

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AT ROCKFORD

BULLETIN OF INFORMATION

JAMES SCHOLAR PROGRAM

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

James Scholar Designation is given to students formally identified by their colleges as honor students. They are granted certain privileges to facilitate their education. Criteria for admission, retention and graduation are established by the individual colleges. The Edmund J. James Undergraduate Honors Program was established for undergraduate students on the Urbana-Champaign Campus in 1959 in response to a feeling that the University should provide appropriate educational opportunities for its best students. The program has provided a number of special curriculum opportunities to academically talented students. Designation by the University as a James Scholar recognizes students of extraordinary ability and achievement. It entitles students to certain academic privileges and charges them with the responsibility for seeking sustained intellectual achievement throughout their careers. In addition, they are encouraged to pursue individual scholarly interests through independent study and research projects.

The James Scholar Program for Independent Study within the College of Medicine was established in 1967. Admission criteria are left to the particular regional sites but requirements for graduation are set by the College of Medicine. The James Scholar Program for Independent Study at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford began in 1972 and since that time each class has had students selected for the program.

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS OF THE JAMES SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Philosophy of an Honors Program

The aim of an honors program is to challenge the best inquiring students to the limits of their capacity by matching them with experienced faculty who share their interests. Encouragement and opportunity are needed to assure that the brightest students will be challenged during their education in becoming competent physicians.

Philosophy of an Independent Study Program

Independent study allows the freedom to tailor one's curriculum to special needs, goals, desires, or interests. It promotes the qualities of intellectual independence, self-motivation and scholarship, and allows utilization of the widest range of possible resources. It fosters the utilization of special talents and abilities. One consequence may be the reduction of formal instruction with an increase in time available for self-directed and self-reliant study that should characterize higher education. Independent study offers the opportunity for unusually creative, imaginative and willing students to deviate from the standard path and pace of instruction; to develop a learning strategy that best suits the student's educational and research goals and interests. It is a special pathway to do things that ordinarily might not be possible within the regular curriculum. It does not mean absence of all parameters and guidelines, but rather provides a means of liberation from the limitations imposed by a structured curriculum and an increased opportunity for self-directed learning. It is not so much a program as a personal orientation to learning. It attracts and supports students who learn best when goals and methods are self-derived.

Philosophy of the Research Project

The Research Project allows the development of special knowledge in some aspect of medicine. It facilitates a furthering of the body of knowledge and the development of special talents and abilities related to that particular area. It fosters scholarly study and investigation. It may allow meaningful contributions to our understanding of disease or science and may well broaden the student's career opportunities. It ultimately enhances the quality of the performance of each Scholar.

In summary, the James Scholar Program is an academic honors program for highly qualified students that stresses independent study and requires a research project. It is not merely a special project or unusual clerkship experience, but rather an approach to one's entire undergraduate medical education. The goals of the James Scholar Program are to recognize outstanding medical students, to promote the qualities of intellectual independence, self-motivation, creativity, and scholarship in those students, and to enable the development of in-depth knowledge in some area of medicine.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Criteria for Admission

Since 1973, the regional sites have been given the responsibility for defining and describing the James Scholar Program for those particular sites (though some requirements for graduation are set by the college). The selection criteria used in Rockford are as follows:

1. Academic excellence. Application is limited to students in the upper one-third of the entering M2 class.
2. A high level of maturity and self-motivation.
3. A desire to pursue an individual curriculum and intellectual objectives without the constraints of the regular curriculum.
4. Interest in pursuing problems in greater depth than possible in conventional studies.
5. Acceptance of the criteria for graduation from the James Scholar Program.

In special circumstances, M3 students in the upper one-third of their class may apply for admission, provided that these students have an acceptable, fully developed research project which is ready to initiate and can be completed without disruption of the student's graduation date and within the requirements of the James Scholar Program.

Overview of the Application Process

This section presents a chronological listing of the major activities and deadlines for the James Scholar application process. Any student contemplating participation in the Program should consider attending all the events.

1. Attend the orientation meeting(s) for potential James Scholars. Materials concerning the Program will be distributed to all eligible students. Materials include a specific timetable of deadlines and a compendium of research ideas/topics of Faculty interested in becoming James Scholar Advisors for those students who do not have a research question already in mind. (Recommended Activity)
2. Meet individually with the Chair of the James Scholar Committee to discuss preliminary ideas, concerns, and questions. The Chair will recommend faculty who may be helpful to the student, and make suggestions regarding the application. (Recommended Activity)
3. If you are still interested in the program, by around the third week in September, you need to submit your name to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office (room S200) to indicate that you are a potential candidate for the program. (Required Activity)
4. Attend all the required workshops and meetings for James Scholar candidates. This may include a workshop on the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Biological Resource Committee course on animal care (BRC), or other workshops arranged for James Scholar candidates. (If you decide to conduct research on humans or animals, whether in the James Scholar Program or

- outside of the program, proof of attendance at the IRB or BRC training sessions will be mandatory.)
5. By the first week in December, submit a preliminary description of your project to the IRB Office. The contents of this Preliminary Description are covered in the next section. This written submission will form the basis for the conference described in item 6 (below). (Mandatory)
 6. Around the second week of December, you and your advisor will meet with the James Scholar Committee to discuss your project. This brief meeting will be used to further refine and adjust the proposal. Your advisor may participate by teleconference, but your attendance is mandatory. (Mandatory)
 7. By approximately the second week in February, a Full Application Packet is due to the Office of Research Support Services. The contents of this Full Application Packet are covered in a separate section. (Mandatory)
 8. By the second week in March, you will receive feedback on your proposal. The final revised version of the proposal will be due the last week in March. No extensions will be allowed.
 9. During the second week in April, the candidate will once more interview with the James Scholar Committee. At this interview, the Committee will review the candidate's credentials, assess the candidate's motivation, self-confidence, and ability to pursue independent study, and review potential curriculum adjustments. The feasibility, significance, and quality of the proposed study will be evaluated.

Preliminary Description of the Project: Contents of Submission

A brief 2 - 3 page summary of your proposed project should include a hypothesis, estimate of the sample size, and basic research design. You should include a letter of support from your James Scholar Advisor, a copy of your CV, and proof of attendance of the required workshops (IRB or BRC). This will be due during early December. Please see the timetable provided for your class for specific dates.

Full Application Packet: Contents of Submission

This Full Application Packet will be due during February. Please see the timetable provided for your class for specific dates.

1. Write a letter of application, including the following:
 - a. A statement of educational and career goals and how the James Scholar Program will enable the achievement of these goals,
 - b. A description of academic achievement to this time, as well as any special talents or abilities,
 - c. A clear description of plans for innovative educational experiences and/or research project as well as an indication of how these plans differ from the regular curriculum,
 - d. A summary of discussions with faculty members (i.e., James Scholar Committee Chair, Mentor, potential James Scholar Advisor, etc.).

2. Complete a proposal (not to exceed 10 pages) of the research project. This should include:
 - a. A concise review of the literature,
 - b. A statement of the hypothesis to be tested,
 - c. A description of methodology,
 - d. A statement of the potential significance of the research,
 - e. The meaning of some possible results,
 - f. A projected timeline,
 - g. A budget form.
3. A current Curriculum Vitae, which should include educational history, relevant job experience, experience with research, independent work or study related extra-curricular activities and any other pertinent information. This should include a current address, phone number, and e-mail.
4. Obtain a letter of commitment from a potential James Scholar Advisor (and a Research Project Advisor if the research project is not to be undertaken with the James Scholar Advisor). The potential advisor(s) should comment, not only on the quality of the candidate, but also on the feasibility of the project.

Committee Action Regarding the Preliminary Application

After evaluating the candidate's application and interviewing the candidate during the early December presentation of the Preliminary Description of the Project, the Committee may take one of the following four actions: Accept the candidate as a provisional James Scholar, accept the candidate as a provisional James Scholar with revisions in the proposed curriculum or research project, request a fundamental re-evaluation of the candidate with major alterations in the proposed curriculum or research project, or reject the candidate. In cases where further evaluation of the research project is needed, a consultative faculty opinion may be sought locally or elsewhere within the University Of Illinois College Of Medicine.

Committee Action Regarding Final Acceptance

After evaluation of any revisions reflected in the Full Application Packet and a consideration of the student's M2 academic performance, the Committee then will consider designating the Scholar as a full James Scholar. Should the project be judged inadequate, or should academic performance be marginal, the Committee may choose to not advance the provisional Scholar to full status. Final committee action regarding full status will come no later than May of the M2 year.

Retention Requirements

Requirements for retention as a James Scholar are as follows:

1. For continuation beyond the M2 year, the Scholar must have fulfilled the requirements for progression from provisional to full James Scholar status.
2. For continuation beyond the third year:

- a. The Scholar must perform satisfactorily in all segments of their M3/M4 curriculum. Satisfactory performance in the curriculum means that the James Scholar Program will not retain a student who receives less than an “S” (Satisfactory), “Meets Expectations,” or “Proficient.”
- b. Complete all Progress Review Forms and show adequate progress on the completion of the project. All delays must be reviewed and approved by the Committee.
- c. The Scholar may not make changes in the area of the research project nor collaborate with another student toward completion of the project without prior approval from the James Scholar Committee.

If the James Scholar fails to attain the requirements for continuation in the program, he or she may be placed on probationary status and given a period of time to correct specific deficiencies. If these deficiencies are not corrected, the student may then be removed from the James Scholar Program, losing the prerogatives enjoyed by such students.

Requirements for Graduation

For certification as a James Scholar upon graduation, the Scholar must have fulfilled the following requirements:

1. Maintain satisfactory performance in the Scholar's independent study curricular segments.
2. Successfully complete the Rockford requirements for clinical education (i.e. Medicine/ Subspecialties including Neurology, 28 weeks; Surgery/Subspecialties, 12 weeks, Obstetrics/Gynecology, 8 weeks; Pediatrics, 8 weeks; Psychiatry, 8 weeks; Family Medicine 5 semesters UPCC; a total of 72 weeks of clinical training is strongly recommended). The James Scholar Committee may grant exceptions to these norms but these exceptions may not violate overall college guidelines.
3. Pass Step 1 and Step 2 of the USMLE.
4. Completion of the research project. The research project is defined as an area of scholarly activity in a health-care related subject. It may involve clinical, instructional, or research aspects, and may run the gamut of subjects (i.e., basic science, clinical application, medical ethics, forensic medicine, public health, medical education, medical literature, etc.). It must result in all three of the following:
 - a) A document (paper formatted for submission to a professional journal), computer program, film, or video tape,
 - b) A poster (students must present at Research Day in March.),
 - c) An oral presentation before the James Scholar Committee.
5. The James Scholar transcript will prominently display recognition of participation in the program and will display all scores on required examinations. In addition, the transcript will also contain the title of the research project.

In the event that a student resigns or is dropped from the James Scholar Program, that student will be required to satisfy all regular requirements for promotion for graduation.

Assurance of Due Process

Assurance of due process includes the following:

1. In the event that a conflict cannot be worked out between the student and the Advisor(s), or in the event of some other extraordinary circumstance, the Committee as a whole shall exercise due process to resolve the problem.
2. To assemble a Committee under this clause, the advisor and the Chair must agree that this is the action to be taken.

Suspension – The James Scholar Committee may invoke an immediate Suspension of a student research project by a 75% vote of a quorum (50%) of total Committee membership. Such immediate Suspension will be considered when/if the Committee has sufficient reason to believe that the continued conduct of the James Scholar research project

- a. poses a significant danger to the student or others in the campus community, and/or
- b. substantially impedes or threatens to impede the execution of the institution's educational, research, or service activities.

If a Suspension is invoked, the student shall be immediately removed from active conduct of their research, and institutional funds for the project shall be frozen.

A positive vote for Suspension requires that the Involuntary Withdrawal procedures outlined below also be considered, at the same meeting. A separate vote on the matter of Involuntary Withdrawal shall be taken (as outlined below). If Involuntary Withdrawal proceedings are also initiated, the student's research shall remain Suspended until the Withdrawal procedures and appeals have been heard and affirmed or overturned.

Voluntary Withdrawal from the Program – After final acceptance into the program, a James Scholar student may elect to Voluntarily Withdraw at any time. Notice of Voluntary Withdrawal must be made in writing and submitted to the Chair of the James Scholar Committee. In the event that a student voluntarily withdraws from the program, that student will be required to satisfy all regular curricular requirements for promotion and/or graduation.

Notification of the Voluntary Withdrawal will be sent by the James Scholar Committee to the Regional Dean of the College of Medicine at Rockford, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean of Student and Alumni Affairs, the Office of Medical Education and Evaluation, the student's James Scholar Advisor, the Rockford Committee on Instruction and Appraisal, and the Office of the Registrar. These notifications will be sent within five working days of the Committee's receipt of the

student letter of Voluntary Withdrawal. Reference to participation in the James Scholar Program will be eliminated from all transcripts and other official documents such as the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (Dean's letter).

Involuntary Withdrawal from the Program – If for any reason (to include, but not limited to, inadequate academic performance or research productivity, failure to execute obligations, lack of professionalism, etc.), a member of the James Scholar Committee considers that the removal of a student from the program is warranted, the member of the Committee may bring forward a motion for Involuntary Withdrawal. Any action on such a motion will require a quorum (50%) of the full Committee to be present and voting on such a motion. A majority vote of the quorum in support of the motion for Involuntary Withdrawal will result in initiating proceedings toward such withdrawal, as outlined below. Within three days of passage of a motion for Involuntary Withdrawal, the Chair of the Committee shall write a letter of notification to the student outlining the concerns of the Committee and requesting the student respond to the concerns (either in writing, in person, or both) at a special James Scholar Committee meeting convened within two weeks of the notification for the purpose of affirming or reversing the Involuntary Withdrawal. If the student chooses not to submit a written defense or oral arguments within the time provided, the Committee shall involuntarily remove the student from the James Scholar Program. The student shall receive written notification of removal from the James Scholar Program from the Chair, within three days of the final determination.

Upon consideration of the written and/or oral defense, the Committee (again, by a majority of a 50% quorum) may elect to return the student to good standing, maintain the student in an Inactive status (see below) until all deficiencies are removed or the issue resolved, or Involuntarily Withdraw the student from the program. The student shall be notified of the decision by letter within three working days of the final determination.

The student may appeal this decision to the Regional Dean of the College of Medicine at Rockford. Written notice of appeal must be submitted within two weeks of the notice of final determination. The Regional Dean may decide the matter alone or impanel an appeal committee to review all pertinent information and make a recommendation. The decision of the Dean shall be final; although an additional avenue of appeal exists within the University academic grievance procedures. Pending the findings of the appeals process, the Inactive James Scholar student may continue only those portions of their project which might be jeopardized by an unplanned hiatus. Institutional funds for Inactive students shall be severely restricted.

If the final decision of the James Scholar Committee is Involuntary Withdrawal, notice of withdrawal will be sent by the James Scholar Committee to the Regional Dean of the College of Medicine at Rockford, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean of Student and Alumni Affairs, the Office of Medical Education and Evaluation, the student's James Scholar Advisor, the Rockford Committee on Instruction and Appraisal, and the Office of the Registrar. These notifications will be sent within five working days after the determination of Involuntary Withdrawal has been made final. Reference to participation in the James Scholar Program will be eliminated from all transcripts and other official documents such as the Medical Student

Performance Evaluation (Dean's letter). In the event that a student is Involuntarily Withdrawn from the program, that student will be required to satisfy all regular curricular requirements for promotion and/or graduation.

Prerogatives of the James Scholar

James Scholars are asked to meet stringent entrance criteria and demonstrate increased academic rigor. In return, James Scholars enjoy certain privileges to facilitate their medical education. At present, these benefits include significant flexibility including first choice in arranging clerkships and electives, basic funding of project costs, and special recognition at graduation. In the future, these benefits may be expanded to include extended use of library facilities, scholarships, grants and career preparatory opportunities. Each year the James Scholar Committee evaluates all M4 student projects for outstanding design, implementation, and results. If a project is determined to meet these criteria, that project will receive a College of Medicine Award. Selection is made by the James Scholar Committee and the final award made by the Committee on Student Affairs and Promotions. The recipient, if any, is announced at the annual Senior Banquet and recognized at graduation.

Curriculum Development

James Scholars participate in the standard medical school curriculum but are allowed certain flexibility in scheduling not usually available to other students. Some examples of acceptable variance from the conventional course of study include prolonged study of basic science, integration of clinical experience with basic science study and research, graduate course work, changes in the amount of time spent on a particular area of study, split time between institutions to see different approaches or sets of patients, exposure to alternative health care systems, independent readings in clinical sciences, foreign study tours, prolonged period of working on the research project, exposure to public health or occupational medicine, advanced clinical studies, combined M.D./Ph.D./M.P.H. programs, etc. Such curricular alterations must be endorsed by the Scholar's Advisor and approved by the full James Scholar Committee prior to the changes being implemented. Requests for schedule changes must be submitted in writing to the Office of Medical Education and Evaluation and the IRB Office and, must include a signature from the Scholar's advisor. The Scholar should keep in close touch with the Office of Medical Education and Evaluation concerning the blocks of time spent on various segments of the curriculum and research. At least once each year Scholars are expected to present written reports of progress to the James Scholar Committee. These reports must include disclosure of any unforeseen difficulties, delays, or adjustments to the protocol needed to complete the project on schedule.

Research Project Support

Wide variability exists regarding the need for financial support to sponsor research projects. Not all projects need major funding. Theses, literature reviews, case reports, and certain clinical studies might qualify as scholarly activity and yet require little in the way of funding. For those projects requiring financial support, several possibilities exist. Some possible sources outside of the James Scholar Program

include internal funding from MSP funds, support drawn from the Advisor's research grant, internal funds from specific departments, or grants or unrestricted gifts obtained from extramural sources.

Funding is available through the James Scholar Program. A budget form must be completed as part of the application process with funds administered through the IRB Office. Forms and rules will be provided to all applicants. A maximum of \$1150 will be available for project-specific costs. An additional maximum amount of \$350 has been set aside for the purchase of products or services available through Media Services. An additional maximum of \$1000 is available to support any travel and/or registration expenses associated with the presentation of the findings of the James Scholar project at professional meetings. Funds may not be moved between expense categories. A maximum of \$2500 is available to each James Scholar student. At present under University regulations, James Scholars are not permitted to receive stipends (i.e., receive a salary) to conduct research that will be used to fulfill or complete the James Scholar research project. It is permissible, however, to use acquired funds to directly support the purchase of supplies, experimental animals, equipment, support services, etc. for use in the James Scholar research project.

Role of the Advisor

The James Scholar Advisor helps the Scholar plan a program that will result in his/her becoming a competent physician. The Advisor will also help plan the research project or help secure an appropriate Co-Advisor. Co-Advisors may be needed for research in the basic science areas, or Adjunct Advisors may be needed at another site removed from the Rockford Campus. The Advisor will also help the Scholar prepare for the presentation of the research project, and help secure support and recognition for the Scholar and the project. The designation as a James Scholar Advisor carries with it added faculty distinction and responsibility. Selecting excellent James Scholar Advisors serves the purpose of matching the best faculty with some of the best inquiring students. Guidance of the James Scholar requires special talent for providing counsel without usurping the independence of the given Scholar. The Advisor should help the James Scholar plan the educational curriculum as well as the study and should periodically review progress of the advisee to assure academic excellence, progress through the individual curriculum, and progress in the research project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In producing this document regarding the James Scholar Program for Independent Study at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford, various useful references were utilized including the following:

1. Honors at Illinois, Report of the Ad Hoc Honors Advisory Committee, June 1982.
2. Undergraduate Program Catalog, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
3. The Independent Study Program at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago, July 1980.
4. Manual of Goals, Procedures, and Mechanisms of the James Scholar Program at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria.
5. A History of Honors Programs at the University of Illinois, Annual Report of the University Honors Program, 1966-67.
6. Various documents of the James Scholar Committee at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford including the James Scholar Program, June 1984; Policies and Guidelines, January 1984; James Scholar Advisor's Guide; Evaluation Protocol for the James Scholar, December 1983; Response to the College-Wide Independent Study Program Survey, February 1983; and Position Paper on the James Scholar Program for Independent Study, August 1985.
7. Programmatic Review of the James Scholar Programs for Independent Study, December 2001.

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