

## **John Merck Scholars Program: Biology of Developmental Disabilities in Children**

**Grantor:** John Merck Fund

**Closes:** 9/30/2010

**Maximum:** \$300,000.00

John Merck Scholars Program: Biology of Developmental Disabilities in Children

The John Merck Fund has had a longstanding interest in children with cognitive and emotional disorders. The Fund supports the most promising basic research into the processes that impair the lives of the developmentally disabled, focusing on investigations by neurobiologists and by cognitive scientists of the underlying causes of developmental disabilities. The Fund hopes to foster a better scientific understanding of the origin of these disabilities and thereby provide the foundation for more effective approaches to their prevention and treatment.

The Fund inaugurated the annual John Merck Scholars Program in 1990 to award four-year fellowships to three scientists at academic institutions throughout the United States. The program is intended to serve as a major stimulus for gifted young scientists to conduct research relevant to the problems of children with cognitive and emotional disabilities.

### Research Areas

JMF has in the past funded and will continue to fund the most promising young researchers whose work illuminates neurodevelopmental disorders from the perspectives of (i) synapse formation and synaptic plasticity; (ii) learning and memory, and synaptic plasticity; (iii) perception, cognition and behavior; (iv) neurogenesis and pattern formation; and (v) genetics and early development. We also encourage proposals that (i) investigate the possible role of environmental chemicals in the origins of developmental disabilities, or that (ii) aim to distinguish subgroups within accepted diagnostic categories through the use of sophisticated behavioral and neuroimaging tests of perception, cognition, and emotions based on concepts from modern cognitive neuroscience. In all cases, we seek proposals from young scientists conducting research that is of the highest quality and that has the greatest chance of increasing our understanding of neurodevelopmental disorders.

### Eligibility

Applicants must have the following:

- \* Academic rank in a university or medical school, or equivalent standing in a research institute or medical center. If the institution offers tenure, must be on a tenure track.
- \* Not more than four years of experience in an independent faculty position at the time of the start of the award.
- \* A record of research in areas relating to the Fund's interest in the underlying causes of developmental disabilities.
- \* Evidence of a commitment to a career in neuroscience or cognitive science.

Applicants may not:

- \* Hold tenured positions or their equivalents.
- \* Apply in more than two rounds of competition.
- \* Apply for continued postdoctoral support.

### Scholarships and Restrictions

Three scholars will receive \$75,000 per year for a four-year period, subject to an annual review of research progress. The sponsoring institution is responsible for fiscal management. The award is for the exclusive use of the Scholar and may not be used for institutional or departmental support. Payments will be made to the Scholar's institution with the understanding that the total amount of the award will be used only by the John Merck Scholar and will be transferred should the Scholar change institutions. At the Scholar's discretion, up to 25 percent of the award may be used for his or her summer salary support, including, when necessary, fringe benefits. The balance may be expended for research assistants, equipment, or other purposes that promote the Scholar's scientific activities.

Note: Holding other fellowships concurrently with the John Merck Scholars Award is discouraged. Prior approval by the Fund for an overlapping fellowship is required and will be given only in unusual circumstances.

### Proposal Submission

The John Merck Scholars Program competition now accepts applications through a two-part, open process. Applicants no longer need to be nominated by an institution, and an unlimited number can apply. JMF will only accept proposals from applicants who demonstrate a strong background in Neuroscience or Cognitive Science.

Each applicant must submit a two-page description of their research activities and plans for the future, and their NIH biosketch. In the description, describe the proposed research program; how the candidate believes the work to be supported will improve the lives of children with co-occurring cognitive and emotional disorders; and the candidate's background, plans, and aspirations. The description is not to exceed 2 pages, in 11-point type, with 1-inch margins, and may be sent along with the NIH biosketch via email as a Word or PDF document by Thursday, September 30, 2010, to [nstockford@jmfund.org](mailto:nstockford@jmfund.org); the subject heading of the email should read: "John Merck Scholars Preliminary Proposal."

A distinguished panel of experts will review all the two-page descriptions and a limited number of full proposals will be invited.

### Review and Notification Procedures

- \* All preliminary proposals must arrive no later than September 30, 2010. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered.
- \* By November 15 the panel will select a limited number of applicants to submit full-length proposals. Candidates being invited to submit full proposals will be notified via email.

\* Full proposals will be due by January 18, 2011. Application guidelines will be provided to those invited to submit full proposals.

\* By March 21 the panel, from the pool of full-length proposals, will select six applicants to be interviewed in Boston in April or May 2011. The Fund will reimburse these applicants for the travel expenses required for the interview.

\* The panel will make its final selections, subject to approval by the Fund's Board of Trustees, and notify winners within two weeks of the interviews .

Applicants who are not accepted will be notified within several weeks of the close of each deadline.

For more information, contact Nancy Stockford, The John Merck Scholars Program, The John Merck Fund, 2 Oliver Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109; nstockford@jmfund.org; telephone: (617) 556-4120.

**Link:** <http://www.ccpr.ucla.edu/blog/>

**Categories:** Brain, Developmental Disabilities, Neurobiology, Neurophysiology , Neuroscience

**Audience:** Junior Faculty, Junior Investigator, Junior Researcher, Junior Scientist, Medical School Faculty, Neuroscientist, Physician Researcher