

Renewing a T32 Cancer Biology Training Grant

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CABTRAC Annual Retreat
Kiawah Island, SC
October 27, 2015

T32 CA071341, Cancer Cell Biology Training Program

- **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**, Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center
- **Directors:** Channing J. Der, Adrienne D. Cox (currently transitioning to Adrienne D. Cox, M. Ben Major)
- **Trainees:** 6 positions, predoctoral only (current year: 19)
- **Mentors:** 40, from 8 PhD-granting depts, 2 curricula
- **External advisory board, Internal advisory committee, Minority recruitment liaison**
- **Program-specific features:** Clinical shadowing program, Target-based cancer drug discovery course, Joint annual symposium with HHMI Program in Translational Medicine
- **Website:** <http://cancer.med.unc.edu/cancer-cell/>

Strengths Leading to Priority Score of 23

■ **Training program**

- Importance of topic area of translational cancer biology
- TG-specific courses, including translational drug discovery and pathobiology
- Clinical shadowing and annual retreat
- “Only” training program for predoctoral training in cancer research
- Program leveraged by other funds
- Strong training environment with lots of resources
- Strong ties with complementary postdoc-only T32

Strengths: Leadership, Mentors

- **Directors**

- Strong training records
- Internal, external advisory committees

- **Mentors**

- Distribution of senior/midlevel/junior faculty with NCI funding and training history
- Collaborative research and mentorship
- Clear selection criteria

Strengths, continued

- **Trainees**
 - All slots are filled, from BBSP and MSTP programs, second-year students who have selected thesis labs in cancer research
- **Training record**
 - Good distribution of students and mentors; many trainees have good publications
- **Minority recruitment**
 - TG-specific activities
 - Active leadership participation in recruitment
- (RCR – acceptable)

Strengths were generally unanimous
Weaknesses were generally reviewer-specific

Weaknesses: Training Program, Director Effort

- **Training Program**
 - Overlap with HHMI Program in Translational Medicine (which covers all aspects of medicine including cancer)
 - Better description of distinctions between CCBTP and HHMI programs
 - Lack of institutional financial support
 - Institutional support from LCCC annually for "program activities"; includes support for CABTRAC membership and attendance, EAB travel and honoraria, annual retreat, refreshments for journal clubs, etc.
- **Directors** - Insufficient percent effort (2% for PD, not spec for AD)
 - Increase Director effort to 5%; specify effort for both PD and AD

Current CCBTP Institutional Support

- CABTRAC annual membership fee
- Travel expenses for PD, AD, Program Administrative Coordinator and Trainee/s to attend CABTRAC Retreats
- Travel expenses and honoraria for EAB to visit and evaluate our program
- Travel expenses, honorarium, hosting expenses for keynote speaker of our annual Research Symposium
- Refreshments for monthly trainee journal club
- Travel expenses for PD, AD and/or Program Administrative Coordinator and Trainee/s to attend ABRCMS/SACNAS, etc.

Weaknesses: Mentors, Trainees

■ Mentors

- Inclusion of assistant professors who lack mentoring experience
- Clarify/emphasize requirement for experienced co-mentors

■ Trainees

- 43% acceptance rate is not selective enough
 - Remind T32 preceptors to encourage their trainees to apply!
 - To encourage more applicants to choose from, open applications to broader community than T32 preceptors?
- Some confusion about applications to this TG versus umbrella admissions program
 - Clarify CCBTP applicant pool versus umbrella admissions process for entire pool of UNC biomedical trainees
- Trainees do not have faculty positions
 - Highlight trainees with faculty positions

Weaknesses: Training Record

- "Some finished their PhD with a single 1st author publication"
 - When appropriate, emphasize impact and/or complexity of projects leading to single first-author publications
 - Encourage preceptors to help students finalize 1st author publications
- "not clear whether they have a regular venue...to present their own research for an audience"; "CABTRAC Annual Retreat is...a requirement of the program that helps to make it distinct; however...only a couple of the students have participated"
 - Better emphasize that our own annual retreat (presentations required from all trainees) and CABTRAC annual retreat (one trainee selected per year) are distinct events
 - **To help reviewers interpret information provided: include more footnotes, comments in Tables and emphasize them visually; bold key information in the Progress Report**

Minority Recruitment and Retention

- Only 12.5% minority trainees
 - In addition to our external recruiting efforts, monitor our internal pipeline: check with BBSP umbrella program applications / admissions to make sure we're recruiting all possible URM's interested in cancer research

“What have you done for us lately?”

- **New for renewal** (not in response to specific concerns about our T32)
 - IDPs (now an NCI requirement)
 - Formal survey evaluations to obtain trainee feedback
 - Monthly journal club
 - Preceptor lunches/program feedback
 - Student selection and hosting of a cancer center seminar speaker
 - Refreshed EAB
- Other components being developed...

More information on reviews/renewals

**See tomorrow's T32 review breakout session
for top do's and don'ts**

On the CABTRAC website (for CABTRAC members only, password-protected): additional T32 workshops and guidance from CABTRAC members and NCI Training Branch officials