



The University of Texas at Austin

College of Natural Sciences

2024 STENGL-WYER SCHOLARS COMPETITION

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Submission Deadline: December 4, 2023 at 5:00 PM CT

DESCRIPTION

Recent Ph.D.s are invited to apply for distinguished postdoctoral positions to study the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments at The University of Texas at Austin (UT), one of the top campuses in the country for this area of research.

Funded by the Stengl-Wyer Endowment, the [Stengl-Wyer Scholars Program](#) provides up to three years of support for talented postdoctoral researchers in the broad area of the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments. Scholars may study any groups of organisms, at levels from genes to populations to communities to ecosystems, and may use any combination of approaches. Scholars will:

- conduct cutting-edge research over three years;
- have access to the outstanding [core research facilities](#) at UT, including field stations, natural history collections, computational, imaging, and biomolecular facilities;
- reside locally and have a regular work space and presence on the main UT campus;
- primarily focus on research, but in one of the three years, also engage in two semesters of teaching or outreach effort related to their interests and career goals;
- participate in biweekly meetings (luncheons) with other Stengl-Wyer Scholars, Fellows or guests; and
- receive career mentorship.

Scholars are expected to be independent and propose their own research project. The project start date at UT should be between June 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024. Applicants should identify one or more faculty members from UT's [College of Natural Sciences](#) (CNS) who will serve as a mentor as well as provide laboratory space to the Scholar. Scholars will be encouraged to interact broadly and collaborate with other faculty, postdocs, and graduate students at UT. 2024 Scholar recipients will receive the following:

- \$70,000 annual salary plus UT benefits
- \$10,000 annual allowance for research and travel expenses
- Up to \$3,000 relocation expenses

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must have completed a Ph.D. or equivalent degree by the projected start date and must not have exceeded 20 months in a full-time postdoctoral position at the time of application deadline. Preference will be given to applicants whose proposed projects broaden the scope of research in CNS and are relevant to the Stengl-Wyer Endowment's mission to explore the diversity of life and organisms in their natural environments. Additionally, preference will be given to applicants not already in residence at UT. Applicants who are non-US citizens or permanent residents must be eligible for J-1 Scholar visa status; the Stengl-Wyer Scholars program cannot support H-1B visa applications. CNS particularly encourages applications from individuals within populations traditionally underrepresented in our disciplines. Our goal is to provide all Scholars with an inclusive and supportive environment in which they may realize their intellectual potential.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

All application documents should be formatted using 1-inch margins and no smaller than 11-point font. Recommended fonts are Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, and Times New Roman. The following documents are required and must be submitted by the application deadline:

1. **Lay Summary:** In 200 words or less describe for a general audience the proposed project and its potential impact on the understanding of the diversity of life and interactions between organisms and their natural environments.
2. **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** Provide a current CV including academic background and research experience.
3. **Research Plan** (4 pages maximum; including figures and excluding citations): Describe the independent project that the applicant wishes to develop or implement at UT. The Research Plan should be innovative but feasible and should be developed independently by the applicant. The applicant is encouraged to consult with the proposed mentor(s) about relevant UT facilities and infrastructure. Preliminary data are not required.
4. **Bibliography/References** (no page limit): List sources in a document separate from the Research Plan.
5. **Scientific Impact Statement** (1-page maximum): Describe the novel aspects and significance of the proposed project with respect to applicant's prior work and the ongoing work in the potential faculty mentor's lab. Describe how this work will make a substantial contribution addressing a major unresolved scientific question.
6. **Statement of Teaching or Outreach Interests** (2-page maximum): Describe teaching and/or outreach efforts related to the applicant's interests and career goals. Discuss previous teaching and/or outreach experience as well as activities you plan to execute while at UT.

7. **Letter(s) of Support:** Submit letter(s) of support from one or more potential faculty mentor(s) within CNS (Integrative Biology, Marine Science, Molecular Biosciences, Neuroscience, Statistics and Data Science, Computer Science, Physics, Astronomy and other departments with programs relevant to the study of the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments). Interdisciplinary projects linking to several research groups are encouraged, and UT faculty members from outside CNS may be included as co-mentors. UT faculty serving as co-mentors may submit a single, co-signed letter of support. Applicant must have contacted the proposed faculty mentor(s) by the time of submission. The applicant is responsible for communicating minimum letter content requirements and deadline to potential faculty mentor(s). At minimum, a faculty mentor letter of support must include the following:
- mentor agreement to provide laboratory and office space or other facilities as needed;
 - a statement that available funding (including the Scholar research allowance) is sufficient for the scope of the proposed project; and
 - a description of how the proposed research is distinct from ongoing work in the mentor lab/research program.
8. **Letter(s) of Commitment:** In the case of proposals for which resources from another institution (such as a non-UT laboratory, field station, or collaborator) are required for the project, a brief letter of commitment from the outside institution should be included. This component is required only if applicable to the project.
9. **List of References:** Provide the names and contact information of three individuals who are familiar with the applicant's qualifications, training, and interests and have agreed to submit reference letters. Applicant's proposed faculty mentor(s) cannot be counted toward the three required references. Letters of reference must be submitted confidentially per the Reference Letters section below. Applicant is responsible for communicating submission instructions and deadline to referees.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications

All required application components (listed in the Application Components section above) should be combined and uploaded as a single pdf and submitted by the **application deadline of 5:00 PM CT on December 4, 2023**.

Applications must be submitted through Competition Space, UT's online submission interface. To apply:

1. Visit <https://utexas.infoready4.com/CompetitionSpace/#competitionDetail/1907500>
2. Click the "Apply" button on the Competition Space page.
3. This will take you to a login screen. External applicants should create an interface account by clicking the "Register" button toward the bottom of the page. Follow the instructions to create an

account. Applicants with an existing UT EID and password should login using the “University of Texas Web Login” button.

4. You will be taken to an online application form. Complete the form and upload the required application components. Click “Submit Application” at the bottom of the page. You also have the option to save a draft and return later to submit your application.

Reference Letters

Reference letters are required from three individuals who have agreed to submit letters on the applicant's behalf. Referees should address an applicant's:

- qualifications, training, and interests;
- independence, ability of applicant to anticipate and mitigate challenges; and
- creativity, and/or novelty of the proposed project.

Reference letters must be submitted by referees via email to the Stengl-Wyer Endowment program manager at swe@austin.utexas.edu and must be received by the **application deadline of 5:00 PM CT on December 4, 2023**. Reference letters should remain confidential, and the applicant must not be copied on this email. Applicant is responsible for communicating submission instructions and deadline to referees.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a faculty panel using the following criteria:

- **Record of intellectual merit:** Consider honors, awards, scholarships, leadership and service activities, teaching and outreach activities, and other non-traditional recognition or distinction.
- **Evidence of research accomplishments and research independence:** Consider publications, talks/presentations at scientific meetings, reports, and other achievements and contributions to research. Place particular value on creativity and impact of research.
- **Reference letters:** Consider accomplishments, especially in the context of obstacles, and potential for development as an independent scholar.
- **Research project:** Consider independence, innovativeness, and scope of the proposed research project, including evidence that the project is distinct from the proposed mentor's existing projects and long-term research program.
- **Scope of research:** Proposed research should align with the endowment's mission of exploring research in the diversity of life and organisms in their natural environments. Projects that broaden the scope of research in CNS within the endowment's mission are welcome. Consider how the application contributes to the overall scope of research supported by the Stengl-Wyer Endowment, given that a strong community of scholars will include diverse individuals who are working on a variety of research themes and are supervised by different faculty advisors.
- **Teaching and outreach:** Consider record of past activities. Consider proposed activities and the potential impact on UT and broader community, feasibility, and likelihood of execution. Consider how the proposed activities will contribute to diversity and inclusion in science.

KEY DATES

Submission window opens: August 7, 2023

Submission deadline: December 4, 2023

Announcement of awardees: February 2024

Award start date: After June 1, 2024 and before September 30, 2024

Award end date: Up to three (3) years from award start date

CONTACT INFORMATION

Program questions should be directed to the Stengl-Wyer Endowment program manager:
swe@austin.utexas.edu

Application submission interface questions should be directed to CNS Strategic Research Initiatives: CNS_SRI@austin.utexas.edu

The form and timing of Stengl-Wyer Scholars awards is subject to change in subsequent years.

The content of this announcement is relevant only for the 2024 Stengl-Wyer Scholars competition and awards.

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