



APSA2026
CHICAGO

Annual Meeting
May 6 - 9, 2026
Chicago, Illinois



2026 EARLY-CAREER GRANT WRITING & CAREER LAUNCH SYMPOSIUM

From Finishing Training to Your First Funded Faculty Position

Organized by the APSA Foundation & the APSA Research Committee

Research Committee Chair: Dr. Catherine Hunter
Research Committee Vice Chair: Dr. Ash Gosain

May 5th, 2pm – 7pm ET

2:00–6:00 PM

Interactive Symposium

6:00–7:00 PM

Mentor Circles & “Meet the Investigators” Reception
Beverages and small bites included

Registration Fee

\$100

In-person only, virtual attendance is not available.

Travel-friendly design

Afternoon start allows same-day arrival

Primary audience

Senior fellows & post-doctoral trainees

First 1–5 years of faculty

Early investigators considering a research track

Location

Chicago Sheraton Riverwalk, Chicago, IL USA

In-person only, virtual attendance is not available.

Goals

- Demystify the transition from trainee to independent faculty investigator.
- Provide actionable, practical frameworks for writing your *first* funded grant.
- Clarify what to apply for, when, and why in the first 5 years of faculty.
- Create direct mentorship connections between participants and senior APSA investigators.
- Normalize and learn from rejection, revision, and resubmission.

Symposium Design: What's Different for 2026?

Instead of sequential lectures, the symposium is structured as interactive blocks, each with:

- A brief framing talk (10–12 min)
 - Panel discussion (10 min) with 2–3 faculty
 - Audience participation (live polling, case scenarios, Q&A)
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Program Structure

BLOCK 1 – STARTING THE RESEARCH CAREER CLOCK: “WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING NOW?”

Moderators

- Dr. Catherine Hunter
- Dr. Ash Gosain

Featured Address

- “What Chairs Look for in Early Faculty Investigators”

Live Discussion Topics

- When your “research clock” actually starts
- Protected time: what it means, what’s realistic vs aspirational
- Choosing a research direction vs a research project

BLOCK 2 – MENTORSHIP THAT ACTUALLY WORKS: “CHOOSING, USING, AND OUTGROWING Mentors”

- The Ideal Mentor: Inside or Outside Surgery?
- Building a Mentorship Team, not a Mentor

Interactive Element

- Small-group breakout: “Diagnose This Mentorship Problem”
- Audience votes on solutions, faculty respond

BLOCK 3 – What Grant Should I Apply For First? “K, Foundation, or R? Why Not All Three”

- Mentored vs Independent Awards
- Foundation Grants: Strategic Advantages and Pitfalls

Career-Stage Polling

- Live polling to tailor discussion to attendee mix (fellows vs junior faculty)

BLOCK 4 – Writing the Grant That Gets Read: “Specific Aims That Don’t Get You Triaged”

- Specific Aims: What Reviewers See in 60 Seconds

Live Exercise

- Real (de-identified) Specific Aims reviewed in real time.
- Audience identifies “fatal flaws” before faculty commentary.

BLOCK 5 – When Things Don’t Go Your Way: “Scored but Unfunded, Now What?”

- Understanding the Summary Statement
- Bridge Funding and Surviving the Gap

Interactive Q&A

- How many resubmissions is “too many”?
- When to pivot vs persist

BLOCK 6 – Expanding Beyond the R01: “Clinical Trials, Teams, and Alternative Funding”

- Clinical Trial Funding for Early Faculty

Mentorship Circles & Networking Reception 6:00–7:00 PM

Attendees pre-select one Mentor Circle, each led by 2 faculty

- Basic science pathway
- Clinical outcomes / health services
- Clinical trials
- Surgeon-scientist with heavy clinical load
- Navigating first faculty job

Goals

- Lower barrier to mentorship conversations
- Enable follow-up connections after APSA
- Foster peer-to-peer support among early-career surgeons

