Overview

Young researchers starting in today’s competitive environment need rigorous scientific training. The STAR Program at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA is a unique curriculum designed for optimal training of physician-scientists. Started in 1993, this program offers the opportunity to combine clinical fellowship or residency training with formal, advanced research training leading to a graduate degree, coordinated with clinical training.

Fellows/residents admitted to the STAR Program complete clinical training toward board certification in internal medicine, its subspecialties (including cardiology, digestive diseases, hematology/oncology, dermatology, endocrinology, pulmonary and critical care, rheumatology, infectious diseases, nephrology, and clinical immunology and allergy) or in other departments, including neurology, pathology, pediatrics, psychiatry or one of the surgical disciplines (including surgery, urology, obstetrics/gynecology or ophthalmology).

The STAR Program begins with approximately 12-24 months of fellowship clinical training, followed by combined clinical and research training in one of four research career tracks:

**Track 1: Basic science**
This pathway leads to a PhD degree. STAR fellows select to pursue their graduate studies in the School of Medicine basic science departments, any department in the Life Sciences or School of Engineering or the California Institute of Technology.

**Track 2: Health services/outcomes**
This pathway leads to a PhD degree from the UCLA/Fielding School of Public Health or the Pardee Rand Graduate School.

**Track 3. Clinical research**
This pathway leads to a Master of Science in Clinical Research from the Department of Biomathematics in the David Geffen School of Medicine.

**Track 4: Postdoctoral research training**
This pathway is for those who enter the program with an MD PhD degree and provides 2-3 years of postdoctoral research training.

STAR fellows also receive assistance in finding a research mentor and laboratory, guidance during graduate school training, grant writing training and career development mentorship through monthly seminars. The directors meet regularly with fellows to oversee their success in becoming independent clinician-scientists.
STAR Graduates’ Successes

- 80% of graduates have continued in research positions either within academia (72%) or industry (8%).
- 49% have obtained an NIH K or other type of career development award.
- 19% have received an NIH R01 or equivalent grant.
- Several graduates hold leadership positions, including Department Chair/Vice Chair, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research, Division Chief, Executive Medical Director, Vice President for a health benefits company, Chief Medical Officer for a pharmaceutical firm, and Chief Scientific Officer of a university-affiliated research institute.
- More than 130 have graduated in the first 20 years.

Pro-STAR: UCLA Resident Physician-Scientist Pathway

While the STAR Program is designed for those at the end of clinical training, the Pro-STAR Program was created for those who want to obtain research experience during residency before fellowship. The Pro-STAR pathway provides opportunities for maintaining exposure to research during residency training for internal medicine residents who previously have experience in research and are committed to a career as a physician-scientist.

The pathway provides the following:

- Assignment to partner with a senior fellow in the Specialty Training and Advanced Research (STAR) Program for peer-career guidance
- Direct career mentorship with the Directors or Associate Directors of the STAR Program
- Guidance in identifying potential research mentors
- Assistance in applying for the STAR Program at the level of fellowship
- Invitation to participate in career-development seminars and social events provided by the STAR Program. The majority of these activities will occur during PGY 2 and 3.
Program Directors

Executive Director
Linda L. Demer, MD, PhD
Professor of Medicine
Physiology and Bioengineering
Executive Vice Chair
Department of Medicine
Division of Cardiology

Dr. Demer originally conceived the STAR Program in 1991 and initiated it in 1993 together with Dr. Alan M. Fogelman (Professor and Chair). She graduated from the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine with a PhD in biomedical engineering. She completed her clinical residency and fellowship at the Texas Medical Center and joined the UCLA faculty in 1988. She has served as president of national and international organizations.

Executive Codirector
Mitchell D. Wong, MD, PhD
Professor of Medicine
Division of General Internal Medicine & Health Services Research

Dr. Wong graduated from the UCSF Medical School in 1994, completed his Internal Medicine residency training at New York Hospital/Cornell and earned a PhD in Health Services Research from the UCLA School of Public Health. He is also Codirector of the Education Core of the UCLA CTSI, Director of the CTSI KL2 Program and Codirector of the UCLA NRSA Primary Care Fellowship.
Assistant Director

Olujimi Ajijola, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor, UCLA
Cardiac Arrhythmia Center
Division of Cardiology

Dr. Ajijola received his medical degree from the Duke University School of Medicine in 2006, and he completed his internship and residency in Internal Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital. He completed clinical fellowships in cardiovascular diseases and cardiac electrophysiology, and he received a PhD in Molecular, Cellular and Integrative Physiology at UCLA. He is currently a clinical electrophysiologist at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center and an investigator in the Neurocardiology Research Center of Excellence at UCLA.

Assistant Director

Tamer Sallam, MD, PhD

Clinical Instructor
Division of Cardiology

Dr. Sallam graduated from the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine in 2005. He completed residency and chief residency training in Internal Medicine at Yale, followed by Cardiology fellowship training at UCLA. Dr. Sallam graduated from the STAR Program earning a PhD in Molecular, Cellular and Integrative Physiology. He joined the UCLA faculty in 2014, where his research investigates the role of novel transcription factor regulatory circuits in cardiometabolic disease.
How to Apply

Candidates planning a career in the subspecialties of medicine or pediatrics generally apply to the STAR Program in conjunction with their specialty clinical fellowship application. In the surgical specialties (i.e., surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, ophthalmology), pathology and dermatology, applications are typically submitted at the time of residency application. Selection criteria include academic achievement, research experience and clinical performance. In most cases, interviews for the STAR Program and the clinical fellowship or residency are coordinated.

For More Information

For more information about the STAR Program and how to apply, please visit our website: star.med.ucla.edu

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