



THE WERNER H. KIRSTEN
Student Internship Program

Mentor Handbook

Program Year 2024-2025



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Key Program Year Dates

Key dates for the 2024-2025 Werner H. Kirsten program:

- **Applications Open:** Wednesday, November 15, 2023
- **Application Submission Deadline:** Friday, January 12, 2024, Noon ET.
- **Teacher Recommendations Due:** Friday, January 19, 2024, Noon ET.
- **Mentor Applicant Reviews:** Monday, January 22 through Friday, February 16, 2024
- **Interviews:** Monday, January 29 through Friday, March 1, 2024.
- **Mentor & Student Rankings Due:** Friday, March 15, 2024
- **Matching & Participant Acceptance:** Not to Exceed March 31, 2024
- **Summer Internship Session Start Date:** Monday, June 17, 2024
- **Summer Internship Session End Date:** Friday, August 9, 2024
- **School Year Internship Session:** First day official day of the program participants school year.
- **School Year Internship Session End Date:** Not to Exceed May 31, 2025.

Please note: The above dates are based on estimated timelines but are subject to change.

Werner H. Kirsten (WHK) Program Overview

For more than three decades, the Werner H. Kirsten program referred to as WHK here forward in this document, has been working to match rising high school seniors with mentors throughout the NCI Frederick biomedical community. The Werner H. Kirsten program seeks motivated students with demonstrated interest in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering Math (STEM) and scientific support.

For applicants selected to be participants in the WHK Program, the NCI-Frederick Office of Scientific Operations will pay an eight (8) week summer internship stipend under a [Cancer Research Training Award \(CRTA\) Appointment](#) and will coordinate the accreditation of four weighted credits toward the participants state diploma under the [Special Volunteer \(SV\) Program Appointment](#) during their senior year of high school. In return, applicants must agree to work forty (40) hours per week during their eight (8) week CRTA appointment and three (3) hours per day, five (5) days a week during their school year SV appointment. An applicant becomes a participant in the WHK Program after their acceptance letter is signed by the applicant, the assigned mentor and by the Office of Scientific Operations sponsor or their designee. The acceptance of a position in the WHK program means the applicant agrees to serve in accordance with the requirements as laid out in this program guidance.

Program Expectations

Becoming a mentor for the WHK program is a one-year commitment. The internship begins in June and continues through May of the following year.

During the summer you and your co-mentor (if applicable) will be responsible for the supervision and guidance of the intern for forty (40) hours a week for eight (8) consecutive weeks. Once the students school year begins, mentors will then be required to provide guidance and supervision of the students work for three (3) hours per day throughout the entire school year.

As a part of the program, interns are required to complete a comprehensive primary research or support project and two additional secondary projects and/or presentations. As a mentor, you will work with the intern to establish the topic

or hypothesis, the requirements, and the desired outcomes for their primary project and will be responsible for ensuring they complete secondary projects and presentations, which may include:

- Writing a paper or research proposal or an article for a newsletter
- Presenting a paper on their research or project to a journal club, at a quarterly intern meeting or at a lab meeting
- Presenting their research at one or more scientific events such as the NIH or NCI Student Poster Day, the Spring Research Festival, or the Frederick County Science Fair.

Mentor Responsibilities

As a mentor it is important to support your WHK interns in developing core competencies important for careers in healthcare, research, and research-related fields. Mentors are not just hosting WHK interns for an additional hand in the office or lab, but rather to foster and grow the next generation of STEM professionals.

The responsibilities of a WHK mentor include but are not limited to:

Application Process & Onboarding

Mentors will be responsible for reviewing applications and interviewing the applicants following NCI criteria and ensuring consideration is given to qualified minority applicants. Once an intern is selected, mentors will need to work with their lab admins and the WHK program coordinator(s) to ensure intern onboarding requirements & paperwork is completed by established deadlines.

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity strengthens our community. We welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds and mentors must ensure they are conducting thorough reviews of applications, interviewing, and giving proper consideration to:

- people from racial and ethnic groups that have been underrepresented in biomedical research and healthcare fields.
- people with disabilities
- people who identify as LGBTQ+
- people disadvantaged by life circumstances that have negatively impacted their educational opportunities.

Safety

Mentors must ensure that interns receive and follow all necessary instructions on safety procedures and the proper use and care of animals and equipment in the lab and/or office. Mentors must report any intern injury or safety violations to the WHK program Coordinator and Occupational Health Services (OHS) immediately following incident.

Time & Attendance

Mentors must work with the intern to establish a work schedule and ensure that the intern works forty (40) hrs. per week for eight (8) consecutive weeks during the summer and at least three (3) hours per workday each week throughout the school year. It is the responsibility of the mentor to coordinate with the intern on their school schedule to determine what time each day they will need to report to the lab/office to complete their three (3) hours.

The mentor should monitor daily attendance and maintain an attendance log to be submitted to the school system as requested. If the intern requests an extended leave of absence, requests to adjust their program start or end dates or in the event the intern is absent from work without prior notification from either the school or the student, the WHK program coordinator should be alerted immediately.

Training Plan

Mentors will be required to develop an appropriate training plan, including a primary (research) project and provide the student with assistance in meeting the requirement for their two secondary projects and/or presentations and any other duties mutually agreed upon. As a mentor you will provide advice, guidance, and instruction to the intern and ensure that the intern is always supervised.

Mentors may also provide the student with weekly homework assignments, as needed. These assignments may include but are not limited to reading about and /or researching a topic, evaluating a process, or any other assignment relevant to the internship experience. These assignments should be included as part of the student's periodic evaluations.

Planned WHK Events

We try to make the WHK program comprehensive and a collaborative experience for the student co-hort. Therefore, it is important that mentors support and encourage their interns to attend planned WHK seminars, trainings, meetings, and networking events. This gives the interns a chance to network, make connections and learn about other topics of interest. Some of these events will be mandatory for the intern and attendance will be reflected on their program evaluations.

Progress Reports

Lastly, mentors are required to evaluate progress on the interns training plan, research project and secondary projects quarterly. Mentor evaluations are to be discussed with the intern and the mentor will also be required to review the intern's quarterly self-evaluation. Evaluations are completed via the WHK program system.

Mentor Registration

Returning Mentors

Returning mentors are pre-registered if they served as a mentor during a previous program year. If you wish to be considered for mentorship in the upcoming WHK program year, you must log-in to your pre-existing WHK mentor account, you can do this using your PIV card. Use the "sign-in" link on the left-hand side of the home page. Then select "I'm a NIH Mentor" from the Login page. Once on the mentor dashboard, under available actions select "edit registration". You will then need to update your profile, provide an updated training plan, and submit your EHS Risk assessment**.

**The EHS Risk assessment step has replaced the JPQ form and is new to the mentor registration process this year. The risk assessment MUST be completed to be considered for mentor selection.

New Mentors

To register as a new mentor for the WHK program, you must login using your NIH account or with you PIV. From the home page select the "sign-in" link on the left-hand side of the page. Then select "I'm a NIH Mentor" from the Login page.

Once logged in, you will come to the mentor dashboard, on the left-hand navigation menu, under the mentor options, select "my registration" to begin the registration process.

Registration Process

There are seven (7) sections in the registration process, it is best to gather needed information, prepare your training plan and ensure you have assembled the needed details for your risk assessment, before starting the registration process.

Mentor information

The first step in the registration process is to confirm your mentor profile, opt in to mentoring for the current year and provide lab information and an alternate contact. Your mentor profile is derived from your PIV card based on NIH system details. If those details are incorrect, please reach out to our technical support team at ncifwebmaster@nih.gov.

Be sure to agree to the lab safety disclaimer by checking the required box before proceeding with your registration.

Sponsor Selection

Next you will select your Mentor Employee Status, either NIH Employee or NIH Contractor, the Non-NIH Employee selection is for USAMRIID mentors only.

If you are a NIH Federal Employee, then no sponsorship needed.

If you are a NIH Contractor, you will need to select a government sponsor, which is typically the PI from your program area. From the dropdown list select "CCR Sponsor Lookup" as this is currently the only option available. Enter First or Last Name to search for your sponsor (or PI)

If you are a Frederick National Lab (FNL) Leidos contractor, please use Carrie Wagerman as your sponsor.

Program Details

There are three (3) sections in this step of the registration, first you will add your Lab Administrators. Lab Administrators are those who need to be included in communications regarding onboarding and paperwork requirements and have access to your registration information for administrative purposes.

Click on the "add lab admin" button and enter the needed details for your lab administrator and click Save Lab Admin, you can add additional lab admins, if needed.

Next, you will add your student programs. Select "add Program" and complete the needed information including providing a detailed student training plan and research goals. You can add additional programs if you intend to mentor multiple students or want to provide options. If at any time you need to remove or edit a program, you can revisit this page and select the red X to remove or select the blue pencil to edit.

You will need to verify that your training plan is current by selecting the check box before proceeding.

The Co-Mentor selection is next. You will see a list of your student programs, to Add a Co-Mentor for your program click on the "add co-mentor" icon in the action column. Enter the needed information for your Co-Mentor and Save. You can add additional Co-Mentors if needed for each student program.

Risk Assessment

The last major step in the registration is completing the Risk Assessment form, to do this you will need to download the form from the PDF link provided in this section of the registration. Complete the form in its entirety and submit.

The Risk assessment form provides details regarding the work to be completed and the lab procedures the intern may encounter. This includes outlining physical tasks, lab and chemical hazards that could be encountered and required PPE

needed for the job. Since WHK students are under the age of 18, this form will be reviewed by a safety officer in EHS for approval.

Registration Review

The final step is to review all your registration information and submit. If there are items that you need to edit you can use the “previous” selection at the bottom to navigate back to the section that needs edited.

You will receive a confirmation of your registration via email once submitted.

Please Note: Your registration is not complete until you see a confirmation page. You will also receive a confirmation e-mail to keep for your records. If you experience technical difficulties, please contact the WHK SIP Webmaster at ncifwebmaster@nih.gov.

Application Review & Selection Process

The application review & selection process occurs over several months. After the application deadline, applications will be verified for completeness and to ensure all eligibility requirements are met. Then registered program mentors will begin reviewing verified applications to select candidate(s) for interviews. Only registered program mentors are authorized to determine the suitability of candidates, offer invitations to interview, and makes final determinations on intern selection.

Creating your Interview List

As a part of the review process, mentors are required to create an interview list of all applicants they are interested in interviewing. To make your student interview list selections, you must add the applicants you are interested in interviewing to your “favorites” list. Please follow the instructions below to do this:

- First, login to your WHK mentor dashboard.
- To review students, select "Review Students" from the left sidebar. Follow the instructions on that page to search/sort the student list.
- Add students to your interview list by selecting “add to favorites”.
- To review favorites, select "My Favorites" from the left sidebar. Follow the instructions on that page to sort the student list and remove students from the list as necessary.
- Once you have completed your selections and are ready to submit your favorite list for interview status, click the button marked "Submit Interview List". You cannot change your interview list once it is submitted. Please contact the [SIP Webmaster](#) for assistance with any edits you need to make.
- **NOTE: Co-Mentors and Authorized Users can "help" you select students by adding/removing to your favorite list from their WHK SIP accounts. However, only mentors can submit the final interview list.**

Interview Process

Once interview lists have been submitted, Interview information will be emailed to the students, mentors will be copied on that communication to see what information they have been given. WHK applicants are responsible for contacting interested mentors directly to set up their interviews. Mentors should not reach out to the applicants to schedule interviews.

Ranking Student Interviews

When registered mentors have completed all interviews, they will then need to access the mentor dashboard and rank their interviews, students will also have to complete the ranking process. This is an important step in the process as this determines student/mentor matching. Once on the mentor dashboard click "Rank Interviewees" on the left sidebar to prioritize your rankings of the students you interviewed. Please do not rank any student you would not like to mentor. **All rankings must be entered into the system by the established deadline for the program year.**

Matching & Acceptance

Once system matching has been completed mentors will receive a communication via email with their student match(es). You will be given instructions on how to "accept" or "reject" your match by the specified deadline.

If you are not in agreement with your match(es), the WHK program staff will work to find a more suitable match if available.

Once all mentors have accepted their match(es), we then distribute acceptance letters to the interns for their acceptance of their mentor match. Once all acceptances have been made when then distribute the official offer letters and the onboarding paperwork package to the incoming interns.

Safety and Risk Assessment

The [NIH Policy Manual 3015 Admittance of Minors to Hazardous Areas](#) and 2300-320-7 [Intramural Research Training Award \(IRTA\) Program](#) define the criteria for students working in NIH facilities. The EHS safety program performs focused risk assessments to evaluate chemical, biological, radiological, and other hazards that may be present in areas where minor students work. To evaluate the need for this risk assessment, mentors will complete an [EHS Risk Assessment for Minor Student Programs](#) as part of their mentor registration process.

Radiation:

Minor student intending to use radiation must receive approval from the NCI at Frederick Radiation Safety Officer.

Biological:

Minor students are prohibited from working with human and/or nonhuman primate blood, body fluids, primary cell cultures and tissue. Students working with biological research material must complete OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Training, initially and annually thereafter. In addition, students must be trained by their mentor on any applicable IBC registrations, biological safety practices, and procedures for risk mitigation.

Chemical:

Chemicals that students may not use and must be isolated from:



1. GHS category 1 and 2 acutely toxic chemicals, H-Codes: H300, H304, H305, H310, H330
2. GHS category 1A reproductive toxicity, H-Codes: H360, H360F, H360D, H360FD, H360Fd, H360Df
3. National Toxicology Program listed known carcinogens
 - a. <https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/assessments/cancer/roc>
 - b. Scroll down to "substances listed" link
 - c. Known to be human carcinogens only

When these chemicals are present in a laboratory space that laboratory space requires a Safety Mitigation Plan for Minor Employees, chemicals must be isolated where the student may not access the chemicals, meaning the chemical must be in an enclosed container (cabinet, fridge, box with lid, etc.) and clearly labeled "not for student use." Areas where these chemicals were used must be decontaminated after the chemicals have been isolated. Please make

students aware that they may not open the containers and remind fellow lab staff that the chemicals cannot be used while student are present.

Chemicals students may not use that do not require isolation from:



1. GHS any category acutely toxic chemicals, H-Codes: H301, H302, H303, H311, H312, H313, H331, H332, H333

2. GHS any category of reproductive toxicity, H-Codes: H360, H360F, H360D, H360FD, H360Fd, H360Df, H361, H361f, H361d, H361fd, H362



3. GHS any category of carcinogenicity, H-Codes: H350, H350i, H351

a. National Toxicology Program, Reasonably Anticipated To Be Human Carcinogens

Program Legal Authorities

Applicants selected for the WHK program will participate under the following NCI Training Authorities:

Cancer Research Training Award

The CRTA is an NCI-specific fellowship award program that establishes an "umbrella" appointment mechanism with uniform provisions and a streamlined application process for the diverse training fellowship programs supported throughout NCI's Divisions, Offices, and Centers.

The CRTA fellowship award program policies are in alignment with many of the NIH Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) program policies, which are based on the following legislative authorities:

(1) Section 405 (b) (1) (D) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 USC 284 (b) (1) (D), as amended, which authorizes Directors of each national research institute to conduct and support research training for which fellowship support is not provided under section 487 of the Public Health Service Act and which is not residency training of physicians or other health professionals.

(2) As defined in the implementing regulations at 42 CFR § 63.3, "the purpose of an NIH research traineeship is to provide support for financial subsistence to an individual during a period in which the awardee is acquiring training in: (a) basic and/or clinical biomedical or behavioral research relating to human health, including extending healthy life and reducing the burdens of illness, or (b) medical library science or related fields pertaining to sciences related to health or the communication of health sciences information. Traineeships are intended to make available in the United States an increased number of persons having special competence in these research fields through developmental training and practical research experience in the facilities of NIH, with supplemental training at other qualified institutions (see 63.8(a))."

The CRTA program incorporates the specific research mission of the NCI and is authorized under an NCI-specific training authority:

Section 413 (b) (3) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 USC 285a-2 (b) (3), as amended pertaining to the National Cancer Institute, which states that the Director of NCI in carrying out the National Cancer Program shall "support appropriate programs of education and training (including continuing education and laboratory and clinical research training)".

Service is a by-product of the CRTA Program, unlike Research and Clinical Fellowships where service is a dominant part of the training objective. CRTA Fellows do not perform a service for the Public Health Service. Rather, the CRTA Fellows are accepted for training in scientific disciplines that will enhance public health efforts to prevent, diagnose, and/or treat cancer, a disease of major public health significance. CRTA Fellows receive stipends and are considered to be in training status; they do not incur a service payback obligation. CRTA Fellows are not considered employees of the Federal government.

NOTE: Trainees are prohibited from having any human subject/patient contact unless they are entirely under the direct supervision, at all times, by an appropriately qualified NIH employee (FTE). See Section D.7. Tort Claims. Trainees may not be assigned official supervisory responsibilities, or sign documents (e.g., requisitions) on behalf of the Government.

The CRTA Program encourages prospective participants from groups who are underrepresented in biomedical research, such as women, persons with disabilities, and individuals of ethnic and racial groups to apply for participation in the CRTA Program. See the Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity, NOT-OD-20-031, available at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html>.

Special Volunteer Program

Special Volunteers (SV) are individuals who provide research services, direct patient care, clerical support, technical assistance, or any other necessary services for NIH. SVs are not financially compensated by NIH for their activities or services.

The SV program incorporates the specific research mission of the NCI and is authorized under an NIH-specific training authority:

Sections 402 and 405 of the PHS Act, as amended. The Director, NIH, and the Directors of the national research institutes and centers may accept voluntary and uncompensated services.