The purpose of this MOU is to identify the roles and responsibilities of the SOM Path to Independence Program Participants and to indicate commitment of the Participant’s department in supporting their full participation and completion of the Program.

**Program Mission:** The Path to Independence Program is designed to assist Duke investigators in securing their first independent NIH R01, R03, or R21 funding. This program educates participants in effectively communicating their ideas for an NIH grant reviewer audience. Some attention will be paid to evaluating application content; however, this should be viewed as complimentary to the assistance and review provided by the participant’s department, peers, colleagues, and mentors.

**Program Structure:** The program consists of structured reviews of grant applications by experienced senior Duke faculty. These faculty Reviewers will have extensive expertise with the NIH either through continuous support or by serving on NIH study section. Ad hoc Reviewers with specific technical expertise may also be recruited to review particular applications.

**Expectations for Program Participants (To be initialed by Participant):**

_____ Prior to Program orientation, the Participant is expected to have his or her Specific Aims vetted by leadership within their Department or Division. The project aims and preliminary data should be deemed sound, sufficient, and ready to be incorporated into a grant application. The participant should be well suited to the project and ready to commit the time to write the grant application.

_____ During the Program and prior to grant submission, the Participant is expected to contact the NIH PO or PD at the NIH Center/Institute most likely to support the proposed project to discuss how project aims fit within the mission of the Center/Institute. Project aims should be revised to reflect the outcome of these discussions.

_____ The Program consists of 3 workshops and an internal review: one Specific Aims workshop, one Significance/Innovation workshop, and one Effective Communications workshop. Program Participants are expected to be present and prepared for each of these workshops. Participants with highly demanding schedules should select workshops early so they can find a time that works for them. The number of Participants per workshop is limited, and new workshops cannot be added to accommodate participant schedules.

_____ The Program includes an internal grant application review in the format of an official NIH review. The Program Participant is expected to submit their complete draft grant application (as defined on the Faculty Mentoring website) to the Program Assistant by the deadline provided for each Program cycle to ensure that the internal Reviewers have adequate time to provide a quality review. Extensions cannot be given. Participants who do not plan to submit a complete draft for review by the deadline should not register for the Program.

_____ During the Program, the Participant may change their submission plans as they assess the readiness of their application. Changes in plans are completely acceptable and should be communicated to the Program Assistant by the deadline provided (approximately 15 days prior to internal submission deadline).

_____ I understand that I will be asked to complete a pre-program survey and a post-program survey to help the Office for Faculty Mentoring evaluate programming. These survey links will be emailed to me directly.
If my application is funded, I agree to provide my grant to the Office for Faculty Mentoring as an example for future program participants. I understand that all sensitive information will be redacted before distribution, and that anyone with access will have a confidentiality form on file with the Office for Faculty Mentoring.

**Departmental commitment (To be initialed by Department Chair or Division Chief):**

As the Department Chair or Division Chief, I have read the “Expectations for Program Participants” above and agree to support the Participant in adhering to these commitments.

The participant’s project aims have been vetted within the department, are scientifically sound and felt to be competitive for peer review.

The Department will provide the pre- and post-award infrastructure to guide the Participant through the technical aspects of grant budgeting, submission, and management.

The Department is committed to the success of this applicant, who we feel is well suited to this project, highly productive, and likely to be successful in establishing an independent career based on this project.

As the Department Chair or Division Chief, I recognize the Program is at least a 4-month commitment with minimal required classroom time, but significant time for writing, review of feedback and scientific contemplation. These commitments will be seen as a priority throughout the duration of the Program.

_____________________________  __________________________
**Participant Signature**  **Date**

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**Participant Printed Name**

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**Department Chair/Division Chief Signature**  **Date**

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**Department Chair/Division Chief Printed Name**

Mark W. Dewhirst, DVM, PhD, FASTRO, FAAAS

**Associate Dean for Faculty Mentoring Printed Name**