

The Emory-Georgia Tech Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BEST) Program

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PhD programs in biomedical science have traditionally been structured to prepare students for careers in research-intensive, tenure-track academic settings. However, many students enrolling in PhD programs are not interested in tenure-track faculty positions. In addition, some students begin their PhD program with an intention of pursuing a tenure-track academic position but eventually learn that few such positions are available.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), with a broad mission to prepare the future biomedical workforce, has developed the **B**roadening **E**xperiences in **S**cientific Training (**BEST**) awards specifically to address the disparity between graduate student and post-doctoral training in the biomedical sciences and actual workforce outcomes. This initiative was developed in response to recommendations made by the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) of the NIH in the 2012 Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report.

The NIH solicited applications for the first round of BEST awards in 2013. Faculty from Emory University and Georgia Tech jointly submitted a proposal and were one of 10 inaugural programs selected from over 150 applications. The Emory/GA Tech BEST program has recruited a total of 20 trainees into the first cohort. This initial cohort includes graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from both institutions. The trainees are midway through their first year of broad career exploration and are now selecting their individual areas of in-depth exploration. Trainees may choose from one of the following six career tracks: Business and Entrepreneurship; Science Writing and Journalism; STEM Education and Outreach; Law, Tech Transfer, and Intellectual Property; Research, Policy, and Program Administration; and Industry Science. Trainees have attended lectures and networking events in business, entrepreneurship, leadership, and technology that have exposed them to leaders in each of these fields. This coming fall, the trainees in this first cohort will begin internships in their chosen tracks to truly immerse and network in a hands-on field experience.

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