

PREP FAQs

Q: What is the Professional Research Experience Program (PREP)?

A: The Professional Research Experience Program (PREP) allows NIST to establish cooperative agreements with universities and colleges to provide NIST researcher appointments to undergraduates, graduate students and postgrads. The program is designed to enhance NIST's research programs by providing opportunities for collaboration with the academic community, and to provide NIST laboratory experience and financial assistance to researchers at various stages of their studies and careers. This program is funded through a five-year cooperative agreement, as NIST will be substantially involved in its implementation. See the Federal Grant Cooperative Agreement Act, 31 USC Sec. 6305, and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) implementing guidance. NIST shall collaborate with the University on the scope of work consistent with the OMB guidance.

Q: Why should a NIST researcher engage with a PREP researcher?

A: Top students from various academic departments apply for PREP researcher appointments. In return, NIST researchers have access to postdocs and students who bring new ideas and experiences that can strengthen the agency's research programs.

Q: What are the categories of researchers that can be brought on through PREP?

A: Undergraduates, Bachelor's Degree Holders, Graduate Students, Master's Degree Holders, Postdocs, Research faculty.

Q: Is there a citizenship requirement?

A: PREP is open to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals with the appropriate visa to work at NIST.

Q: Who can request a PREP researcher?

A: A request should come from a NIST researcher.

Q: Who pays the PREP researcher?

A. PREP researchers are paid by the sponsoring PREP University through a cooperative agreement received from NIST.

Q: What financial assistance is available for a PREP researcher?

A: All PREP researchers are eligible to receive financial assistance which includes a salary. PREP researchers' salary is based on classification (undergraduate, graduate student, postdoc, faculty) and level of expertise. Additionally, all PREP researcher categories except for undergraduates, are eligible to receive benefits and relocation.

PREP researchers enrolled in graduate school at participating PREP university are eligible for tuition assistance.

Q: Does PREP pay for tuition?

A. PREP covers tuition for graduate students enrolled at a participating university during the time of appointment. Undergraduate tuition is not covered by PREP.

Q: Are PREP researchers classified as undergraduate and graduate students required to be enrolled at a PREP University?

A. Yes. PREP researchers who are undergraduate or graduate students are required to be enrolled full-time at a partnering PREP University.

Q: Is a PREP researcher a NIST employee?

A: No. PREP researchers conducting research at a NIST laboratory are guest researchers and are required to sign a Guest Researcher Agreement.

Q: Who is the PREP researcher's employer?

A: PREP researchers are employed by a PREP University.

Q: Who are the PREP Universities?

A: PREP Boulder is a partnership with the following institutions: Brown University, Colorado School of Mines, University of Colorado Boulder, and University of Colorado Denver.

PREP Gaithersburg is a partnership with the following institutions: Brown University, Georgetown University, JUMBO Consortium (Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University, and State University of New York), Montgomery College, Towson University, University of Maryland College Park, and University of the District of Columbia.

Q: Contact info for questions?

A: Send an e-mail to prep@nist.gov.