

**Virginia Tech Post-Baccalaureate
Research and Education
Program (VT-PREP) in the
Biomedical and Behavioral
Sciences**

VT-PREP Scholars Handbook

www.vtprep.maop.vt.edu

This Handbook is subject to change

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Virginia Tech Post Baccalaureate Research and Education Program (VT-PREP)

Mission

To use developmental and experiential learning activities to prepare post-baccalaureate scholars in the biomedical and behavioral sciences for the successful pursuit of PhDs and research careers.

Program Support

- The VT-PREP is supported by the NIH through the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), which has a special commitment to preparing scholars from underrepresented groups for participation in careers in the biomedical and behavioral sciences.

Program Governance and Management

The VT-PREP program will be led according to the terms and conditions governing NIGMS grant 1R25GM066534-01A1. As promised to NIH, PREP will be led by the PI, Ed Smith, who shall also be referred to in this document as Program Director. Other members of the management team include the Co-PI, Larry Moore; the Ombudsman, Marilyn Kershaw; and the Chair of the Advisory Committee. Day-to-day management of PREP is the responsibility of the Program Director who will be assisted by the PREP Coordinator. The PREP management team will have the primary responsibility of getting PREP scholars through an experiential program that will get them into a Ph.D. program. The PI will be responsible for all personnel decisions and the disbursement of PREP funds.

Eligibility

- A Masters degree or BA or BS with a minimum GPA of 2.5 (of possible 4.0)
- U.S. citizenship or permanent residency
- Applicants must have graduated within the last three years
- Applicants must be interested in pursuing a Ph.D. within two years of admission into PREP

PREP Scholar

Each PREP scholar has met and exceeded the eligibility criteria defined above and has been accepted by a mentor and designated by Virginia Tech as an Apprentice Scientist at the rank of “Research Associate”. The primary responsibility of the scholar is to ensure that he or she is making adequate progress in acquiring the necessary background and experience to be competitive for admission to a Ph.D. program at VT or elsewhere. Adequate progress shall be defined as but not limited to the following:

- Become an independent worker capable of conceiving and carrying out a scientific research project

- Develop an ability to judge science beyond a broad cynicism within a discipline consistent with the biomedical and behavioral science culture
- Be able to communicate effectively research results to peers locally and at national and international meetings

VT-PREP Scholar Benefits

Benefits provided scholars are in accordance with NIH guidelines as described in PAR-03-140 that can be found at <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-03-140.html>.

- \$21,000 annual stipend plus benefits as a special research faculty member (health care, retirement, disability and life insurance)
- Tuition remission
- Travel support to attend a workshop or to make a presentation at a scientific meeting
- Possible research exchange at the University of Washington Genome Center
- Increased competence and experience in scientific field of interest
- A commitment of 4 VT graduate assistantships and tuition scholarships to 4 PREP scholars annually available to those admitted to a VT graduate program on a full-time basis

Terms of Appointment

- A 12 to 24-month mentored research experiential work and educational program
- 75% of each scholar's time will be spent in a mentored research program
- 25% time will be spent in enrichment programs including:
 - VT undergraduate and/or graduate coursework
 - Academic seminars and workshops
 - Off-site technical workshops to gain additional laboratory skills
 - Graduate school preparation and survival skills workshop
 - GRE preparation program
 - Regional and national conferences
 - Meetings
 - PREP meetings/social interactions
 - PREP coordinator
 - Peer mentor

Evaluation: Evaluation at several levels is a must for the PREP program. PREP scholars must participate in the evaluation process which will be conducted separately from the experiential activities. The PREP Evaluator is Dr. Lee Cooper. Please familiarize yourself with the Evaluation process as described in the "Evaluation" section of this Handbook.

VT-PREP Mentor

Research mentors, with outstanding records of scholarly work and student advising from different colleges and programs at Virginia Tech, have agreed to use their experiences and wisdom in mentoring PREP scholars. The broad research areas of the faculty include: *cell and molecular biology, biophysics, biochemistry, biomechanical engineering, genetics including functional and comparative, mathematical modeling, molecular and biochemical nutrition, neurobiology, physiology, proteomics, computational biology and behavioral sciences.*

An active VT-PREP mentor has a scholar engaged in research activities and preparing to enter a Ph.D. program at VT or at other Research Extensive universities. The mentor is responsible for the day-to-day research and related activities of the PREP scholar. It is expected that although PREP scholars have research faculty appointments, their mentoring will follow the paths of those of graduate students. As such, each scholar is expected to actively participate in the mentor's research program and to be assigned a research project that can offer the potential of growth of the scholar and impact on the field. It will be the responsibility of the mentor and the scholar to identify conferences to attend and to present research papers/posters. PREP will provide travel support for both the mentor and the PREP scholar. The mentor shall also be responsible for the identification of courses that the scholar can take to help in his/her development. Mentors will also be required to provide periodic feedback as detailed in **Evaluation**.

Courses

As a state employee at VT, PREP scholars are entitled to enroll in a maximum of 12 credits of course work a year without paying tuition. PREP scholars will be expected to take gateway as well as supplemental courses to help in their development and competitiveness for admission into a Ph.D. program at a Research Extensive university.

VT-PREP Code of Conduct

As a VT-PREP scholar, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. The Special Research Faculty Handbook, which is applicable to PREP scholars, includes a statement of principles of ethical behavior that should guide your work and interactions, see http://www.provost.vt.edu/researchfachandbook/srf_02.html, section 2.12.

Virginia Tech Environment

(see www.vt.edu/ and www.grads.vt.edu/ for more information)

- Virginia Tech is the largest research university in VA and ranks among the top in many disciplines in the world
- Several social and academic programs are available on campus to enhance and enrich the experience of minority students (see www.diversity.vt.edu for more information)
- VT ranks among the top 10 Research Intensive Institutions for the number of minorities receiving graduate degrees

Synergism with other programs at VT including those in the Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP)

PREP made a commitment to NIH that the scholars will not be isolated and that synergism with existing programs will be a priority. Therefore, PREP management and scholars will seek to participate in all VT activities that will help develop a critical mass necessary to make minorities feel welcome and a part of the scientific endeavors at VT. The Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP) family supports the academic success and personal growth of undergraduate and graduate students at Virginia Tech. MAOP consists of five divisions: Undergraduate Scholars Program, Peer Mentoring Program, Mid-Eastern Alliance for Minority Participation (MEAMP), Graduate Scholars Program, and the Summer Research Internship Program. VT-PREP participants are a part of the MAOP family and are encouraged to participate in the activities and services that are provided. Please visit the MAOP web-site at <http://maop.vt.edu> for more information.

Housing

Housing can be found through the VT-PREP coordinator, students, faculty, or the university housing office. The cost of room and board is borne by the scholar.

Termination from VT-PREP

PREP scholars are initially given a one-year contract that is renewable for a second year if adequate progress is being made as determined from the evaluations. The maximum appointment of each PREP scholar is 2 years. Termination before this can be either voluntary or involuntary:

- **Voluntary Termination**

PREP, like other educational enrichment programs, is run on a trust system and our ability to identify scholars/candidates who will stay the course and follow their dream as espoused in their applications and during the interview process. Supporting this dream to become biomedical or behavioral scientist is our sole purpose in PREP. So, if a scholar determines that he or she wants to terminate their participation in PREP, we will first focus on understanding the reasons for this decision and to provide help if appropriate. If a solution cannot be found, a scholar should provide a 30-day notice to the mentor and the PREP Program Director/PI prior to resignation.

- **Involuntary Termination**

PREP scholars shall be terminated for reasons that include but are not limited to the following:

- Inadequate progress toward becoming competitive to enter a Ph.D. program

- Activities determined to be inconsistent with faculty status as described in the VT Special Research Faculty Handbook. The following procedure shall be used as a guide in terminating PREP scholars:

1. The PREP scholar shall be informed of the specific violation
2. A meeting shall be arranged, if necessary, of the PREP scholar, the Ombudsman, the Program Director, and in some cases, the mentor

3. A final decision of termination shall be made by the Management Team, all of whom do not have to meet with the scholar prior to making a final decision. Termination shall be made in writing and scholars will be given a 30-day notice.

Problem Resolution

Built into PREP management and activities are a series of opportunities to address problems scholars may encounter. PREP scholars are expected to use resources available to them in solving these problems including:

1. The mentor
2. PREP management
3. The PREP Ombudsman, Marilyn Kershaw

We will especially want PREP scholars to use the “Tuesdays with Larry and Marilyn” meetings to address potential concerns.