Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life
2018 Postdoctoral Fellowship Request for Applications

Overview
The origin of life is among the great unsolved scientific problems of our age. To advance our knowledge of the processes that led to the emergence of life, the Simons Foundation established the Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life (SCOL). The collaboration supports creative, innovative research on topics such as the astrophysical and planetary context of the origins of life, the development of prebiotic chemistry, the assembly of the first cells, the advent of Darwinian evolution and the earliest signs of life on the young Earth.

In the past decade, a small number of researchers have developed a “systems” approach to origins-of-life research that connects disciplines, technologies and institutions in new collaborations. It is likely that answers to important scientific questions may come in the next decade, making this a significant moment in the changeover that results from an influx of new talent, new instrumentation and a growing global community of researchers.

Opportunity
The collaboration is now inviting applications for postdoctoral fellowships to support independent research on topics related to the origins of life at one or more laboratories or research institutions in any country. For more information on the Simons Collaboration on the Origins of Life, please click here.

The collaboration seeks to engage the ideas and creativity of researchers around the world by providing an array of opportunities for postdoctoral fellows to interact with colleagues from different disciplines and programs, both online and in person, including webinars, workshops and annual symposia. As fellows are expected to participate fully in all SCOL events, these opportunities are designed to not only strengthen the collaboration but also provide the most fruitful mechanism for bringing a growing origins-of-life community together. Applications from all origins-related disciplines are encouraged.
Eligibility
Candidates must have received their Ph.D. or equivalent degree within five years of the fellowship’s start date. Applications may be submitted from scientists in domestic and foreign nonprofit organizations; public and private institutions, such as colleges, universities, hospitals, laboratories and units of state and local government; and eligible agencies of the federal government. There are no citizenship or country requirements. Postdocs in currently funded SCOL Investigator labs are ineligible to apply.

Funding
Appointments last for three years, contingent upon continued research on questions relevant to origins of life as assessed by annual progress reports. The annual stipend will be $62,000 USD. The stipend may be supplemented by the host institution or the mentoring PI. There will be up to a $10,000 allowance for health insurance or equivalent insurance in the country in which the fellow’s institution is located, for the fellow and his or her family. The allowance is only for health insurance and not any other benefit(s). Exact health insurance amounts must be included in the second-stage proposal budget. Any unexpended health insurance funds must be returned to the Simons Foundation. An annual allowance of up to $20,000 may be used for supplies, publication costs, small equipment and other research-related expenses. Of the $20,000 allowance, up to $6,000 of it may be used for research-related travel and up to $3,000 of it for relocation costs of the fellow and his or her family to the host institution. Relocation costs must be in accordance with the policies of the host institution. Payment cannot be made directly to fellows. No indirect costs may be taken.

Policies and procedures governing this award can be found at the following link.

Instructions for Submission
The application process has two phases. In the first phase, applicants submit a first-stage proposal via proposalCENTRAL. The submission deadline for first-stage proposals is Tuesday, September 12, 2017, 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time. First-stage finalists will be notified by Tuesday, November 7, 2017, and must submit a second-stage proposal by Friday, December 1, 2017.
All proposals must be completed electronically and submitted using forms provided at proposalCENTRAL. To submit your first-stage proposal:

- Log in to proposalCENTRAL using your username and password. If you are a new user, click on the CREATE ONE NOW button under APPLICATION LOGIN. Your registered email also works as your username. If you forgot your login information, you can retrieve your username and password from proposalCENTRAL by clicking the forgot your username/password? link under APPLICATION LOGIN.

- To apply, after you log in, select the grey GRANT OPPORTUNITIES tab on the right side of the page and scroll down to the Simons Foundation section. Then click on APPLY NOW in the LIFE SCIENCES-SIMONS COLLABORATION ON THE ORIGINS OF LIFE FELLOWSHIPS row. For assistance with proposalCENTRAL, please call 800-875-2562 or email pcsupport@altum.com.

**First-Stage Proposals must include:**

- A signed letter of acceptance from the mentoring Principal Investigator (PI)
- Biosketches of the mentoring PI and postdoctoral fellow applicant, including publications
- Technical and lay abstracts
- Narrative that addresses one or more of the 10 key questions central to origins-of-life research. The narrative should not exceed two pages (excluding references and figures) and must include:
  - specific aims,
  - background,
  - significance of this work to the origins of life and
  - research design and methods.
- Two confidential letters of recommendation, from current or former advisors (other than the mentoring PI) or other scientists familiar with your work.
- Confidential letters of recommendation must be submitted through proposalCENTRAL (see instructions document in proposalCENTRAL) by Thursday, September 7, 2017, 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time. Note: this is prior to the first-stage proposal deadline.
Review of First-Stage Proposals
The SCOL steering committee will review all first-stage proposals and forward recommendations to the Simons Foundation science staff for their review. Successful finalists will be notified by the foundation on Tuesday, November 7, 2017, and will be invited to submit a second-stage proposal online via proposalCENTRAL.

Second-Stage Proposal
The deadline for second-stage proposal submission is Friday, December 1, 2017, 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. Finalists will be required to submit the following:

- The original narrative that was submitted and approved with the first-stage proposal. Changes to the narrative are not allowed.
- Budget (three years)
- Brief budget justification
- Renewable reagents and data-sharing plan
- 501(c)(3) determination or equivalency letter (foreign institutions only). The Simons Foundation requires a determination letter from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) stating exemption under 501(c)(3) and, furthermore, either a 509(a)(1), (2) or (3) classification. If an international institution is selected for funding and does not have the aforementioned documentation, the Simons Foundation will require the institution to complete an equivalency determination with NGOsource (see Policies and Procedures).
- Signed signature page with institutional approval to document the commitment from the fellow’s institution(s) to administer the fellowship

Fellowship Review
The steering committee of the SCOL will review, rank and recommend candidates to the Simons Foundation. The SCOL will award up to five fellowships in 2018.
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**Contacts**

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