Seeking Research Mentors for Undergraduate Students

February 2022

Dear Potential Research Mentors,

We are looking for research mentors to work with undergraduate students in our National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded Student Opportunities for AIDS/HIV Research (SOAR) Program. This is an intensive two-year academic and research mentoring program for juniors and seniors at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor that prepares them for graduate education and eventual research careers in behavioral and social science research (BSSR) on HIV/AIDS, with a focus on sexual and gender minority communities. We encourage applications from students who are from backgrounds that are identified by NIH as underrepresented in the U.S. biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social sciences research enterprise, as well as sexual and gender minority students. Research mentors do not need to be members of these groups, and can come from any unit within the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor community.

SOAR students complete a year-long HIV and/or SGM-focused research experience and we are looking for researchers who are conducting BSSR in these areas to provide a Mentored Research Experience (MRE) for our amazing SOAR students during the academic term. The MRE should include exposure to the multiple aspects of conducting BSSR, and not merely focus on the completion of isolated research tasks. SOAR students are paid by the program for the hours they spend with mentors on their MRE, are simultaneously enrolled in coursework that supports their research skills/competency and professional development, and receive additional holistic mentoring and support through the SOAR Administrative Team. Mentors are provided with mentor training and support services from the SOAR Administrative Team.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor for the SOAR program, you can read more about the program at https://irwg.umich.edu/soar and on the following pages of this document. All mentors will need to participate in two half-day sessions focused on orienting mentors to the SOAR program, and providing mentoring skills. The tentative dates are as follows, but are subject to change: Friday, Sept 9: 1-4pm (lunch provided) and Saturday, Sept 10: 10-1 (coffee and “grab-and-go” lunch provided).

We would like all potential research mentors to complete a very brief form by April 15, 2022, so that we know who will be available to provide an MRE for our prospective students. Our new class of SOAR students will be selected at the end of April, and we will work with you to determine who will be the best fit for your research experience.

Thank you for supporting underrepresented undergraduate students at UM!

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Student Opportunities for AIDS/HIV Research (SOAR): Expectations of Mentors and Mentees

Expectations of Faculty Research Mentors

- Provide one or more SOAR students with 9-12 hours a week of a mentored research experience for one academic year.
- The mentored research experience should be focused on some aspect of HIV and/or the lives of sexual and gender minority (SGM) people or communities. The research does not have to have a sole focus on HIV or SGM people, but HIV or SGM people should be included as significant factors.
- Participate in a 6-hour training across two days focused on mentoring and supporting under-represented minority students on their educational journey to graduate school.
- Attend a monthly mentor check-in meeting with the Research Director and all mentors.
- Participate in an end-of-the-year interview with our SOAR program evaluator.
- Complete online evaluations of mentored SOAR students at the end of each semester.
- Supervise and approve work-related hours so students can receive payment.
- When appropriate, complete necessary paperwork for students to receive course credit.
- Provide mentorship on various aspects of the research process such as research design, research ethics and Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies, research questions/hypotheses, methods, and dissemination (other members of your research team may provide such training/mentorship as well).
- Meet individually with SOAR students weekly for a minimum of 30 minutes to provide holistic mentoring support.
- Introduce SOAR students to other behavioral and social science researchers conducting HIV-related research with SGM communities of color.

Benefits of Being a Mentor

- The opportunity to contribute to the diversity of the next generation of HIV and/or SGM-focused social and behavioral science researchers.
- Training and support in mentoring underrepresented minority undergraduate students.
- Mentoring support through the SOAR administrative team which provides holistic services to SOAR students, including the development of an Individual Development Plan and graduate student near-peer mentoring.
- Networking with other UM faculty members conducting HIV and/or SGM research, as well as members of our national External Mentor Network.
- Since students receive funding from the SOAR program for 9-12 hours a week of a mentored research experience for an academic year, mentors will have bright and dedicated students who are committed to the research that mentors are conducting.
- Some students will complete a brief summer mentored research experience in June and July, so mentors have the opportunity to continue working with their primary SOAR scholar and/or other SOAR students.
- SOAR provides $1000 per student to present or co-present at an academic conference.
Expectations of SOAR Student Mentees

- Students will work with their mentor and the mentor’s research team for an average of 9-12 hours per week during the academic year in order to be fully engaged in the research process.
- Students will participate in research group meetings.
- Students will actively learn about all aspects of the research process such as research design, research ethics and IRB, formulating research questions, methods, and writing up results.
- Students in each year of the program will create a Research Presentation Product that will then be presented at the Spring Research Symposium.
- Students in their first year will be responsible for a poster presentation, and students in the second year will be responsible for an oral presentation.
- Students in the first year of the program will create their Poster Presentation based on a secondary analysis of data from the research project they are working on with their mentor.
- The second year Oral Presentation will be to describe the development and implementation of a policy or practice product.
- Students will be encouraged to work with their mentor to convert their first year poster into an academic paper that can be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.
- Participate in the SOAR Graduate School Preparation Spring Intensive (4 weeks in person in May)
- Complete summer research or a focused internship (6-10 weeks in June-July)
- Participate in end of the semester interviews with our SOAR program evaluator.
- Complete online evaluations at the end of each semester.
- Enroll in Behavioral and Social Science Research in HIV: Methods and Perspectives for SGM Communities (Fall & Winter, 3 credits-term) during junior year and Translating HIV Research into Policy and Practice for SGM Communities (2 credits in Fall, 1 credit in Winter) during senior year.
- Meet with SOAR Academic Counselor at least twice per year to discuss Individual Development Plan