



High School Catalyst Program

Updated February 19, 2023

The High School Catalyst Program (previously The Weill Cornell Medicine High School Immersion Program) is a partnership between the Weill Cornell Graduate School and the Memorial Sloan Kettering Postdoctoral Association. The High School Catalyst Program is designed to offer hands-on biomedical research experience to New York high school students from self-reported underrepresented minority, disadvantaged, and/or first-generation immigrant backgrounds.

The Catalyst Program also runs in collaboration with the Harlem Biospace non-profit HYPOTHEkids Bioforce program. (More info can be found here: <https://www.hypothekids.org/new-york-bioforce>) The Bioforce program independently receives their own applications from high school students interested in life sciences research and looking to receive intensive lab training before the start of the Catalyst Program in the summer. After the conclusion of the Bioforce program at the beginning of July, students will immediately begin their summer research experience in the Catalyst Program at a WCM or MSK laboratory. Catalyst gives priority to high school students enrolled in Bioforce, so we highly recommend applying to their program! In addition, Bioforce students receive a generous stipend for their participation and effort in the program. The Bioforce application can be found on the page using the link above.

Updates for 2023 Programming:

The Catalyst Program is back to being fully in-person. The goals and overarching expectations for the Catalyst Program are to provide high school students with a rigorous 6-week biomedical research experience. Accepted high school students will work closely with a graduate student or postdoctoral mentor to advance a scientific project in a WCM or MSK laboratory as well as attend a selection of journal clubs, panels, and workshops designed to introduce high school students to medical research and life as a scientist. Mentees and mentors will be paired based on their scientific interests, and the specifics of the project will be designed by the mentor and shaped by their expertise. Students will then present their research in the form of a poster at the conclusion of the program. The 2023 Catalyst Program requirements can be found below:

2023 Catalyst Program Requirements:

- **Start date: July 5th, 2023**
- **End date: August 16th, 2023** (6 weeks)
- **FULLY IN-PERSON PROGRAM**
- High school student mentees will be paired with a graduate student or postdoctoral associate mentor to be guided through developing a research project and conducting in-person research.
- High school student mentees are expected to be in the laboratory for approximately **25 hours a week** with their mentor to advance their research skills and obtain hands-on experience planning and performing experiments.
- High School student mentees are expected to attend their mentor's lab meetings as well as program journal clubs, panels, and workshops throughout the program.
- High school student mentees will **present their research** to their peers at the conclusion of the program in the form of a **poster**.

In general, high school students are expected to learn about their mentor's research area (typically will also include attending their mentor's lab meetings), assist with experiments at the bench, and present their findings and summer research topic at the conclusion of the program. Accordingly, graduate student and postdoc mentors are expected to provide mentees with the necessary reading materials for introducing them to the research topic, design a scientific project for mentees at the appropriate level, and guide mentees through both the hands-on portion as well as the intellectual journey of the summer research experience. Importantly, mentors are expected to dedicate a significant portion of their time and effort to supporting their Catalyst mentees during the 6-week program. Mentor/mentee pairs should follow the basic program requirements below, but have the flexibility to exceed them.

For prospective students (not interested in or eligible for the Bioforce program):

We are looking for highly motivated, enthusiastic, and committed high school students for the Catalyst Program! Students **MUST BE 16 YEARS OF AGE** at the start of the program (unfortunately we cannot make any exceptions). If you are interested in applying, our application can be found below. **Applications for the 2023 Catalyst Program are due 11:59PM April 1st, 2023.**

2023 Catalyst Application:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeXaYJ2dr_-NAF7KqNnHAPdYIOzl8g_u01eMHa2MoR-hjBc/g/viewform?usp=sf_link

If you have any questions about the program, please email hscatalystprogram@gmail.com and one of our program leadership will get back to you.

For graduate students or postdocs interested in serving as Catalyst mentors:

Please email program Co-Presidents, Clare Cahir (cwc4001@med.cornell.edu) and Victoria Rasmussen (vir4003@med.cornell.edu) directly with your name, position, laboratory, and broad research topic. Graduate students who are interested in serving as mentors must be post-ACE. First-year graduate students may be eligible to serve as a co-mentor with a post-ACE student or postdoc.