PharmD Scholarly Project
Frequently asked questions for students and advisors

What is the PharmD Scholarly Project?
The PharmD Scholarly Project (PSP) is a required project for PharmD students to engage in a piece of scholarship to be completed by individuals or groups of students. The PSP is designed to give students the opportunity to develop analytical thinking skills and expose students to the process of scientific inquiry, teaching them how to analyze literature, formulate an answerable question, gather data, and go through the methodology of appropriate scholarly investigation. The PSP may encompass a wide variety of disciplines including, but not limited to, science, clinical, educational, behavioral health, health services, community, and epidemiological activities.

What is the timeline for students to completely their PharmD Scholarly Project?
The PSP must be completed by the end of the P3 year. An example timeline is as follows:

**Fall P1** PharmD Scholarly Project is introduced

**Spring P1** Students identify potential PSP advisors

**Fall P2**
- Formal instruction on development of research questions in PHRD 508 - Pharmacy Literature Analysis and Drug Information
- Formation of groups and discussion of potential projects within groups
- More formal discussion with potential advisors regarding project details

**Spring P2**
- Enroll in PHRD 634: PharmD Scholarly Project 1
- Develop proposal starting from research question and literature review
- Submit proposal by end of the Spring semester
- The PSP committee will give feedback and approve projects upon satisfactory review

**Fall P3**
- Enroll in PHRD 635: PharmD Scholarly Project 2
- Start project (if not already started) and collect data
- Each student in the group must demonstrate evidence of their role
- By the end of semester, data collection should be complete
- Present progress to a group of peers, faculty, and project advisors
**Spring P3**

- Enroll in PHRD 636: PharmD Scholarly Project 3
- January and February: Analyze data and develop poster
- By March 1: Submit poster and abstract on the PSP website
- End of March: Present project at the PharmD Scholarly Project Symposium

**Will the PharmD Scholarly Project (PSP) be tied to a course?**

- For P1 students: PSP will not be tied to a course, but information regarding PSP will be provided throughout the year. One PSP related assignment will be included in the Pharmacy Practice and Professionalism course in the spring.
- For P2 students: PSP will be tied to PHRD 508: Pharmacy Literature Analysis and Drug Information in the fall and PHRD 634 in the spring.
- For P3 students: PSP will be tied to PHRD 635 in the fall and PHRD 636 in the spring.

**How many students are allowed per group?**

One to four students are allowed per group

**What are the benefits for students to participate in a PharmD Scholarly Project?**

- Completed PSPs will be featured on the School of Pharmacy website at the end of the academic year.
- Official PSPs will be eligible for recognition and cash prizes in a poster competition at the USC School of Pharmacy PharmD Scholarly Project Symposium.
- Opportunity to be more qualified and marketable for internships, postgraduation opportunities, and particularly for residencies or fellowships.
- Opportunity to contribute to and expand the breadth of pharmacy practice, healthcare delivery, and research.
- Prepared posters and abstracts are prepared for submission to professional local and national meetings.

**What are the minimum requirements for a PharmD Scholarly Project?**

- Proposal submission and approval
- A minimum of 200 hours of fieldwork per student
- Completion of three PSP 1-unit courses

**What are some examples of appropriate types of research for a PSP? What does or does not count?**
Your PSP must answer a hypothesis-based question. This may include contributing to larger projects being conducted by project advisors. Each student will be asked to clearly define their role in the project proposal. You can view examples on the PharmD Scholarly Project website. Projects do not need to involve the generation of new data or prospective study design. Students are encouraged to work within the time frame and conduct feasible scholarly work. Literature reviews, retrospective analyses of data, case series, and descriptive designs are appropriate.

[http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/2019/symposium/projects](http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/2019/symposium/projects)

Examples of acceptable types of research for a PSP include:

- Basic Science/ Bench Research
- Clinical/Outcomes Research
- Educational Research
- Database Research
- Qualitative Analysis
- Structured Chart Review (e.g., Medication Use Evaluation)
- Meta-analysis
- Structured Literature Review (publishable)
- Survey
- Quality Improvement Study

**Will I have to go through Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI)?**

All students will received training on the IRB, will sign up for an iStar account and will complete CITI training as part of the PHRD 634 course. It is important that all students discuss the need for IRB submission with their advisors. You may ask faculty for more guidance and this will be covered in the PSP courses. If your project *does* require IRB approval, this process is critical. If the project as planned does not require IRB approval, you will not be required to submit your project to the IRB. Please keep in mind that any time spent working on the project including trainings and IRB application counts towards the minimum number of hours required by each student to work on the project.
Frequently Asked Questions from Advisors about the PharmD Scholarly Project

What are the benefits of serving as an advisor for a PharmD Scholarly Project (PSP)?

- Opportunity to advance scholarly work with the help of student workers that may lead to expansion of scholarship, improved care delivery or quality of care, and assistance in completing publishable work.
- Contribute to advancement of the academic culture of the School of Pharmacy
- Mentoring students to have successful post-graduate careers

I've been approached by students about a topic for their PharmD Scholarly Project. What should I do?

- Ask the students if they have a project in mind
- Determine if you have a project that fits the students’ needs and interests
  - If not, perhaps consider referring them to another advisor who may be able to help
- Assist the students in defining the research project including guided research and readings
- Set reasonable goals together including a timeline
- Review the PSP website together:
  - Previous projects: [http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/2019/symposium/projects](http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/2019/symposium/projects)
  - Create your project: [http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/project/create](http://pharmdscholarlyproject.usc.edu/project/create)
- Assist in getting the project approved by the PSP Committee
  - Students will complete their proposal in the PSP website
  - Once students submit their project on the website, you (the advisor) will receive a unique link from the school to complete your own information
  - Please look for this link to be sent and complete the information requested
- Ensure the students are complying with appropriate study methodologies and guidelines
- Continue to guide the project(s) to completion

What is the suggested number of projects for each advisor to take on?

The PSP Committee suggests two projects, encourages complementary studies and collaboration with colleagues. More projects may be feasible if advisors co-advice with colleagues.

What is the estimated time commitment to serve as an advisor for a Scholarly Project?
Time commitments for projects will vary depending on the complexity of the project, the size of project group, and student experience. We estimate an average of 2-4 hours/week over the course of the project. It is likely that some weeks will require no time at all, and other weeks may require more time.

Am I allowed to ask another person to serve as co-advisor?
Yes, it is encouraged.

Who is allowed to serve as an advisor/preceptor for a PharmD Scholarly Project?
- Any person with an advanced degree in an appropriate area of study (relevant to the scholarly work) may be considered as an advisor (eg. Someone with a MPH may oversee public health related research, someone with Masters or Doctorate in Education could oversee educational research.) Keeping in mind the suggested general topic areas above.
- Most students will select: Faculty, USC School of Pharmacy staff, pharmacist colleagues from work, IPPE preceptors, other health care professionals, or other scientists/researchers
- If you aren’t sure if you are an appropriate choice, feel free to email scholarly.project@usc.edu to inquire further

What resources are available to students for support analysis of data?
The expectations for the PSP do not require high level statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics are absolutely sufficient. Students are given instruction on basics for collecting and analyzing data from our USC biostatistician Mimi Lou. Advisors are also encouraged to seek statistical support within their organizations. If you are advising a project that requires statistical support beyond your abilities or the resources of your organization, we would like to help. Please contact scholarly.project@usc.edu and our committee will work with you and your team to arrange for additional support.

Students have approached me about a project, I want to help but I don’t think their idea aligns with my goals, is feasible, is interesting, etc?
Students are encouraged to think about research questions and discuss ideas with potential advisors. However, as an advisor you are encouraged to guide students in the development of their project from start to finish. For most students, this will be their first attempt at conducting scholarly work. They will require guidance and feedback. This can mean helping them adapt their idea or suggesting a completely different topic. It is important that the PSP align with the interests of the project advisors as well as the
students. Students will appreciate your guidance and you should not feel obligated to advise a project that does not align with your goals or interests.

I said I would advise a group, but I can no longer fulfill this role. What should I do?
We understand that life happens and work demands may change during the course of a project. We kindly request that all advisors who have agreed to work with a team try to assist the team with finding a new advisor if possible. If this is not possible, please contact scholarly.project@usc.edu so that our team can help the students.

More questions, contact scholarly.project@usc.edu