SPARCS Program Frequently Asked Questions

SPARCS is sponsored by the American Heart Association (AHA).

1. I am a first-year student. Am I eligible to apply?

To be eligible for this program, an undergraduate student must be classified at junior or senior academic status (i.e. have completed sophomore year in college) by the time the program begins.

2. Can international students or students on a visa apply?

Per AHA, at the time of application, the student must be a United States citizen, or foreign national holding a student, exchange, or permanent resident visa. Reach out to our program with specific questions.

3. Can I apply if I graduate from college next May or June?

Yes, you can.

4. I will graduate in December before the summer program. Am I eligible to apply?

Unfortunately, you are only eligible to apply if you graduate in the spring immediately prior to the summer program.

5. My university uses a trimester schedule, and my classes continue into early or mid-June. Can I start the program late?

No. The SPARCS Program includes an orientation and in-person group activities, so all participants must be present throughout week 1 (virtual) and be present in person on campus on the first day of week 2 and available throughout the entire 10-week program.

6. Can I take an online summer course while participating in the program?

The SPARCS Program requires participants to be available Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Classes or jobs that interfere with program hours are not allowed. If an exceptional circumstance requires you to take an asynchronous online course, discuss it in detail with the program directors before accepting an offer. Approval is at their discretion.

7. Am I required to provide references?

Yes. You may provide contact information for up to three references, but two completed references are required for your application to be considered complete. Each reference will receive an email with a link to a REDCap form, where they will paste their reference and sign the form. They do not need to upload a signed PDF reference letter.

8. What should my references or I do if we have difficulty completing the application form?

Please contact us via email: SPARCS@Advocatehealth.org

9. How can I make my application stand out?

Read the application carefully and follow every instruction. Complete all required sections, write a thoughtful and polished personal statement, and choose references who can speak to your experience and strengths in research, science, and academics.

10. What happens after I submit my application, and when will I learn whether I have been accepted into the SPARCS Program?

Multiple reviewers will evaluate each application independently. The selection committee will then make final decisions and notify all applicants as soon as the review process is complete.

We will notify every applicant of the decision. If you are accepted, we will also provide instructions for accepting your offer and completing the required onboarding tasks.

11. Will all participants work at the same location?

Not necessarily. You will attend regular seminars and other events with the full group, but you will spend most of your time at your assigned research location. Your location will depend on the faculty mentor with whom you are matched.

12. Does the program provide housing?

Yes. The program will arrange and pay for your housing on the Wake Forest University campus during weeks 2-10 of the program.

13. Does the program provide transportation?

Yes. If you need to travel by air, the program will book and pay for your flight. If you drive, the program will reimburse you for fuel costs.

Once you have started, the program provides shuttle service to and from the Wake Forest University School of Medicine campus so you can travel to your research location. Wake Forest also operates shuttles that connect its various campus locations.

14. 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. You will have a kitchen area available in your shared apartment.

15. Where can I learn more about the SPARCS Program?

Visit the SPARCS Program website for more information.