THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
College of Medicine
Phoenix

BECOME A SCHOLARLY PROJECT MENTOR

EDUCATION // PATIENT CARE
RESEARCH // COMMUNITY

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SCHOLARLY PROJECT

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix requires students to complete a four-year scholarly project that culminates in a graduation thesis and presentation. The program teaches critical inquiry into medical questions by emphasizing medical information literacy, lifelong learning, effective communication, teamwork and evidence-based medicine approaches.

MENTOR LEADERSHIP

Each student's longitudinal scholarly project is led by a mentor who helps identify an unresolved medical question, provides assistance on a prospectus to address the question and lastly, assists with the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the results.

MENTORSHIP ESSENTIALS

Successful mentors need to provide access to data and resources, help in designing projects that fit into a student's schedule and finally, work well with students by being accessible, communicative and supportive.

REWARDS & PRIVILEGES

Becoming a Scholarly Project Mentor has its rewards and privileges. Mentoring provides an opportunity to not only lead and support the next generation of doctors, but to further the understanding of medical knowledge and give back to the profession. In addition, mentors will be able to take advantage of the college's resources and apply for a faculty appointment.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Scholarly Project (SP) Curriculum

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Sarai Alvarado, MSc Senior Coordinator
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Every student at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix is required to design and successfully complete a hypothesis-driven Scholarly Project (SP). Students work closely with mentors and the SP office throughout the four years of their project. Through their SP research, students learn about medical information literacy, lifelong learning, teamwork, effective communication, research methods, evidence-based medicine approaches, and ethics related to scholarly inquiry.

TIMELINE

- *Year 1:* Students pair with a faculty mentor with similar interests and goals. The student and mentor complete a research question and a project prospectus. Once institutional review board compliance is fulfilled the student begins the research project.
- *Year 2:* The student and mentor meet regularly to carry out the research project. The student provides an oral presentation of their progress to a panel of faculty.
- *Year 3 (the clerkship year):* The student and mentor continue to meet regularly; however, the student's time to work on the project may be limited due to clerkship activities.
- *Year 4:* The student submits a final poster and thesis summarizing their entire SP. Each student presents the poster at the annual Student Research Symposium, where selected students also provide oral slide presentations.

SP NOTABLES

- During Year 1, students receive training in literature searches, evidence based medicine, research design, statistical approaches, research compliance, and prospectus construction.
- There are 10 one-week content-free blocks distributed throughout Years 1 and 2. Students can devote part of these one-week blocks to SP work.
- Students have a six-week Personalized Active Learning block between Years 1 and 2. Students can devote all or part of this block to SP work.
- Prior to entering Year 3, students have a five-week Transitions block with 12-14 half days reserved specifically for work on their SP.
- SP productivity is limited during Year 3, but most students identify pockets of time to maintain productivity.
- A rough draft of the SP thesis should be completed by November of Year 4.
- Students are able to pursue a four-week research elective in Year 4. Students can use the elective for follow up projects, writing manuscripts, or other SP-related activities.
- Students are able to apply for travel funds to present their SP work at a national conference.
- Our statisticians are available for students who need advice about experimental design and data analysis. Students should consult with a statistician during year 1 or 2, and during Year 4 for guidance on the final analysis. Please complete the form via the website to request help: https://phoenixmed.arizona.edu/research/resources/biostatistics-services
- Students are able to consult with our research specialist, Keilana Valdez (keilanavaldez@arizona.edu) for advice about research compliance and IRB approval.

Tips for Successful Mentorship of a Scholarly Project (SP)

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The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix requires students to complete a four-year scholarly project (SP) that culminates in a graduation thesis and poster presentation. The most important component of the SP program is the mentor-student relationship. As a mentor, we truly appreciate your service and dedication to this important component of our medical school curriculum.

1. **Communication** — This is the most important component of a successful scholarly project. Problems with a SP usually are due to a lack of communication.
2. **Check in** — We recommend setting up a schedule of regular meetings, or a requirement that students "check in" to gauge progress at regular intervals (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly etc.).
3. **Project Scope** — Students and mentors often find that there is far less time for a project than they had anticipated. Shorter well-defined projects typically have more success than larger complicated projects. Students can always design a second follow-up project if they complete the first project ahead of schedule.
4. **Student Schedule** — The student schedule has periods that allow for greater productivity with their SP (e.g. summer PAL block, electives, others) and periods of less productivity (e.g. Step 1 study time, certain 3rd year clerkships). Students should discuss their schedule with their mentors.
5. **Milestones** — Students are required to demonstrate progress on their SP at key time points throughout medical school (e.g. research question, prospectus, year two presentation, thesis, and poster). Students should discuss the deadlines for these milestones with their mentor.
6. **Second Year Oral Presentations and Research Symposium** — Students are required to deliver an oral presentation to faculty in the fall of Year 2. We hope you can participate in these presentations. Many faculty find it helpful to hear some of the strategies for other student presentations. In addition, the Research Symposium in the 4th year is an excellent opportunity to support your student.
7. **Concerns** — If you have concerns about your project, we encourage you to contact our office. We can typically help you and the student develop a strategy to overcome barriers.
8. **Resources** — The UACOM-P has a number of resources to facilitate the SP project. We have a full time statistician to help with project design and analyses. We have research compliance/IRB staff to help with IRB issues. We also have poster printing services if needed.
9. **Online resources** — The UACOM-P has a number of online learning modules to facilitate research activities on topics related to statistics, research design, research compliance, and others. There are also a number of library resources and faculty development seminars available for faculty mentors.
10. **Obstacles** – All student projects will encounter obstacles. The mentor along with the SP office should help the student develop strategies to overcome these obstacles