Overview of the CaRES Program

UAB Cancer Research Experiences for Students
https://sites.uab.edu/cares/

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Goals of the CaRES Program

CaRES is an “R25” research training grant funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to support students to undertake short cancer research projects.

Long-term goal: motivate participating students to pursue careers in cancer research.

Short-term goals: provide each student with the support needed to undertake a mentored cancer research project; provide each preceptor with a capable student who can facilitate his or her research progress.

Overarching goal: to become recognized as a model for short-term cancer research education and training.
Background of CaRES

- CaRES was initially funded in 1999, now in year 20
- To date CaRES supported **788 medical students and graduate students** to do short cancer research projects
- **Preceptors** are UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center faculty
- **Longitudinal tracking** of CaRES students found:
  1) 15% remain actively involved in cancer research
  2) 27% published cancer-related, peer-reviewed papers after doing CaRES; about 500 papers through 2017
Students Eligible for CaRES

• **UAB** medical students and MPH students
• **USA** medical students
• **Auburn** veterinary medicine and pharmacy students
• **Samford** pharmacy students and MPH students
• **ACOM** medical students
• Medical and veterinary medicine students, as well as graduate students in public health, nursing and dental students, from **HBCU’s** are eligible to participate

Undergraduates and high school students are not eligible.
CaRES Faculty Preceptors

400 UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center faculty in the six research areas listed below are eligible to propose CaRES projects and mentor CaRES students:

1) Inflammation, Immunology, and Immuno-therapeutics
2) Cancer Cell Biology
3) Experimental Therapeutics
4) Neuro-Oncology
5) Cancer Control and Population Sciences
6) Cancer Chemoprevention
Fundable CaRES Projects

Any type of cancer research project submitted by CCC faculty members can be funded by CaRES. For reference, CaRES projects funded over the past 3 years were:

- **Basic Science** (including animal research) – 35%
- **Clinical** (cancer patients) – 35%
- **Community** (people at risk for cancer) – 25%
- **Analytical** (secondary data) – 5%

In recent years, many CaRES projects have focused on cancers of the breast, ovary, cervix, skin, and brain; or on obesity, diet, and tobacco use; or on cancer survivorship.
CaRES Virtual Projects in 2021

• Due to the pandemic, many / most / or possibly all CaRES projects in 2021 will be “virtual” projects

• NCI will approve virtual projects if the goals are clear, mentorship and oversight are substantial, and a poster or paper is produced; details from NCI are forthcoming

• Virtual projects may relate to basic science, patient care, or community health

• Many virtual projects involve secondary data analysis

• UAB and NCI policies on social distancing must be maintained and projects must be done without risk to students, faculty, or staff.
CaRES Application Process

• There is **no application** (document) to fill out!
• There are **no essays** to write and **no research proposals** to put together! Sounds too easy, doesn’t it?
• *Each CaRES research project is proposed by a UAB faculty preceptor who will interview interested students until she or he finds the perfect student to work with them this summer to complete their research project*
• But **if you are selected** to do a CaRES project, **we will need** your current CV and proof of American citizenship or permanent residency to verify program eligibility
CaRES Student-Preceptor Self-Matching Process Timeline

• Early in the calendar year, Cancer Center faculty members who want a CaRES student to work with them in the summer, post their project descriptions on our website https://sites.uab.edu/cares/

• Students read each project description and identify projects to which they are well-suited, based on their background and career interests.

• Students email their CV to the preceptor of each project that interests them and request an interview as soon as possible.

• Students interview for as many CaRES projects as they wish, and preceptors interview as many students as they wish.

• Once a student and a preceptor agree to work together, they email Dr. Waterbor to claim one of our 30 CaRES internship slots.

• Typically, all internship slots are filled by about March 1 but the projects are not done until summer.
Internship Weeks and Pay

• CaRES internships are for 8-15 weeks in the period May 3 – August 27, 2021

• Start and end dates for each project are negotiated between preceptor and student, according to their availability and in light of the demands of the project

• **Performance Sites:** all projects are done at UAB or at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville, AL

• Student pay is $600/week for full-time effort

• CaRES can pay for poster printing and for some other training-related expenses

• Students must arrange and pay for their own housing
Seminars and Poster Session

• **CaRES Seminar Series:** 6 hours of in-class instruction on career development and the **Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR),** with online homework assignments

• **CaRES Poster Session:** in July CaRES students showcase their work with awards given for the best posters

• **UAB medical students** are encouraged to present at **Medical Student Research Day** in the fall

• **CaRES students** are encouraged to work with their preceptors to present their CaRES research at professional meetings.
Important Features of CaRES

• **Self-matching process** of students to preceptors
• **Flexible start & end dates** in May through August
• **400 UAB Cancer Center faculty eligible to be preceptors**
• Recruitment of students from **several professional and biomedical graduate programs, from several universities**
• A few projects based at **HudsonAlpha** in Huntsville
• **Individual Development Plans** completed by each student-preceptor pair before summer begins
• Instruction in the **Responsible Conduct of Research**
• **Favorable short- and long-term program evaluation results** (see CaRES website for summaries of evaluations)
Publications about CaRES


Reasons Why the CaRES Program Has Been Successful

- Large pool of bright and highly-motivated students of varied backgrounds and disciplines from which to recruit
- Excellent (and numerous) UAB faculty preceptors who are active in cancer research and enjoy mentoring students
- Dedicated CaRES program faculty (Drs. Smith, Waterbor, Brooks, Litton, and Padilla) and staff (Internship Coordinator Judy Baker)
- UAB’s collaborative and student-oriented environment
- UAB’s outstanding *O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center*
If you have questions, contact:

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Thank you!