

Department of Pediatrics Summer Student Research Program Evaluation

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Department of Pediatrics started the Summer Student Research Program in 2018 in order to enrich the experience of students conducting research in the Department. The program is sponsored by the UIC Department of Pediatrics Research Committee, under the director of Molly Martin, MD. All students working for faculty in the Department were invited to participate, and all faculty in the Department had the opportunity to participate as mentors.

Program Summary Statistics

- 8 weekly one-hour sessions (June 7- July 26, 2018)
- Total students invited = 22
- Total students attended at least once = 20
- Average student attendance per session = 12
- Students were in high school, college, medical school, and graduate programs
- Total number of mentors involved = 18

Evaluations

We received 18 evaluations (6 from mentors, 12 from students). The average time spent per evaluation was 7.6 minutes.

- Most (89%) said the summer program was something students probably or definitely need.
- Research topics that were most helpful were translational research and research careers and planning. Survey design was somewhat helpful. Research questions and hypothesis testing and study design were less helpful. Ideas for topics in the future include qualitative research methods, mixed methods research, lessons learned and challenges in research implementation, data analysis and visualization, how to develop a study from a question and obtain funding.
- The didactic format of research topic presentations was acceptable.
- Students also gave presentations about their research to the group. This was evaluated as a very helpful activity.
- The dates and times worked well for most, although there were suggestions that the program start a little later to better accommodate the medical student schedule.

Qualitative Findings

What people most liked about the program:

- Learning about the research conducted by other students
- Learning about mentor careers
- Being able to present
- Learning about the different areas of research in pediatrics
- Learning about the integration of clinical duties and research

“I really enjoyed learning about the different types of research projects that are taking place in the Department of Pediatrics. I also liked hearing from different researchers about how they got into research and why they do it.”

“I enjoyed spending time with classmates and faculty in a more relaxed professional environment on repeated occasions so that I could develop stronger professional relationships.”

What people thought would improve the program:

- More small group discussions
- More time allotted to presentations, perhaps a poster symposium at the end
- Time and date adjustments to accommodate more students and faculty
- Inclusion of others involved in the research process that are not physicians or PhDs
- Funding for students to participate in research

Final thoughts:

“This program is a valuable experience for those who want to attend and participate. Students don't often get this warm of welcome into a department, and if they do it's often limited to the research group. For the first time in medical school I was able to develop multiple professional relationships and learn from other faculty and future colleagues in a small-scale, relaxed setting. Plus, the opportunity to present is an awesome resume item for residency apps, etc. because every item counts.”

“My personal thoughts that this program was well developed and implemented and much needed. The turnout of students was a direct indicator of this. I do think the mentors (both faculty and otherwise) need to do a better job in attending and committing to this program. I think it has tremendous potential for the future of both students and highlighting the pediatrics research at UIC in the map of strong competitors.”

Next Steps

The UIC Department of Pediatrics Research Committee will revise the program based on this feedback. Announcements for faculty mentors to start looking for summer students and promoting the program will begin in January of 2019.