

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

## Area of Scholarly Concentration Program



As part of the mission of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine to mentor and educate students to become inquiry-driven physicians, educators, and researchers, we have created a new program under the curriculum renewal – called Area of Scholarly Concentration (ASC) – to help students gain expertise in an area of interest that might not be covered as completely through the regular course of study for the Doctor of Medicine degree.

Learners can immerse themselves in specific themes in research, education, or community service of their choosing and develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member that will help them build their expertise. The ASC will be integrated into each learning phase of the new Feinberg curriculum, which will begin rollout in the 2012/13 academic year.

# Area of Scholarly Concentration Program

## Program Definition

The Area of Scholarly Concentration (ASC) is a highly mentored program which allows medical students to develop expertise in a specific area of interest during their four years of medical school. It focuses on training students to develop and complete a longitudinal project in a range of disciplines including the biomedical sciences, social sciences, humanities, public health, global health, medical ethics, medical education and community outreach.

## Program Goals

The goals of the program include the design and performance of an inquiry-driven, highly individualized scholarly project which culminates in the submission of a formal thesis during the fourth year of medical school. Projects will be either scientific, hypothesis-driven investigations or longitudinal projects with a focused, detailed design appropriate for the specific area of study. ASC projects

will enhance the student's ability to identify and solve problems and develop mentored relationships with Northwestern University faculty members. Throughout each phase of the curriculum, protected time has been built in to allow students to work on their ASC.

## Curriculum Integration

### Prologue:

During the Prologue, students will attend introductory lectures providing an overview of the ASC format, requirements and opportunities. Students will begin participating in monthly seminars in which they will have the opportunity to explore individual areas of interest.

### Phase 1:

During the first year of the curriculum, students will participate in monthly seminars, which will focus on helping them develop their longitudinal project and select a mentor. Students will

submit a thesis proposal which will be formally reviewed. After the proposal is accepted, students will initiate their project during a 6-week period at the end of the academic year.

During the second year of the curriculum, several hours per week will be allocated for students to work on their ASC. Students will continue to engage in monthly seminars in which they will formally present the progress on their projects, as well as develop the skills to critically and constructively evaluate the projects of their fellow students.

### Phase 2 and 3:

During the third and fourth year of medical school, students will spend one to three months on completion of the project and submission of an ASC thesis. The thesis will be reviewed and approved by an ASC committee prior to graduation.

