National Institutes of Health
DeWitt Stetten, Jr. Early-Career Scholarships
in the History of Biomedical Research and Technology

2026 Information for Applicants

The Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum (ONHM), part of the Intramural Research Program of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), will host two early-career research scholars interested in NIH's history for one year each, starting in the summer of 2027. Each position offers a stipend of about $71,000 for the full year, plus health insurance that includes dental and vision coverage. One of the scholars will be supported by NIH's Office for Research in Women's Health (ORWH) in honor of its 35th anniversary. The second position is open to researchers investigating any aspect of NIH history.

Named to honor ONHM's founder, DeWitt (Hans) Stetten Jr., MD, these early-career positions are designed to support full-time research for a period of twelve months. Although applicants have typically come from programs in history, history of medicine, or history of science, strong project proposals from candidates in other disciplines will also be considered. Competition is open to US citizens and those with US Legal Permanent Residency (LPR) who have completed the PhD within the last five years. While PhD candidates may apply, the position cannot be initiated until the final version of the dissertation has been accepted by the selectee's institution.

Application materials include the ORISE application form, an official transcript of graduate coursework, two letters of recommendation, and a narrative (max 12,000 words) describing the research to be conducted during the tenure year. The narrative must demonstrate a clear, central connection with the history of NIH and an ability to conduct successful, independent, and historically sound research. Priority will be given to proposals that focus on NIH's intramural programs, laboratories, and clinics. Proposals that draw on the history of ORWH will also be considered for the ORWH-funded position.

Scholars must be based at the NIH-Bethesda campus for the year, although travel to conferences and other archives related to the project is permitted. The positions offer priority access to ONHM's archives and reference materials; the rich resources of the National Library of Medicine; and ample opportunities to consult NIH program staff and biomedical research scientists concentrated in the Washington, DC area. As part of its hosting efforts, ONHM will facilitate regular, sustained mentorship by one or more researchers in NIH's Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs); encourage presentations to NIH audiences; organize networking events; and provide opportunities to publish broadly accessible work such as blog posts and features on its website (history.nih.gov).

Please see our website at https://history.nih.gov/ for further information about ONHM, or write to us at history@nih.gov to ask about our archival and other resources related to your interests.

Applications must be submitted by midnight, January 11, 2027
via the ORISE portal:
https://www.zintellect.com/Opportunity/Details/NIH-ONHM-2026-0001

Application materials transmitted by other means cannot be considered.

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility

- **What if my degree is in a field other than history?** As long as your application demonstrates that you have mastered standard historical research methods and can conduct sound, independent historical research at the doctoral level, your degree need not be from a history department.

- **If I need to defend my dissertation between applying for a Stetten Scholar position and starting my appointment, how long do I have for any revisions and acceptance by my university?** Your application should provide a projected timeline to completion as part of demonstrating feasibility. ONHM can offer some flexibility in choosing your start date, but you must have your degree in hand when you take up the position.

- **What if I'm an established scholar (more than five years post-degree)?** The Stetten Scholars program is designed specifically for early-career researchers. However, the National Library of Medicine offers the Michael E. DeBakey Scholarship (https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/get-involved/debakey-fellowship.html), which is open to scholars in any career stage.

- **Can I become a Stetten Scholar if I have already accepted another fellowship or research award for the same period?** No. Since these positions are designed to support full-time research projects, concurrent commitments are not permissible. However, we may be able to grant some flexibility in start and end dates.

- **Must my degree be granted by a US institution?** No.

- **Can I live elsewhere while conducting my research?** No. These positions are intended to support full-time research on the NIH campus. Selecting a residence beyond the DC Metro area would result in loss of the level of personal interaction that is a major benefit of the position. Incumbents may pursue their research elsewhere (e.g., at another archive) for up to a month, although additional expenses cannot be covered by the program.

- **Will there be other requirements to meet once I have accepted the position?** Although scholars are not federal employees, they must pass a standard federal background check to obtain ongoing access to campus and NIH resources.

Assembling an application

- **What kinds of project can I propose?** You should provide a clear, feasible research question with an essential focus on the history of NIH and then lay out a sound, historically grounded research plan to answer it. Your proposal must demonstrate mastery of fundamental historical research methods and readiness for advanced training. Stetten scholarships do not support non-scholarly projects such as artistic representations or background research for historical fiction. Applications to produce a documentary video or podcast will be considered.

- **You are encouraged to contact ONHM to explore our historical and other resources related to your research interests.** You can explore our online holdings at https://history.nih.gov/ and email us at history@nih.gov with questions or for an appointment.

- **How will my application be assessed?** All applications submitted by the January 2027 deadline will be considered in competitive peer review by a multi-specialty panel of historians and biomedical subject-matter experts. The panel will evaluate the significance of the research proposed, including its relevance to NIH history and the novelty of the research question or approach; methodological rigor and feasibility, particularly in light of the applicant's documented knowledge, skills, and abilities; learning opportunities and mentors available at NIH; and the historical and biomedical sources available at NIH and elsewhere.

- **Does the position support travel to conferences or other archives?** Stetten Scholars are encouraged to use historical resources outside of NIH and to present their work in progress. However, ONHM's ability to cover travel expenses is contingent on its operating budget and thus limited by its other commitments.

- **Should my application specify one or more NIH ICOs that figures in my proposed research?** You are welcome but not required to identify specific ICOs, and even to name specific NIH labs or researchers. While ONHM will strive to identify and facilitate mentoring relationships useful in conducting your research, we cannot guarantee a connection with any specific person, lab, or ICO.

- **If I propose a project related to the history of women's health research, will it automatically be considered for both of the available positions?** Yes.

- **When are the award announcements made?** We project notification sometime in April 2027.

- **Can I compress the award into a shorter period?** No. If circumstances arise that require a shorter period (e.g., a job offer), support will be pro-rated.

- **Can I submit more than one application, or an application that proposes more than one project?** Each applicant may submit only one proposal per year. Complex proposals should have a single theme and demonstrate that the research can be completed within the scholarship year.

- **Can I propose a second year of research for a follow-on project?** Continuing proposals may be considered near the end of the initial year, depending on the scholar's progress to date and the funding available. Such proposals will be considered alongside new proposals in the year's competitive review process.

General questions

- **What are Bethesda living expenses like? Does NIH help in securing short-term housing?** NIH's Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE) provides up-to-date information on housing and the local cost of living here: https://www.training.nih.gov/incoming-trainees/move/

- **Can I use programs and resources offered by OITE?** OITE (https://www.training.nih.gov/) provides valuable online resources developed for its trainees but accessible to anyone. However, since Stetten Scholars belong to a separate program under the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), they are not eligible for many of OITE's on-site benefits and resources. If you have questions, please contact Dr. Kristin Heitman, ONHM's Deputy Director and Senior Historian, at kris.heitman@nih.gov.

- **Can I use ONHM's resources if I am not a Stetten scholar?** Absolutely. ONHM welcomes researchers of all kinds, both virtually and in person. Online collection catalogues are available through its website at history.nih.gov. Assistance from ONHM historians, archivists, and curators can be requested by email us at history@nih.gov.