures. The PI should contact the appropriate office as soon as an invitation to advance to full proposal is received.*

#### *Scope and Content of the Full Proposals*

The full proposal must include the following components and use the templates provided (maximum page length indicated for each section must be strictly adhered to):

1. Abstract (2400 characters/~350 words): The abstract should be appropriate for a general scholarly audience. Avoid disciplinary jargon or technical language specific to a single field. The abstract is not counted in the 4-page limit.

2. Proposed Research Plan (4-page limit, not including literature cited): Identify the research activities and scholarly contributions of the proposed research, including the innovative components that will advance scholarship in cancer research. The plan should be written for a general scientific audience and must include a description of the lab facilities, data, or resources that the applicant will use, and explain the importance to the applicant's career development as a cancer researcher.

The scope of the proposal should be suitably limited such that completion in one or two years is a reasonable expectation. The narrative must emphasize what the PI expects to accomplish with the CRCC funds, including a timeline and expected outcomes.

CRCC funds are intended to support research clearly and directly related to cancer and are not intended for support of general biological or other health research. Proposals should articulate their cancer relevance and impact in relation to theoretical and/or practical problems in cancer in any discipline. Relevance and impact may also include the likely impact of the research on communities disproportionately at risk or afflicted by cancer.

Applicants may include up to 1 additional page (not included in the 4-page limit) for literature cited.

3. Mentoring Training Experience (1 page): The mentor should describe their history of mentoring predoctoral students or Postdoctoral Scholars, including number of trainees and their current positions, if known.
4. Mentoring Plan/Training Plan (1 page): The proposal must include a detailed training plan developed in consultation with the applicant's mentor, describing the specific training and mentorship activities, including any courses, workshops and/or professional development opportunities to supplement the research. Describe how the mentorship and training will prepare the applicant for a career in cancer research. Include a timeline and frequency of mentor-trainee meetings.
5. Itemized Budget and Justification: Provide an itemized budget for the proposed activities in accordance with the allowable costs and budget guidelines. A budget justification that describes significant project expenditures is also required. The budget should include *direct costs only (no indirect costs are allowed)*.
6. Other Support: Please use the provided template. Identify all current and pending grants and fellowships that the applicant has applied for or has been awarded that provide direct financial support to the PI during the project period. Include direct costs only. For each grant or fellowship, describe any scientific relationship that exists between that grant and the proposed CRCC project and, specifically, how they differ. Do not include the mentor's grants.
7. Additional Attachments (*all required unless otherwise noted*):
  - a) PI biosketch: Not to exceed five (5) pages. Please use the NIH fellowship template. Include intended career goals and career trajectory in the Personal Statement.
  - b) Mentor biosketch: Not to exceed five (5) pages. Please use the NIH template with the

following modifications: list current and pending grants; if applicable, describe the need for funding to support the trainee (applicant PI) in the Personal Statement. If the applicant has more than one mentor, include only biosketches of mentors involved in the research.

- c) Human subjects, animals or biohazards: Indicate anticipated IRB or IACUC review requirements and, if applicable, provide a summary of any human subjects or animal use issues.
- d) Letters of reference: Three blinded letters of reference are required, describing the applicant's qualifications and capacity for a career in cancer research. One letter must be from the primary mentor; the other two must be from individuals who are not involved in the research project. Do not submit more than three letters; letters from individuals involved in the research project will be redacted from the application. The mentor's letter should also include: 1) a statement of commitment to serve as an advisor to the applicant for the duration of the award and provide mentorship and training as outlined in the Mentoring Plan/Training Plan, 2) assurance of access to equipment and available resources to support the applicant's research project, and 3) the following verifications. For predoctoral students, include a statement verifying the applicant PI's status as a full-time predoctoral student at UC, their advancement to candidacy, and anticipated or confirmed date of graduation. For Postdoctoral Scholars, include a statement verifying the applicant PI's status as a full-time Postdoctoral Scholar, including position title (Postdoctoral Scholar Employee/Fellow/Paid-Direct), and their initial or anticipated UC appointment date in the mentor's lab. Applicants with more than one mentor may submit a joint letter or a letter from the primary mentor. Letters may not exceed one page each.

### *Proposal Review and Scoring Criteria*

The review process is competitive and the CRCC will evaluate proposals based on the scoring criteria and program priorities. Committee members are faculty drawn from the University of California system with a wide variety of expertise. Review assignments will be made to ensure a fair and balanced review and to address conflicts of interest.

Proposals receive a combined score based on specific consideration of the following:

1. Research Excellence and Cancer Relevance and Impact: The results of the proposed research should make a significant advance in scholarship and (for predoctoral applicants) enable degree completion. The research plan should be appropriate for the level of the applicant, clearly relate to their research plan, and be feasible in the proposed timeframe. Reviewers will also assess the project's relevance and impact on cancer prevention, education or treatment; and the extent to which it will prepare the applicant for a career in cancer research.
2. Strength of Training, Supervision, and Mentorship: The quality and engagement of the mentor and endorsement of the proposed research and training plan, and level of supervision should be evident. The strength of the training and mentorship plan should ensure the student or Postdoctoral Scholar receives adequate time and supervision to complete their project/degree and has access to all necessary resources. This includes the extent of structured opportunities to engage with other scientists, trainees, and with experts and programs in place at the campus. Reviewers will also assess the extent to which the training

and mentorship will prepare the applicant for a career in cancer research.

3. **Qualifications of the Applicant and Quality of Academic Preparation:** The applicant's academic record should demonstrate their potential to conduct successful research and (for predoctoral students) enable degree completion, and include evidence of strong, appropriate preparation for the research through both coursework and prior research or training. Important criteria include the extent to which the applicant demonstrates the likelihood of success and academic productivity.

In making funding recommendations, reviewers also consider:

1. **Alignment with CRCC Topics of Interest:** Special consideration will be given to applications in public health and/or population sciences, including cancer health disparities and community-based awareness.
2. **Additional Considerations:** a) Considerations related to human subjects, animal use or biohazards, and the proposed compliance plan; and b) the PI's concurrent research or fellowship support and the mentor's need for funding to support the trainee.

#### *Final Selection*

The final determination of awards will be made based on a rank-ordered list of proposals approved by the CRCC and available funding. Funding decisions are not subject to appeal.

Upon nomination for funding, applicants will be required to provide updated Other Support information and meet other pre-funding criteria. *Abstracts of funded proposals will be made publicly available.* Funded proposals must comply with all relevant UC, state, and federal research policies and PIs are required to submit a progress report at the end of the fund year, and final report of research outcomes in four years. Publications and other dissemination resulting from research supported by the CRCC must acknowledge CRCC support in the publication.

#### **Research Program Oversight**

The CRCC is administered under the auspices of UC Research Initiatives (UCRI) in the Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) at the UC Office of the President. Funded proposals will be assigned to a program officer who will serve as the primary program contact.

#### **Additional Information**

*Please review the CRCC Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document appended as [Appendix 1](#).*

*For questions on program scope and priorities, please contact [UC Research Initiatives \(UCRI\)](#).*

*For administrative questions regarding the application process and for technical questions related to use of SmartSimple, please contact [RGPOGrants@ucop.edu](mailto:RGPOGrants@ucop.edu).*