

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS ON TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH THAT  
BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN BASIC RESEARCH AND PATIENT CARE  
TO PREVENT OR CURE CANCER, ARTHRITIS, HEART DISEASE,  
MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY, RETINITIS AND/OR MACULAR  
DEGENERATION**

**Program Background**

The mission of the Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Fund (the “Voelcker Fund”) is to advance medical research with emphasis given to research to find cures for cancer, heart disease, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, retinitis, and/or macular degeneration of the retina. The Voelcker Fund aims to support research that will lead to newer and better treatments to improve the health of our population.

The Institute of Medicine noted in its 1990 report, *“Funding Health Sciences Research”*, that the goals of health research can only be achieved by creating a positive research environment for health sciences. This environment should *“identify and encourage young talented individuals to pursue health research careers, provide stable research support for talented scientists throughout their careers and offer flexibility in allocating resources to foster creativity and meet changing demands....”*

The report went on to note that the most critical and longest-term investment in the research system is the development of career scientists who contribute to the long-term success of the enterprise through both their own research efforts and their training of future generations of scientists. This report is as relevant today and it was nearly twenty years ago as talented scientists remain the intellectual engines for advances in improved health.

Recognizing the need to provide support for the “human capital” of the research enterprise, the Voelcker Fund proposes two pilot awards programs open to scientists from San Antonio institutions conducting research the goal of which is to either prevent or treat cancer, heart disease, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, retinitis and/or macular degeneration.

The Voelcker Fund Scholar Award program seeks proposals from well established high-impact researchers at the associate or full professor level or the equivalent position.

The Voelcker Fund Young Investigator Award program seeks proposals from young investigators at the assistant professorial level or equivalent position to enable them to develop new data and innovate to secure follow-on funding from other sources.

**Voelcker Fund Scholar Awards**

This program is open to investigators at the associate or full professor level at University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, Texas, University of Texas, San Antonio, Texas, or the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research who have a proven track record of excellent research and strong funding from other sources. The Voelcker Fund invites proposals for innovative research projects to find cures for the diseases noted above that bridge the gap between basic research and patient care. The program provides one time awards of up to \$500,000 to investigators which are paid to the sponsoring institution and can be used to support a variety of research activities, including but not limited to developing new high risk/high potential benefit ideas, supporting young scientists in the investigators laboratory, and collaborative projects with other investigators around the world. The principal investigator must allocate at least 50% of their time to research. Up to four such awards may be made in 2009.

### **Voelcker Fund Young Investigator Award**

This program is open to investigators at the assistant professor level or equivalent position at University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, Texas, University of Texas, San Antonio, Texas, or the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research to help them take risks and develop their careers. The Voelcker Fund invites proposals for innovative research projects to find cures for the diseases noted above that bridges the gap between basic research and patient care. The program provides awards of up to \$750,000 over a five year period to enable investigators to innovate and develop data that might generate follow-on funding from other funders. Awards are paid to the sponsoring institution and can be used flexibly as noted above. The principal investigator must allocate at least 50% of their time to research. Up to 7 such awards, for a total of \$1,000,000, may be made in 2009.

### **Program**

The Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Fund Research Program will make up to \$3 million dollars in awards in 2009 to support scientists at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, Texas, the University of Texas at San Antonio, or the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research. This announcement requests proposals for the Voelcker Fund Scholar Award and the Voelcker Fund Young Investigator Award. The programs goal is to foster research to prevent and find cures for diseases such as cancer, heart disease, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, macular degeneration and retinitis. The Fund wishes to support work that bridges the gap between basic research and patient care.

Studies may involve research in a variety of broad areas such as:

Etiology, pathogenesis and mechanisms of disease (particularly studies with direct application to disease prevention and treatment).

Clinical knowledge, improved diagnosis (including development of new biomarkers, diagnostic methods, or devices), natural history of disease, and biomedical informatics. This includes the use of large clinical and genomic datasets for the purpose of generating and testing hypotheses.

Disease management (including therapeutics aimed at molecular targets), molecular epidemiology, and limited small-scale clinical studies involving “first-in-humans” testing of novel approaches.

Large scale clinical trials are not eligible for support.

### **Guidelines For Application**

Candidates must have a PhD, MD, or MD PhD degree, or equivalent.

Candidates must be academic investigators at the associate or full professor level for the Scholar Award and at the assistant professor level for the Young Investigator Award. The principal investigator should hold a tenure track **or equivalent position** at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, Texas, the University of Texas, San Antonio, Texas or the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research, at the time of application.

Candidates must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States at the time of application.

The Voelcker Fund must receive all application materials by March 1, 2009.

The sponsoring institution must demonstrate that it can provide the environment necessary for successful research.

### **Selection**

An advisory committee will review all applications and make recommendations for awards to the Voelcker Fund Trustees. The Voelcker Fund will not provide critiques of unfunded proposals.

Selection will be based on the quality and originality of the proposed research and its potential to advance preventive or clinical care, especially on the diseases of interest to the Voelcker Fund—cancer heart disease, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, macular degeneration and retinitis. Proposals that contain novel ideas and new approaches for probing difficult problems will be considered more competitive. The track record of the researcher proposing the work and his or her potential to carry out innovative collaborative research will also be an important element of the funding decision.

'The committee seeks evidence that the sponsoring institution has the necessary laboratory and patient facilities and has made a tangible commitment to collaborative research will also be considered.

## **Application Instructions**

Proposals should be submitted to:

Emily Harrison Liljenwall  
The Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Fund  
112 E Pecan, 30<sup>th</sup> floor  
San Antonio, TX 78205  
(210) 224-4491  
(210) 224-7983 facsimile  
[eliljenwall@scs-law.com](mailto:eliljenwall@scs-law.com)

Application instructions and proposal information will be posted on the the Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker website at [www.voelckerfund.org](http://www.voelckerfund.org) beginning January 15, 2009.

Applicants should direct their questions to Emily Harrison Liljenwall.

## **Terms**

Awards are made to the sponsoring institution on behalf of the award recipient. The sponsoring institution is responsible for disbursing the funds and maintaining adequate supporting records and receipts of expenditures. Indirect costs may not be charged against the awards.

Award recipients must devote at least 50 percent of their time to research-related activities, and the sponsoring institution must make a commitment in writing to honor this requirement.

Award recipients must provide the Voelcker Fund with an annual progress report detailing scientific progress as long as the grant is active. Sponsoring institutions must provide an annual financial report. Both reports must be submitted (on forms that will be provided) within 60 days of the end of each award year. Annual progress reports will be reviewed by the scientific advisory committee to assess research outcomes and make decisions concerning ongoing funding.

No more than 50% of the award may be used annually for salary support of the award recipient's salary support without prior written consent of the Voelcker Fund.

The sponsoring institution may supplement the award recipient's salary to a level consistent with its salary scale. There is no limit on the use of the award for salary support of other laboratory or clinical personnel working with the award recipient.

Research support, which is under the control of the award recipient, may be used flexibly for items such as consumable supplies, equipment, travel to scientific meetings, and laboratory personnel working with the award recipient. Prior approval by the Voelcker Fund is required when, within an award year, purchases of equipment will exceed \$20,000 or travel costs exceed \$3,000.

During the award period, unused research funds may be carried over to the succeeding year. Any unused funds held by the sponsoring institution when awards expire or are terminated must be returned to the Voelcker Fund unless permission has been given to retain the funds. Award recipients may receive a no-cost extension of up to 24 months with prior written approval of the Voelcker Fund, and requests explaining why an extension is needed must be submitted in writing at least four months prior to the end of the award.

Awards may not be transferred to another institution.

Award recipients who want to take a sabbatical year in order to acquire new research skills must submit a written request to the Voelcker Fund that includes appropriate justification.

Scientific publications or presentations that result from these awards must acknowledge the award recipient's receipt of an award from the Voelcker Fund. Copies of journal articles and other publications should be sent to the Voelcker Fund along with the annual progress report.

Award recipients should follow the sponsoring institution's patent, copyright, intellectual property, and conflict of interest policies regarding discoveries that result from research conducted under these awards. Award recipients are expected to adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations regarding the participation of human subjects, and the use of animals, radioactive or hazardous materials, and recombinant DNA in their research projects. The Voelcker Fund expects the appropriate federal, state and local guidelines with regard to scientific misconduct are in place and enforced at all institutions with which award recipients are affiliated.

Award recipients should share scientific findings in a timely manner via the standard means of scientific communication, including publications and/or presentations in scientific forums. The Voelcker Fund will not retain any rights to published results or patents that result from the research.