

25 Years of Workforce Development: The Story of One Health Network's "Research Scholar" Internship Program

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Published In/Presented At

Hadinger, M. A., Green, K. Zumas, B. (2019, Sept 18-21). *25 Years of Workforce Development: The Story of One Health Network's "Research Scholar" Internship Program*. Poster Presented at: The AMA 2019 ChangeMedEd: Accelerating Change in Medical Education, Chicago, IL.

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25 Years of Workforce Development: The Story of One Health Network's “Research Scholar” Internship Program

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PROBLEM

There is a long-term need for talented health care professionals across the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). This demand requires strategies to attract new workers to health care professions, as well as strategies for longitudinally tracking and supporting individuals who express an interest in health care careers.

APPROACH

One strategy utilized at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) to address these needs is youth programming. Youth programs provide opportunities for experiential and problem-based contextualized learning in health care settings. LVHN uses these programs as one entry point to recruitment and longitudinal tracking of local youth into health care careers, and specifically careers at LVHN. One long-standing example of LVHN youth programs is the Research Scholar Program, LVHN's undergraduate summer internship program. The program has existed in various forms for over 25 years, and was formalized in 2005.

“My scholar experience... impressed upon me the fact that, to be a truly great physician, I needed to be a great teacher and life-long learner as well. The program also introduced me to the wonderful family of LVHN colleagues.”

—T. Friel, MD, Chair, LVHN Department of Internal Medicine, Research Scholar Alum 1989

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- 8 week summer program, June–July
- Competitive application process; open to any/all undergraduate students
- Real-world work, QI or research projects, and observation experiences, coupled with valuable participant contribution to LVHN
- Orientation, weekly professional development seminars, community service, and final poster symposium
- Participant final posters published in LVHN's Scholarly Works repository
- Stipends funded in part by The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust, with matching funds provided by LVHN departments hosting scholars

“I can't express enough how significant this time as a part of the LVHN Research Scholars Program has been to me. From invaluable professional training, research, exposure to surgical experiences and the networking opportunities made available to us, I have solidified my aspirations and goals and have an energized, focused direction, as well as a true appreciation for the LVHN system.”

—A. Repp, Duke University Student, Research Scholar Alum 2019

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Of 915 scholars longitudinally tracked, 89 (10%) have been hired at LVHN
- 100% of mentors report that they find value in the program
- 100% of scholars report the program provided valuable career information and planning
- 100% of scholars report potential interest in working at LVHN in the future
- 96% of scholars said it created a positive mentor/student relationship

TRANSFERABILITY

The Research Scholar Program model is highly transferable. Resources required are outweighed by the benefit to the community, to participants, and to the institution in terms of direct research support and less directly by workforce recruitment metrics.

“The Summer Research Scholar Program has been invaluable to research projects... the scholar did significant work which will all but complete our study. I anticipate a series of posters and a manuscript as a result.”

—B. Kane, MD, Research Scholar Mentor, LVHN Department of Emergency and Hospital Medicine



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Scan here to read LVHN Youth Program alumni stories.



Scan here to read more about the Research Scholar Program.

