

UHAND (University of Houston/MD Anderson Cancer Center) Education Program

Open only to U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents.

Program Description

The UHAND Education Program at the University of Houston (UH) and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center positions students to develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to conduct research aiming to reduce cancer disparities, and ultimately, to launch them into careers focused on eliminating cancer disparities. The program is designed to expose and involve its student scholars in community-based research and community experiences in order to provide them with a comprehensive view of the determinants of cancer disparities and cancer risk factors. These experiences, knowledge, and skills will serve as the foundation of innovative strategies to reduce cancer disparities.

The UHAND Education Program organizes activities for its student scholars at UH and MD Anderson as well as across the Houston community. The program offers outstanding training opportunities, including:

- Mentored research projects with a focus on cancer disparities related to tobacco use, alcohol, diet, obesity, and physical activity;
- Didactic coursework, seminars, and journal clubs in cancer disparities;
- Interactive, community-based service learning experiences; and
- Individual career advice and professional development training.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be enrolled as undergraduate or doctoral students at the University of Houston in good academic standing, and/or have accepted invitations to attend as undergraduate or doctoral students at the University of Houston by/before the Summer or Fall of 2018.
- Applicants must have at least two full years (including two summers) of academic work left to complete prior to graduation.
- Applicants may be from backgrounds in behavioral and social sciences, social work, communications, biomedical sciences and related public health disciplines or any other disciplines relevant to studying cancer health disparities.
- This fellowship is only available to U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

Funding Support

- **Undergraduate scholars** receive \$10/hour for a maximum of 20 hours per week for time spent working on mentored research projects, with the expectation they will work ~20 hours per week.
- **Doctoral scholars** receive stipends with the expectation that they will work 20 hours per week for time spent working on their mentored research projects and engaging in other UHAND programming. Fringe benefits include a health insurance stipend (paid monthly). UHAND tuition and fee waivers may be available dependent on UH departmental affiliation. The monthly stipend varies based on UH departmental affiliation and year within the doctoral program, but can range from \$1061 to \$1261 monthly.

Terms of the Award

- Fellowships are funded (contingent on satisfactory progress in the program) for **two years, including the full summer term**.
- Recipients need to maintain a minimum overall GPA of 3.25 and successfully complete all required UH academic courses with at least a grade of “B” in each course.
- During the fellowship, all student scholars will be required to participate in UHAND courses, events, educational and career activities, which include, but are not limited to the following activities:
 - **Required courses at the UT Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences:** Enroll in GS21 1112: Bio-behavioral Research Methods in Cancer Prevention and Control (2cr) and GS21 1622: Topics in Cancer Prevention (2cr)
 - **Required UH courses:** Enroll in HLT 4308/PHSL 7324: Understanding Cancer (3cr), HLT 4309/PHLS 7306: Health Disparities (3cr), HLT 4398/PHLS 8398: Disparities in Health in America: Working Toward Social Justice Summer Workshop (3cr)
 - **Progress review meetings with UHAND directors:** Four (4) mandatory meetings with UHAND Education Program Directors during the course of the fellowship (starting at fellowship initiation and every 6 months thereafter).
 - **Community outreach and education activities:** Community activities will vary for each scholar.
 - **MD Anderson Summer Activities in Cancer Prevention Training:**
 - Career Conversations in Cancer Prevention
 - Cancer Prevention Trainee Forum
 - ECHO Programs (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes)
 - **Additional mandatory activities:** Cancer Prevention and Control Grand Rounds, Topics in Cancer Disparities (monthly seminar), Career and Leadership Conversations, Responsible Conduct of Research seminars, and any additional career development activities advertised. *Conflicts in activities will be handled on a case by case basis and will be outlined in the scholar’s training plan.

How to Find a Mentor

- Participation in the UHAND Education Program requires at least **one faculty mentor** and **one community mentor**. More than one faculty mentor is allowed. Community mentors will be appointed upon acceptance in the program.
- **Undergraduate student applicants** must name 3 potential mentors in their research statement with a brief description of their interest in working with each individual (see <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/mentors> for listing and links to research expertise). Undergraduate applicants will be matched with mentors following acceptance into the program.
- **Doctoral student applicants must apply with the support of faculty who have agreed to serve as a mentor/s.** Mentors must be selected from the list of UHAND faculty mentors. (<https://www.uhandpartnership.com/mentors>). After reviewing faculty profiles, applicants should contact individual potential mentors directly to discuss the possibility of serving as a UHAND mentor. At least 1 UHAND mentor must be named in applicant’s research statement. All identified mentors must provide a letter of sponsorship and support for the applicant. If the applicant has a primary doctoral mentor who is not affiliated with UHAND, the faculty member can petition to be a UHAND mentor (see Education Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)) or agree to collaborate with an identified a UHAND mentor. Email UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org with further questions.
- Community mentors will be assigned to both undergraduate and doctoral applicants after appointment into the program. Community mentors will be matched to student scholars by their skills and shared interests.

FORMAT

Margins: 0.5 or 1 inch

Format: Single-Spaced

Standard Paper Size: 8.5 x 11

Font Color: Black

Font Size: 11 or 12 point font

Font Types: Arial, Times New Roman, or Georgia

Top right corner of each page of the application must include applicant name & "UHAND".

NOTE: Your application will not be accepted if any of the following items are missing, unclear or incomplete. Please read these instructions carefully.

- 1) Your application is to be submitted in the order listed on the **Application Checklist**. The Application Checklist must be signed and dated and saved as the first page of the completed application file.
- 2) All documents must be scanned into one PDF file and emailed to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org by the due date. Documents should be scanned using a scanner, photos of each document will not be accepted.
- 3) Completed Scholar Application Form
- 4) **Brief research & career statement:** A 2-page description of your education and research background, career interests and goals. Describe your interest and experience in disparities research, cancer, and work or experience with racial/ethnic minority populations. Discuss what research questions you are interested in and your educational and professional goals. Explain how this program will help you meet your goals. **References are not included in the 2-page limit.**
- 5) **Doctoral students must include a letter of support from a sponsoring UHAND mentor. The letter must meet all of the following requirements, or the application could be rejected:**
 - Must be on letterhead.
 - Must be manually or electronically/digitally signed.
 - Must be dated within the last 90 days of application submission.
 - Must be addressed to the Directors of the UHAND Education Program (Drs. Kayce Solari Williams and Shine Chang).
 - Original letters of support may be submitted directly by mentor or mentor's support staff (not by the applicant) to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org. Letters may also be included with the completed application, but **MUST** be submitted directly to the Program's email.
 - **All Letters of recommendation and all additional application components are due at the application deadline.**

NOTE: We strongly recommend you read and share with your mentor, *The Guidelines for Writing Letters of Support* available on the *UHAND application page*.

- 6) **Letters of recommendation must meet all of the following requirements, or the application could be rejected:**
 - **Two** letters from external recommenders are mandatory. External recommenders are defined as individuals other than sponsoring mentors. Applications with fewer than 2 letters of recommendation will **not** be accepted (at least 2 letters must be from academic recommenders).
 - Must be on letterhead.
 - Must be manually or electronically/digitally signed.
 - Must be dated within the last 90 days of application submission.
 - Must be addressed to the Directors of the UHAND Education Program, Drs. Shine Chang and Kayce Solari Williams.
 - Academic recommendations from a professor who has taught or supervised you for at least one semester are ideal. Letters should be written from people who know the applicant well and know

whether he/she is well suited for the opportunity he/she seeks. We suggest that the recommenders talk to each other (if possible) about what aspects they focus on so that they do not all sound the same, except for singing his/her praises.

- Original letters of support may be submitted directly by mentor or mentor's support staff (not by the applicant) to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org. Letters may also be included with the completed application, but MUST be submitted *directly* to the Program's email.

- **All letters of recommendation are due at the application deadline.**

- 7) **Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)**; be sure to include **GPA** and **title of thesis** (if applicable).
- 8) **GRE scores and percentiles (Doctoral students only)**. If you do not have GRE scores, please indicate the reason why these scores are not included on the application coversheet.
- 9) **All academic transcripts:**
 - Unofficial transcripts must be legible and include grade point average and any appropriate test scores. **Failure to submit a legible transcript could result in the rejection of the application.**
 - Screen shots of a class schedule or grades are not acceptable.
 - Submit all academic transcripts of all institutions attended after high school, including undergraduate and graduate transcripts.
 - High school transcripts or diplomas are not required.
 - Official transcripts will be required if accepted to the program.

Application Review Process

Phase 1: Initial Application

- All items on the application checklist & coversheet must be emailed by or before the application deadline, including letters from prospective mentors and recommenders.
- Confirmation of receipt and the application decision date will be e-mailed to the applicant within 2 business days after receipt of their application materials.
- The application decision will be e-mailed once the review by the Advisory Committee is complete.
- Successful applicants are deemed **finalists** and will be invited for an interview.

Phase 2: Interview

- Finalists will be invited for an in-person, phone, or video conference interview.
- Interviews will last up to one hour and will include discussion of the finalists' interests in cancer and disparities research, research and/or volunteer experience, and long-term plans for pursuing a career in cancer disparities research.
- Acceptance decisions will be conveyed via email approximately two weeks after the interview. Scholars must notify UHAND of their decision to join the program one week after receiving their acceptance email (the deadline date will be conveyed in the acceptance email).

Application Review Criteria

The Advisory Committee will use the following criteria when reviewing applications:

1. **Relevance:** Are the career and research interests of the applicant clearly described in the personal statement?
2. **Promise and educational benefit to the applicant's career development:** Will the UHAND Education Program accelerate the applicant's interest in and career development toward becoming a researcher in cancer disparities? Do the letters of recommendation indicate knowledge about the applicant's capabilities and describe desirable attributes for a UHAND scholar and appropriate fit for the program's goals? Does the applicant have the intellectual experience and work ethic to benefit from the UHAND Education Program and eventually become a cancer disparities investigator? Will the UHAND Education Program offer educational experiences that will not otherwise be available?
3. **Availability of Support:** Are the applicants' research interests aligned with those of the proposed mentors and existing resources?
4. **Minority Status:** Preference will be given to applicants who are underrepresented in the sciences.

Important Information

- **All application documents are due by the application deadline, including letter/s of support and letters of recommendation.** Missing items will result in an incomplete application and will not be reviewed.
 - Refer to the **UHAND Education Program FAQs** for commonly asked questions. If your answer is not found in the FAQs, email UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org.
- Selected finalists must work with their UHAND mentors to develop a research/project plan, including a description of specialized training required (if applicable). Research plans are due **one month before** fellowship start date. More information will be sent out with program offer/admission letters.
- Please be aware that all selected UHAND scholars will have appointments at MD Anderson. In order to be appointed at MD Anderson additional items are required.
 - Selected UHAND scholars must create an application form and profile in MD Anderson's Discover system.
 - Selected UHAND scholars must submit **official** transcripts.
 - **Immunizations, tobacco and drug testing are required by the institution of all UHAND scholar awardees.** Testing positive for tobacco or illegal drugs will result in the forfeit of the fellowship award. Immunizations must be current within one year of your fellowship start date. Since lack of immunizations can delay the fellowship start date, it is **recommended that all applicants begin requesting immunizations and health documents as soon as students are notified of acceptance (approximately April 2018).**

Submitting the Application

1. Print the Application Checklist and check it for completion prior to submitting.
2. Fill out and print the Scholar Application form, which can be found on <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/apply-1>
3. Print all other documents and place in order listed on Application Checklist. Ensure each page is labeled with your Last Name, First Name - UHAND in the top right corner. Format instructions can be found above.
4. Submit the application in one single pdf file using one of the options below.
NOTE: Some of the application documents are fillable PDF files and cannot be completed using the Read-Only version of Adobe. You will need to print and scan the application checklist, digital signatures will not be accepted.
5. Email the single pdf file to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org
6. Both the subject line and filename are to be named ***Last Name, First Name - UHAND Application***.

Option 1:

Using a document scanner, scan all documents in the order listed above in **Assemble the Application** into one single pdf file. Email to UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org by the due date. Photos of each document will not be accepted.

Option 2:

- Download the preferred Adobe software (select one below):
 - [Adobe Reader for Windows](#)
 - [Adobe Reader for MAC](#)
 - [Adobe Pro – Trial Version for Windows or MAC users](#)
- [Follow these instructions \(scroll down to the “Combining Files” section\)](#) to merge the application documents into single pdf file using the preferred Adobe software selected above.

Contact

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