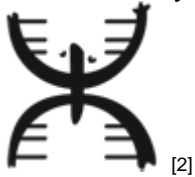


Funding for the Yale Ciencia Academy has been renewed! ^[1]

Submitted by [Titilayo Omotade](#) ^[2] on 5 October 2020 - 12:00am



For the past five years, the **Yale Ciencia Academy** ^[3] (YCA) has provided almost 200 doctoral students with critical tools, skillsets, outreach opportunities, and an expansive mentoring network to promote career advancement. We are thrilled to announce that the competitive grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that funds the YCA (R25GM114000) has been renewed for another five years! **The new YCA (or YCA Phase 2) will have a slightly different focus: the PhD to postdoc transition. However, the program will stay true to its core mission: to enhance biomedical training through (1) skills development, (2) community, and (3) outreach.**

A new focus: the PhD to postdoc transition

As PhD candidates progress through their training, one of the most challenging transitions is between the end of the PhD and the start of the postdoc. This interface is a pivotal point that must

be successfully navigated in order to pursue a faculty career. A postdoc is an opportunity for early career researchers to deepen and diversify their research experiences, develop and expand their scientific network, and demonstrate greater autonomy and confidence in their research environments. Yet few programs explicitly prepare students for this transition and there is a significant decline [4] in the proportion of biomedical postdocs from underrepresented minority backgrounds (9.1%) compared to graduate students from the same backgrounds (15.3%). Attrition during this transition period contributes to the severe lack of representation of URMs among faculty (only ~6% of faculty members [5] are from URM backgrounds). Thus, meaningful and methodical interventions at this stage — like the ones offered by YCA Phase 2 — can potentially have great impact on the retention of talented URM scientists in academia.

Empowering students through planning, mentoring, and communication skills

The new Yale Ciencia Academy (or YCA Phase 2) will create resources and video training modules to help students in the final years of their PhD secure and sustain a well-matched postdoctoral position that aligns with their professional and personal goals and values. The new program is founded on three pillars, already established through YCA Phase 1:

1. **career planning** for a successful postdoc transition and experience;
2. **effective mentoring** practices and a community of support; and
3. **effective scientific and interpersonal communication**.

The program will run from June 2021 – June 2022, and in similar periods in future years. As part of the program, students will participate in in-person and virtual workshops and conversations with peers and role models, geared to develop their planning, mentoring and communication skills and to put learned skills into practice as they explore and find great postdoc matches.

Some of the most important programmatic changes in YCA Phase 2 include:

- **smaller cohort size** to promote more personalized training and support;
- **an additional cross-cohort in-person meeting** to strengthen the YCA network of support; and
- **practical training products** including mock interviews, postdoc transition individual development plans (IDPs), and engagement of mentors throughout this process.

Expanding the program's impact

Over the next five years, YCA Phase 2 will help 64 PhD students from underrepresented backgrounds find great postdoc matches. To expand the program's impact to as many students as possible, the YCA team will collaborate with iBiology [6] to convert most of the workshops into free on-demand video training modules.

We are hopeful that this comprehensive approach will (1) **demystify the PhD to postdoc transition**, (2) **equip and empower students to excel in the next stage of their career**, and (3) **increase the representation of minority students at this critical juncture to the professoriate**.

For prospective applicants

Applications for YCA Phase 2 will open in January and be due March 2021. Selected applicants will be notified of their acceptance in April 2021 and the program will kick-off in June. More information about the program and its application can be found at www.cienciapr.org/yca [7].

A big Thank You to our collaborators, fellows and alumni!

The design and successful renewal of YCA Phase 2 could not have been possible without the help and contributions of numerous people and collaborators. We are extremely grateful for our evaluators, Mark Graham and Melanie Bauer, for their help analyzing and interpreting the outcomes of the first five years of the YCA program—an aspect that was particularly well-received by reviewers. We are also thrilled with the experts who have collaborated in the delivery of the YCA workshops, as well as with the scientists who have served as role models for the students over the years—your insights made YCA a success and helped us refine our own approaches to training.

The program benefitted from great institutional support from Yale University School of Medicine, iBiology, and CienciaPR, and from many champions at these and other institutions who helped expand our reach and reputation. Finally, we are indebted to all the YCA fellows and alumni who gave feedback and who shared perspectives that informed the program's renewal application and Phase 2 design. We continue to be inspired by your commitment to science and to your own professional success, which is the success of a more inclusive scientific community. Thank you!

Tags: • [yale ciencia academy](#) [8]

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