

## Pritzker Summer Research Program (SRP)

### FAQ's

November 19, 2008

#### 1. I'm interested in going into specialty X (i.e. dermatology, radiology, ENT, orthopedic surgery, etc.). Will doing research help me get into that specialty?

While it is important to identify a mentor in your clinical area of interest, these “clinical” mentors may not be suitable research mentors (especially if they are predominantly engaged in clinical work). Smaller, predominantly clinical specialties often may not have numerous research mentors and/or opportunities. In addition, it's important to remember that **high quality research that leads to scholarly work (regardless of field) will enhance your residency application.** It is in your best interest to find a mentor with a demonstrable track record of mentoring students and producing scholarly work (HINT: The SRP opportunities book includes prior mentorship history). By limiting the clinical specialty of your potential research mentor, you are forgoing opportunities with successful mentors in basic science & clinical research applicable to many types of patient problems and/or specialties (e.g. immunology research relevant for dermatology; cancer biology or ethics relevant for almost any specialty, etc.)

#### 2. Why are certain projects considered part of the “mission”?

Over 50% of general SRP slots are funded through NIH training grants which are to train students in mission areas of diabetes, digestive and kidney disease, and aging. A minority training grant also exists for funding projects related to cardiovascular disease and hematology.

The remainder of slots are funded through the Pritzker School of Medicine. Because Pritzker funding is finite, ensuring SRP funding for Pritzker students overall depends on ensuring that at least half of our students work in our mission areas.

#### 3. When should I begin meeting with a research mentor?

You can meet with a mentor if you have an idea for the project; we **recommend that you wait until after the Orientation to Summer Research meeting on January 12th.** You can look at last year's project guide as a starting point for finding mentors. Projects listed in the book indicate faculty interest in mentoring students for research projects and can facilitate finding a project. The book also lists the track record of prior mentors, which is a very good starting point to find a successful project. At the January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, you will receive the 2009 Summer Research Project Guide containing research projects that BSD faculty have submitted. You will also have the opportunity to interact with experienced mentors from each department who can connect you to other mentors or recommend projects based on your interest. You can take a look at last year's project guide on the Pritzker website:

[http://pritzker.bsd.uchicago.edu/current/students/SRP\\_Guide.pdf](http://pritzker.bsd.uchicago.edu/current/students/SRP_Guide.pdf)

Click on “2008 Summer Research Project Guide”

#### 4. When can I begin working on summer projects?

We recommend waiting until after the Steering Committee has reviewed your application and notified you of your acceptance into the program at the beginning of the spring quarter. Research proposals may be rejected or require substantial revision prior to acceptance, therefore it is important that you invest the time necessary to develop a scientifically rigorous proposal with your mentor. Use time during the winter quarter to find a mentor and to develop a robust project.

#### 5. I have an idea about a project. How can I find a mentor?

We strongly encourage that you **pursue an ongoing IRB-approved project with a mentor who is invested in that project.** Student-initiated research projects for the SRP are unlikely to be approved for several reasons including: 1) lack of IRB approval or delay in project initiation due to seeking IRB approval; 2) lack of a mentor invested in the project. The goal of the SRP program is to provide you with the skills and experience of conducting research. For those with the desire to conduct a student-initiated project, obtaining a PhD or additional training equivalent with mentorship is appropriate.

#### 6. I looked through the SRP book and have not found a project that I am interested in. What should I do?

We advise that you review the SRP book and **circle any and all projects that you may be interested in.** Schedule a meeting with the faculty who very likely will showcase the SRP project and/or other related projects. **Many faculty have additional projects that may not be listed in the booklet.** Often times, faculty know of other projects (with them or other faculty) that are IRB approved and may be relevant to your area of interest. If you are still at a loss, contact one of the directors of the program as soon as possible to discuss potential opportunities.

#### 7. How can I make sure that I get a paper out of my SRP project?

**A summer project in and of itself is unlikely to lead to scholarly work (especially a publication).** Students who continue their relationship with their mentor well into their medical school training (i.e. second year, Fentress award during 4<sup>th</sup> year) are more likely to successfully produce scholarly products (posters, abstracts, papers) than those that limit themselves to summer exposure. Therefore, we advise not pursuing any project with the expectation that your summer work alone will result in a scholarly product. We do, however, strongly encourage students to work with mentors that have a track record of scholarly work with students. Hint: It's often a good idea to ask students who have worked with a mentor before regarding their success in this area.

#### 8. I emailed a potential mentor last week and have not heard from them? What should I do?

We recommend that you pursue 2 or 3 opportunities at the same time. You do not need to wait to hear from one faculty member before investigating other options. **Keep in mind that faculty are busy.** They may be away at a conference, dealing with a major deadline, or trying to keep up with multiple e-mails. **You must factor this into the time it will take to contact your mentor (and set up an appointment).** Many students often get into a bind because they wait until 2 or 3 weeks before the deadline to find a mentor, only to panic since the mentor can't meet with them for a variety of reasons listed above. These applications also tend to be of lower

quality since less time and faculty input is invested in them. If you truly cannot coordinate a meeting time with your mentor (or do not hear back at all), we strongly advise that you pursue a different mentor & project. Your mentor should be invested in you and if they are not able to contribute the time to ensure a timely and high quality application for the deadline, it is unlikely that your summer experience will be much different. If you miss the application deadline (as with all research and educational opportunities including medical school), it is unlikely that your application will be considered.

**9. I would like to participate in an international health, military or other service-learning opportunity (or have some other personal commitment during the summer). Does this mean that I cannot participate in SRP?**

**It depends on the degree to which the opportunity or commitment interferes with your required obligations in the program.** Many students take advantage of international or service opportunities that occur after SRP ends and before school starts (ideal case). If this is not possible, the SRP application includes an area to describe your schedule conflicts, whether payment is provided for your participation in another activity that overlaps with SRP time, and a plan to overcome the barrier to your participation in SRP. Your potential mentor must also agree to this plan. Keep in mind that your SRP application (and funding level) will be evaluated for the quality of the research proposed AND the level of conflict with completing the research. The committee will review each application on a case by case basis. For students with conflicts, SRP reserves the right to adjust funding commensurate with degree of participation.

**10. I would like to go abroad and do research somewhere else. Can I get funding from SRP?**

In general, SRP funding is not available for international research opportunities with mentors on projects unfamiliar to the University of Chicago SRP program. Exceptions MAY be made for a limited number (1-2) students who have identified a qualified mentor from the University of Chicago who is also conducting University of Chicago IRB-approved international research project and agrees to serve as the mentor for the student. These applications will be evaluated on a case by case basis and the quality of the research proposed, mentor for the project, and the student's ability to carry out the research will be taken into consideration. For those students that are funded through other mechanisms who wish to participate in the SRP forum, applications will be considered.

**11. I would like to TA Anatomy and also do SRP. Is this allowed?**

For students who wish to participate in SRP, we recommend serving as an Anatomy TA after the conclusion of SRP in late August to allow for full participation in SRP especially towards the end of the research when the focus is on preparing the final paper and presentation. Rare exceptions may be made for exceptional students who wish to participate fully as an Anatomy TA and also in SRP. These decisions are made by SRP Directors in conjunction with Dr. Callum Ross and are based on their ability to function as an Anatomy TA while incurring a fulltime obligation of SRP, the quality of the research proposed, the mentor for the project, the student's ability to carry out the research.