



LARGEST US COLLABORATIVE FUNDING EFFORT FOR EQUITY IN BIOMEDICINE AWARDS \$12.1M IN GRANTS

Effort support more than 250 early-career biomedical researchers with caregiving responsibilities intensified by the pandemic to accelerate the progress of 22 medical schools leading the way in cultivating, retaining and supporting a diverse research workforce

New York, Nov. 17, 2021 — Today, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) in concert with the American Heart Association, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the John Templeton Foundation, the Rita Allen Foundation and the Walder Foundation announced the 22 medical schools receiving \$12.1 million in grants through the **COVID-19 Fund to Retain Clinical Scientists** (FRCS) competition. As the nation's largest funding collaborative advancing equity in the biomedical sciences, the COVID-19 FRCS is designed to support the strengthening of policies, practices and processes at U.S. medical schools to advance the research productivity and retention of early-career faculty experiencing mushrooming family caregiving responsibilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building on the [promising outcomes](#) of a [similar program](#) launched by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation in 2015, this new COVID-19 FRCS collaborative is awarding grants of \$500,000 each to U.S. medical schools and their affiliated hospitals across 17 states that will together support at least 250 biomedical early-career faculty. The 22 recipient institutions will use the funds to deploy supportive programs that provide eligible faculty who are experiencing periods of caregiving crisis supplemental support for their research, such as hiring administrative personnel, statisticians and technicians, among other uses. These vital supports will allow hundreds of brilliant contributors to scientific discovery to keep their important work on track while directly tending to the needs of their families.

Across the entire workforce, the pandemic has exacerbated the caregiving demands too often borne disproportionately by women and people of color. The sciences have been especially hard hit, putting decades of gains in greater representation of women in the early ranks of these fields at risk. As documented in a [report](#) by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine earlier this year, "COVID-19 has negatively affected the productivity, boundary setting and boundary control, networking and community building, and mental well-being of women in academic STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Medicine)."

This is a persistent challenge made more visible by the rigors of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the biomedical research workforce's proximity to the crisis makes it particularly ripe to benefit from institutional action, the issues are long existing. Even prior to the pandemic, studies pointed to unsupported family caregiving as a likely fundamental contributor to the loss of [more than 40%](#) of early-career physicians at their first full-time faculty appointments at academic medical schools within 10 years. The pressures of COVID-19 have only worsened this attrition and decimated research productivity.

Bioscience researchers, especially those with dependents, decreased time spent on research upwards of 40%. A National Academies' survey of women faculty found that, due to COVID-19, 58% of respondents faced childcare or eldercare demands, and most were shouldering a majority of school and childcare responsibilities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that researchers of color have also been more deeply affected by such demands.

The stark effects of COVID-19 on caregivers in biomedicine also present an urgent opportunity for the biomedical sciences to better support faculty who identify as women and/or as members of communities of color, including Black and Indigenous people, and remove systemic barriers to their advancement. The 22 medical schools chosen for support to implement these programs all feature a strong body of research, aggressive efforts to provide a more equitable and inclusive environment for faculty and students, and a commitment to further advancing such efforts. The wide demand for this program, as evidenced by the sizable applicant pool, confirms the time is now for medical schools to rethink and reimagine how they accommodate researchers during periods of outsized family caregiving needs.

Sam Gill, CEO and president of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, stated: "COVID-19 brought us face-to-face, or Zoom-to-Zoom, with the caregiving demands so many face. This is a crisis for biomedical science—but it can be an opportunity. These medical schools are leading the way in seizing the urgency of the moment to challenge business as usual and to commit to innovative approaches that will assure a more inclusive, equitable future across the biomedical sciences."

Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association, stated: "The pandemic has been particularly challenging for clinical scientists, especially women and people of color who are already disproportionately under-represented in science. Keeping research moving forward and ensuring equity in research is vital. The AHA is committed to support diverse investigators as part of the COVID-19 Fund to Retain Clinical Scientists to advance equity in the biomedical sciences through policies, practices and education."

Louis J. Muglia, MD, PhD, president and CEO of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, stated: "Physician scientists are in a unique position to provide perspectives that integrate clinically-relevant questions with revealing mechanisms from the laboratory. To partner with so many other foundations on this investment is a testimony to the critical role physician scientists play in the research landscape and the need to support them through challenging junctures in their careers."

Elizabeth Good Christopherson, president and CEO of the Rita Allen Foundation, stated: "The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social inequities to the forefront of public health, and we have seen how these inequities have deeply affected the biomedical research space. This initiative reflects the promise of funder collaboration to catalyze and accelerate long-needed culture change for academia to become more inclusive of scientists—particularly for women and scientists who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color—with family caregiving needs."

Heather Templeton Dill, president of the John Templeton Foundation, stated: "We're pleased to support the COVID-19 Fund to Retain Clinical Scientists. The pandemic has brought significant challenges to the workforce, including an intense strain on caregiving. This project will allow scientists and physicians to continue their essential, life-saving research and clinical efforts while maintaining their family caregiving responsibilities."

Dr. Joseph Walder, co-founder of the Walder Foundation, stated: "We recognize that many researchers, especially physician scientists, have been burdened by caregiving responsibilities during COVID-19. But beyond the pandemic, this is a systemic barrier faced by women and marginalized

scientists across the sector. We all benefit from the outcomes of life science research. By providing technical and coordinating support, critical research can move forward and valuable diversity retained.”

The majority of the grants are earmarked to support institutional programs providing research supplements for physician scientists working on clinical research projects whose productivity is being impacted by family caregiving responsibilities increased by COVID-19. Funding has also been earmarked to support at least two grants to U.S. medical schools at historically Black colleges and universities or universities serving large bodies of Latinx or Hispanic students.

The full list of grantee institutions is below:

COVID-19 FUND TO RETAIN CLINICAL SCIENTISTS

Grants of \$550,000 each total

Boston University School of Medicine
Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
Duke University
Emory University
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Indiana University School of Medicine
Northwestern University
The Ohio State University
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Arizona
University of Chicago
Michigan Medicine – University of Michigan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Pennsylvania / Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
University of Pittsburgh
University of Utah Health
University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical Center / Meharry Medical College
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis
Yale University
Stanford University School of Medicine

To learn more about the COVID-19 Fund to Retain Clinical Scientists, visit [the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s website](#).