

cMEDA Summer Student Research Fellowship

The purpose of this program is to help students get valuable experience in research focused on enhancing our understanding of the microbiome, or aimed at improving wet lab and data analytics methods for studying it, and to catalyze the development of microbiome-oriented research at VCU. Students are encouraged to identify a research mentor at VCU (VCU faculty member or clinician) with existing projects or an interest in starting microbiome-oriented project. Students with no known mentor are encouraged to apply. If their project is selected for support, cMEDA will attempt to find an appropriate mentor with overlapping interests.

Eligibility and requirements for applicants

- cMEDA Fellowships are open to all VCU students, including all undergraduate and graduate students in all schools and colleges, plus students at any level in medical school, dental school, pharmacy school, nursing school, population health school, etc.
- cMEDA Fellowships will provide a \$1500 summer stipend to support research during the summer of 2026, and in selected cases also limited funds for lab work and/or data analysis.
- Students may conduct research with any faculty member at VCU who has interest in microbiome research; projects in basic or clinical research are eligible for funding.
- Students are encouraged to discuss potential research projects with their mentors, write their own proposals and obtain their mentor's (if available) approval before submission.
- Students who have not yet identified a faculty mentor should speak with Dr. Myrna Serrano, project liaison for the program, for guidance before submission.
- The number of cMEDA Fellowships is limited and competitive. Amount and number of the awards will depend on the number of high-quality applications received.

Application process

- Complete the cMEDA Summer Scholar [application form](#), outlining the microbiome-oriented research.
- A resume (one page) outlining previous academic preparation and research experience.
- If a mentor has been identified, they should submit a letter agreeing to play that role.
- If no mentor has been identified, please carefully describe your research interests and we will attempt to find a match.

Review of applications. Applications will be judged on:

- The quality of the applicant for their level of preparation (undergrad, med student, nursing student, etc.)
- The research plan; significance, research strategy, feasibility, probability of success; availability of a mentor (we will attempt to find a mentor for students who don't yet have one).
- Relevance of proposed research to microbiome science.

Fellow Obligations

- Perform full time research during this period (at least 6 weeks).
- Notify cMEDA if it becomes impossible to complete the fellowship.
- Present results (orally or as a poster) at a cMEDA Research Symposium of 2026-27.
- Acknowledge support of the cMEDA Summer Research Fellowship in all communications.

Dates

- Application submission: April 15, 2026
- Decision release: early May, 2026
- Begin research: mid-May (in consultation with research mentor)

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Myrna Serrano
Project Liaison for cMEDA
Microbiology and Immunology
School of Medicine
Email: Myrna.serrano@vcuhealth.org