

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 a full-time undergraduate or doctoral student in good academic standing at the University of Houston by/before the Summer 2020.
- Applicants must have at least one full year (including Summer 2020) 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 approximately 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 for doctoral students varies based on year within the doctoral program but will be commensurate with or exceed standard rates paid within the Department of Psychological, Health, & Learning Sciences at the University of Houston.

Terms of the Award

- Fellowships are funded (contingent on satisfactory progress in the program) for one academic year, including the Summer 2020 term. Opportunities for extension through Summer 2021 are available.
- 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 events as well as educational and career activities, which include, but are not limited to the following activities:
 - **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.
 - **University of Houston Summer Activities:**
 - Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program
 - **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, Meet the Speaker Brown Bag Lunches, 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 letters 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 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.

Application Components

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

- 1) Submit your application and supporting documents online using the UHAND Application Portal - <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/apply-2>
- 2) Submit all supporting documents on the **Application Checklist**. The Application Checklist must be signed and dated and uploaded with the application materials on the scholar application - <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/apply-2>
- 3) **Professional Headshot:** Upload a high-resolution (png or jpeg) headshot in the application portal. A headshot or headshot is a recent, digital portrait in which the focus is on the person.
- 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.

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 supporting documents must include applicant name & "UHAND" (e.g., "Le, Kathy - UHAND").

- 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 official 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 **must** be submitted directly by mentor or mentor's support staff (not by the applicant) using the UHAND Online Recommendation Portal (<https://www.uhandpartnership.com/recommendation>)
 - **All Letters of recommendation and all additional application components are due by the application deadline.**

NOTE: We strongly recommend you read and share with your mentor, *Mentor Letter Instructions*, available on the *UHAND application page*.
- 6) **All students: 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.
 - 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.

- Recommendations from a professor who has taught or supervised you for at least one semester are ideal.
 - Original letters must be submitted directly by recommender or recommender's support staff (staff (not by the applicant) using the UHAND Online Recommendation Portal (<https://www.uhandpartnership.com/recommendation>)
 - **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 application components (including letters) must be submitted to the application portal by or before the application deadline.
- 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.

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 an investigator 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. **Resources and Support:** Are the applicants' research interests aligned with those of the proposed mentors and existing resources?

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 2020)**.

Contact

Shine Chang, Ph.D., Director
UHAND Education Program
713-563-3573
shinechang@mdanderson.org

Kayce Solari Williams, Ph.D., Director
UHAND Education Program
713-743-0311
kdsolari@central.uh.edu

Kamisha H. Escoto, Ph.D.
UHAND Education Program
713-745-3892
khescoto@mdanderson.org

Crystal Roberson, MPH, Administrative Manager
UHAND Partnership
713-794-1074
clroberson@mdanderson.org

Kathy Le
UHAND Education Program
713-743-6882
kle14@central.uh.edu

Business Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm

Website: www.uhandpartnership.com

Email: UHANDpartnership@mdanderson.org