

UTRGV School of Medicine Scholarly Activities Guide

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For more information about medical student research, see the [Scholarly Activities homepage](#)

Course Director

The course director for the Scholarly Activities course electives, MEDI 8127 and MEDI 9331:

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Office: HCEBL 3.100. usually on T and TR while M, W, F usually in the EMEBL

Office Telephone: 956-296-1556

Best Meeting Place and Time in Edinburg: At the end of the PBL sessions in 1.104 (MS1)

Program Overview

A medical education program is conducted in an environment that fosters the intellectual challenge and spirit of inquiry appropriate to a community of scholars and provides opportunities, encouragement, and support for medical student participation in the research and other scholarly activities of its faculty.

Scholarly activities enhance your medical education. Mandatory course curriculum and USMLE Step 1 exams must take precedence over participation in research experiences. UTRGV SOM structures protected time for students to receive course credit during the 4-year curriculum for approved, faculty-mentored, scholarly activities:

- **MS1 (Summer)** - MEDI 8127 Scholarly Activities – Pre-Clerkship
- **MS3/M4** – MEDI 9331 Scholarly Activities – Clinical Years

Students may seek scholarly activities experiences with faculty mentors who are internal or external to UTRGV. We recommend whenever you are conducting research to take these courses, as the credit reflects favorably on your residency applications and CVs.

Projects may begin at any one of three possible stages in the scholarly process for individual or more in-depth longitudinal research experiences: (1) developing a new project; (2) continuing work on an ongoing project; or (3) completing a project.

Top three rules of thumb for students to engage in scholarly activities:

1. *The first step is to find a UTRGV faculty mentor.*
2. *Students should consult their faculty mentor before engaging in any UTRGV regulatory training (CITI, IRB, IACUC, IBC, etc.) to ensure that appropriate modules are taken for specific projects.*
3. *Students should not contact external clinical or community entities without first consulting a UTRGV faculty mentor. UTRGV SOM has cultivated valuable relationships with our RGV regional partners and has established procedures for all UTRGV personnel to make appropriate contact with our RGV partners.*

Finding a UTRGV Faculty Mentor

Step one in engaging in scholarly activities is identifying a faculty mentor. We encourage students to begin exploring scholarly activities and potential faculty mentors during the MS1 year. Finding a mentor is a process. The experiences they provide can develop into lifelong and rewarding professional relationships. We recommend talking to several faculty in areas that interest you. Have open discussions with potential mentors about their availability when asking about opportunities.

It is critical to work with your mentor for advice on developing a right-sized project and study plan, creating your study design, and for guidance with any necessary regulatory training or approvals with CITI, IRB, IBC, and IACUC, IBC, etc., depending on the nature of the research. It is important not to make contact with external clinical or community entities without consultation from UTRGV faculty mentors. Do not begin any of these steps without first consulting with your mentor.

1. The UTRGV SOM Research Office website provides several resources for students to seek out faculty mentors in their areas of interest using the [Find a mentor](#) link. You can also browse research faculty by College or Institute.
2. Access [SCHOLARWORKS @UTRGV](#) (see below for details). Search by topic, student or resident author names, faculty advisor names, or event name for presentations and papers (e.g. Student Research Colloquium 2019)
3. Contact the course director for MEDI 8127 and MEDI 9331
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Regulatory Training for Scholarly Activities

UTRGV and all affiliated clinical sites (DHR, VBMC, MMC, Knapp)

Students should consult their faculty mentor before engaging in any UTRGV regulatory training (CITI, IRB, IACUC, IBC, etc.) to ensure that appropriate modules are taken for specific projects.

All human subjects research conducted by UTRGV investigators (Faculty, Residents, Staff and Students) must be approved by the UTRGV Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UTRGV IRB will be responsible for providing oversight of the research and will serve as the IRB of record. Researchers remain responsible for requesting authorization from affiliated clinical sites (often referred as “Site Permission”) to conduct the proposed study at their facilities or with their patients. Such approval must be secured before the beginning of the research and documented on the UTRGV IRB records.

For campus-wide research policies: [UTRGV Forms, Policies and Guidelines](#)

To keep up-to-date on SOM Research: [Office of the Associate Dean of Research](#)

Contacting external clinical and community entities for scholarly projects

Rule of thumb is don’t do it without first consulting a UTRGV faculty mentor. UTRGV SOM has cultivated valuable relationships with our RGV regional partners and has established procedures for all UTRGV personnel to make appropriate contact with our RGV partners.

Timelines

MS1	Deadline
Submit MEDI 8127 Scholarly Activities – Pre clerkship Course Application to the course director for approval. Funding may be available for RGV-based projects.	March 15th
Scholarly Activities – MEDI 8127 course	First to last day of summer session per SOM academic calendar
MS2	
Step 1 Exams	May – July 1st
MS3/MS4	
Enroll in MEDI 9331 Scholarly Activities – Clinical years elective. Submit project proposals to the course director.	Enrollment: 4 weeks prior to starting date of the elective (block). Final reports: Due on or before last day of block.
Annual Presentation Opportunities	
UTRGV SOM Annual Research Symposium	September
UTRGV SOM Spring Student Research Colloquium	January
Local, state, national conferences	Year-round

Prerequisites for MEDI 8127

- Successful completion of MS1 modules
- [Study Plan and Mentor Agreement](#) upfront

Prerequisites for MEDI 9331

- [Study Plan and Mentor Agreement](#) upfront

Deliverables for Course Credit - MEDI 8127 and MEDI 9331

1. **Minimally 3-page write-up** that satisfies the following guidelines
Components: Title, Authors, Affiliations, Abstract, Introduction, Material & Methods, Results & Discussion, Acknowledgments, References. If the data merit, include Figures and Tables. Figures need a description underneath. Tables need a title above. Both should be numbered and referred to in the narrative.
Content:
Abstract constitutes a concise flow of highest impact statements from introduction, results and discussion (is written last)
Introduction provides the background and relevance (references needed) leading to why this work is so important, e.g. here we present for the first time...
Materials and Methods describe your procedures (references as appropriate) so other researchers could reproduce your results. Include preparation details, types of equipment used, data acquisition details, calibrations, controls, organism/cell strains etc. use third person, past tense, passive voice
Results describe the data (figures if included, and references as appropriate)
Discussion is an appreciation of your results in the light of the current literature (references needed). Here you can also include well-founded speculations, interpretations and future projections.
2. **Presentation of your data** (held or projected): Anything between a short oral presentation to your research group to a plenary lecture at an international conference or a poster presentation locally, national or international, or a peer-reviewed publication. We wish you the visibility that you deserve for your hard work. We encourage all students to present locally at the UTRGV Annual Research Symposium (a poster) in September or the Spring Student Research Colloquium (oral presentation) in January. For dates and further details, visit the SOM Research website (insert link).
3. **Attendance verification:** You are expected to attend all scheduled activities as agreed with your mentor. The mentor will sign an attestation as part of your final grade

Grading Policy

P/F; In order to pass, each student must have satisfied the above deliverables by the deadline.

Publication of final projects in the [SCHOLARWORKS@UTRGV](#) Repository

The UTRGV SOM Library works with the Office of the ADR to publish all UTRGV students' and residents' scholarly works on our own curated public portal, [SCHOLARWORKS@UTRGV](#). This site includes collections of scholarly works of students and residents. UTRGV Libraries and SOM Research Office provide a public-access repository of poster presentations and final papers of students and residents completing their research electives and presenting their work at local, state, national and international conferences. The site provides students:

- An internal faculty peer-reviewed posting of scholarly works

- A rich resource to see a list of past student projects that will help them discover mentors to explore new areas of scholarly projects
- Opportunities to explore longitudinal scholarly activities, for example in clinical quality improvement lines and ongoing community-based participatory research, population health and global health
- A citation link to an internally peer-reviewed posting for use on residency applications and CVs

We encourage students to upload all faculty-mentored and approved final project abstracts, papers, posters or oral presentations to the SCHOLARWORKS@UTRGV Repository. Students are reminded to upload their work upon acceptance for presentation at the Annual Research Symposium and the Spring Student Research Colloquium. See [the SOM Collection](#) for uploading instructions. Uploads are reviewed by the Office of Research prior to posting.

Funding for student research

Funding for student research is typically provided by a UTRGV faculty mentor's research program through their own grant funding or departmental resources. As funds are made available, UTRGV and the SOM provide additional mechanisms for students to apply for further support of their research.

[MEDI 8127 Scholarly Activities – Pre-clerkship \(MS1 students eligible\)](#)

Each summer, and as annual funds are available, UTRGV SOM financially supports student research up to \$2,000 for those conducting research in the RGV AND taking the **MEDI 8127 Scholarly Activities – Pre-clerkship** course.

The aim of this funding is to increase UTRGV medical students' regional impact in the Rio Grande Valley by supporting scholarly inquiry conducted with UTRGV and affiliated faculty mentors. Funding is approved for eligible expenses based on merit. **These funds are not personal stipends, and cover operational research costs only.**

For more information, contact the MEDI 8127 course director.

[The UTRGV Student Government Association Travel Funds \(all medical students are eligible\)](#)

There is funding available through UTRGV SGA, please review information at [this link](#). For more information, contact the SOM Office of Student Affairs at MDStudentAffairs@utrgv.edu or (956) 296-1410.

[The UTRGV SOM Travel Award \(all medical students are eligible, as funds are made available\)](#)

Each year if left-over funds are available after Summer Scholarly Activity Awards have been distributed, the Office of Research offers travel awards up to \$2,000 for UTRGV-eligible costs to attend regional, state and national conferences. These funds are awarded as available for meritorious applications. Students must have project abstracts accepted at events/conferences for oral or poster presentation as primary presenter.

Individual students may apply for one conference per academic year. If funds are available, exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. Research teams must select one student to apply for travel funds to present group projects.

To apply: Complete the online [Scholarly Activities Travel Award Form](#).