
HVTN Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP) Scholar Awards

Request for Proposals – Due Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024
at 5:00 pm PST

The HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) is pleased to announce that the application period is open for the Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP). This year the program is supported by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the National Institutes of Health. RAMP scholar awards support African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Islander medical students considering careers in HIV vaccine research.

PURPOSE

RAMP aims to increase the participation of members of the African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Islander communities in HIV prevention research, both as participants and as researchers. Specifically, RAMP identifies promising medical students from these communities who wish to engage in HIV prevention and vaccine-related research activities. Our goal is to develop future physician-scientists from these communities whose careers are dedicated to the search for a safe and effective HIV vaccine. To achieve this goal, the HVTN created this grant program to select and support competitive U.S. medical students and provide outstanding mentorship and training in an introductory experience with HIV vaccine and related research. These students, under the mentorship of HVTN-affiliated investigators, conduct research projects in areas aligned with the HVTN scientific agenda.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Short term (8-10 week), and long term (9-12 month) research projects
- Structured mentorship by HVTN investigator(s)
- Travel to an HVTN Clinical Research Site
- Opportunity for domestic and international travel
- Attendance at an HVTN Full Group Meeting (May 2025 or 2026 in Washington, DC preferred)
- Oral and poster presentations and potential for publication

PROGRAM RESOURCES:

- Up to \$20,000 for short-term project (8–10-week projects)
- Up to \$70,000 for long-term project (9-12 months)
- Funding includes salary, materials, and travel
- Career mentoring and access to HIV vaccine research expertise
- Attendance at monthly training webinars through the course of the year, and a professional development workshop at the conclusion of the program.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Tuesday January 2nd, 2024 at 5 pm PST

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Each year, the HVTN puts out a call to medical schools and student organizations to recruit a cohort of outstanding students. Interested students are then welcomed to submit an application for a short-term (8-10 week) or long-term (9-12 months) research project working with HVTN-affiliated investigators.

- Short-Term projects involve a minimum 8-week experience (i.e. 40 workdays onsite) and can be timed during the summer between academic years, as a clinical elective block, during research years, or during an MPH or PhD program.
- Long-Term projects involve an academic year-long experience that is best timed with a distinct, non-degree associated research-focused year, but is also available concurrent with a planned masters or doctoral program (e.g., MPH or MD/PhD program), or during medical school research years.
- Onsite experience will be supplemented with webinar training and professional development seminars.
- Following the onsite experience, scholars will continue to work with mentors remotely to complete any data analysis, prepare oral and poster presentations for the May 2025 or 2026 HVTN Full Group Meeting, and collaborate on any resulting publications.

All projects for the 2024-2025 period will be conducted at an HVTN Clinical Research Site (CRS) around the world. Projects are timed to occur between May 1st, 2024 – November 30th, 2025. Interested students should review available projects which are posted online at www.hvtn.org/RAMP and utilize the [RAMP application](#) to demonstrate their interest in the project as well as their capacity to complete the project in the time allotted. **Each student applicant is responsible for completing and submitting all application materials by Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024 at 5:00 pm PST.**

Applications will undergo competitive review by the RAMP Review Board and the HVTN Scientific Governance Committee. Once selected, scholars will work closely with mentors and site staff to plan their research experiences, finalize logistics and create a mentorship plan. The scholar will then travel to the HVTN CRS to conduct the research project for the allotted time. During the project period, the mentor(s) will oversee the student's progress throughout the project implementation and also work with the student on professional and career development. In addition to investigator-led mentorship activities, scholars will participate in HVTN-organized training activities designed to develop their skills in research methods, academic writing and working within the scientific community. Students should expect to complete the bulk of their research while onsite at the CRS or remotely during the project period, but will finalize data analysis, drafting of results, and preparation of oral and poster presentations of their work at their home institution before May 2025 or 2026 (dependent on length of project).

The culmination of the project will occur when the scholars present their projects in an oral plenary session and a poster session at the HVTN Full Group Meeting scheduled for May 2025 or 2026 in Washington D.C.

ELIGIBILITY OF SCHOLARS

This program specifically seeks medical students who self-identify as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Islander. We acknowledge that there are a number of other racial, ethnic and other minority groups that are underrepresented as researchers in the HIV vaccine community. However, the disproportionate impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native

American/American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the U.S, combined with structural barriers that have limited career development opportunities for these students, warrant attention by programs such as RAMP.

To be considered for a RAMP scholar award, a candidate must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident or an individual granted deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. They must be currently matriculated at an accredited US medical school conferring MD and DO degrees or an international medical school where medical students and graduates are eligible to apply for certification in the US from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) and express an interest in pursuing a future career in research relevant to HIV prevention and/or vaccine research. Students must be in good academic standing at their medical school and must be able to commit to working at their site full-time (approximately 40 hours per week) for the entirety of their project period.

PROJECT SELECTION

Students interested in applying for RAMP scholar awards should visit the “How to Apply” page at www.hvtn.org/RAMP and review all supporting application materials to ensure the program is a good fit. A list of potential RAMP projects are listed on the “[How to Apply](#)” section of the website.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Awarded scholars at international sites will be assigned HVTN-affiliated Resource Managers. The Resource Manager will facilitate payment for the scholar and provide additional research support as needed.

Upon selection to a RAMP Project, scholars will be informed of the regulatory requirements of the HVTN and of the host institution for their project and will be expected to complete these in collaboration with their mentor.

All projects will include:

- Orientation Conference Call
- Monthly RAMP Webinars
- Kick-off Conference Call with Mentors
- Travel to and from selected HVTN site
- 8-10 week or 9-12 month research project at an HVTN site (If COVID has been controlled)
- Customized trainings and workshops designed for RAMP scholars
- Attendance at an HVTN Full Group Meeting (May 2025 or 2026 in Washington, DC preferred)
- Poster and Oral Presentation of Results at the Full Group Meeting
- Potential publication of project

After the award is made, the scholar and mentor will develop milestones for the project in the Mentor-Scholar Agreement and send to the RAMP manager for tracking.

All scholars are required to present their results at an HVTN Full Group Meeting in the form of an oral plenary presentation and a poster. Scholars are also expected to attend the entirety of the HVTN Full Group Meeting (**May 7-9, 2025, or May 2026 in Washington, D.C.**), and work with their mentors to plan appropriate sessions to attend while there. Scholars must inform the RAMP Manager of any scheduling conflicts with the Full Group Meeting.

FUNDING

We anticipate that support will be available for up to 4 scholar grants awarded directly to HVTN sites (U.S. or international); including up to 3 short-term project awards, at a maximum award amount of \$20,000 (direct costs), and up to 1 long-term project award, at a maximum amount of \$70,000 (direct costs). If no long-term projects are funded, there may be funding for additional short-term projects. A portion of funds from each award will be applied towards the scholar's salary, which will cover living expenses during the project, including housing, food, local transportation, personal trips, traveler's insurance, etc. Salaries generally range from \$3,500-5,500 per month based on these factors. The salary funds will be distributed to the scholar in installments via paycheck from the mentor's institution or by the HVTN after the scholar has successfully been hired. If the hiring of the scholar is delayed, the salary support may be delayed and begin after the project start date.

The remainder of funds will be applied to purchase research supplies and cover travel to the site, HVTN Full Group Meeting and, for those with long-term projects, to other conferences. To support the investigators' research mentorship activities, the mentor's site will receive a supplement in addition to the scholar award amount (\$1,500 for short-term project mentors, \$10,000 for long-term project mentors).

Project funding through the RAMP Scholar Award can begin any time starting May 1, 2024, and end no later than November 30th, 2025. The exact dates of funding will depend on the schedules of the parties involved and the type of project.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The following are the review criteria for the RAMP Scholar Award applications:

- The interest of the medical student in HIV/AIDS research or clinical care, and in potentially pursuing a career in HIV vaccine research.
- Relevant research background or personal experiences such as laboratory research, clinical experiences, strong interest in gaining new research experience, and/or personal experience with HIV/AIDS. Relevant research experience is not a requirement of the program but will be viewed favorably.
- The student's ability to successfully complete a large-scale project like RAMP. Demonstrated evidence of qualities such as intellectual rigor, independence, curiosity, responsibility, drive and ability to manage multiple priorities.

APPLICATION

If interested in applying, please go to www.hvtn.org/RAMP and visit the "How to Apply" page. Applicants must fill out the [RAMP Application Form](#), describing research and career interests, and the scholar's conceptualization of the how they will successfully complete the project. You are welcome to apply for a maximum of two projects and for each project you will be required to submit a unique application and different letters of recommendations from your professional references.

The deadline for receipt of applications is **Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024, by 5:00 PM PST**. All application materials must be submitted electronically, either through the application form or via email to HVTNAwards@hvtn.org. **No paper documents will be accepted.** The application, resume, and transcript(s) should be submitted electronically via the [RAMP Application Form](#). The letters of recommendation should be either emailed directly to HVTNAwards@hvtn.org or uploaded via the application form. The applicants will be notified of receipt of application materials.

Application Materials

- [RAMP Application Form](#)
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae
- Transcript (unofficial PDF preferred)
 - First year students should provide a medical school and an undergraduate transcript
 - Second, third and fourth year students should provide a medical school transcript
- Three Letters of Recommendation emailed to (HVTNAwards@hvtn.org):
 1. Dean, Associated Dean of Student Affairs or equivalent – must provide a letter of recommendation that indicates your student status and approval of your participation in RAMP.
 2. Two professional references (**per application**) - people who can speak to your potential for success and attributes that contribute to that success. If you apply to more than one project (maximum two), you will need to submit unique recommendations speaking to your interests and fit for the specific project. This means you will submit 1 letter from your Dean and 4 professional references.

AWARD DATE

Awards will be announced by mid-late February 2024. Funding will be available for students to begin projects as soon as May 1, 2024. The award is contingent upon the availability of funds provided by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases under the cooperative agreement with the HVTN. HVTN staff will work with students' medical school leadership to verify academic standing and ensure institutional support for the students' participation in all aspects of the program.

INQUIRIES

Questions regarding the RAMP Scholar Awards can be directed to HVTNAwards@hvtn.org or:

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