Frequently Asked Questions

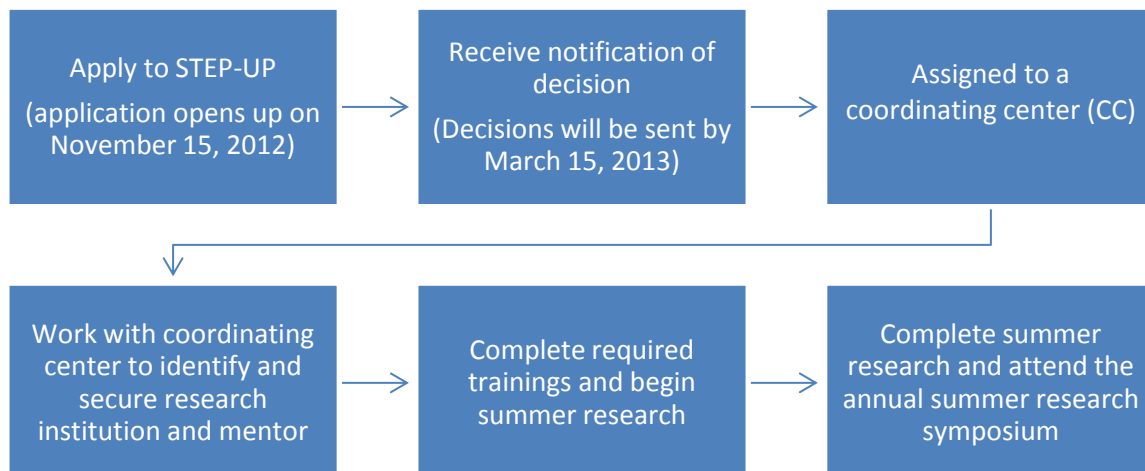## General Information

What is STEP-UP?

STEP-UP stands for Short-Term Education Program for Underrepresented Persons.

What is the goal of STEP-UP?

The overall goal of NIDDK's Short-Term Education Program (STEP-UP) is to build and sustain a biomedical, behavioral, clinical and social science research pipeline focused on NIDDK mission areas. The STEP-UP is particularly interested in increasing the participation of students from backgrounds underrepresented in biomedical research on a national basis. This includes individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, and individuals with disabilities.

How does STEP-UP work?

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┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Apply to STEP-UP    │      │ Receive notification│      │                     │
│ (application opens  │ ───► │ of decision         │ ───► │ Assigned to a       │
│ up on               │      │ (Decisions will be  │      │ coordinating center │
│ November 15, 2012)  │      │ sent by             │      │ (CC)                │
│                     │      │ March 15, 2013)     │      │                     │
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│ Work with           │      │                     │      │ Complete summer     │
│ coordinating center │      │ Complete required   │      │ research and attend │
│ to identify and     │ ───► │ trainings and begin │ ───► │ the annual summer   │
│ secure research     │      │ summer research     │      │ research symposium  │
│ institution and     │      │                     │      │                     │
│ mentor              │      │                     │      │                     │
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What is a Coordinating Center (CC)?

Students are assigned to a CC after they are admitted into the program. A coordinating center serves as the STEP-UP students' primary contact for any administrative or programmatic needs during the summer research experience. The CC will provide direct oversight for all student activities. Students **DO NOT** have to conduct their research at a coordinating center.

Where do I conduct my research?

Students work with coordinating centers (CC) to identify and secure a research institution and research mentor. We recommend that students conduct research at institutions within commuting distances of their homes. Undergraduate students who are interested in conducting research at another institution not in proximity to their home must make arrangements with staff at the coordinating institute.

What are the start and end dates for the program?

The start dates for both the high school and undergraduate program are flexible and must be negotiated with your coordinating center and research mentor; however, undergraduate students must begin the program no later than 6/17/2013. All students are expected to have a minimum of eight weeks of research experience.

Are vacations permitted?

Vacations are <u>not permitted</u> during the 8 - 12 week research experience. All vacations must be taken before or after the program start and end dates.

Can I take classes or work in the evenings during my research experience if it does not interfere with my time or my research?

Students are expected to conduct research work full-time (equivalent to 40 hours per week) in a supervised laboratory or clinical facility. Participation in outside activities and the establishment of a work schedule must be negotiated with your research mentor.

Will my research experience match my research interest?

We will do our best to match your research interest with a research mentor and institution related to your interest. If there is a research mentor and/or institution that you are interested in, we strongly recommend that you speak with staff at your assigned coordinating center.

Does my research have to match NIDDK core mission areas?

No. However, we strongly recommend that students pursue research within the NIDDK mission areas of diabetes, endocrinology and metabolic diseases; digestive diseases and nutrition; kidney, urologic and hematologic diseases. Staff at coordinating centers will attempt to match student with research mentors within NIDDK core mission areas before matching students with research mentors outside of the NIDDK core mission areas.

Eligibility

Can I apply if I am not a citizen, permanent resident or noncitizen national of the United States?

No. Only citizens, permanent residents and noncitizen nationals of the U.S. are eligible to apply to this program.

Do I have to prove citizenship prior to the program?

Yes. All students are required to submit a copy of a U.S. passport, U.S. birth certificate or a government issued photo identification document to their coordinating center once accepted into the program.

What is a noncitizen national?

Noncitizen nationals are persons born in American Samoa, certain former citizens of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and certain children of noncitizen nationals born abroad. Please visit http://www.travel.state.gov/law/citizenship/citizenship_782.html for additional information.

I am currently a senior scheduled to graduate at the end of the school year? Am I eligible for the STEP-UP?

Yes. High school or undergraduate students that are currently in their senior year of school are eligible to participate in the program.

Are there other eligibility criteria not listed on the website?

Yes. You must be sixteen years of age or older and either be enrolled at least half-time in high school or an accredited U.S. college or university or plan to be enrolled in the fall.

What constitutes an Underrepresented Minority (URM)?

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 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 Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

What is the definition of "disadvantaged background?"

An individual from a disadvantaged background is defined as an individual who comes from 1) a social, cultural or educational environment that has demonstrably and recently directly inhibited an individual from obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to develop or participate in a research career 2) a family with an annual income below established low income

thresholds. 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.

Do my parents have to submit financial data for me to be considered economically disadvantaged?

No. However, students must self-report family income levels if they apply to the program on the basis of being "disadvantaged." The following income levels determine what constitutes a low-income family for determining economically disadvantaged students:

Family Size (includes parents and dependents)	Income Level
1	$21,780
2	$29,420
3	$37,060
4	$44,700
5	$52,340
6	$59,980
7	$67,620
8	$75,260

What constitutes an individual with a disability?

According to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), disability means, with respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual.

If I have a disability, will reasonable accommodations be granted?

Reasonable accommodations will be provided to selected applicants with disabilities unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the coordinating centers or research mentors. Selected applicants must request the need for reasonable accommodations prior to beginning his/or her summer research experience. Accordingly, whether a particular accommodation will impose an undue hardship to the coordinating centers or research mentors will always be determined on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, individuals supported under this program must, with reasonable assistance, be able to contribute to the research conducted by the research mentor.

Is there a minimum GPA to participate in this program?

Students must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

Do I have to prove that I have health insurance prior to the program?

Yes. All students are required to submit a copy of their insurance policy to their coordinating center. If you do not have insurance prior to the start date of the program, you can inquire from your coordinating center on how you can obtain a short-term insurance policy. Exceptions will be made for students residing in certain U.S. territories.

Application Procedure

Is there a deadline for submission of applications?

Yes, the application deadline is 2/15/2013. Note: Partial applications that are not completed by the deadline will not receive further consideration. The STEP-UP application is available online from 11/15/2012 through 2/15/2013.

When should I apply?

We recommend that you apply as soon as possible after the application site becomes available. There will be numerous applicants submitting their applications at the last minute that may result in an electronic system crashing under the load; therefore, do not wait until the last minute to submit your application.

What information do I need to apply?

Before you begin your application, we recommend that you thoroughly read the [STEP-UP Application Instructions](). The document provides step-by-step guidance to help you successfully submit an application for STEP-UP.

Can I update my application from last year?

No. You will need to reapply and request new letters from your references.

How late will you accept applications?

All applications and supporting documents must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST (Eastern Standard Time) on 2/15/2013. Official transcripts must be postmarked by 2/1/2012. Applicants will not be able to submit an application after 11:59 p.m. EST on 2/15/2013.

Is there a deadline for receipt of my reference letters?

All letters of reference must be received by 2/15/2013.

How do I submit my transcript?

Students can upload an unofficial transcript through the online application system. However, **OFFICIAL** transcripts **must be submitted and postmarked by 2/1/2013** and mailed to:

STEP-UP High School Program
II Democracy Plaza
6707 Democracy Blvd., Room 904
Bethesda, MD 20892

STEP-UP Undergraduate Program
II Democracy Plaza
6707 Democracy Blvd., Room 904
Bethesda, MD 20892

Does my transcript have to include my fall 2012 grades?
Yes. Official academic transcripts must reflect all earned credits and grades through December 2012.

If I do not have access to the Internet, how can I apply?

The STEP-UP application is web based and not available in paper form. Visit your local library to access the Web or inquire if your school has a computer that you can access before and after school hours.

After Applying

How will I be notified if I am selected?
You will be notified by the NIDDK STEP-UP Director via email.

When will I hear whether I am accepted into STEP-UP?

The NIDDK STEP-UP Director will begin notifying applicants of acceptance into the STEP-UP by email on March 15, 2013, this will continue until all available spots are filled. Accepted applicants will be required to confirm their participation within one week of notification.

Who do I contact if I have any questions regarding STEP-UP?

High School STEP-UP:
Jennifer Curry
301-594-9649
Email: niddkstepup@mail.nih.gov

Undergraduate STEP-UP:
Delia Houseal, MPH
301-443-8415
Email: niddkstepup@mail.nih.gov