

University of Maryland Pepper Center Request for Applications, 2026-2027 Research Career Development and Pilot Awards

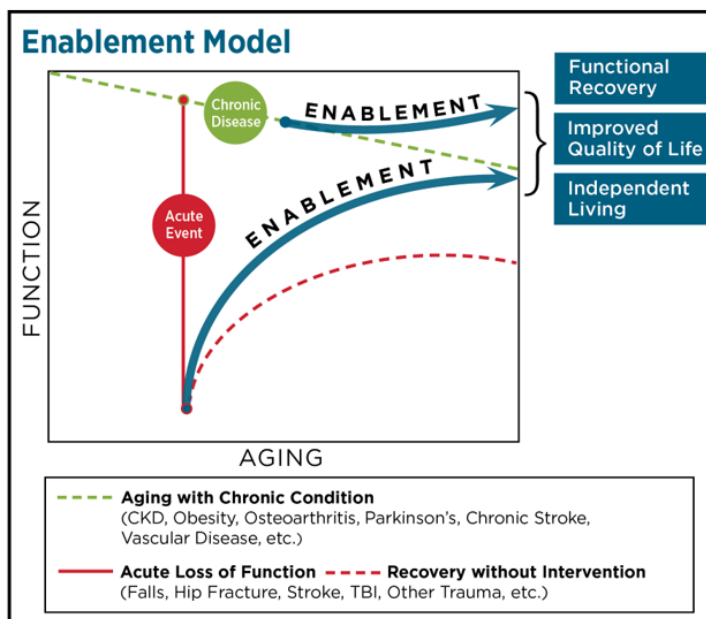
Please circulate this announcement to other faculty in your division, department, or school.

The University of Maryland Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center (UM-OAIC) has two funding opportunities available:

- **Pilot and Exploratory Studies Core (PESC)** will fund two-year pilot projects
- **Research Education Core (REC)** will fund early career scholars

Funding will provide support for research proposals of high relevance to the Center's mission of enablement, which addresses the processes by which function is lost, and the multiple factors that affect the onset and progression of disability in older adults (see figure below). Studies may examine the mechanisms underlying functional impairments associated with stroke, hip fracture, osteoarthritis, and other common chronic diseases or injuries in older adults. Studies proposed in human subjects, studies that utilize pre-clinical methods, and studies utilizing existing databases will be considered for funding.

It is expected that REC Scholars and Pilot awardees will propose at least one, if not more, select UM-OAIC Cores as research resources. A brief description of each core follows. Interested applicants must discuss their project with a core leader (below) to assure compatibility with the center's mission.



Biostatistics, Data Science and Informatics Core: Study design, informatics and modern data analysis and interpretation as well as development and dissemination of new statistical and data science methods and software.

Applied Physiology, Mechanisms, and Translation Core: Medical assessments and cardiovascular screening of participants, development and testing of interventions in clinical centers, home, community and care settings, cardiometabolic and function phenotyping and biochemical study of blood and tissue, and studies in preclinical aging rodent models.

Rehabilitation Technology Resource Core: Characterization of neuromotor, musculoskeletal, and cognitive function and supports laboratory, clinic, and home/community validation studies of robotics, wearable sensors, and digital health platforms.

For more information about the UM-OAIC's mission and core services, please visit <http://www.medschool.umaryland.edu/peppercenter/>.

Award Types:

1. **Pilot Awards:** The Center will support up to three pilot awards of no more than \$30,000 in direct costs for the 1st year of work only. These projects are renewable for a second year pending approval of a progress report by UM-OAIC leaders. No additional funds will be provided during the 2nd year.
Expectations: Results will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal and a proposal for external funding will be submitted within 12 months following successful completion of the pilot study.
2. **REC Scholar Awards:** The UM-OAIC will support two scholar awards of up to \$50,000 (salary + fringe) for a period of up to two years contingent on adequate progress. The Center provides research training and education to promote the career development of early career faculty toward independence as investigators in aging-related research.
Expectations: REC Scholars will submit a career development grant application as part of their scholar activities.

Eligible Candidates:

Pilot Awards: A pilot project investigator (PI) should be a full-time junior faculty member with limited external funding, a post-doctoral fellow with a written departmental commitment to faculty appointment within the coming academic year, or a more senior funded investigator transitioning to research in aging. PIs may use the funds for technical support, but not for their own salaries. The Center is looking to support new investigators and increase collaborations on campus. As a result, projects that involve 2 or more investigators who have not worked together previously in an aging research area will be given priority when reviewed.

REC Scholar Award: Criteria for a successful application include:

- Research interests and academic accomplishments (3-5 publications, abstracts/presentations) that demonstrate potential for success in aging research that involves enhancing functional independence and/or health in older persons;
- Demonstrated competence in research during previous clinical, research, and fellowship training;
- Evidence of originality and critical thought in the conduct of research;
- US citizen, permanent resident and/or green card holder;
- Faculty appointment at University of Maryland school Baltimore, University of Maryland Baltimore County or University of Maryland College Park at time of award; and
- Not previously a PI on an NIH R01, VA Merit, program project, or currently on a K or VA Career Development Award.

LOI Application Process:

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to meet with one or of the core leaders to ensure eligibility and fit with the UM-OAIC mission prior to submission.

Pilot Awards: Submit your NIH Biosketch and one for any co-investigators (no effort) and complete the attached form (page 4 that follows) containing the following:

- 1) Description of how the project relates to the theme of the UM-OAIC;
- 2) How pilot funding will lead to next grant submission and advance the PI's research in aging;
- 3) Brief narrative of the proposed research justifying the hypothesis and aims, primary outcomes, analyses, and the timeline for the completion of the research;
- 4) A list of the potential collaborating mentors and associated center core leaders;
- 5) A description of the UM-OAIC core services that will be required to conduct the research.

REC Scholar Awards:

- 1) Updated curriculum vitae;
- 2) A 2-3 page written statement of career goals including the focus of their aging-related research as well as a brief description (research question, hypothesis, aims, methods and relevance to the UM-OAIC) of the research that is planned to be conducted during the period of the REC award;
- 3) A letter of support from a research mentor;
- 4) A letter from your Department Chair providing protected time to be commensurate with your training needs and the proposed development plan
- 5) Completed Initial REC Scholar Application Form (page 5 that follows)

RFA Information Workshop

Join to learn more about the LOI and full application process for pilot and REC Scholar funding.

Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 4:30pm via zoom link: [Join Here](#)

Meeting ID: 951 0775 8814

Passcode: 104773

Application Timeline

Letter of intent due by October 30, 2026

Notification of LOI acceptance by November 23, 2026

Pilot project applications due by January 29, 2027

Decision notification by April 30, 2027

Funded pilot projects begin on September 1, 2027 or upon NIA release of funds

LOIs are due by 5pm on **October 30, 2026 in WORD format to Anne Sullens**
(asullens@som.umaryland.edu)

UM-OAIC Core Leaders	Area of Expertise
Jennifer Albrecht, PhD	TBI, sleep disorders, cognition, study design and epidemiological methods
Odessa Addison, DPT, PhD	Mobility, Function, Intramuscular Fat
Daniel Forman, MD	Geriatric Cardiology, cardiac rehabilitation, telehealth technologies
Leslie Katzel, MD, PhD	Applied Physiology
Rozalina McCoy, MD, MS	Claims & EHR data, endocrinology, pragmatic trials, infor-matics, health services research, target trial emulation
Denise Orwig, PhD	Hip fracture recovery, outcomes assessment, translational methods, implementation science
Alice Ryan, PhD	Exercise and nutrition interventions, functional impairment, metabolites, adipose/muscle metabolism
Stephen Seliger, MD, MS	Chronic Kidney Disease, Aging Cognition, Physical Function
Michelle Shardell, PhD	Causal inference, survival bias, machine learning, missing data, proxy data, -omics data, instrumental variables, data harmonization
Avelino Verceles, MD, MS	Physical Rehab and Nutrition in Survivors of Critical Illness
Chris Ward, PhD	Pre-clinical studies, cytoskeleton microtubule research in aging muscle
Kelly Westlake, PhD, MSc, PT	Motor learning, brain imaging (MRI, fMRI, EEG), rehab technology validation/translation, fall prevention
Larry Zhang, PhD	Neuro & MSK assessment and precision rehab; Rehab robotics, bioengineering, translation from lab to clinics

2026 Pilot Letter of Intent Application
University of Maryland Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center (UM-OAIC)
at the School of Medicine

Application Process: Interested pilot project investigators need to submit a NIH Biosketch of the principal and co-investigator and the following (please add additional space if needed; no more than 3 pages total):

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Faculty Position:

Institution/School/Department/Division:

Title of Pilot Project:

Name(s) of Mentors:

Name(s) of Co-Investigators:

- 1.) Describe how the project relates to the theme of the center.
- 2) How will pilot funding lead to the next grant submission as well as advance your future research in aging?
- 3) Provide a brief narrative of the proposed research justifying the hypothesis and aims, primary outcomes, analyses, and the timeline for the completion of the research.
- 4) Provide a list of the potential collaborating mentors and Pepper center core leader(s) you met with.
- 5) Which core services will be required to conduct the research? Explain.

Letters of intent are due by 5pm on **October 30, 2026** in WORD format to Anne Sullens
asullens@som.umaryland.edu

Research Education Core Scholar Initial Scholar Application Form 2026
University of Maryland Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center

Contact Information:

Name:

Telephone Number:

Email:

Degree(s):

Faculty Position:

University Affiliation including School and Department:

Eligibility:

- Are you currently, or have you been, a PI on an NIH R01, R29, or subproject of a Program Project (PO1), Center (P50, P60, U54) grant, or mentored career development (K-series) grant?
____ Yes ____ No
- Are you a US citizen or have you been admitted for permanent residence/citizenship?
____ Yes ____ No

Professional Goals and Research Interests:

- Attach a copy of your current curriculum vitae.
- Attach a brief description (hypothesis, aims, methods, and relevance to the UM-OAIC) of the research you plan to conduct during the period of your award.

Letter of Support:

Please provide a letter of support from your primary research mentor.

Letter of Commitment:

Provide a letter from your Department Chair providing protected time that commensurate with your training needs and the proposed development plan.

Please send all materials via e-mail by 5 pm on October 30, 2026 to:
Anne Sullens at asullens@som.umaryland.edu