



The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program *Frequently Asked Questions*

- **I'm not in medical or nursing school, but I do have an interest in tying my field in to improving the health and well-being of communities. Am I still eligible?**
Yes! We are looking for applicants from any field in which the Fellow can create a health-related community project. For example, previous Fellows have included students pursuing careers in education, business, music, law, urban planning, and more! We think expansively about health and realize that there are so many factors that contribute to the health and well-being of our communities.
- **Is the orientation really mandatory? What if I already have obligations for that weekend?**
Yes, the orientation is a firm requirement. If you already know you cannot make it, please do not apply for the Fellowship. The orientation is one of the most critical components of the Fellowship.
- **Are all of the monthly meetings really mandatory? What if I have class or work during those times?**
Yes, the monthly Fellowship meetings are required. The meetings are held in the evening (5:30-8:15pm), and the days are rotated (Monday-Friday) throughout the Program Year in order to accommodate the schedules of Fellows representing many different schools and programs. We understand that there may be occasional unavoidable schedule conflicts with class and work obligations, but full attendance is otherwise required. Please do not apply for a Fellowship unless you intend to honor this requirement as fully as possible.
- **When do I have to complete my 200 hours of service?**
The Fellowship begins May 1st, 2020 and ends May 31st, 2021. You can complete your 200 hours of service at any time within that period. Some Fellows start their hours during the summer, some don't start until the fall. Some Fellows do all of their hours over several months and some spread them out over the entire year. It is up to you and what your project entails!
- **What exactly do you mean by an "underserved" population? How do I know which community to work with?**
"Underserved" is open to interpretation, but for the majority of Fellows, it has meant the uninsured, especially people who are low-income, minorities and immigrants (including undocumented immigrants), persons with a disability, and seniors living on fixed incomes. Any group of people that you can conceive of that has difficulty receiving quality health care and other needs that impact their health and well-being could be considered underserved.
- **What exactly do you mean by "direct service"?**
"Direct Service" means you are working directly with a community. You are interacting in some way with the population you have chosen to work with. Examples include providing health

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information workshops, leading a fitness class, tutoring, providing screening exams at a health fair, or linking residents to needed health services. We usually contrast “direct service” with “administrative” hours (also called “indirect service”), with the latter being the preparation and planning that goes into the “direct service.” Note, up to 20% of the 200 service hour requirement (i.e., 40 hours) can be spent on indirect service, and up to 30 hours can be accrued from collaborating with a team of other Fellows in learning collaborative groups and by attending monthly meetings. At least 130 hours should be conducting direct service activities with the target community.

- **I have never really done something like this before. Does that lower my chances for getting the Fellowship?**

We view the Fellowship experience as an important opportunity for learning, whether someone has already done a lot of community work or very little. Experience is not a requirement for the Fellowship, but in your personal statement we’d like for you to explain how your background and skills have helped prepare you to do community outreach work, and what motivates you to make such a serious commitment. The Program’s mentors and Program staff provide ample support to Fellows so that everyone who is passionate about providing service to improve health can do so.

- **Does each new Fellow have to think of his/her own project, or can a Fellow continue a project that has previously been started by another Fellow?**

Fellows can either start a new project or continue and expand upon an already established project. If an applicant wishes to continue a project, they should propose ways of improving the project and explain why adding their perspective/training into the project will benefit the community. We have a Community Site Guide with descriptions of previous Fellows’ projects and sites to facilitate identifying possible organizations to partner with.

- **Does the project I propose in my application have to be the project I actually do during the Fellowship year?**

Most Fellows carry out the project they propose, but often have to fine-tune their ideas. A few Fellows change their ideas altogether after being accepted to the Program. In the application, we are generally more interested in hearing your ideas and which population you would like to work with, and we understand that plans and ideas change over time. You can even propose 2 possible ideas in your application and upon acceptance to the Fellowship, settle upon one of them. Once the Fellowship year is underway, Schweitzer Program mentors and Program staff can help you develop your ideas to turn them into reality.

- **I have an internship requirement for my school. Can I use the Schweitzer Fellowship to help fulfill this requirement?**

No, we do not allow Fellows to “double dip” for credit within their curriculum. The Fellowship is really meant to be an added component to your educational experience that enables you to develop your abilities as a leader in service. The Fellowship is a program not only to complete a community service project but also to become part of a community of Fellows who are dedicated to similar work and hold similar values. Although it may take a lot of time to participate in both the Fellowship and your school internship or practicum, it is a very enriching and rewarding experience to be part of the Fellowship separate from your academic requirements.