

University of Colorado SOM Mentored Scholarly Activity (MSA)

A resource for faculty mentors

What is MSA?

The University of Colorado Anschutz School of Medicine's curriculum includes a four-year longitudinal course requirement for all students to pursue and complete a Mentored Scholarly Activity (MSA) project. The MSA course culminates with an in-person class-wide Capstone Presentation the month prior to graduation. All students are also required to demonstrate the ability to write a manuscript in their final year.

The MSA project is aimed at fostering self-directed, life-long learning and curiosity. The MSA requires students to identify and work with a mentor to complete their project(s), which also prepares them for working with mentors (and teams) in their careers and later serving as mentors to others in the medical profession.

Students will engage in an in-depth scholarly project in an academic area of interest related to medicine or health care with the mentorship of a University of Colorado faculty member. Similar requirements are satisfied separately for students in the MSTP program or the School of Medicine Research Track.

What do we expect from MSA mentors? (Also available on the [MSA website](#); scroll toward the bottom of the page for [Mentor Role and Responsibilities](#).)

1. Initial Engagement & Project Development

- Meet with students, per request, to explore scholarly interests and brainstorm feasible project ideas. These are almost always the mentor's ideas (such as envisioned projects not yet started, or ongoing, partially completed projects in need of new team members to move them forward).
- Outline potential projects for students who may have general interests but no specific ideas. Many students have clinical and technical research skills from gap year activities or undergraduate/graduate work that often surprise mentors and nicely complement a mentor's projects.
- Help students develop a scholarly and achievable project plan (on average, we suggest they allocate 2-3 hrs/wk on their MSA project, but that often comes as longer once/month or once/quarter work phases).
- As the years progress, be open to alternative projects that may be more practical or better aligned with student goals if needed. Many students complete an MSA project early and stay with a mentor to accomplish 1-3 other scholarly projects outside of the MSA requirement.

2. Relationship Building & Communication

- Establish expectations of students:
 - Meeting and communication schedule

- Authorship expectations
 - Professional development goals
 - Is a conference abstract realistic? If so, mentor along these lines.
- Understand and negotiate timelines based on student schedules. Students are quite busy in the MS2 (LIC year) but can augment project milestones by taking a 5-week summer research block after the MS1 year and taking a post-clerkship 2–4-week MSA research block (after Step 1 exam in January of MS3 year).
- For rural track students, who will be living far away from most mentors in their MS2 year, consider a project with substantial online/remote work and Zoom meetings.
- Maintain availability and provide consistent supervision throughout the 4-year project.
- Look for opportunities for publication of the project, or sustainability efforts for local educational, QI, and curricular projects. For ongoing longitudinal projects, other medical students can often take over work from a graduating medical student (who can help recruit junior medical students to the project).

3. Project Support & Scholarly Development

- Review and give feedback on scholarly materials:
 - Proposal (brief, in MS1 Spring)
 - Annotated bibliography (Spring of MS2 year)
 - Abstract (demonstrates ability to write a conference abstract in MS3 year)
 - Work-in-progress presentations (Winter of MS3 year)
 - Draft and final papers, and Capstone poster (MS4 year)
- Support presentation opportunities by helping students find subspecialty meeting opportunities, travel awards, and scholarships.
 - All students may receive up to \$400/yr of travel support for a meeting or conference at which they are a presenter (up to two times during their tenure in the SOM).
 - Students who present at a conference on oncology-related projects are eligible for up to \$1500 of travel support yearly through a separate, competitive funding mechanism.
- Assist with data gathering, analysis, and Capstone preparation.
 - Mentors typically cover poster printing costs (about \$60).
 - Project posters presented at national meetings may be re-used for the final Capstone poster.

4. Evaluation & Reporting

- Provide a summative evaluation at the end of MS2 and after the final Capstone presentation in MS4 year (this will come to mentors by email).
- Complete end-of-elective evaluations for post-clerkship students (IDPT 8091 and 8093). These will be sent by email.
- Report concerns about student progress or academic professionalism to the student's MSA Associate Director or coordinator via email: SOM.MSA@cuanschutz.edu.

5. Professional Standards & Faculty Requirements

- Promote academic rigor and professionalism.
- Ensure at least one CU Faculty member is involved as a mentor/co-mentor.
 - Non-faculty mentors can apply for volunteer faculty status: som.ocbme@cuanschultz.edu.
- MSA Associate Directors are not usually project mentors - but can provide guidance regarding project scope, assignments, and deadlines.

6. Final Deliverables & Publication

- Final Capstone posters and abstracts will be posted on the MSA website for 5 years.
 - Contact SOM.MSA@cuanschultz.edu to request non-posting or removal of sensitive or proprietary data.

Where can I go for questions?

Email questions to the MSA coordinator at SOM.MSA@cuanschultz.edu, the MSA director Jim Maloney at James.Maloney@cuanschultz.edu, or one of the Associate Directors (listed on the MSA website).

Thank You for being an MSA Mentor!