CIRES Visiting Fellows Program (VFP)

Information session

November 2, 2026

cires.colorado.edu/award-programs/visiting-fellows-program

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CIRES University of Colorado Boulder NOAA

About CIRES

Cooperative **I**nstitute for **R**esearch in **E**nvironmental **S**ciences

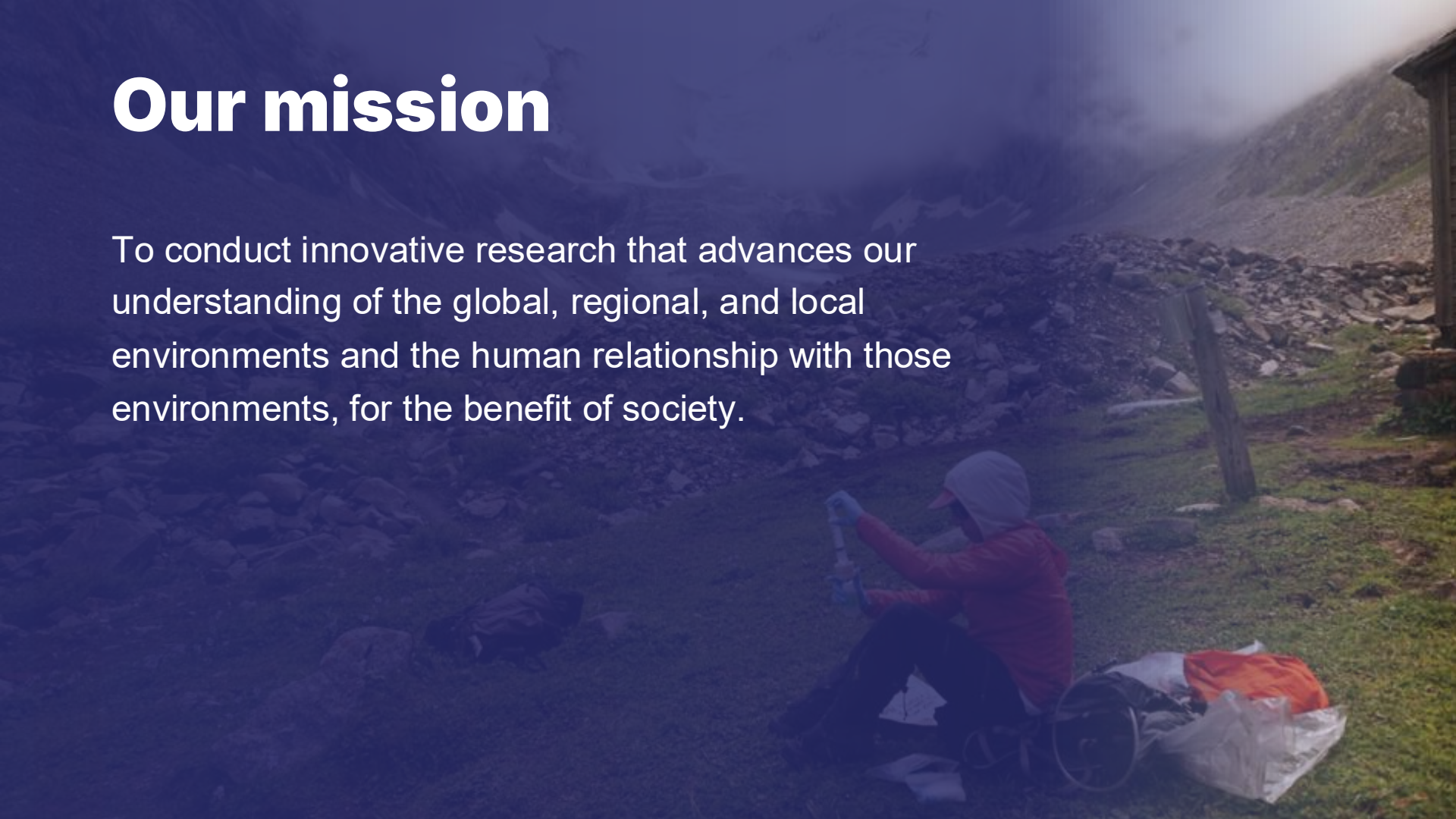
CIRES at CU Boulder has partnered with NOAA since 1967



cires.colorado.edu/cires-strategic-plan

Our mission

To conduct innovative research that advances our understanding of the global, regional, and local environments and the human relationship with those environments, for the benefit of society.



CIRES at a glance

Largest institute at CU Boulder

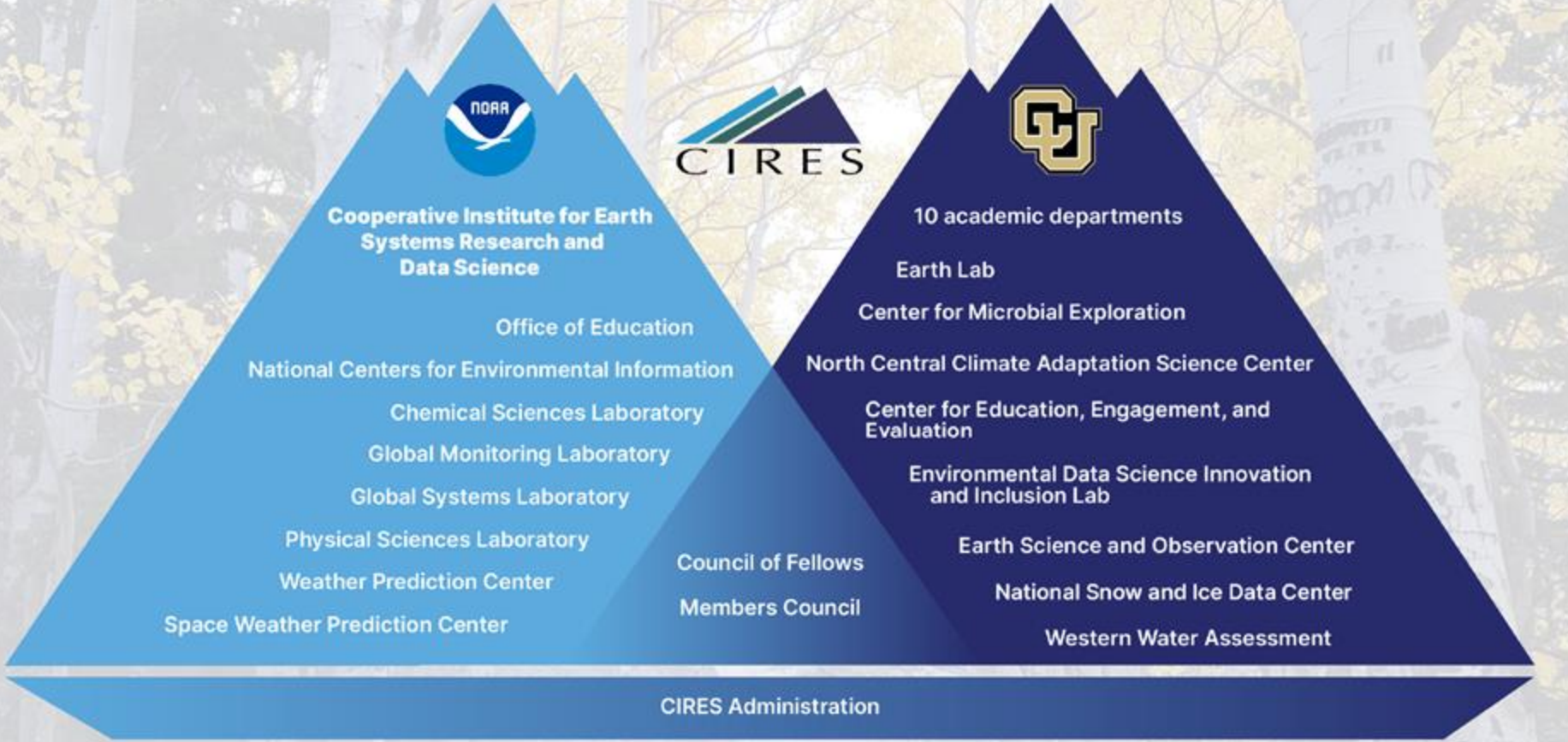
900+ researchers, students, and administrative staff

~200 graduate and undergraduate students

- 400+ CIRES researchers embedded at 7 NOAA labs and centers
- 20+ faculty across many departments
- Centers and Programs (Earth Lab, ESOC, CEEE...)

cires.colorado.edu

CIRES composition



Our research includes

- Atmospheric Sciences
- Biology and Ecosystems
- Chemistry
- Cryosphere
- Solid Earth
- Space Weather
- Water Resources
- Data Science
- Remote Sensing
- Social Science



What is the Visiting Fellows Program?

Post-Doctoral position

- 2 years
- Fully funded (salary)
- Research budget
- Relocation stipend

Sabbatical Visitor

- 3 -12 months
- Housing allowance
- Research budget

*slides focus on postdoc opportunity, contact staff with questions

Post-doctoral Fellowship Eligibility

- The applicant should be no more than 4 years out from completion of PhD at the time of application (exceptions up to six additional months may be made for time off due to caretaking responsibilities, contact Becca Edwards, becca.edwards@colorado.edu).

  PhD must be achieved by the start of Fellowship

- Priority will be given to candidates affiliated with institutions outside the greater Boulder scientific community.
- Past or current CU Boulder graduate students and postdocs are not eligible.
- Current or former CIRES Visiting Fellows are not eligible.

Timeline

- Applications open October 19, 2026
- Applications due 11:59pm MT December 21, 2026
- Reference Letters due January 8, 2027
- Applications reviewed by internal committee January- February 2027
  - ***Committee recommendations must be approved by the CIRES Fellows***
- Applicants notified Spring 2027
- Awardees must start before February 2028

Application

- **CV** (2-page, template provided)
- **Transcripts** (may be unofficial)
- **Cover letter** (max 2 pages, 12 pt font)

  Expected start date, the name(s) of the sponsoring CIRES Fellow(s) and other CIRES, NOAA, and University of Colorado researchers with whom you intend to work, and a description of the nature of the collaboration with each scientist.

  Justification of how you would be a strong addition to the CIRES scientific community. Be sure to align your answers to the CIRES Strategic Plan.

  Short description of an experience or event that was pivotal in your growth as a researcher, in terms of what was learned and how it informs your approach to your research. Higher priority will be given to those who can clearly explain how this position will forward their growth as a researcher, both in terms of methodology and skillset.

insidecires.colorado.edu/visitingfellow/

Application

- **Research proposal** (max 3 pages, 12 pt font, including figures @ 10 pt font, **not** including references)
  - Proposals should outline your motivation for the work, its novelty and potential contribution to the field, the research question, the methods to be pursued, and the expected outcomes. Higher priority will be given to those who indicate an appropriate timeline for achieving these outcomes.
  - Proposals should also include the scientific rationale for doing the work in CIRES, such as linkages with the research of the CIRES Fellow/Senior Research Scientist supporting your proposal.
  - Please remember that the proposals will be reviewed by an interdisciplinary scientific team and should therefore be written for a broad scientific audience. Feel free to contact Becca Edwards (becca.edwards@colorado.edu) if you would like clarification on this request.

Application

- **Sponsors**
  - Proposals must be supported by at least one (and up to 3) CIRES Visiting Fellows Program Sponsor.
  - Identification of at least 1 (and up to 3) CIRES Fellow/ Senior Research Scientist Sponsor
  - Contact potential sponsors well in advance of submitting an application.
  - Successful proposals are typically designed in collaboration with your potential host at CIRES.

Without the support of a current CIRES Fellow/Senior Research Scientist, your application is unlikely to succeed.

https://cires.colorado.edu/award-programs/visiting-fellows-program/sponsors

Application

- **Letters of recommendation**

  Letters of recommendation should include specific examples to illustrate:

  ~ the candidate's ability to complete tasks on a reasonable timeline

  ~ independent thinking skills

  ~ creative problem solving skills

  ~ passion for the field of study

  ~ examples of perseverance when met with a challenge

  ~ the ability to work collaboratively on a team

Be sure to contact letter writers in advance! Give them plenty of time to write a strong letter. Feel free to share examples with them that illustrate the qualities outlined above. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the recommendation letters are submitted by the deadline.

CIRES Sponsors cannot write recommendation letters.

Qualities of a strong application

- Cover letter and letters of recommendation follow application guidelines. Various letters of recommendation speak to different skillsets for the candidate.
- Novelty of research being proposed
- Support of CIRES Fellow/Senior Research Scientist sponsor(s).



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- Clear benefit of research to CIRES
  - ***Significance and relevance of the proposed research to the mission of the Visiting Fellowship program, CIRES, and NOAA***
- Potential for the development of novel partnerships across CIRES and/or NOAA that could benefit or advance scientific understanding
- Meeting the imperatives of the CIRES Strategic Plan

Suggestions for a successful application

Follow the directions on the website. Keep track of the deadlines.

Reach out to a sponsor early! More tips on the next slide.

What makes a good proposal?

- Write to a general scientific audience. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Have someone read it and give you feedback!
- Be specific about what problem you plan to address.
- Motivate the work: ***Why is this work important, interesting, needed?***
- Realistic outcomes - is it achievable in the timeframe?
- Research fits within CIRES

Suggestions from CIRES Sponsors

Reach out early through email to ensure time for feedback.

Write a one-page proposal that is similar to a concept paper.

What are CIRES Sponsors looking for?

- Research fits within CIRES
- Clear connection to their ongoing research & flexibility to adapt
- Potential collaborations across CIRES
- Strong idea that needs a small amount of iteration with the Sponsor
- Innovative and creative ideas that are clear to sponsor and reviewers
- Understanding and interest in the goals of our institute

Current VFP fellow



Lily Hahn
Sponsor: Dr. Jen Kay

“Impact of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation on Arctic Warming: Isolating the Role of Cloud Feedbacks and the Mean-State AMOC"

Thank you for coming!

Please put your questions in the Google form.

Feel free to contact us after this session with questions!

Becca Edwards
becca.edwards@colorado.edu