

Summer Program: Training in Research Affecting Child Health (TRAC)



Wake Forest University
School of Medicine

Brenner
Children's
WAKE FOREST BAPTIST HEALTH



Application Deadline: January 9, 2026
In-Person Program Start: June 1, 2026
Program End: July 30, 2026

THE PROGRAM: Are you interested in conducting research this summer on a child-health related topic that you are curious and passionate about? Then this innovative program may be for you!

WHO CAN APPLY: Undergraduate, medical, and graduate students, residents, fellows

WHERE: Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC (in person)

PROGRAM DELIVERABLES:

Abstract submission
Presentation at a scientific meeting
Submission of a first-authored manuscript to peer-reviewed journal

APPLY HERE:
[2026 TRAC Application](#)
Or use QR Code to access student application:



TRAC Program Participants 2025

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Eight weeks of an in-person, paid internship
- Autonomously design your research project under guidance of a faculty mentor
- Near-Peer Coach Mentoring (NPCM)©
- Develop research skills emphasizing autonomy and critical and creative thinking
- Pediatrics-specific skills course and career-enhancing activities
- Present a poster at the Summer Research Symposium
- Continue to be involved in research after the summer to see your project to completion

QUESTIONS? Email: TRACAHWFB@advocatehealth.org

****Note that this program cannot provide housing!****

TRAC receives funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health, (Award Number R25HD111367; MPIs Gwathmey, South)

Training in Research Affecting Child Health (TRAC) Program at Wake Forest University School of Medicine (WFUSM)

Program Objectives:

- Provide key pediatric research skills in the preclinical, translational, clinical, epidemiological, statistical, and biomedical informatics sciences as applied to reproductive, developmental, clinical, behavioral, and social processes that impact the health and well-being of children, especially the social determinants of health.
- Provide opportunities for engagement in child health-related research through an independent mentored research project designed and led by participants that incorporates a unique model of near-peer mentorship in addition to faculty mentorship.
- Reinforce participants' pursuit of a career in child health research through participation in activities that increase empowerment and independence as a researcher.
- Recruit a broad array of participants across the educational spectrum to maximize creativity and innovation towards addressing the challenges related to child health.
- Increase exposure of program participants to existing barriers to health and gaps in health outcomes through each domain of child health research.

Designed to foster the development of enduring research skills in child health, the TRAC program places particular focus on promoting independence and critical thinking among participants. One of the unique aspects of TRAC is its innovative Near-Peer Coach-Mentoring© approach that emphasizes horizontal mentoring relationships and encourages problem solving and networking among program participants.

Beginning with acceptance into the program, participants start to conceptualize, design, and implement their own research project idea to address an aspect of child health. They will select a WFUSM faculty coach-mentor with expertise relevant to their research project who will provide guidance and feedback. The two month-long in-person summer program encompasses work on their own research projects, a child-health relevant skills course, weekly TRAC group meetings, regulatory training, and professional development activities to help prepare participants for their next career goals. Networking and social events connect participants across many WFUSM summer programs. TRAC leadership provides continued support during and after the program.

Limited continued program involvement throughout the following academic year is expected and entails participation in virtual monthly meetings and asynchronous work on research projects that fits individual schedules. This allows participants to see their research project to completion and achieve the **program goals**: Supported by TRAC, participants will present posters at the WFUSM Research Symposium, submit an abstract to attend a professional society meeting, and submit a first authored manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal to demonstrate their research achievements.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following Q&A is intended to provide general information about the Training in Research Affecting Child Health (TRAC) program at Wake Forest University School of Medicine (WFUSM).

What is unique and innovative about the TRAC program?

Learner-as-Principal Investigator (Learner-PI)©

Participants complete their own autonomous research project that addresses critical problems in child health for which they are passionate. They are in charge of their research project and will therefore be responsible for every step. Each participant will have a coach-mentor, to coach participants every step of the way.

Ideation, Conceptualization, Design, Implementation, and Dissemination (I DID IT)©

The I DID IT model provides a rigorous structure to empower participants to think about every step of their project with their coach-mentors. The TRAC program coaches participants how to conceptualize their idea into a rigorous research question, design a project to answer that question, implement their project from start to finish, and disseminate their findings.

Write As You Go (WAYG)©

As part of the TRAC curriculum, participants will write their first-authored abstract and manuscript starting from day one. As a complement to the mentoring by coach-mentors, TRAC guides participants on how to focus their idea and research question into a formal Introduction, clearly describe how they are doing the project in the Methods, clearly report their findings in the Results, and contextualize their findings into the broader field in the Discussion.

Near-Peer Coach-Mentoring (NPCM)©

Mirroring the TRAC program coaching approach TRAC participants will serve as coach-mentors to each other in at least weekly meetings.

Where is the Application Form?

Please use the link below.

[2026 TRAC Application](#)

How should I respond to the personal statement?

Please upload a single page (8.5 x 11), 11pt font, minimum 250 words, single-spaced personal statement to answer the following questions, as described on the application form: 1) What are your values? 2) When you have failed in something, what did you do differently the next time you faced a similar situation?

Who should write a letter of recommendation on my behalf?

We encourage you to find individuals who can best speak to your qualifications, character, interest and commitment to engaging in research and advance education and training in biomedically relevant disciplines, and address, to the extent possible, any experience most pertinent to this program (e.g. child-health related coursework or training).

What happens if my recommendation letter is sent in late?

All application materials, including letters of recommendation and transcripts, must be submitted on or before the application deadline. Letters of recommendation will not be accepted after the due date. Your application will still be reviewed, but you will be penalized for your missing letters of recommendation. As detailed in the application, transcripts may be emailed to TRACAHWFB@advocatehealth.org with the applicant's name in the subject line.

Do you have to be in college to apply?

You must have completed at least two semesters of college (at an undergraduate college, community college or university in the U.S., Puerto Rico or other U.S. territory) and be currently enrolled in a degree-granting program, or have completed an advanced degree and be involved in continued training e.g. residency, fellowship, etc.

Are there any age restrictions?

Yes. Applicants must be 18 years of age on or before the first day of the summer program (June 1, 2026)

Are there additional eligibility criteria?

Yes. You should have:

- a cumulative GPA of 2.85 or higher (4.0 scale)
- completed at least two semesters of undergraduate education by the start date of the Summer Scholar Program
- an interest in, or currently pursuing a masters, PhD and/or MD degree or similar, or be in professional continued training after completing a degree (e.g. residency).

Can I mail a hard copy of my application?

No. We cannot accept hard copies of applications. Only on-line applications will be reviewed. Please also have your official transcripts sent electronically. Should this be a problem, please email us at TRACAHWFB@advocatehealth.org.

What are next steps after I submit my application?

Your application will be reviewed independently by multiple reviewers. If you are selected into the next round, TRAC will contact you to schedule an interview.

How soon can I expect to hear whether I got accepted into the TRAC Program?

After interview completion for those who were selected into the next round, the committee will make final decisions and contact all applicants as soon as possible.

What else do I have to do after acceptance into the program but prior to the summer start date?/Why is the application deadline so early?

This program needs ample time prior to the official start in the summer to make sure you are well prepared to start your research immediately. We call this time the “**Runway**”, to help you get ready to maximize what you get out of the summer experience.

Since you will be the major driving force behind the project you wish to work on (you as a learner will also be the principal investigator and design your research project), TRAC needs to make sure you are well prepared in terms of selecting a coach-mentor and completing all necessary paperwork, both for onboarding but also for your proposed research project. We ask in the application whether you are willing to participate in some onboarding meetings and complete materials prior to the beginning of the program.

Does your program provide housing?

No. Unfortunately, this program cannot provide housing. If accepted, you would have to organize your own housing near Winston-Salem, NC for the 8-week long summer experience.

Do I need to provide my own transportation to WFUSM?

Yes. While there is some public transportation available and shuttle buses can take you from one WFUSM location to another, you are responsible for your transportation.

Does the program provide compensation?

Yes. You will receive compensation equivalent to approximately \$15/hr for the summer portion of the program.

Does the program provide food?

No. While we will have occasional luncheons or receptions as part of the program, you must provide your own food.

Do I get a chance to network with peers and faculty?

Absolutely, this is one major intent of the TRAC program. In addition to interactions with coach-mentors, through horizontal peer mentoring, and through weekly TRAC group meetings, you will have frequent, direct interactions during professional development and social program components with other summer program participants (e.g. Excellence in Cardiovascular Sciences; Biomedical Engineering and Informatics, and others.)

Do I get to present my data?

Absolutely! You will provide frequent updates on your research progress to the group throughout the summer, we expect you to practice giving an elevator speech about your research, and you will write an abstract to present at a scientific conference focused on child health, as well a first-authored publication. The TRAC summer portion culminates in a research symposium where you will present a poster and receive recognition. You may invite family and friends to share your research accomplishments with them as well.

Will I be able to shadow a physician while participating in the program?

Yes! If you are interested, you may have the opportunity for shadowing. This requires extra paperwork. Please make sure you read and complete all parts of the application carefully for that.

How involved is the continued program participation in the following fall and spring semesters?

We strongly encourage you to continue to work on our research project with your TRAC coach-mentor (most likely remotely, e.g. finishing data analyses, writing on a first-authored manuscript, etc.) to bring your project to completion. This will be based on your own schedule and availability. We also hold monthly meetings with the full group of TRAC scholars to provide peer support to one another, address hurdles, receive/ provide feedback and guidance.