The Charles R. Mathews Scholarship for Geriatrics Education and Research (Mathews Scholarship) was made possible through the generous donations of the late Dr. Charles R. Mathews and his family members, who donated money to the Department of Geriatrics at Florida State University College of Medicine (FSU COM) to help students who are interested in geriatrics research opportunities. The goal of the Mathews Scholarship is to provide medical students with the opportunity to engage in a geriatrics-related summer research project with the mentoring support of Department of Geriatrics faculty.

This Student Policy Manual provides an overview of the scholarship and the required research proposal processes and requirements that students must follow.

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Summer Scholarship Overview

Each year, dependent upon the availability of funds, the Department of Geriatrics awards up to four students with a Mathews Scholarship in the amount of $3,000 each. The summer research projects span ten weeks during the Summer Semester.

Only one first-year medical student is eligible per project. However, students from the departments of exercise physiology, nutrition, social work, music therapy, nursing, law, or school of physician assistants may also apply to receive funding to work with a medical student on a single interdisciplinary project. Students may submit a proposal to either work on a project developed by a faculty mentor or may propose their own research project. Faculty research and scholarly interests are listed on the Department’s webpage, About Our Research, and descriptions of faculty-proposed research projects are emailed to students in January.

All students must contact the Department’s Research Program Manager when interested in participating in a summer research project. Students who propose their own research project will be paired with faculty mentors. Primary faculty mentors must be full-time, main-campus Department of Geriatrics faculty members. Students are expected to meet regularly and often with their research faculty mentors and the Program Manager.

After proposals are submitted, a competitive review process is used to determine scholarship recipients.
Research Overview and Timeline

1. The Department of Geriatrics emails the call for proposals in January.

2. Proposals are due in February.

3. Geriatrics Faculty (who are non-mentors for the students submitting a proposal) review proposals in March.

4. The Research Program Manager notifies scholarship recipients by email, which includes a signed award letter, by the end of March.

5. Scholarship recipients are required to sign a promissory note. This is a legal document that states the student will owe $3,000 unless the conditions set forth in the note are completed.

6. For payment purposes, the student needs to complete a Vendor Direct Deposit Authorization form and a Vendor Authentication-Non-Duty Stipends, Fellowships form.

7. Students are required to complete CITI human subjects training and submit copies of their certificates to the Research Director. This training conveys a basic understanding of human subjects’ research and the issues that arise when conducting this type of research. Instructions will be provided to scholarship recipients.

8. Projects involving human subjects require both FSU COM Research Advisory Council (RAC) and FSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. It is suggested that applications be submitted prior to the project’s start date to allow for adequate review and approval. No research activities can begin until approval has been received.

9. Research projects begin in May, with start dates subject to students’ summer clinical practicum schedules. Students are expected to work full-time (40 hours/week for 10 weeks) on their research projects during the summer. Note that students who accept the scholarship cannot also be a Medicine 1 teaching assistant (TA). Any other time commitments outside of the research project must be discussed prior to the application due date with your faculty mentor. This includes vacation time. It is possible that any deviation from a full-time schedule may not be approved.

10. Students must meet regularly with their Faculty Mentor and Research Program Manager to discuss project activities.

11. Projects should be completed by early August.

12. Students will present their work at the annual FSU COM Research Fair the following February by creating a poster. The Program Manager and Grants Compliance Analyst can assist faculty mentors and students with content editing and formatting. The college and department have specific poster resources that have great tips. These can be shared upon request.
13. Students are required to submit with their faculty mentor an abstract of their work to either a state or national annual conference, such as the Florida Geriatrics Society or American Geriatrics Society annual meeting. If accepted, the Department of Geriatrics will sponsor the student’s travel, dependent upon the availability of funds, to the conference to present their work.

14. At the end of the project, scholarship recipients are required to write a “thank you” letter (2 copies) to the Mathews family for the scholarship. A sample letter can be provided for reference.
Summer Research Application Requirements

Proposals must be written by the student and not by the faculty mentor or research support staff/personnel. Any suspected plagiarisms or copying without proper citations will disqualify a proposal and result in referral for violation of professionalism standards.

Background
Include enough background information to enable an intelligent reader to understand your proposed work and rationale. Support your idea and claims with references and include a bibliography.

Aims and Research Question/Hypothesis
Describe your research question, your hypothesis, and what outcomes you hope to achieve with the proposed study.

Personal Statement
Describe your interest in the topic and/or study and any relevant experience.

Methodology

Study Procedures
Describe the procedures that will be used during the summer and how they relate to the specific aims and research question. An additional description of the procedures for existing projects can be quoted from other sources with appropriate attribution. For example, grant proposals, IRB application, or published work.

Student’s Role
Describe the student’s role in the proposed study. For example, study conception and design, protocol development, data acquisition, protocol submission to IRBs, data collection, data analysis.

Protection of Human Subjects

Human Subjects Involvement and Characteristics
Briefly describe the tasks that subjects will be asked to complete. Describe the inclusion/exclusion criteria. For example, age, sex, location.

Sources of Research Material
Briefly describe the types of research materials (for example, surveys, blood samples, etc.) to be used and how they will be obtained.

Potential Risks/Protections Against Risks
Briefly describe the level of risk the study poses on subjects and why. Also describe the procedures that will be used to protect subjects and their identity.

Deliverables
List all products that the faculty mentor and the scholarship require the student to complete.

Timeline
Complete a timeline that lists major milestones for the summer research study.
Important Writing Tips*

Tip #1: Make Your Project’s Goals Realistic
- Be realistic. Don’t propose more work than can be reasonably done during the 10-week project period.

Tip #2: Be Organized and Logical
- Follow the application as outlined.
- Use short paragraphs and other techniques to make the application as easy to navigate as possible. Be specific and informative, and avoid redundancies.
- Use bullets and numbered lists for effective organization. Indents and bold print add readability. Bolding highlights key concepts and allows reviewers to scan the pages and retrieve information quickly.
- Utilize white space effectively.

Tip #3: Write in Clear Concise Language
- Write a clear topic sentence for each paragraph with one main point or idea. This is key for readability.
- Make your points as direct as possible. Avoid jargon or excessive language.
- Write simple and clear sentences, keeping to about 20 words or less in each.
- Be consistent with terms, references, and writing style.
- Use the active, rather than passive, voice. For example, write "We will develop an experiment, "not "An experiment will be developed."
- Spell out all acronyms on first reference.
- If writing is not your forte, seek help!

Tip #4: Edit Yourself, but also Ask Someone Else to Help
- Allow someone with fresh eyes read your content, check your punctuation, and give you feedback on whether the content flows.
- Have zero tolerance for typographical errors, misspellings, grammatical mistakes, and sloppy formatting.

*Modified from the NIH’s Important Writing Tips for grant applications.
Questions / Additional Information

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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