

## Health Services Research Summer Scholars Program for Students Underrepresented in Medicine



### OVERVIEW

To address the current underrepresentation of minorities in fields that inform the direction of health care practice and policy, the Department of Medicine of the Perelman School of Medicine in collaboration with the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics and the Master of Science in Health Policy Research have developed a novel **Health Services Research Summer Scholars Program for Students Underrepresented in Medicine**. This program is available for up to two Perelman School of Medicine students who are underrepresented minorities in medicine per year. The program consists of an 8-week summer internship between June-August 2020. During the program, the students will conduct a mentored research project, participate in an Introductory to Health Policy and Health Services Research Seminar course which is offered to Master of Science in Health Policy students (HPR 600) at the Perelman School of Medicine, receive career guidance from multiple health services research role models and mentors, attend the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, develop a health services research network and receive a stipend. The directors for this program are Carmen Guerra, MD, MSCE, Associate Professor of Medicine, and Peter Groeneveld, MD, MS, Professor of Medicine, at the Perelman School of Medicine.

### BACKGROUND

One of the most pressing health care challenges facing the nation is the critical need for more minority physician researchers. By 2050, racial and ethnic minorities are projected to account for half of the U.S. population. And while African-Americans and Hispanics are among the fastest growing segments of the population, they are also the most severely underrepresented minorities in medicine. Although blacks and African-Americans comprise 13% of the population in the U.S., they account for only 4% of the physician workforce. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans together make up 30% of the U.S. population and only 8.9% of practicing doctors.

The need for minority physician researchers is even more striking. Data from AcademyHealth's membership survey shows that African-Americans accounted for only 6.9% of the health services research workforce in 2011, while Hispanics accounted for only 3.7%. The need for minority physician researchers is important because data shows these researchers are more likely to undertake studies to improve the health and health care of diverse populations and reduce health disparities.

According to the Federal Office of Minority Health, the low number of underrepresented minority researchers leads to the underfunding of minority health research initiatives and agendas as well as a lack of culturally appropriate theories, models, and methodologies that could advance minority health and redress the existing disparities in U.S. health and health care. Thus, as disparities in health and health care continue to widen, it has grown increasingly evident that we need more minority health services researchers who personally understand the social,



economic, political, and environmental determinants of racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM**

To address the current underrepresentation of minorities in fields that inform the direction of health care practice and policy, we have developed a novel **Health Services Research Summer Scholars Program for Students Underrepresented in Medicine** for up to two medical students who are underrepresented minorities in medicine per year. The program consists of an 8-week summer internship between June-August 2020. During the program, the students will conduct a mentored research project, participate in an Introductory to Health Policy and Health Services Research Seminar course which is offered to Master of Science in Health Policy students (HPR 600) at the Perelman School of Medicine, receive career guidance from multiple health services research role models, attend the AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, develop a health services research network and receive a stipend. The directors for this program are Carmen Guerra, MD, MSCE, Associate Professor of Medicine, and Peter Groeneveld, MD, MS, Professor of Medicine, at the Perelman School of Medicine. This program is jointly sponsored by Penn's [Master of Science in Health Policy Research](#) and [Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics](#).

This new program builds on the success of and uses the infrastructure of the very successful University of Pennsylvania's LDI [Summer Undergraduate Minority Research \(SUMR\) Program](#). SUMR is a 12-week summer internship program focused on underrepresented minority undergraduate students recruited from universities across the country to participate in a mentored research experience and learn about the political, social, economic, and environmental realities that have led to existing health outcomes.

#### **THE COMPONENTS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH SUMMER SCHOLAR PROGRAM**

##### **1. Participate in Introduction to Health Policy and Health Services Research Seminar course, (HPR 600)**

Introduction to Health Policy and Health Services Research Seminar course (HPR 600) is offered to students enrolled in the Master of Science in Health Policy at the Perelman School of Medicine. The course provides students with an introduction to health services and health policy research. Top Penn faculty representing various departments and schools at the University of Pennsylvania lecture on key health care and health services research topics including a number of "hot topics" such as health disparities, medical decision making, neighborhood and health, quality of care, access to care, behavioral incentives and cost-effectiveness research. The course will also offer an introduction to various career paths in research and policy domains. Finally, the course will provide a brief overview of practical issues such as data options, publishing and dissemination and implementation of research. The course meets several times per week between 9 am and noon. Most of the students enrolled in this course are clinical fellows at Penn and CHOP in a wide variety of clinical specialties, or National Clinician Scholars.

##### **2. A mentored research experience in an area of the student's interest**

LDI senior fellows and other interested Penn faculty members are recruited to be mentors for this program. Potential mentors provide a brief research project description to create a list



distributed to admitted scholars. The mentors are also provided with the resumes of the scholars and both parties are prompted to reach out to the other if they are either interested in the project or on the mentor side if they feel the scholar has the necessary skill set to join their research team. Prior to the beginning of the program every scholar will be assigned a research mentor and have identified their mentored project through this process. The directors of this program will also help to suggest potential mentor-mentee matches and introductions. The mentored research experience will consist of some combination of the following: conducting literature searches and reviews, conducting interviews with subjects according to established protocols, designing surveys, data collection, entry, and analysis, and assistance with abstract and manuscript preparation. The scholars will be fully integrated into the research team and participate in all team meetings. The PI and Research Coordinator will train the students to use existing protocols, and monitor their work to ensure quality and consistency.

### **3. A learning contract**

To ensure the experience meets both the needs of the scholars and the mentors, the scholars and mentors are both required to sign a learning contract that describes what the scholar expects to accomplish while working on that project throughout the summer.

### **4. A weekly lunch seminar series with an eminent health services researcher**

During this weekly lunch seminar series with an eminent health services researcher, the students will learn about the career paths of various nationally recognized health services researchers.

### **5. Attendance at AcademyHealth**

Each summer the scholars have the opportunity to attend the [AcademyHealth](#) Annual Research Meeting at which they are exposed to the different areas of health services research. The scholars attend different research sessions and panels as well as poster presentations and are provided the opportunity to network with leading faculty members and researchers.

### **6. Career Guidance**

The scholars receive guidance on future career development activities and training, on an as needed basis, from the directors of the program, Drs. Guerra and Groeneveld. The scholars also attend weekly seminars with various Penn faculty (many of whom are minorities themselves) who are available as needed discuss their research, their career paths and answer any questions the students may have. We also anticipate that the scholars will serve as role models and peer mentors for the SUMR students.

### **7. Presentation at an end-of-program symposium**

We organize a symposium at the end of the program where the scholars gain experience presenting their completed research and receiving feedback from faculty, LDI senior scholars, and graduate students. Prior to their presentations, scholars receive one-on-one presentation coaching and are video taped to augment their learning.

### **8. Evaluations**

At the end of the program we administer a detailed evaluation survey to scholars and their mentors. Each scholar receives a detailed evaluation from their mentor(s) addressing their



dependability, commitment, problem solving skills, thought processes, research abilities, interpersonal skills, administrative qualities and overall assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

### **9. Alumni Tracking: Outcomes and Support**

We foster a strong alumni network as a resource for alumni and incoming students, through Facebook and other social media. This allows us to accurately track the program outcomes and to engage with other minority colleagues to promote the program and broaden recruitment efforts.

### **10. A stipend**

To offset living expenses during the Summer Scholar Experience, each participating student will receive a stipend in the amount of \$3000.

### **APPLICATION**

We welcome applications from all Perelman School of Medicine medical students who are members of groups who are underrepresented in medical research.

More information about the program can be found on our [website](#).

The application is due on Friday, February 1, 2020 and can be accessed [here](#).

Questions about the program can be sent to:

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