

Hub: Wake Forest University Health Sciences (Wake Forest School of Medicine)

Grant: KL2

Category: Mentorship

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KL2 Scholars Program: Translational Research Academy (TRA)



TRA: 24-month education and research support program to enhance the career development and success of early-career clinical and translational researchers

- 90 minute-long biweekly sessions provide leadership training, research support services, mentoring, and networking opportunities
- Small group setting for KL2 Scholars and other early career researcher
- Adjusted to follow a traditional academic calendar with rotating two-year curricula (A and B years) to allow concomitant training of two TRA cohorts, with a new cohort starting annually, either with the Year A or Year B curriculum
- New structure better aligns with new CTSA funding cycle, seamless integration with annual summer K&R Writers grant writing workshop series
- Facilitates peer mentorship, as 1st year and 2nd year TRA scholars overlap
- Session topics selected by group consensus from KL2 Core faculty and Scholar feedback
 - New sessions on Inclusion and Diversity, Learning Health System and Implementation Science that align with the overarching goals of Wake Forest CTSA.

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In 2020, the Wake Forest School of Medicine (WFSOM) launched the revised Translational Research Academy (TRA), a 24-month education and research support program to enhance the career development and success of early-career clinical and translational researchers. The TRA meets for 90 minutes biweekly to provide leadership training, research support services, mentoring, and networking opportunities in a small group setting for KL2 Scholars and other early career researchers. The TRA sessions are facilitated by the KL2 director/co-director and five additional KL2 core faculty and supported by CTSA staff. We restructured the TRA to follow a traditional academic calendar with rotating two-year curricula (A and B years) to allow concomitant training of two TRA cohorts, with a new cohort starting annually, either with the Year A or Year B curriculum.

Compared to our previous training model, this new structure better aligns with our new CTSA funding cycle, seamlessly integrates with our annual summer K&R Writers grant writing workshop series, and facilitates peer mentorship, as 1st year and 2nd year TRA scholars now overlap.

We created the revised TRA curriculum based on survey feedback from all KL2 core faculty and current and former TRA scholars. Topics were selected by group consensus. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also converted the TRA to a live virtual meeting format in March 2020. Cohort 7 of the TRA finished in a virtual format in May 2020, while the new TRA cohort of 15 research-intensive junior faculty started in September 2020. Year 1 of the revised curriculum ended in May 2021, followed by the K&R Writers series.

To encourage connectivity among TRA participants, we added new interactive features to each virtual TRA session, including brief introductions by each scholar/KL2 core faculty, a "question of the day," and work-in-progress discussions. We finished the first year of our revised TRA with a pandemic-appropriate outdoor speed networking event.

The revised TRA retains a novel Team Science curriculum and a session on Inclusion and Diversity. We also added Learning Health System and Implementation Science topics that align with the overarching goals of our CTSA.

First Year Curriculum Topics Presented in 2020/2021 included:

- Significance and Innovation: How Do You Know?
- Overview of the academic Learning Health System and Learning Health System Science
- Team Science: Effective Meetings - Make Every Moment Count
- Community Engagement: Why do it? What is it really? How do you do it best?
- Writing and Refining Your Specific Aims
- Pilot Studies
- Presentation Skills: Visualizing Data for Presentations & Manuscripts
- Data Management
- Best Practices for Managing Staff
- Networking and How to Get the Most Out of a Professional Meeting
- Building a Budget
- Financial Savvy for Early Career Researchers
- Best Practices for Getting EHR Data for Use in Research Studies
- Behavioral Strategies for Increased Writing Productivity

Outcomes/Measures Used to Determine Success: We tracked attendance at TRA sessions, and scholars complete pre- and post-TRA assessments of core translational science research competences. Scholars also complete a brief web-survey after each session to provide real time feedback on the content and alignment with career development goals. Streamlined longitudinal tracking of scholar success and productivity after graduating from the TRA is conducted annually by the CTSA Evaluation Team. Our

integrated tracking system collects data on productivity measures like grants submitted, publications, presentations, and promotions.

Description of Results: The new TRA format has been very well received, with 89% attendance by TRA Scholars. Of the 90 completed session evaluations, 91% were rated as valuable for career development, 92% would recommend the session to other learners, and 93% reported that the presenter's ideas were understandable and clear. Post-TRA results from the complete 2-year curriculum will not be available until 2022, but results from the pre-TRA assessment regarding desired career development content topics suggest that the revised TRA curriculum is well-aligned with scholar expectations.

Lessons Learned: The revised 24-month Translational Research Academy (TRA), including the transition to a virtual platform, was well received by early-career clinical and translational researchers. Attendance surpassed that of prior cohorts and more than 90% of session ratings were positive.