

## **SBAS Intuitive Faculty Research Award Funding Opportunity Announcement (SBAS Faculty FOA)**

### **Program Start Date**

1/1/2025

### **Program End Date**

12/31/2026

### **Program Description**

Historically, academic surgeons from groups underrepresented in medicine (URIM) have faced daunting challenges in securing funds for research and have been largely excluded from this process of conducting research, with only 2% of NIH funding going to Black/African American applicants over a 20-year period. Most notably, only 10 Black/African American women received R01 funding over a 20-year period.

The intent of the annual SBAS Faculty Research Award is to provide early-career research support to junior faculty. The recipient of the award will have access to the award funds in addition to support from a senior-level SBAS member who will serve as a coach in partnership with their institutional research mentors. This award will support and propel a junior faculty member through their first years in academia and facilitate their preparation of research proposals that are suitable for submission to the NIH or a comparable funding agency.

### **Areas of Research**

Multidisciplinary care and training are both central and integral to the successful practice of both clinical and academic surgery. In recognition of this, applications may focus on clinical, basic science or translational research; surgical ethics; education; epidemiology; biostatistics; and/or health care systems and delivery as they relate to surgery.

### **Funding**

Funding in the amount of \$50,000/year for two years (\$100,000 total funding). This grant mechanism will only cover direct costs. No indirect costs will be covered.

### **General**

This funding mechanism specifically targets faculty in the early stage of their careers. Consideration may also be given to early investigators within the first seven years of their academic appointment who are changing the focus of their research.

SBAS will issue an open call for applications to applicants who are members of the organization.

### **Eligibility**

Any surgeon with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Principal Investigator (PI) is invited to work with his/her organization to develop an application for support in addition to the criteria below:

- A. Active member of SBAS in good standing who identifies as Black/African American
- B. Applicant's institution must be an institutional member of SBAS
- C. Within ten years of terminal degree or post-graduate training program
- D. Designated mentor at home institution; a letter from the applicant's designated mentor is required
- E. Track record of publications commensurate with the phase and stage of the applicant's career
- F. 20% or more protected time to conduct research
- G. A letter of support from the applicant's Chair or Division Chief is required.
- H. Applicant is required to disclose any research funds including potential funds to be received within the first year of the award
- I. Applicant with career development grants from other societies are eligible to apply
- J. Applicant with NIH funding such as K (internal [e.g., BIRCWH, K12, KL2] or individual), R-21, or R-01 grants are NOT eligible to apply
- K. Applicant must submit a NIH Biosketch

## Program Structure

- A. Quarterly coaching with a senior-level SBAS member. The coaching sessions will allow awardee to address non-research factors which may impede success in academic surgery and aid promotion.
- B. Quarterly mentorship meeting (i.e., to discuss research progress, barriers to research success, share learning opportunities for growth in research space, etc.).
- C. Submit an abstract submission to the SBAS annual meeting during each year of the award.
- D. Submit an annual progress report and present a research update each year at the SBAS Annual Meeting.
- E. Attend a minimum of two SBAS mentorship programs (e.g., Leadership Institute, Promotion and Progress Institute) annually. Attendance will be free for the awardee.
- F. Serve as a future Mentor
  - i. Awardees may be asked to provide peer mentorship to subsequent awardees to allow a clear multitiered team to support success.

## Selection Criteria

Selection of the SBAS Faculty Research Grant recipient(s) will involve review of applications by SBAS Research and Education Committee (REC) members, independent of any industry oversight or influence, using the NIH scoring system. The SBAS President, Executive Director, and Administrator will be notified of the selected awardee and alternate. As a condition of the grant, recipients must deliver a podium presentation of their findings during the annual SBAS meeting.

## Review Criteria

### A. Candidate

- i. Does the candidate have the potential to develop as an independent and productive researcher?
- ii. Are the candidate's prior training and research experience appropriate for this award?
- iii. Is the candidate's academic, clinical (if relevant), and research record of high quality?
- iv. Is there evidence of the candidate's commitment to meeting the program objectives to become an independent investigator?
- v. Do the letters of reference address the above review criteria, and do they provide evidence that the candidate has a high potential for becoming an independent investigator?

### B. Career Development Plan/Career Goals & Objectives

- i. What is the likelihood that the plan will contribute substantially to the scientific development of the candidate and lead to scientific independence?
- ii. Are the candidate's prior training and research experience appropriate for this award?
- iii. Are the content, scope, phasing, and duration of the career development plan appropriate when considered in the context of prior training/research experience and the stated training and research objectives for achieving research independence?
- iv. Are there adequate plans for monitoring and evaluating the candidate's research and career development progress?
- v. If proposed, will the clinical trial experience contribute to the applicant's research career development?

### C. Research Plan

- i. Are the proposed research questions, design, and methodology of significant scientific and technical merit?
- ii. Is the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project rigorous?
- iii. Has the candidate included plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project?
- iv. Has the candidate presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?
- v. Has the candidate presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, **such as sex, for studies in vertebrate animals or human subjects?**
- vi. Is the research plan relevant to the candidate's research career objectives?
- vii. Is the research plan appropriate to the candidate's stage of research development and as a vehicle for developing the research skills described in the career development

- plan?
- viii. If proposed, will the clinical trial experience contribute to the proposed research project?
- D. Mentor(s)**
- i. Are the qualifications of the mentor(s) in the area of the proposed research appropriate?
  - ii. Does the mentor(s) adequately address the candidate's potential and his/her strengths **and areas needing improvement?**
  - iii. Is there adequate description of the quality and extent of the mentor's proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate?
  - iv. Is the mentor's description of the elements of the research career development **activities, including formal course work adequate?**
  - v. **Is there evidence of the mentor's, consultant's, and/or collaborator's previous** experience in fostering the development of independent investigators?
  - vi. Is there evidence of the mentor's current research productivity and peer-reviewed support?
    - vii. Is active/pending support for the proposed research project appropriate and adequate?
    - viii. Are there adequate plans for monitoring and evaluating the career development **awardee's progress toward independence?**
    - ix. If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research career development, is there evidence of the appropriate expertise, experience, and ability on the part of the mentor(s) to guide the applicant during participation in the clinical trial?
- E. Environment & Institutional Commitment to the Candidate**
- i. Is there clear commitment of the sponsoring institution to ensure that the required minimum of the candidate's effort will be devoted directly to the research described in the application.
  - ii. Is the institutional commitment to the career development of the candidate appropriately strong?
  - iii. Are the research facilities, resources and training opportunities, including faculty capable of productive collaboration with the candidate adequate and appropriate?
  - iv. Is the environment for scientific and professional development of the candidate of high quality?
  - v. Is there assurance that the institution intends the candidate to be an integral part of its research program as an independent investigator?
  - vi. Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject **populations, or collaborative arrangements?**

**ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA (NOT SCORED)**

**F. Protections for Human Subjects**

- i. For research that involves human subjects but does not involve one of the categories of research that are exempt, under 45 CFR Part 46, the committee will evaluate the justification for involvement of human subjects and the proposed protections from research risk relating to their participation according to the following five review criteria: (1) risk to subjects, (2) adequacy of protection against risks, (3) potential benefits to the subjects and others, (4) importance of the knowledge to be gained, and (5) data and safety monitoring for clinical trials.
- ii. For research that involves human subjects and meets the criteria for one or more of the categories of research that are exempt, the committee will evaluate: (1) the justification for the exemption, (2) human subjects involvement and characteristics, and (3) sources of materials. Please refer to the Guidelines for the Review of Human Subjects

**G. Inclusion of Women, Minorities, and Individuals Across the Lifespan**

- i. If the proposed project involves human subjects and/or clinical research, the committee will evaluate the proposed plans for the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals on the basis of sex/gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals across the lifespan (including children and older adults) to determine if it is justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed. For additional information on review of the Inclusion section, please refer to

the Guidelines for the Review of Inclusion in Clinical Research.

H. **Study Timeline (Optional – clinical trial only)**

- i. Does the work proposed appear feasible for the amount of time allotted?
- ii. Is there accounting for challenges with participant accrual and retention?

There is a need for mentorship focusing on both research and academic support for early-career Black academic surgeons. This initiative is focused on both and provides funding for research with mentorship for the applicant as well so not just research but mentorship. The expected return on investment for this mentored research program is two-fold:

1) Development of Black/African-American academic leaders in surgery committed to becoming successful surgeon-scientists.

2) By year 3 of the program, we expect the first applicant to have generated sufficient data for submission of a career development grant (i.e., “K award”) at NIH or equivalent funding.

Overall, SBAS seeks to cultivate and support a cadre of successfully funded URIM academic surgeons who will fill the pipeline for future generations. SBAS stands in the perfect position to provide support for this pipeline as it stands as the preeminent organization representing the African American academic surgeon. Awardees will have access to holistic mentorship and coaching to attain success in academic surgery. The organization has been integral in the success of multiple African American academic surgeons including most recently the first African American woman Chair of Surgery, Yet, as has been previously noted we lack a robust pipeline of federally funded researchers which often is the metric for academic success to provide support for junior faculty interested in research.

**Success and impact will be measured by the following (short and long term) metrics.**

**Short Term**

1. IRB approval
2. Letter confirming access to participants (if applicable)
3. Biannual feasibility report articulating what is needed to accomplish goals of project from research and infrastructure vantage points.

**Long Term**

1. Successful submission (and resubmission) of NIH or equivalent funding
2. Attainment of NIH or equivalent funding
3. Promotion at rank for program participants (e.g., Instructor/Assistant to Associate)
4. Sustained and active membership in SBAS and contribution to the cycle of mentorship / leadership progression & success
5. Future participation in leadership training and coaching activities
6. Increase in the number of national academic societies or leadership positions since participation
7. Maintain continuity in SBAS research participation – we will invite past participants back to share what they have learned and how our program helped them
8. CV building / measures of academic scholarship - papers and grants
9. Research program building success and development (novel diagnostic and treatment programs)
10. Translation of research into clinical trials or other evidence of high-level, impactful research

**Timeline**

- May 15 - Jul 1 Application Submission
- Jul 1 - Aug 1 REC App review
- Aug 14 SBAS REC mtg - “Study section
- Sep 1 Awardee notified
- Sep 19-22 Awardee announcement at SBAS Annual Meeting

**Review**

- Applicants will undergo review by REC members

- Two reviewers each with an NIH study section type review of applications with final scoring denoting the recipient of the award.
- **Overall Impact:** Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed).
- **Scored Review Criteria Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit and give a separate score for each.** An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.
- **Significance** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? Is the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project rigorous? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims **change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions** that drive this field?

- The categories for each application should be graded with a score of 1-5 for each category with "1" being the lowest score and "5" being the highest. The scoring categories are below.

1. Candidate
2. Career Development Plan/Career Goals
3. Research Plan
4. Mentoring Plan
5. Environment and Institutional Commitment

Degree of Impact	Impact Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Moderate	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

- As part of the scientific peer review, applications will receive a written critique.
- Applications that are incomplete or non-compliant will not be reviewed

### Milestones

- Formal Report on Research Project: September of following year at the SBAS annual meeting
- Submission of NIH (or similar level of funding) award proposal  
<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/index.htm>
- Programmatic conclusion report: include letter from chair and institutional mentor

### SBAS Legacy

The Society of Black Academic Surgeons recognizes that its members are its most valuable asset. Outlined below are the organization's core values which underscore our foundation and purpose.

- **Excellence** - We promote the highest level of scholarship in all clinical, scientific, and educational endeavors.
- **Mentorship** - We cultivate an environment of mentorship and career development.
- **Advocacy** - We advocate for the success of underrepresented minority surgeons and for healthcare equity of underserved patient populations.
- **Community** - We celebrate the importance of fellowship in achieving our mission.