



## HOW TO NAVIGATE THE TRANSITION FROM FELLOW TO JUNIOR FACULTY

**Q: I am interested in academic medicine, but my institution doesn't have extra funding to support me after fellowship. What options are available to me?**

**A:** If you wish to stay at your institution, find out if there are internal opportunities funded by external training awards, such as individual NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Training Grants (T-32s), advises ATS president David H. Ingbar, M.D., who directs the Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Division at the University of Minnesota.

“These awards can provide two to three years of funding for research training and would be appropriate for third-year fellows looking to gain experience,” he explains. “Other grants, such as the NIH Mentored Clinical Scientists Development Program Award (K-L2s) or the individual K awards, offer five years of research support, but generally require more experience, preliminary data and publications.”

**Q: What if no externally funded opportunities exist at my institution?**

**A:** Apply for additional training at another institution where support is available or look to national and regional organizations that offer research training fellowships. A number of societies—including the ATS, American Cancer Society, American College of Chest Physicians, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and American Lung Association—offer awards just for this purpose.

**Q: Where do I find information about funding sources and available opportunities?**

**A:** Almost every major university has a searchable database of external funding support, which is a good place to start. Also ask your mentor, program director, division chief and colleagues if they are aware of awards for which you are eligible, suggests Charles G. Irvin, Ph.D., director of the Vermont Lung Center at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. “Once you identify an opportunity, it is also a good idea to call the funding organization to learn more and ask about other grants for which you will be most competitive,” he said.

Funding organizations usually post new grant opportunities on their respective Web sites, so online research can be extremely useful, adds Mark W. Geraci, M.D., head of the Division of Pulmonary Sciences and Critical Care Medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

**Q: Are particular grants better than others?**

**A:** The grants that provide the most money, with the most flexibility, for the longest duration are obviously the most sought after awards, said Robb Glenny, M.D., professor of medicine, physiology and biophysics and head of the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle. He notes that the American Heart Association and Parker B. Francis Fellowship offer some fellow-to-faculty grants that are ideal for funding the transition from a fellow to a faculty position.

Be aware, however, that these awards usually require a mentor who is willing to sponsor and support your research, cautions Gary Hunninghake, M.D., who serves as director of the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research and the Graduate Program in Translational Medicine at the University of Iowa. Timing is also an issue: “Since there is a lag period from the time of submission to the time of funding, you would need to apply for these a year before the end of your fellowship,” he explains.

**Q: I can't stay at my own institution after fellowship. What would make me most competitive to get a research-oriented academic job elsewhere?**

**A:** A strong CV with an identified programmatic need at the potential institution is crucial. “An employer might be looking for certain research or clinical skills, the quality of which can be difficult to judge, but no one will have trouble counting the number of papers

you have published or the number of grants you have received,” said Dr. Irvin. “Grants are much easier to get when you are well-published, so focus on getting your work accepted in archival peer-reviewed literature.”

The best currency, adds Dr. Glenny, is a funded scientific program that can be transported to your new institution. “This demonstrates your ability to garner funding, contribute to your salary and manage a peer-reviewed scientific program,” he said. “It will also give you more leverage when bargaining for space, protected time and salary.”

**Q: Are there effects on benefits with any grants?**

**A:** There is some variation at individual institutions, so it would be best to check with a grants administrator in your department or division. That said, with all awards, be careful to investigate whether or not payment and benefits are included, said Dr. Geraci. “If benefits are included, make sure they won't be interrupted. If benefits are not included, I would suggest negotiating with the institution,” he said.

**Q: Should I do a fourth year, or ask to be appointed as junior faculty?**

**A:** This depends on your situation. “The advantage of undertaking a fourth year in fellowship is the opportunity to have more protected time to focus on writing grants and papers before you start to have increased clinical, administrative and teaching responsibilities and other demands on your time,” said J. Randall Curtis, M.D., M.P.H., ATS vice-president and professor of medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle.

“A fourth year may help you accomplish more before your academic clock starts to tick, since many universities have a time limit by which you must be ready to be promoted to the next faculty level,” he continued. “But if your junior faculty position has enough protected time for research and you already have a jump start on publications and grant writing, a fourth year may not be to your advantage.”

**Q: What should I expect as a standard start-up package for a junior faculty member?**

**A:** This varies greatly from institution to institution, and will depend on your experience and accomplishments. “One thing to keep in mind is that this negotiation for a junior faculty position is not anything like applying for a fellowship or residency, which generally have standard terms of employment and salaries,” said Dr. Curtis. “This is not usually the case for junior faculty positions. Keep in mind that the best time to ask for resources is before you accept the job—once you do, you will generally have much less leverage for negotiating.”

**Q: What are the most important elements of a start-up package?**

**A:** Protected time for research pursuits and an excellent environment for academic growth, said Dr. Ingbar. “To be successful as a research-oriented faculty member, you really need at least three years of protected time, with adequate support for your research activities,” he explains.

Dr. Geraci notes that junior faculty members usually require that approximately 75 percent of their time be protected to continue research pursuits, with a maximum of 25 percent of time dedicated to clinical obligation.

**Q: What is the timeline between initiating a job search for a new institution and securing a position?**

**A:** If an institution is advertising for a research position, the time from submitting your CV to settling into your new office could be as short as one year, said Dr. Glenny. However, if you have geographical or institutional preferences that put you in a position of looking for a job where there is not a specific opening, it can take longer and is more likely to be in the range of 18 to 24 months.