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# Research4Life (R4L) Scholar Program: New Initiative to Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Medicine through a Bottom-Up Approach

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## Background

- According to the Pew Research Center, Hispanics are 17% of the workforce but only represent 8% of people in a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) position. African Americans are 11% of the workforce but hold 9% of STEM jobs.
- A formalized mentorship and clinical research program is one pipeline to increase representation of underrepresented groups in medicine (URM) and academic medical careers.<sup>1</sup>

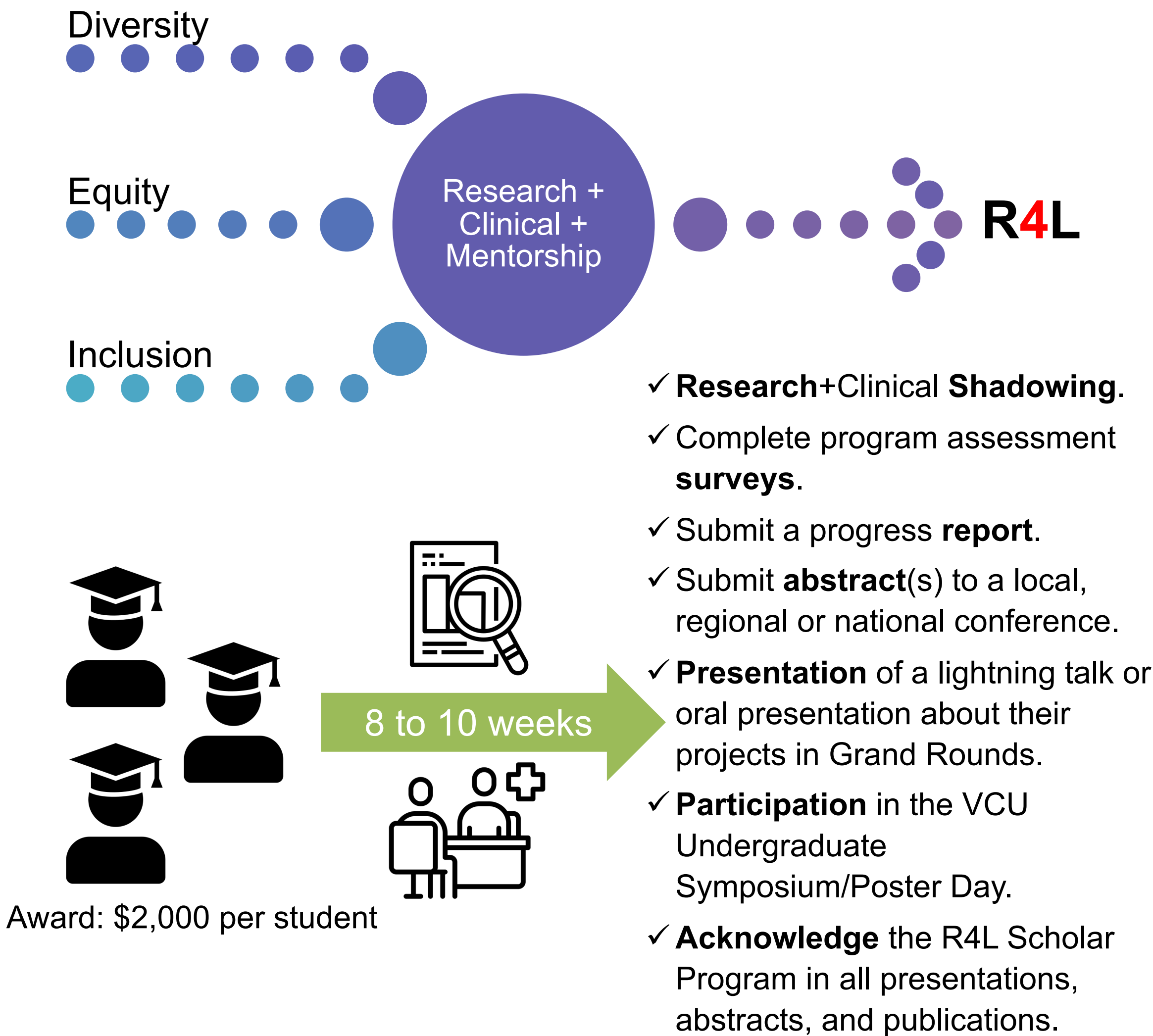
## Goals

- Increase the students' interest in Internal Medicine and academic careers and enhance the visibility of Internal Medicine.
- Increase representation of URM groups in various medical fields by starting from early stages of college education.
- Mitigate obstacles and increase access to high impact clinical research opportunities for students from URM groups.
- Support the mission of the university to attract and retain a talented and diverse student body that will not only graduate at a high rate but will also go on to contribute to a highly skilled workforce.
- Provide a model for other departments, institutions and universities to adopt and to promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in medicine and academia.
- Increase engagement of URM students in medical research and create a culture that reinforces their identity and a sense of belonging in the medical and academic fields.
- Support students' participation in community-based experiences through involvement in mentored scholarly activities and clinical training opportunities.



## Project Description

- The R4L scholar program is a structured summer scholar program offered by the Department of Internal Medicine (DOIM) at VCU and consists of an 8 to 10-week structured medical research experience combined with clinical shadowing experience for students from URM groups and minoritized communities.



## Sustainability

- The plan is to establish this program within the VCU DOIM to not only support VCU undergraduates and medical students, but also to support URM students from other colleges in the Richmond area to serve and support Richmond communities and to promote DEI at a large scale. The program will be offered yearly every summer to benefit future students.

## Impact/Outcomes

- Increase the student's interest in Internal Medicine, research and academic careers.
- The program will help establish a future diverse inclusive workforce and close equity gaps in representation of minority groups in academic careers.
- The R4L program creates a formal pathway for clinical training and research learning, sponsored by the Department of Internal Medicine.
- The curriculum developed in this program will expand opportunities for students in many ways.
- The program will provide a model for adoption by other departments and institutions for promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion.

## Future Directions/Generalizability

- The R4L program has a great generalizability potential as it can be applied to different settings, populations, communities, cultures, health systems, and countries.
- This program can be applied in outpatient and low resource settings, and in diverse populations/communities. It can be implemented globally and can be modified easily to accommodate the different educational and health systems.
- The R4L program will be expanded to increase the number of students participating in future offerings of the program, provide equitable opportunities to medical students (in addition to undergraduate students), and include students from other colleges in Richmond, especially the non-academic ones.

## References

1. "When it comes to applying for NIH grants and scholarships, who qualifies as an underrepresented person?" | NIH: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Accessed January 13, 2023. <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/underrepresented-person-definition>

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