

Summer Research Assistantship (SRA) / Scholarly Concentrations (SC):

Medical Student Application Instructions 2024-2025

Summer Research Assistantship (SRA) awards are available for intensive 8-10 week summer projects to rising Warren Alpert Medical School M2 medical students annually on a competitive basis. Medical students who are awarded an SRA will receive a \$3,750 stipend to carry out a research or scholarly project. Work may be in-person, remote, or hybrid, depending on project requirements, under the supervision and mentorship of a Brown faculty member during the summer between M1 and M2 year. SRAs are the primary source of funding for the SC Program (see below). Typically, about 70-75% of applications are funded annually. *PCPM and MD-PhD students do not need to apply for summer funding using this mechanism unless they have been explicitly informed about this by their program director.*

SRA Program Requirements:

- Dedicate approximately 30-40 hours per week (on average) for 8-10 weeks between June to August on an intensive, mentored project
- Other employment is not usually authorized during the defined work-week tenure of the assistantship. If the student has other commitments that will run concurrently with the SRA, the mentor must be aware of this situation and give their consent.
- Submit a brief (1-page) progress report at the conclusion of the summer (due September 2025). Failure to complete a progress report or the project will result in the need to return the stipend.
- Presentation of project findings at the Medical School's annual Academic Symposium is required of all SRA awardees and SC students.

Scholarly Concentrations

SRAs are the primary source of funding for medical students who are completing summer project as part of their scholarly concentration (SC). However, participation in the SC Program is not required to apply for and receive an SRA. Additionally, it is possible to be admitted to the SC Program and not receive an SRA. Students can only apply to one SC area. Most students continue their SRA project as part of the SC program, although students may apply to an SRA and the SC for separate projects (with a separate application for each project) but are only eligible to receive funding for one.

Other Summer Funding Programs (Links to More Info below)

Rising M2 students should use this same SRA application process for aligned summer research funding programs (BTR, H-EIDS, SRA-EM). These programs are similar to the SRA, although are externally funded (NIH or departmental), have specific areas of focus, and may have additional resources available including dedicated mentors, didactics, and research services and support. Students may only apply to one of these programs (BTR, H-EIDS, SRA-EM), however if not selected, the application will be reviewed by the general SRA program, and a separate application is not needed.

- **[The Basic and Translational Research \(BTR\) Program](#)**
- **[Emerging Infectious Disease and HIV Scholars \(H-EIDS\) Program](#)**
- **SRA-Emergency Medicine** (same as general SRA but must have a faculty mentor in Department of Emergency Medicine)
- **[Global Health Scholars Supplemental Travel Grant](#)**: For global health projects requiring international travel, students may request consideration for an award up to \$2,000 to support travel costs supported by the Brown Global Health Initiative. Simply indicate "Yes" on the Ufunds application question, "Does your project require international travel, for which you are requesting a supplemental travel grant from the Global Health Initiative?" These requests will be evaluated by the Global Health Advisory Committee. Contact Laura Pleasants with questions about this process (laura_pleasants@brown.edu). Projects requiring international travel are also required to have a second letter of support from the international mentor.

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Faculty Mentorship Expectations

The SRA Review Committee expects that the student and faculty mentor will meet a minimum of once every 1-2 weeks (on average) to provide structured opportunities to discuss the ongoing work. Students should not be expected to work independently for long stretches without adequate mentoring.

Applications must show evidence of collaboration between the student and mentor. It is the mentor's responsibility to ensure that the student has clearly defined roles, responsibilities, short- and long-term goals, and is aware of expected work hours.

Please note:

- The primary faculty mentor must be a faculty member in the Division of Biology and Medicine, School of Public Health, or affiliated clinical faculty (Care New England, Brown University Health, VA, etc.) to mentor a student for the SRA. A secondary mentor is allowed from other Divisions, institutions, and can also be a resident or fellow.
- Mentors / Labs may have more than one SRA medical student per year, however it is very important the mentor has capacity to meaningfully mentor and engage with each of their SRA students, and students have independent projects.
- A student who is awarded a SRA and receives another fellowship from the University (i.e., fellowship from School of Public Health) or from another source (external institutions, NIH, etc.) will be asked to choose one source of funding. Medical students should discuss all funding opportunities with their advising dean and Director of Medical Student Research.
- Students working at a Brown-affiliated hospital must abide by hospital workforce regulations. Additional steps may be mandatory and may include, but not limited to, completing a medical screening, obtaining an ID badge, attending new employee orientation, and completing CITI online research training. These steps should be completed (if applicable), and the faculty mentor and student should meet to confirm start date, work hours, meeting times, work space, and ensure all required resources will be available by June 1, 2025.

QUESTIONS?

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PROJECT PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

These guidelines are adapted from those required for NIH research grant submissions, and preparation of the proposal is meant to allow judges to decide on funding decisions, as well as be a practical learning experience for students, to prepare for future competitive scholarly funding opportunities.

The SRA Review Committee scoring rubric is linked on the research [website](#). Please note the following criteria that the committee emphasizes when reviewing applications:

- **Readability:** use language that can be understood by a general audience with basic scientific knowledge, but do not assume subspecialty knowledge. Write clearly and succinctly. Spell out acronyms and abbreviations on first reference. Do not simply cut and paste from your mentor's research proposal. Spell out abbreviations on first reference.
- **Feasibility and Timeline:** Make your project goals realistic. The work should be substantial enough for a full-time summer research experience, but do not propose more work than can be reasonably done within a 10 week period. If you plan to continue work beyond the summer period, briefly describe your plans for this in your proposal.
- **Quality of mentorship**
- **Educational value to the student and potential for scholarly productivity**

Formatting Requirements: The project proposal section should be no more than 3 pages total, single-spaced, 1-inch margins, font Arial, Helvetica, Times New Roman, in 11-point font or larger. The 3-page limit does not include references (no limit). You may include figures and tables however these count towards the 3-page limit.

Project Proposal Format

• **Project Title:**

- **Student Name:**
- **Primary Mentor's Name, Department:**

• **A. Abstract (<150 words):** The role of the abstract is to present the essential meaning of the proposal and form the reader's initial impression of the work. Summarize the significance and background needed to contextualize the importance of the work, the project goals, the procedures to be followed to accomplish the goals, and the potential impact of the project.

• **B. Significance and Project Aims (~1 page):**

- Address why the proposed work is needed and important in the field
- Make clear what the study or project aims to do and what has been accomplished previously
- Identify a gap in knowledge or activities that must be filled to move the field forward or show why previous work needs to be continued
- State concisely the aim(s) to be achieved, and if relevant, the hypothesis to be tested. The aims should be reasonable to make substantial progress on during the summer period, although we recognize that many projects often extend beyond the summer period to achieve all the project goals.

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• C. Research Strategy / Project Methodology (~1 to 1.5 pages):

1. Innovation:

- Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms (or medical humanities, healthy policy or other relevant paradigms).
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, intervention(s) (or policies, works of art, literature, etc.)
- This section can be brief as student projects are not expected to have major innovations

2. Approach:

- Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the aims of the project.
- For patient-oriented studies, this section must include the study setting (i.e., where participants will be / were recruited), the eligibility criteria (both inclusion and exclusion), participant recruitment and enrollment procedures (if applicable), estimated dates of enrollment (if applicable), and data collection procedures.
- For research studies, there must be a reasonable plan for analyzing data. Although the review committee understands that many student projects will use simple and mostly descriptive analyses, we advise you to discuss the analysis plan with your mentor and, if needed, a statistician or qualitative methods consultant.
- For medical humanities, medical education, or other projects which do not focus on data analysis, there must be a clear description of how the project will be conducted in order to achieve the project goals, why the methods were chosen, and how successful accomplishment of the project goal will be assessed.
- Delineate a timeline for different elements of the project (can be in table or narrative format).
- Discuss the anticipated outcomes and impact, limitations, potential problems, alternative strategies to achieving the project aims.

• D. Student Responsibilities, Learning Goals, Mentorship Plan (~0.25 - 0.5 pages)

- Explain each of your responsibilities during the summer period
- Describe the schedule agreed upon between you and your mentor, including a work schedule, a meeting schedule, and any other times you are expected to be present in relation to the project
- Describe the mentorship plan, including mutually agreed upon goals and expectations
- Describe the expected timeline of your project
- Include how this work fits into your educational goals, including any goals for scholarly output (i.e., poster presentation, publication, conference, etc.).

• E. Scholarly Concentrations Description (only for those applying to SC program)

This section is not included in the 3-page word limit and can be up to 250 words maximum.

- Describe your motivations for joining this specific SC Program and how participation will contribute to your professional and personal educational goals.
- *If your SRA project will be also used as part of the SC Program:*
 - Describe the timeline of how your SRA project will continue during the SC Program
 - 1) How will your project develop and grow after the summer funding?
 - 2) How do you anticipate that you will continue to work on the project?

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- *If you are applying ONLY for the SC program (not for SRA funding) in this application:*
 - Complete Sections A-C and E
 - Describe the timeline of your project as part of the SC Program—how do you
 - anticipate your project growing and developing through the years?
 - Given there is still the expectation to present at the Research Symposium in the fall, please indicate evidence that you are preparing for a significant portion of the project to be completed during the summer between your first and second year.
- **References (no page limit, not included in 3-page limit):**
 - Each reference must include names of authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.
 - Include in-text citations. Each work cited in the text must appear in the reference list, and each work in the reference list must be cited in the text.
 - The references should be limited to relevant and current literature. While there is not a page limitation, it is important to be concise and to select only those literature references pertinent to the proposed research.

LETTER OF SUPPORT

Faculty mentor letters of support should be addressed to the SRA/SC Review Committee and sent to the student for upload with the project proposal. Only one letter of support is required (from the primary mentor) for all programs, with the exception of projects involving student international travel. If applicable, a secondary mentor's letter of support is accepted, or the mentors can co-sign a single letter. It is not required nor expected for students to have more than one mentor, except for global health projects requiring international travel. Projects requiring students to travel internationally **MUST** have a second letter of support from a mentor at the international site/institution.

- All faculty mentor letters of support should include:
 - A. A brief overview of the project and the student's role and responsibilities
 - B. A statement that the necessary space, equipment, and supplies will be available
 - C. A statement that arrangements have been made to provide the student with the appropriate level of faculty guidance and supervision, and that the student and mentor have agreed upon mutual expectations and goals.
 - D. Provide details of plans for meetings with the student, and how often, when, and where meeting will occur. If the student has other summer commitments that will run concurrently with the SRA, the mentor should address this situation in the letter and give consent.

IRB/IACUC APPROVAL LETTER

Approval by the IRB or IACUC is mandatory if the project involves human or animal subjects, respectively. If the work will be completed at a Brown-affiliated hospital, obtaining approval will be the mentor's responsibility as the student may not yet be registered as part of the hospital workforce. However, the student may undergo the experience of preparing drafts of the IRB protocol and other required forms. Students must request a copy of the IRB approval letter from their mentor and attach it to the end of the application. If IRB approval is still pending, please attach documentation that confirms the submission status (e.g., letter requesting revisions from the IRB, a screenshot of the submission).

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The Ufunds application will also include the question below regarding your need for IRB/IACUC approval (do not include this information in your application PDF – it will be completed on Ufunds):

- Is human subjects research, and have current IRB approval*
- Is human subjects research, currently being submitted to IRB or under review (approval required prior to starting project)*
- Not human subjects research or research involving animals, and does not require IRB or IACUC approval.*
- Submitted to IRB and categorized as exempt.*
- Project involves animals and has been submitted or approved by IACUC*

CHECKLIST

- Completed Ufunds application – once this is submitted no changes will be allowed

Upload on Ufunds as Single PDF:

- Student's Project Proposal (3 page limit + references)
- SC Program Description (if applicable, 250 words)
- Letter of Support from Mentor (no page limitation) with Cover Sheet
- Mentor's Conflict of Interest Form
- Documentation of IRB or IACUC submission / approval if applicable (if project involves human or animal subjects, respectively)

SUBMISSION PROCESS

All application materials should be completed online on UFunds (open in December) by **Monday, February 3, 2025**. All materials should be uploaded by the student in a single PDF file, including the mentor letter of support, COI form, and IRB/IACUC documentation, if applicable. Incomplete applications will not be considered after this date and time.

FORMS AND LINKS:

UFunds: <https://ufunds.brown.edu/>

All forms and documents can be found online:

<https://studentaffairs.med.brown.edu/enrichment/student-research-opportunities/summer-assistantships>

Application Deadline: Monday, February 3, 2025, 11:59pm.