

RURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH, MS

This 30 hour degree program is designed to provide some of the tools necessary for future rural Alabama physicians to become community health leaders. The program teaches principles of rural public health as a basis for community health leadership, characteristics of rural health concerns and approaches to biomedical science study. The curriculum is a combination of Basic Science Courses, Rural Primary Care discussions, activities, visits and an introduction to basic clinical medicine through didactic sessions, clinical simulations and shadowing with physicians. It will help prepare them to lead in the development and maintenance of community health center practices and other health care practices. There are two concentrations: Rural Medical Scholars and Rural Community Health Scholars.

Concentration 1: Rural Medical Scholars (RMS) was established in 1996 by The UAB Heersink School of Medicine (UABSOM) to recruit students who grew up in rural Alabama who desire to practice primary care medicine in rural Alabama. RMS apply to UABSOM, go through a special interview/selection process and enter a RMS 5-year track of study leading to the MD degree. For the first year, RMS spend a year on the Tuscaloosa campus in the MS in Rural Community Health program with a set of courses related to rural community health and basic sciences. Following this year, RMS then complete two years of pre-clinical study at UABSOM in Birmingham. RMS then return to Tuscaloosa for two years of clinical medicine training in the College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) (UABSOM – Tuscaloosa Campus). After completing the MD degree, RMS enter residency training in the specialty of their choice.

Concentration 2: Rural Community Health Scholars (RCHS) are students who exhibit a desire to be rural primary care physicians, but are not yet eligible for the RMS program. The RCHS have the same rural Alabama residency requirements (8 or more years growing up in a rural Alabama community or have graduated from a rural Alabama high school) as RMS. Most of these students use the Master of Science degree as a bridge to the RMS program by demonstrating their ability to handle graduate-level studies and improving admission test scores. If they do not become eligible for the RMS program, they may choose to complete the degree and/or pursue admission to other programs.

Students will complete degree requirements following Plan II (without thesis). Each student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or better for all graduate courses undertaken at UA, although UABSOM may require a higher science GPA for RMS. At least 75 percent of the graduate hours taken must have been completed with grades of "A" or "B" at UA. All requirements for graduation must be completed within six semesters.

Goal / Purpose

The purpose of the RCH MS - RMSP is to identify, recruit and retain rural students who have the desire to return to the rural setting as physicians. Ten to Twelve rural Alabama students from a competitive applicant pool are selected each year to enter the Rural Community Health Master's Degree Program at the University of Alabama. Upon successful completion of the Master's Degree, these students will matriculate to the UAB Heersink School of Medicine (UABSOM) and complete the first two years of medical education in Birmingham. Students then return to Tuscaloosa to complete the third and fourth years of medical education at the University of Alabama, College of Community Health Sciences. The RCH MS - RMSP provides:

- Creation of a peer support network among rural students
- Interaction with an advisor/mentor who is a practicing physician
- Study of rural health issues

- Community fieldwork/experiences
- Introduction to health care policy and current trends in medicine

Benefits of Being a Rural Scholar

- Peer relationship development through shared experiences
- Interaction with rural health care professionals through shadowing and community projects
- Interaction with Medical Students, Residents and Medical School Faculty and Preceptors
- Review and evaluation of student progress and guidance as indicated

Admissions

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission as a Rural Medical Scholar (RMS) student, an applicant must:

- Have an MCAT score of 495 or above
- Have An undergraduate GPA of 3.2 or higher.
- Have been a resident of a rural Alabama county for at least eight years or have attended a rural high school
- Intend to practice medicine in rural Alabama
- Meet Heersink School of Medicine admission requirements

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission as a Rural Community Health Scholar (RCHS) student, an application must include:

- An MCAT score of 490 or higher.

Who Should Apply?

Applicants who spent their formative years in rural Alabama who are interested in practicing primary care medicine in rural Alabama Applicants must meet the <https://cchs.ua.edu/rural-programs/medical-scholars/> admission requirements for Rural Medical Scholars and Rural Community Health Scholars See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

Each track within the program - the Rural Medical Scholar (RMS) and Rural Community Health Scholar (RCHS) tracks - require a minimum of 30 credit hours to complete. The RMS track is a one-year program, and the RCHS track is a two-year program. All students will complete a set of common core courses, plus the additional core courses and approved electives within their respective tracks. Students who complete the first year of RCHS track and are accepted into the RMS track in spring of year one will complete the RMS track core curriculum and approved electives in year two. Students who complete the first year of RCHS and are NOT accepted or choose not to apply or enroll into the RMS track will complete the remaining RCHS core curriculum in year two.

Of note, though listed as additional core courses in each track, RCH 522 Community Clinical Process I and RCH 532 Community Clinical Process II and CHS 540 Rural Community Interaction I and CHS 541 Rural Community Interaction II, all meet the same student learning outcomes related to rural community health. Clinical Community Processes I & II are separate courses because they also provide preparation for medical school success and careers as rural family physicians.

Required for ALL Rural Community Health Students		Hours
RCH 500	Rural Envir/Occup Health	3
POPH 521	Health Policy & Planning	3
One Common Core BSC Course		3 or 4
BSC 524 Human Physiology (Fall Semester)		
BSC 569 Histology of Vertebrates (Spring Semester)		
BSC 535 Immunology (Fall Semester)		
BSC 551 BCH/Molecular Biology II (Spring Semester)		
BSC 544 General Virology		
BSC 549 Endocrinology		
Additional Concentration Total Hours		20-21
Total Program Hours		30

Rural Community Health Scholars Concentration

Rural Community Health Scholars Concentration		Hours
Core Courses		9-10
Required Rural Community Health Scholars Courses		
POPH 522	Biostatistics (Fall Semester)	3
POPH 523	Basic Epidemiology (Spring Semester)	3
CHS 540	Rural Community Interaction I (Fall Semester)	3
CHS 541	Rural Community Interaction II (Spring Semester)	3
Elective Courses		9
Select from the Elective Course list.		
Total Hours		30

Rural Community Health Scholars Elective Courses		Hours
BSC 524	Human Physiology	3
BSC 535	Immunology	4
BSC 544	General Virology	3
BSC 549	Endocrinology	3
BSC 551	Bch/Molecular Biology II	3
BSC 550	Fundamentals of Biochemistry	3
BSC 560	Human Developmental Biology	4
BSC 569	Histology Of Vertebrates	4
RCH 523	Indep Stdy Community Med	1 to 6
RCH 530	Stress Management	3
NHM 561	Adv. Vitamins and Minerals	3
NHM 562	Metabolism of Energy Nutrients	3
Total Elective Hours		9

Rural Medical Scholars Concentration

Rural Medical Scholars Additional Courses		Hours
Core Courses (see above)		9
RCH 522	Community Clinical Process I	3
RCH 532	Community Clinical Process II	3
RCH 591	Clin Corr and Study Strat I	2
RCH 592	Clin Corr & Study Strat II	2
Elective Courses (select from options below)		11
Total Hours		30
Elective courses for Rural Medical Scholars		
NHM 561	Adv. Vitamins and Minerals	3
NHM 562	Metabolism of Energy Nutrients	3
BSC 524	Human Physiology	3

BSC 569	Histology Of Vertebrates	4
BSC 535	Immunology	4
BSC 551	Bch/Molecular Biology II	3
BSC 544	General Virology	3
BSC 549	Endocrinology	3
BSC 550	Fundamentals of Biochemistry	3
BSC 522	Biology of Cancer	3
BSC 530	Introduction to Pharmacology	3
BSC 560	Human Developmental Biology	4
RCH 523	Indep Stdy Community Med	1 to 6
Total Elective Hours		11

Transfer Credit

Graduate School Information on Transfer Credit.

Comprehensive Examination/Capstone Project

There is no comprehensive examination. Instead, students will complete a Rural Community Health Assessment as a capstone project.

The Rural Community Health Assessment will be of their hometown or other rural community. It will entail a review of the history and current health status of the community, and interviews with rural community members. Using this data, students will develop a review of community systems (e.g., health, education, government, spiritual, recreational, economic), and identify a comprehensive problem list with one or more priority concerns about the health status of the community.

Students will develop and be evaluated on a written description and oral presentation of their Rural Community Health Assessment. Written work will be evaluated by faculty in the Rural Community Health program using a rubric provided to the students. Oral presentations will be evaluated by a panel of faculty from the Rural Community Health program and additional faculty members from across the College of Community Health Sciences with expertise in rural community health and medicine using a rubric provided to the students. Students must receive a grade of at least a 'B' on the written description and oral presentation components of their capstone project to graduate.

For students enrolled in the Rural Community Health Scholars concentration, the capstone project will be completed as a part of CHS 540 Rural Community Interaction I, and CHS 541 Rural Community Interaction II.

For students enrolled in the Rural Medical Scholars concentration, the capstone project will be completed as part of RCH 522 Community Clinical Processes I and RCH 532 Community Clinical Processes II.

Program Requirements

Candidates for the master's degree must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours of coursework credit and complete a culminating or "capstone experience" as described under the Comprehensive Examinations. Candidate working under Plan II may be required to participate successfully in seminar or problem courses that will give them an acquaintance with the methods of research and an appreciation of the place and function or original investigation in the field.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

All students will complete degree requirement following Plan II (without thesis). Each student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or better for all graduate courses undertaken at UA, although UABSOM may require a higher science GPA for RMS. All requirement for graduation must be completed within six semester.

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

Student Progress Requirement

Please refer to the UA Graduate Catalog, Scholastic Requirements and Academic Standing for guidelines on evaluating student progress.

Academic Misconduct Information

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence.

Academic Grievances Information

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadline Information

Graduate School information on the Graduate School Deadline.

Application for Graduate School Information

Graduate School information on the Application for Graduate School.