

Med Mentors at UCLA Presents:

Recommendations from Medical Students for Premedical Students

**on Student Organizations, Volunteer
Experiences, Academic Programs, and more!**

Collectively written by Medical Bruin Alumni for
UCLA Undergraduate Students

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The goal of this resource spreadsheet is to compile advice and recommendations from Bruin alumni who are now medical students, in an effort to pass down our experiences, tips, and knowledge on things we learned or wished we knew earlier as a premed student. Over 25 *medical students* from various medical schools contributed to this document and commented on some of the student organizations, resources, scholarships, programs, and other experiences listed that they greatly enjoyed (or even those they didn't). This is not an all-encompassing guide covering every single one of the student organizations on compass, but rather the direct and honest personal experiences that each of the medical student contributors wanted to share with current undergraduates at UCLA.

This is meant to be a dynamic and constantly updated document. Please let us know if you are a Bruin alumna/us and current/former medical student and would like to contribute to this document further. If you have any suggestions or questions regarding this resource document, feel free to contact: hollyhuang@mednet.ucla.edu or @medmentorsucla on Instagram.

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Contributors:

Medical students from the following schools:

- DGSOM at UCLA
- UC Davis School of Medicine
- UC Irvine School of Medicine
- University of Rochester School of Medicine
- Saint Louis University School of Medicine
- Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine
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CLINICAL VOLUNTEERING

CARE EXTENDERS

Ronald Reagan Hospital volunteering experience

<https://www.uclahealth.org/careextender/>

Student Comments

1. “Helps you get accustomed to the hospital environment in one of the top hospitals in the nation. Each rotation is about 12-14 weeks long. For your first rotation, you are usually assigned to a nursing floor and a greeter shift. Afterward, you can list preferences for which floor you would like to rotate on. Personally, I enjoyed the ICU floors as there were more procedures going on, more opportunities to connect with physicians, and the ability to have a meaningful impact on patient's lives. From when I applied, the recruitment process has changed a bit, so I can't say for sure what it's like now.”
2. “Care extenders have many pros and cons. The pros include the variety of departments and experience you get. However, coming with that pros is the discrepancy in experience as well. Often, the responsibilities you have will mostly be clerical and patient support (water, food, conversation etc.). From my experience, I had the most patient interaction on a regular unit or Non-ICU floor. ICU is good for procedure observation but depending on when you start your shifts. Later in the day shift (nighttime) entailed less procedures from what I recall. The application and recruitment process is likely the most intense of all consisting of a form + an interview, which for me was surprisingly in MMI format so I guess another pros here is that you will be exposed to MMI med school interview much earlier! “
3. “Former CE here as well. Definitely the experiences can vary based on my conversation with many fellow CEs as well. Things generally get better however, and it is really cool to be able to work inside a hospital (and see what your future life might be like, and whom you will be working with). I still keep in great contacts with many hospital staff whom I used to work with on the floor. When you start out, definitely recommend the morning shifts if you can. Then, as you get into later rotations, consider rotations such as: ICU, ER, Radiology, etc. but hey if you stay in one department long enough and know the staff really well, that's also a plus. And being a CE Staff is also a plus and super fun experience as well.”
4. “Former CE here, and I also was part of the CE staff. CE is very much what you put into it is what you get out of it. With that said, it's a great *introductory* look into the hospital, as you are literally placed into a real hospital with real patients. If you've never played a role in the hospital, this is a great way to ease you in. You get to choose from all sorts of departments (options are limited at first, but they open up the longer you've been in the program). If you try out different departments, you might even find that you like Med-Surg or Radiology, when you would have never thought of them before. In

general as a volunteer, there's only so much you can do, and a lot of your experience will also depend on the department you are in and the staff/patients that are there during your shift. You have to be really proactive to see how you can help out. However, a little bit *can* go a long way. Talking to patients and their loved ones, especially when staff are busy, can make a world of a difference not only in their day, but in your own patient skills (very important as a doctor). I've done CPR a couple times in different departments, watched procedures, helped with casting and even suturing. However, like I said, it depends on day/department/staff/how proactive I wanted to be, because there were definitely days when I was just walking circles because there wasn't much to do. But that's hospitals sometimes; not always a Grey's Anatomy episode. You also get a sense of how the entire hospital works and meet not just doctors and nurses, but techs and assistants; everyone plays an integral part in the hospital setting. Some of the EMT's I met during my shift later led me to pursue being an EMT myself. And then being on staff is awesome because you get to guide new pre-health students through the program and have the opportunity to mentor and help shape their experiences. It's a great leadership opportunity if you want to stick around for it."

5. "Former CE here and also echoing a lot of what everyone else has said. Care Extenders is really what you make of it, and how much you're able to get out of it depends a lot on how much you put into it. In the first few rotations, the shifts can definitely feel a little more mundane- a lot of restocking, bringing food/water/blankets, etc. However, if you are willing to put in the effort, there is a lot to be gained from CE as well. There are so many opportunities to talk with patients and their loved ones, and in a busy hospital like Ronald Reagan, many patients often can feel neglected and lonely if staff are busy. Your presence as a CE and your availability to talk with them can really make a world of difference to them, and you may not even realize it at the time. (Some examples off the top of my head include: spending time listening and talking with an elderly patient with dementia, who had no family who could visit her in the country. On that day, the patient was nervous/anxious, and kept walking into the hallways to try to talk to someone but the nurses were busy and their shift was understaffed, so they didn't have time to talk with the patient. I went to talk with the patient in the room, and ended up talking with her for the rest of my shift. She seemed to feel a lot better as she shared her story with me too. In another case, a 16-year-old was in the ER after a suicide attempt, and also needed someone to talk and just sit with her, so I was able to stay late after my shift ended to be there with her until someone else came.) So even though the written job description of CE's is often to restock or run simple errands, there is so much more to be gained if you are willing to put in the time and effort to really be there and care for the patients. Additionally, as you volunteer longer as a CE, there are more privileges and knowledge that you are able gain. I probably learned the most as a CE by volunteering for multiple rotations in the ER- I came to know the department and the nurses well, was able to shadow trauma cases, had residents show and teach me about various procedures, etc. At the Santa Monica hospital, there is a rotation that can be done (only if you've volunteered for long enough), where you can shadow internal medicine residents, so that was an incredible learning experience for me too. "

FLYING SAMARITANS

Clinic trips to Mexico

<https://www.flyingsamaritansatucla.org/>

Student Comments

1. “Incredible opportunity to explore various healthcare careers while contributing directly to care in Tijuana, MX! I was a club member for 1 year and board member for 2 years. The community was very welcoming (no cuts) with the flexibility to get involved as much or as little as you wanted. For example, you could join the Public Health committee and conduct field projects in Tijuana, join the Pharmacy committee and dispense meds on clinic days, or simply volunteer at clinics and learn about healthcare to underserved populations. You are placed into groups of 3-4 to interview patients and scribe the encounter, with student translators in each group. As a member, the more you participated, the more points you earned to enter the "lottery" for clinic attendance. 40+ students and providers went every month so there were plenty of chances. Students I met in the club were premed, pre-PA, pre-nursing, pre-pharm, pre-public health etc so the mission brings together a variety of perspectives.”
2. “I tried joining this org my first year, but I found that there really weren't that many spots for students to join for each clinic trip, and priority was mostly given to students who had cars or spoke spanish. If you don't have either of these, the chances of you going on a clinic trip really isn't high at all (maybe once a year?), and the way they picked ppl was also based on how many meetings and events of theirs you went to.. and at that point, I don't really see whether attending all those weekly meetings is worth the time.. just my two cents! I'm sure some ppl had great experiences in it as well.”
3. “Great first exposure to rural medicine, awesome organization of students genuinely dedicated to the organization's cause”

FISH

Health fairs, blood pressure screenings, & youth English lessons in Mexico

<https://www.orangefish.org>

Student Comments

1. “FISH taught me to think critically about the ethics of global health and sustainability of community-based interventions. Huge focus on community partnership and empowerment. Great for students with any sort of interest in public health work (both pre-med and non pre-med). Emphasis on addressing upstream factors related to health disparities.”
2. “This experience taught me so much about global health, ethics of sustainable service, and how to develop community partnerships. Amazing opportunity to learn

about social determinants of health and to serve an underserved community in a more collaborative and ethical way.”

MOBILE CLINIC PROJECT

Free clinic caring for unhoused clients in Hollywood and Santa Monica

<https://www.mobileclinicproject.org/>

Student Comments

1. “As an undergraduate caseworker, you'll work closely with DGSOM medical students and public health students to take social histories and provide referrals to local social and medical care for individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. Learn more about streetside medicine, interdisciplinary care, and issues regarding homelessness”
2. “Easily the most rewarding and formative pre-med experience I was fortunate enough to have at UCLA! Being a caseworker was an incredible learning experience from a medical/public health standpoint but sitting beside individuals experiencing homelessness on a sidewalk to hear their life stories and the adversities they endure was truly special. MCP gives you a humbling glimpse at health and social inequities as well as the humanistic facet of medicine in a unique setting. I had the opportunity to be a board member, specially one of the two Chairs of the Outreach Committee, during my second year with MCP as well which was also a fulfilling experience! We organized clothing donation events, fundraisers, established a social media presence, and orchestrated Homelessness Awareness Week, a weeklong event dedicated to spreading awareness of the issue of homelessness. Currently a DGSOM med student!”

NURSING VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM

Similar to Care Extenders

<https://www.uclahealth.org/volunteer/nursing-volunteer-program>

Student Comments

1. “Great exposure to the hospital healthcare system, including patient and provider interaction, operation of phone systems, pharmacy orders, medical supplies, etc.”
2. “Geriatric patients are sometimes the most lonely and neglected patients. I can't believe this program has not been put on this list yet! It is definitely underrated. I loved meeting these patients because it really put life into perspective. I got the best advice from these patients who kept telling me to make sure I follow what I want to do in life. I would be worried about exams and then I would talk and listen to these patients and I would just be so thankful and humbled. The trip to Santa Monica is worth - there is a shuttle from Reagan to Santa Monica or an easy bus ride (the big blue bus 2 or 1 if I recall correctly) with a student discount with your student ucla id badge! I think after a certain number of hours, the volunteer services also let you go to different floors, but I

would double check on that! Overall, the shifts are chill and relaxing, sometimes the patients are sleeping or busy so there is a lot of downtime so I would try to go for a 11am-3pm shift or 3pm-7pm so that you can feed them their meals! (so much fun omgoodness) When I was in the program, they were very relaxed with the scheduling and let you also schedule your own shifts. I would double check on this as well.”

MAPS

Observe patient safety protocol on different floors (4hr/week)

<https://www.uclahealth.org/volunteer/maps-volunteer-program>

Student Comments

1. “Was super useful for being able to observe different floors, specialties, etc. Great way to get exposure to the various departments rather than just being assigned to 1 department. Was helpful for me in deciding which specialties I liked more than others/whether I liked ICU or not, etc.; you don't get much exposure to working directly with physicians unless you ask; if you see them walking around, just ask if you can join them in the patient room and then you can shadow them!”
2. “I joined this my freshman year and it was a great way to first get exposure to the hospital floors. What you are basically doing is observing whether the healthcare providers are sanitizing their hands when going in/out of each room. For you to get substantial shadowing opportunities though, you had to be proactive and approach nurses/doctors and ask whether they'd be open to having you shadow them, but whether this was well received is highly variable. Because of this, the experience you had with each shift largely varies and really depends on how proactive you are. Most shifts definitely were more just walking around the icu floors outside of the patient room though, and I didn't really get to see that much honestly. But it is an easy way to get hospital volunteer hours, but other than that, I don't think it's an experience that I would have recommended for others to continue after your freshman year. The shadowing experiences that actually pair you with physicians are much more rewarding usually in my experience.”

SCOPE PATIENT HEALTH ADVOCATE

Clinic Volunteering – Provide resources to patients

<http://www.uclascope.org/patient-health-advocates>

Student Comment

1. “PHA equipped me with a thorough understanding of social determinants of health and provided me direct means to address them in the clinic. PHA sites exposed me to Peds, Med/Peds, IM, and IM subspecialties like GI. I learned to talk to patients and address their concerns. I was also able to follow up with some patients and address additional concerns that they had. Through the process, I shadowed excellent

pediatricians, internists, hospitalists, and GI specialists and was able to make an informed decision to pursue medicine.”

VCH

Free-Clinic Volunteering- Supports underserved communities in Orange County -- patient demographics include significant Vietnamese, Hispanic, elderly immigrant populations
<http://vchbruins.weebly.com/>

Student Comment

1. “In 2006, Vietnamese Community Health (VCH) was founded by five UCLA students with the words, Sức khỏe là vàng (Health is gold), in mind. Years later, VCH has exponentially grown to over 60 members. Like its founders, those who are a part of VCH aim to improve the health and overall well-being of the underserved communities in Orange County (O.C.) and strive to solve the health disparities faced by these communities. Though Vietnamese immigration began decades ago, the Vietnamese people continue to struggle. Many lack health care access and insurance due to financial, language, and cultural barriers. Thus, it is essential that VCH alleviates some of these barriers and works hard to show that we empathize with and understand our patients and their needs. VCH easily is the reason why I decided to enter medicine. If you ever have any hesitation and talking to a gung-ho VCH advocate would help, hit me (Michael) up at mml@mednet.ucla.edu”

ASIAN PACIFIC HEALTH CORPS (APHC)

Free-Clinic Volunteering - Health Fairs, health networking, mentorship
<https://aphcatucla.weebly.com/>

Student Comment

1. “APHC works with the underserved Asian Pacific Islander community in Los Angeles by providing free health fairs. APHC also has a health career networking night (open to all pre-health students at UCLA), and offers lots of resources and mentoring for its members. Non-selective club. APHC (and many free-clinic volunteering clubs like it) are great for learning about the social determinants of health and developing cultural competency. You get some hands-on experience working with underserved patients, many of which don't have health insurance and don't consistently see a primary care provider, and therefore it gives you a more well-rounded knowledge of healthcare outside of the hospital. Many of these types of clubs train you to do blood pressure and BMI and you get to help out at different screenings and learn about those as well (osteopathic manipulative medicine, diabetic foot check, stroke, bone density, glucose and cholesterol, etc.) It's also awesome to be surrounded by other pre-health students and have a support group as you get through your UCLA pre-health experience.”

PROJECT RISHI

Free-Clinic Volunteering - promotes sustainable development of a village in rural India

<http://www.projectrishi.org/>

Student Comment

1. "Project RISHI is a great org that aims to help the development of a rural village on the other side of the world. There are four committees (clinic & pharmacy, environment, education, and women's empowerment), so you can be sure to find some aspect of grassroots health/education/sustainability that interests you! As a member of the clinic & pharm committee, our initiatives included supplying the clinic with oral rehydration salts to combat diarrhea, spreading emergency health information through posters, and arranging summer medical camps for the villagers. Our work culminates in an annual trip to the village, often during the summer or winter break, which is an amazing opportunity to first hand witness the progress made by our projects and assess the work that still needs to be done. Also, our village is in Tamil Nadu, so bonus if you speak Tamil!"

UCLA COMPANION CARE

Hospital Volunteering at UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center - keep geriatric patients company, help feed them, order their food, help them take phone calls, get them blankets, help set up tea/deliver tea/coffee, do anything else they might need your help with (even reading out a book or some activity like coloring or games), listen to their AMAZING stories, gain a bigger perspective on life

<https://www.uclahealth.org/geriatrics/companion-care> **also an article:**

<https://www.uclahealth.org/companion-care-program-at-ucla-medical-center-santa-monica-strive-to-make-hospital-stays-less-lonely-for-elderly-patients>

Student Comment

1. "Geriatric patients are sometimes the most lonely and neglected patients. I can't believe this program has not been put on this list yet! It is definitely underrated. I loved meeting these patients because it really put life into perspective. I got the best advice from these patients who kept telling me to make sure I follow what I want to do in life. I would be worried about exams and then I would talk and listen to these patients and I would just be so thankful and humbled. The trip to Santa Monica is worth - there is a shuttle from Reagan to Santa Monica or an easy bus ride (the big blue bus 2 or 1 if I recall correctly) with a student discount with your student ucla id badge! I think after a certain number of hours, the volunteer services also let you go to different floors, but I would double check on that!"

TEACHING/MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES

TEACH

Tutor and provide health education for at-risk youth in Los Angeles

<https://www.teachatucla.com/>

Student Comment

1. “Mentor and support youth after school by helping them with their homework and giving health presentations; if you enjoy teaching, mentoring others, and learning more about public health, this is an incredible opportunity to do so!”
2. “Big experience if you enjoy teaching and want to get involved in public health early on. Working with kids can be a learning curve, but it's so rewarding when you see them developing skills they struggle at or opening up to you at site”
3. “An amazing org for anyone with any interest in public health, teaching, or working with kids; allows undergrads to step outside of the UCLA bubbles and form meaningful, long-term connections with kids in the greater LA area by helping them with their homework and presenting health modules geared for their age group; going to site and interacting with the kids was honestly one of the highlights of my week”
4. “Really good organization if you are interested in public health and education. Kids are super great to work with and honestly were always one of the highlights of my week. Was talked about a lot on my med school application process”
5. “Mentoring and delivering health-focused modules for underserved youth was both fulfilling and enjoyable. TEACH introduces you to the significant importance of community development, health education, and a strength of personal mentorship relationships in inspiring youth with limited resources and support systems. As one year as an intern, I became a Site Coordinator and oversaw a group of interns and gained a different perspective on how health education can be delivered in the community organizationally. For the recruitment process, be sure to display your enthusiasm and passion for working with youth and for engaging with public health issues in the community context. Currently a DGSOM med student.”

CITY-LAB

Teaching - Teach high school students in the Los Angeles area to the rapidly developing world of biotechnology through hands-on laboratory experience.

<https://citylabatucla.wixsite.com/citylab>

Student Comment

1. “Super fun program that allows you to work with high school students with less science resources for their school programs and teach them easy lab skills (ex. pipetting,

running gels, etc.), but using pop culture themes! We would dress up as different movie characters for our presentations and the entire session would follow an immersive story-line. It made me more comfortable with showcasing my personality and teaching large groups of students (who may or may not be very interested in science), so definitely was a great learning experience. The interview process involves preparing a quick 5 min teaching session on any science topic, and my tip is to try using fun analogies and creative methods!”

2. “So much fun, very interactive, and the kiddos are truly amazing to work with.”

UCLA BRUINCORPS

Teaching - Paid employment community service mentorship

<https://www.bruincorps.ucla.edu/>

Student Comment

1. “As a BruinCorps member, you commit to helping under-resourced communities in LA county by serving as a tutor for disadvantaged students. Personally, I assisted underrepresented minorities in a public charter school where I would sit in on classes and have one-on-one interactions with students who were struggling. The school was unfortunately quite understaffed and there were moments where the teachers were unable to teach a specific topic, so I stepped in to help teach whenever possible. This is obviously not a requirement but goes to show how incredibly important it is to provide mentorship for these students. My interview mainly consisted of showing how you would teach math to a student, and I was hired immediately afterward.”

INTERAXON

Teaching neuroscience to underserved primary education students

<http://www.bri.ucla.edu/outreach/interaxon>

Student Comment

1. “Help design/create digestible neuroscience presentations to be given at science fairs and underserved schools to elementary and middle school aged students. Fun, not high commitment unless you want to be involved in leadership.”

LEARNING ASSISTANT

Teaching - Undergraduate (Teaching) Assistant - unpaid, but rewarded with grades

<https://ceils.ucla.edu/learningassistants/>

Student Comment

1. “I was a UA and later TA for LS 30. It has become such a rigorous program through the years that I have seen. I cannot speak to the other leaders, but those in

charge of LS 30 are super into teaching and dedicating their time to support students as much as they can. Highly recommend participating because you get to lead or help lead a section (or for certain classes, help facilitate in-class discussion). Through this, you can hone your teaching skills and public speaking - which is a great plus for anything that you do later on.”

PEER LEARNING FACILITATOR (PLF)

Teaching - Paid position as a learning assistant-esque tutor. Almost complete independence to design worksheets and lead sessions

<https://www.aap.ucla.edu/units/peer-learning/>

Student Comment

1. “You have similar duties to a learning assistant, only you do not attend course sessions, and you have to plan sessions by yourself. You develop your teaching and organizational skills by planning lessons, logging attendance and responding to your students' questions. You may lead up to 6 sessions a week of <12 students in courses from both South Campus and North Campus. Depending on the course, you may go over problem sets, reteach complicated concepts, or facilitate discussions. You may also provide essay feedback if you're the PLF for an English course. You are hired on a per-quarter basis AKA you can take a quarter off, then come back whenever you want. Definitely a high commitment high reward job. Also is the highest paying job on campus, which ain't bad either “

MEDICAL FRIENDS AT UCLA

Mentorship organization that pairs you with an upperclassmen premed mentor

Student Comment

1. “Medical friends is a really great mentorship program that really helped me during my first couple years at UCLA. There is just so much information that gets thrown at you and that you need to know as a premed student that it helps to have an entire organization devoted to helping you navigate classes, extracurriculars, research, the application process and more. In addition as a 3rd and 4th year you can help mentor students and that is something medical schools really like. A lot of schools want to see students that are willing to help each other out and showing that you were a mentor can demonstrate that. They want to know you will get along with your fellow classmates and be willing to accept/give help because med school is tough, and having people alongside you is very helpful”

2. “I was also part of this org throughout all four years of undergrad, and it was very helpful with guiding me throughout each year of undergrad and keeping me on track with certain deadlines/things I need to be aware about. I learned about various programs through this org and met upperclassmen who became my mentors. This was a relatively

smaller club (20-30 active members usually), so it was easy to get heavily involved with a leadership position and also implement ideas that you had. I'd recommend joining some kind of mentorship org if you haven't found a good support system yet! “

RESEARCH EXPERIENCES:

STROKE TEAM

Research - Volunteering in the Ronald Reagan ER to assist with enrollment of stroke patients into clinical trials for novel stroke treatments

<https://www.uclahealth.org/neurology/stroke>

Student Comment

1. “This is an incredible opportunity to work closely with neurologists and ER physicians, learn how doctors detect and diagnose disease, and better understand brain anatomy. When a stroke code is called in the ER, you'll witness the neurological exam, help determine a patient's eligibility for a stroke clinical trial, follow the patient's care from the ED to imaging, and present the case to the project PI. You'll also join the medical team on morning rounds to learn how they develop treatment plans for patients and how they engage with patients and their families. My favorite moments were the many times the doctors would teach me how to interpret imaging and think critically about patient care. It also helps you develop tangible skills you can apply in medical school and beyond (i.e., oral presentations)”
2. “Excellent opportunity. I applied 7 times in Undergrad and unfortunately didn't get in. Everything panned out okay but it's a good reminder that these organizations are extremely competitive. Even if you don't get in, find your own way around. Success isn't only for those who are part of EMRA/Stroke team/MCP, etc.”

CTSI-RAP

Research associates are trained to conduct clinical research studies, collect and maintain securitized data, assist in the authorship of research protocols, aid in statistical analyses, and co-author abstracts, posters, and papers.

<https://ctsi.ucla.edu/pages/rap>

Student Comment

1. “I was able to get involved in various clinical research projects through this org, and also was able to shadow a whole bunch of physicians at RR! Also, everything you do for this program also gets documented as volunteer hours through the hospital. I ended up getting a really great LOR from the advisors, since you really get to work closely with them. The recruitment process is pretty intense (two rounds of interviews)”

STROKE FORCE

Volunteering in RR ER to assist with enrollment of stroke patients into clinical trials. In addition, participate in health fairs and community events and give workshops on stroke education and

treatments to the general public. Sister org to Stroke Team, and time is split 1/2 in ER, 1/2 at community speaking events.

<https://www.strokeprogram.org/>

Student Comment

1. “Overall a very well-rounded program. Like Stroke Team, you get ample experience in the ER and become familiar with the residents and stroke protocol. You additionally get the opportunity to attend neuro rounds and grand rounds, which is valuable shadowing experience. In addition, you are able to improve your public speaking skills from all the community events and health fairs you attend. Your ER shifts are the exact same as Stroke Team's, but you only have them every other week on weekends. One drawback of this program is that you do not have as much ER time, and may feel less knowledgeable compared with your stroke team co's. However, this is made up by the fact that you get to participate in community outreach. For those who desire the Stroke Team experience, but are willing to sacrifice some hospital exposure for public speaking and community engagement.”

DIETING, STRESS, AND HEALTH (DISH) LAB DISH PSYCHOLOGY LAB

<http://www.dishlab.org/first.php>

Student Comment

1. “As a research assistant in the DiSH lab, you get to work with other wonderful undergraduates, graduates, post-docs, and faculty who are committed to learning about the relationship between dieting, stress, and health. Dr. Tomiyama (PI) is a wonderful person to get to know personally. She also teaches a health psychology class where basically the whole class gets an A; so, if you can take that I'd really recommend it. Overall, I had a very positive experience in this lab and would recommend anyone to join. They typically recruit at the beginning of the year and spring if I remember correctly.”

ELAINE HSIAO LAB

Research - Microbiome, wet lab/basic science

<https://hsiao.science/>

Student Comment

1. “Incredible mentor, research opportunity, collaborative environment. Rigorous, expects significant time commitment (up to you, definitely need to be self-motivated, they won't explicitly tell you that you need to put more time in but it'll be obvious). Excellent opportunity to explore basic science research, poster/presentation/publications, and be part of an extremely diverse, malleable area of research relatable to basically all fields of medicine these days. Elaine is incredibly kind, supportive, but also has high

expectations. Fun lab environment, quarterly happy hours/lab outings. Very strong letter of rec if you do well. From what I hear, a more competitive lab to apply into these days, but well worth it!”

DANIEL FESSLER LAB

Research - Behavioral Anthropology

<http://www.danielmfessler.com/fessler-lab/>

Student Comment

1. “Interesting, unique research on human behavior. Large lab, most students inducted by taking one of his bio anthro classes. Can become involved and have opportunities to present posters/publish, but also can be just one of 25 undergrads doing data collection. Nice PI and was a kind of random but conversation-starting involvement to talk about.”

SHADOWING EXPERIENCES

PULSE

Shadowing program at RR (departments: peds, IM, neuro, cardio, EM)

<https://pulseucla.wixsite.com/pulse>

Student Comment

1. “PULSE is a fantastic way to shadow world-class physicians at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center; you have the option to shadow doctors in a variety of departments, including peds, cardio, neuro, the ED, and more; the ability to participate in rounds and learn from attendings and residents is an extraordinary opportunity to introduce yourself to the world and language of medicine and to see if medicine might be a career for you; some of the cases at UCLA are so unique and complex, you never know what you might have the privilege of seeing; also, the interview process was very friendly and everyone in the org is so down-to-earth “

PRE-HEALTH STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Cedars-Sinai Program that pairs you with a physician for a few weeks for shadowing. There are weekly meetings and they invite various physician panelists for Q&A panels

<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/volunteer-services/adults/pre-med.html>

Student Comment

1. “I got to shadow an oncologist and bariatric surgeon through this program, and this shadowing program eventually helped me land a research internship and eventually a gap year job through one of the physicians I shadowed! Definitely recommend this program, since Ronald Reagan and many hospitals now only allow undergrad shadowing through formal shadowing programs. The interview process was very enjoyable (there was one group interview when I was part of the program!). It would be nice to have a reliable form of transportation, but I've heard of students biking to Cedars or taking public transportation.. so don't let that stop you! “

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH MINOR

<https://www.biomedresearchminor.ucla.edu/>

Student Comments

1. “This program helps make the effort of getting into a research lab so much easier.. since they pair you with a PI based on your interests. There is an interview involved, but no prior research experience is necessary! You just need to express an interest in research and take a course prior to applying. There aren't that many intensive required classes for the minor, most were satisfied through my major, and the rest were pretty lowkey journal club courses. Also got a LOR from a professor from a journal club course, since these classes are typically only 15ish students and you get to interact with the professor much more and show your inquisitive side :) “
2. “If you're interested in research seriously, then this is a powerful pipeline that covers many different aspects of research (e.g. finding a lab, reading journals, communicating and understanding research, etc.). If not, I HIGHLY encourage you not to join -- there are many students that do it for the resume and find their time in the minor a chore.”
3. “I agree with both of the other students - the minor was a great way for me to get paired with a PI whose research I was interested in and to get deeply involved with an independent research project; however, the time commitment is significant (at least 15+ hours/week), so be sure you can meet this expectation before applying”
4. “I already found my lab before joining the minor, but Dr. Clark is super awesome. He is a tremendous mentor to have and really supportive. Also, I really like the classes, such as 5HB, etc., because they are super chill classes for me to learn about other people's research. If there is any class I am not as big of a fan of, it's the Journal Club, but I am not from Life Sciences so I couldn't really participate during the discussion haha.”
5. “Highly encourage the minor if you are interested in getting involved in research! There is an application process for the minor, but once you are accepted, they help to pair you with a lab based on your interests. Through the minor, I was able to join an incredible lab that really strengthened my interest in research and helped me become deeply involved in research during my undergrad years. Additionally, based on your major, you can also take 199 or 198 classes (basically getting class credit for your research), and this can count towards both your major (depending on your major) and also your minor, so this helped ease my class load as well, since I was already doing research anyway, and was now getting credit for it too. There are some other courses required for the minor (like journal club, etc), but these are pretty light and doable courses so nothing to stress over I think. ”

6. “The faculty are amazing! Dr. Clark and Dr. Romero for the win!”

SPANISH MINOR

<https://www.spanport.ucla.edu/undergraduate/majors/>

Student Comment

1. “Great Minor honestly as it required only 5 extra classes if you got a 5 on AP Spanish Exam. Teachers were great and this minor and my ability to be conversationally proficient in Spanish was talked about a lot on med school interviews”

ENGLISH MINOR

<https://english.ucla.edu/undergraduate-english-minor/>

Student Comment

1. “UCLA has an incredibly renowned English department. So many interesting classes to balance out my hardcore STEM courses, including Screenplay Adaptation, Shakespeare, creative writing workshops... if there is a minor that interests you or speaks to you, take the leap. It will look great on med school applications too, yada yada yada, but lifewise this will probably be your last chance to study a subject passionately in an academic setting.”

GERONTOLOGY MINOR

<http://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/ucla-catalog20-21-787.html>

Student Comment

1. “The faculty in gerontology are so open and kind. The courses are interdisciplinary, which means it is one of those rare opportunities to dip your feet into both North and South campus courses! Our older adult population is GROWING, so gerontology/geriatrics is definitely going to impact your career - medicine or not - and it applies to every medical speciality, even pediatrics! Don't believe me? Then, take this minor to find out for yourself!”

MIMG MAJOR

<https://www.mimg.ucla.edu/degree-requirements/>

Student Comment

1. “Science GPA 3.4, total GPA 3.75. No lie, these upper divs were HARD! I scored probably straight B's throughout my upper divs; my GPA was held up by my English minor (straight A's). Why did I "risk" my GPA? Well, as a non-gunner premed, I wasn't as concerned about my grades and instead had cultivated a mindset since freshman year

to try my best in whatever interested ME, and for me that was microbiology. I don't regret at all doing this major, for I thoroughly enjoyed the courses I took, whether that was the Plant-Microbe Ecology lab or Parasitology or Virology. I also ended up at a UC med school, so in the end getting a string of Bs should NOT stress you out coming from UCLA -- you are much more than a GPA."

BIOENGINEERING MAJOR

<https://www.bioeng.ucla.edu/undergraduate-requirements/>

Student Comment

1. I loved this major. I'm super interested in technology, so this was a perfect introduction. The major has a strong theoretical emphasis, but the Biomedical Engineering Society and Maker Space have been working to incorporate more practical applications. Fair warning though: The engineering classes are typically more difficult and less forgiving than a usual 'pre-med' class. This is because GPA isn't a priority for engineers so faculty tend to go quite hard on exams/classes. It is doable though! There's a big pre-med Bioengineering population, others have done it before (including yours truly).

MCDB MAJOR

Student Comment

1. MCDB represents! Faculty is amazing. Connie (the advisor) is SO helpful; she really helps you figure out your courses and plan to graduate when you want to, with no judgment - she knows what she is doing! MCDB is also very flexible as a schedule. Many of the courses are offered multiple times across the year, and often, if you do research, that will count for your course credit! I have found my MCDB peers to also be so sweet and chill and helpful! Go MCDB! The mitochondria is indeed the powerhouse of the cell.

ASK PEER COUNSELING

Peer advising employment, 8-10 hours/wk

College Academic Counseling Website; recruits spring quarter for following year (entire academic year commitment)

Student Comment

1. "Was a great student part-time job that taught me how to talk to individuals one-on-one and counsel them on academic challenges. Used in my AMCAS to parallel It to help patients navigate health questions. Not medical in any way, but very enjoyable and learned valuable communication skills. When you're not being asked questions, you can study or do whatever else, and that's nice too."

SCHOLARSHIPS

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Stipend for research

<http://sciences.ugresearch.ucla.edu/programs-and-scholarships/ursp/>

Student Comment

1. “The scholarship looks good on your resume, you get money, you write a report, and you present a poster”
2. “Do any research fellowship, very well worthwhile. Free money and awards are always good”
3. “You might as well apply. As mentioned, free money is great; and you get to present your research on poster day + write a thesis (might be a stress not gonna lie, but you should do it)”

UNDERGRADUATE SCIENCE JOURNAL

Students submit manuscripts to be peer reviewed and published in an annual journal

<https://uclausj.weebly.com/>

Student Comment

1. “A great way to showcase your research in a publication and learn about the review process of scientific literature. You can get involved as a submitter, or as a member of the review, editorial, or layout boards.”

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Stipend for research

<http://sciences.ugresearch.ucla.edu/programs-and-scholarships/urfp/>

Student Comment

1. “The scholarship looks good on your resume, you get money, you write a report, and you present a poster”
2. “This looks really good on your resume and sets you up well to apply for the senior scholarship (URSP) as well; time commitment for the required class is super low, don't worry about it...the course was actually helpful in preparing for med school/grad school”

AMGEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Stipend for summer research

<https://amgenscholars.com/university/university-of-california-los-angeles/>

Student Comment

1. “This was a prestigious research scholarship that opened many doors for me because of its brand name”

CHANCELLOR'S LEADERSHIP TRIP TO WASHINGTON D.C.

Funded 1-week trip to D.C. with other UCLA student leaders, faculty, and Gene Block

<http://everyone.ucla.edu/chancellors-trip/>

Student Comment

1. “Extremely fun and impactful way to learn about working with others from different backgrounds, advocacy, policy, etc. Competitive application, but made lifelong connections with people both in and outside medicine. Helped me realize how important It was to important advocacy into my future role as a health provider, meeting with congressional legislators”

OTHER EXPERIENCES

THE DAILY BRUIN

Award-winning UCLA student-run newspaper

<https://dailybruin.com/contact>

Student Comment

1. If you're into journalism, creative writing, photography, web design, you name it... I wrote for the DB all four years and absolutely loved it. I already had a baseline love and interest in writing as an English minor, so maybe I was biased, but I had some pretty unique experiences in undergrad writing for Science & Health. I got to tour PI labs, visit the hospital, and interview student-run clinics. Not to mention everything NON-health related I wrote about that absolutely thrilled me; stories about the astronomy and architecture departments, breaking news... Quite demanding in terms of deadline (it was unpaid labor) but the editors are students and understood when I had a busy month. Within the S&H beat in my time, you could become Lead Reporter or Editor.

STUDENT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AT UCLA

Student Leadership Organization

<https://alumni.ucla.edu/student-alumni-association/>

Student Comment

1. The Student Alumni Association (SAA) is a 100 member student leadership organization working within the UCLA Alumni Association to enhance the student experience and connect the student body with our incredible alumni. Throughout the year, SAA members plan social, career-oriented and school-unifying events such as Spring Sing, Beat 'SC Bonfire and Rally, I Heart UCLA Week Dinners for 12 Strangers, STEM Networking Night, and Interview With A Bruin. During my three years with the org, I served in the Bruin Spirit, Career Networking, and Outreach committees, helping to organize large-scale professional development events such as Interview With A Bruin as well as school spirit and community building events such as I Heart UCLA Week and Beat 'SC Bonfire and Rally. SAA has weekly Tuesday evening meetings where members connect with their committees to work on tasks and where professional development workshops are held. I learned everything from managing finances to applying for jobs to how to deliver great handshakes! SAA is a phenomenal org for social life as well. Most of my best friends from undergrad I met during my time with the org. The recruitment process is challenging but definitely manageable. For the interview, displaying energy, enthusiasm, and an understanding of SAA's mission and how you want to make an impact is super important. I'm currently a DGSOM MS2 and I can honestly say that SAA was among my most important experiences for learning leadership.

UCLA OFFICE OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE: RESIDENT ASSISTANT

Paid Student Leadership/Student Affairs Position

<https://reslife.ucla.edu/employment/ra>

Student Comment

1. I was a Resident Assistant for two academic years, working with over 150 residents in two diverse residential communities: De Neve Plaza and Rieber Hall. One of my pivotal responsibilities was counseling residents on personal issues such as academic progress, campus involvement, and mental wellbeing while providing useful resources and referral information when necessary. I developed and promoted floor-wide and building-wide programs designed to develop social responsibility and leadership, foster personal growth, encourage academic diligence, and cultivate safe environments. In addition, I provided duty coverage for my communities from 7PM to 7AM three times per week on a rotational basis. This position was significant for my leadership development, and I developed skills in event planning, conflict mediation, and community building. It is a substantial commitment (19 hours per week officially on payroll), but your housing and food expenses are completely covered. I'm a current DGSOM MS2 now!

UCLA THE IKNITIATIVE

Learn and teach how to knit or crochet. Donate items to the community! :)

Student Comment

1. This org is so dear to my heart. You are making a tangible impact to the community while being part of such a warm and welcoming one of your own! It is a great way to relax *gotta need something to wind down in med school y'all!!*, something that stands out in apps *wink wink*, learn to be handy for those medical techniques later *another wink wink*, and most importantly, you are having fun helping people with the best people! Anddd, they even have needles/hooks/yarn/supplies you can learn with!

AGAPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Christian Fellowship

Student Comment

1. Associated with University Presbyterian Church. This is NOT the only Christian fellowship, but I am placing it here because I want to emphasize how important it is to also take care of your spiritual health during your journey as a pre-med/med/honestly your whole life. Agape and University Presbyterian Church are one of the smaller organizations, so I felt like it was home and it was a family. People there will welcome and take care of you and give you lots of yummy food (daily bread and otherwise) haha. I am sure there are many other Christian groups out there that are the same! Check them out! But, in all seriousness, watch out for cults. Always double check, triple check

that the fellowship and church stay true to the Bible and Gospel. Not to scare you, there are many groups out there that are not cults. haha :)

NON-UCLA VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

VENICE FAMILY CLINIC

Location: Los Angeles (Venice, Santa Monica, etc)

<https://venicefamilyclinic.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/>

Student Comments

1. “VFC is a clinic that provides free services to low-income and underserved patients. It was eye-opening to witness the types of difficulties healthcare poses to these populations. As a VFC volunteer, there are a variety of potential positions you can apply for such as Front Desk Assistant, Healthcare Coordinator, etc. After working there for some time, you can apply to become a Clinic Assistant where you get to go into patient rooms and perform vitals, converse with the patient, and more. They are usually very open to recruitment. “
2. “This was my primary clinical experience when I applied to medical school. It is truly a fantastic and rare experience. As a Clinical Assistant, you will be able to work directly with patients in the intake process. This includes taking vitals, chief complaint, history, and more. You are a part of the medical team here, and that's so rare for an undergrad experience. I highly, *highly* recommend applying to the clinic. You do have to work your way up to the Clinical Assistant (6 months of a different volunteering position but it may have changed), but it's well worth it!”
3. “This was my absolute favorite clinic experience in undergrad!! Working as a clinic assistant let me really solidify my decision to apply to medical school. I got to directly take the vitals, history, and perform small tests such as a finger prick blood glucose test for 5-10 patients during each 4 hour shift and hear about each patient's stories. It gave me many concrete examples of why I wanted to go into medicine and I wrote about it extensively in my applications and talked about it during my interviews as well! The autonomy they give to volunteer clinic assistants is not found with any other volunteer programs that I'm aware of, and I would recommend this experience to any premed out there looking to get hands-on experience working with actual patients from low-income and under-resourced communities. “
4. “This was one of my most valuable experiences as a pre-med student at UCLA, and honestly really inspired my desire to pursue primary care now as a medical student. As a Clinic Assistant at Venice Family Clinic, we had a lot of autonomy, and we would do everything from taking vitals, history/interviewing the patient for their reason of visit, documenting the encounter on the electronic medical records, and performing tests such as finger prick glucose tests. Furthermore, through direct patient interaction, I had the opportunity to learn from so many patients and to hear their stories. Volunteering at VFC really gave me much deeper insight into the healthcare disparities and lack of access to healthcare that low-income or underserved populations of LA face, and greatly motivated my goal to continue to work with underserved populations in the future as a physician as well. I definitely highly recommend this experience. “

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

<https://www.habitat.org/>

1. “There's a section on the AMCAS asking about non-medical volunteering, and this fits the bill perfectly. Plus it's fun working with your hands and meeting the people you're helping.”
2. “Worked with other volunteers and even veterans in constructing homes for veterans at the Santa Clarita/San Fernando valley. This was very rewarding to see yourself make a positive change in your community and the lives of those who contributed so much.”

SOUTHEAST HEALTH CENTER (SF DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH)

Location: San Francisco, CA

<https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp2643392.jsp>

1. “SEHC is a safety-net clinic in the underserved Bayview-Hunters Point district in San Francisco. Can volunteer as a medical scribe and take on quality improvement projects. Takes summer volunteers, which makes it a great opportunity for UCLA students who might be from the Bay Area.”

COPE HEALTH SCHOLARS AT CA HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

Location: Downtown LA

<https://copehealthscholars.org/locations/downtown-los-angeles/>

1. “I started this program in November of my Senior year and went halfway through my gap year. I wanted to do something "different" from Care Extenders. It was a demanding training course -- I woke up at 6:00 AM for 2 consecutive weekends to take the bus downtown for training. You learned how to ambulate, move, feed, greet patients etc and had to pass a practical exam in front of other students. This was more terrifying than actual med school interviews lol but the whole experience was my first real exposure to hospital work. You rotate through Med/Surg and other departments of your choice, including the ICU and Couplet Care (Postpartum Care). Also I rotated through the Women's Health department, which mainly used me to answer phones but let me observe a breast biopsy. Typically you are the "workhorse" of the floor in which you run errands here and there, like taking labs to a different floor or serving patients food. It is recommended to be as proactive as you can with shadowing; simply ask the nurses what they need done and they'll give you a task, or ask the doctors (very quickly, not wasting their time) if "you'd be open to me observing" their next interaction. My best memories were connecting with the patients, because you were called frequently to take patients on walks // discharge them. The shifts were demanding (16 hours per month, so 4 hours/weekend) and I quit after several rotations (~6 months) because I felt like I got

what I wanted from the program. I think I was influenced by an older COPE scholar who complained to me about being used as unpaid labor. The program was relatively new in 2017-2018, so I expect growth to have occurred. It would be best to talk to someone more recently involved.”

CONTACT INFO OF BRUIN MED STUDENTS

Below is a list of current medical students and former Bruins who are willing to answer school-specific questions regarding their respective medical schools. If you are a medical student and former Bruin who would like to be included on this list, feel free to contact Med Mentors at UCLA.

Note: these are only the names of some, but not all of the contributors to this document!

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