Participants

Bridges students are those students who will receive support in the form of salaries/wages under this program. These students must belong to an underrepresented group, must be U.S. citizens or non-citizen nationals or permanent residents, and must be enrolled full-time in biomedical or behavioral science fields at the participating community college. (A non-citizen national is a person who, although not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the U.S. This is generally a person born in a land that is not a state but that is under U.S. sovereignty, jurisdiction, or administration -- for example, American Samoa.) An individual lawfully admitted for permanent residence must possess an alien registration receipt card (I-551) or other legal verification of such status prior to appointment to the Bridges grant. Individuals on temporary visas, those seeking asylum, or refugees are not eligible for support from the Bridges Program.For the purpose of this FOA, individuals underrepresented in the biomedical and behavioral sciences include the following classes of participants:

A.   Individuals from racial and ethnic groups that have been shown by the National Science Foundation to be underrepresented in health-related sciences on a national basis (see data at http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/showpub.cfm?TopID=2&SubID=27 and the most recent report on Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering). The following racial and ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: African Americans, Hispanic Americas, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Hawaiian Natives, and natives of the US Pacific Islands. In addition, it is recognized that underrepresentation can vary from setting to setting; individuals from racial or ethnic groups that can be convincingly demonstrated to be underrepresented by the grantee institution should be encouraged to participate in this program

B.   Individuals with disabilities, who are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

C.   Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who are defined as:

   1.   Individuals who come from a family with an annual income below established low-income thresholds. These thresholds are based on family size; published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index; and adjusted by the Secretary for use in all health professions programs. The Secretary periodically publishes these income levels at HHS - Poverty Guidelines, Research, and Measurement. For individuals from low income backgrounds, the institution must be able to demonstrate that such participants have qualified for Federal disadvantaged assistance or they have received any of the following student loans: Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL), Loans for Disadvantaged Student Program, or they have received scholarships from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Scholarship for Individuals with Exceptional Financial Need.

   2.   Individuals who come from a social, cultural, or educational environment such as that found in certain rural or inner-city environments that have demonstrably and recently directly inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to develop and participate in a research career.

Recruitment and retention plans related to a disadvantaged background (C1 and C2) are most applicable to high school and perhaps to undergraduate candidates, but would be more difficult to justify for individuals beyond that level of academic achievement. Under extraordinary circumstances, the PHS may, at its discretion, consider an individual beyond the undergraduate level to be from a disadvantaged background. Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, based on appropriate documentation.

It is the responsibility of the applicant institution to establish the qualifications of students prior to their appointment in the Bridges Program.