

AY2025 – AY2027 WCUCOM Research and Scholarly Activity Strategic Plan (RSASP)

In July 2021, William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCUCOM) established the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) as a cornerstone of its commitment to fostering a culture of scholarly activity among faculty and students. The ORSP has since served as a vital resource in providing the infrastructure, support, and guidance necessary to promote research excellence and innovation. This office has been instrumental in securing external funding, facilitating collaborative research initiatives, and enhancing the visibility of WCUCOM's contributions to the advancement of scholarly activity in the areas of medical education, population health, and osteopathic medicine.

Building on the successes of the previous research strategic plan, which saw significant achievements in faculty scholarship, student research opportunities, and interdisciplinary collaborations, the 2025-2027 Research Strategic Plan outlines a clear vision to expand research capacity, enhance student and faculty engagement in scholarly activities, and prioritize areas of strategic importance including OPP/OMM, health disparities and underserved communities, and medical education innovation. By continuing to invest in the professional development of its faculty and the scholarly growth of its students, WCUCOM reaffirms its mission to prepare the next generation of osteopathic physicians and contribute meaningfully to the broader medical community.

Priority 1: Develop Faculty and Student Capacity for Research

Goal 1.1: Provide training and resources to support research competency and productivity among students

- **Activities:**
 - Integrate evidence-based medicine, study design, CITI Training, and statistical analysis skills into the OMS-1 curriculum to equip students for meaningful engagement in summer research after their first year
 - Provide an opportunity for students to participate in mentored research during the summer of OMS-1
 - Introduce training on case report writing to medical students during their OMS-3 year, equipping them with the skills to document and share clinical experiences effectively
 - Promote research elective rotations for OMS III and IV students
 - Increase faculty capacity to mentor students in research
 - Increase awareness of opportunities to disseminate findings from student research (State and national conferences, Cureus, etc.)
 - Support student scholarly activity through appropriate budgetary processes (travel awards, summer fellowships, Journal APC charges, poster printing, database purchases)

- o Continue to host WCUCOM Summer Research Symposium to showcase student scholarly activity

Goal 1.2: Provide resources and training to support research competency and productivity among faculty.

- **Activities:**

- o Assess preceptor's and faculty's needs related to engaging in scholarly activities to guide faculty development workshops
- o Provide faculty and preceptor development workshops that increase capacity to engage in independent research (research design, data analysis, manuscript development, etc.).
- o Assist with preparing external funding proposals (e.g., AOA, HRSA, R15, INBRE)
- o Develop and implement the Master Preceptor Program to foster preceptor engagement in clinical scholarship
- o Provide seed funding for pilot research projects to support faculty in advancing their research agendas
- o Support faculty scholarly activity and professional development through appropriate budgetary processes (Conference travel, Journal APC charges, database purchases)
- o Increase awareness of opportunities to disseminate findings from faculty research
- o Promote engagement with peer reviewed journals as authors and reviewers

Priority 2: Expand the Osteopathic Research Program

Goal 2.1: Expand the capacity for students and faculty to engage in research with an osteopathic focus

- **Activities:**

- o Establish data use agreements (DUAs) with regional hospitals that participate in GME programs within the state
- o Increase student and faculty access to clinical databases appropriate for osteopathic research, emphasizing OMM and related treatments
- o Support the development of faculty research agendas that include OMM research
- o Provide faculty proposal development workshops ahead of AACOM grant submission deadlines
- o Support the development of an EHR system within the Institute for Primary Care / OMM clinic as a source of primary data for OMM research

Goal 2.2: Enhance dissemination and visibility of osteopathic research to promote broader understanding and evidence-based application of osteopathic principles

- **Activities:**

- Promote faculty participation in state, regional, and national professional conferences for faculty with an osteopathic-focused research agenda (e.g., AACOM, AOA)
- Create a dedicated section within WCUCOM's website to highlight osteopathic research projects, publications, and opportunities for collaboration

Priority 3: Advance research efforts that support the mission of WCUCOM in addressing healthcare needs of medically underserved communities in MS and the surrounding regions

Goal 3.1: Expand the capacity for students and faculty to engage in research that positively impacts health disparities in MS and the surrounding regions

- **Activities:**

- Continue to partner with the Jackson State University Graduate Training and Education Center to provide research training opportunities to students traditionally underrepresented in research
- Expand partnership with Mississippi State University's Graduate Training and Education Center to provide research training opportunities to medical students serving in physician shortage areas
- Expand research opportunities for students placed in the Delta Hubsite (competitive selection) by promoting formal engagement with the Delta Thriving initiative which aims to improve diabetes outcomes in the rural Mississippi Delta.
- Collaborate with the Mississippi State Department of Health to evaluate initiatives that improve CVD outcomes for those most at risk (HDSPP, WW, DHC).
- Support the development of faculty research agendas that include health disparities research
- Support community-based outreach activities that prioritize underserved populations

Goal 3.2: Enhance dissemination and visibility of research that positively impacts health disparities in MS and the surrounding regions

- **Activities:**

- Promote faculty participation in state, regional, and national professional conferences for faculty engaged in research focused on health disparities
- Create a dedicated section within WCUCOM's website to highlight health disparity research projects, publications, and opportunities for collaboration

Priority 4: Expand the Medical Education Research Program

Goal 4.1: Expand the capacity for faculty, staff, and students to engage in research focused on innovation in medical education

- **Activities:**
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of current programs like simulation training, standardized patient encounters, and point-of-care ultrasound in improving student outcomes.
 - Provide mentorship for faculty and staff to assist in transitioning innovative teaching practices into research initiatives
 - Provide resources for faculty and staff to conduct feasibility studies or gather preliminary data to support larger grant applications
 - Provide faculty and staff development on conducting qualitative and mixed-methods research, and standardized data collection procedures commonly used in medical education
 - Support the development of faculty and staff research agendas that include research in medical education innovation (Curriculum development, Point of Care Ultrasound, SIM, SP, etc.)

Goal 4.2: Enhance dissemination and visibility of research focused on innovation in medical education

- **Activities:**
 - Promote faculty participation in state, regional, and national professional conferences for faculty with research agendas focusing on innovation in medical education
 - Create a dedicated section within WCUCOM's website to highlight research projects, publications, and opportunities for collaboration around innovation in medical education

Priority 5: Develop Student and Faculty Research Recognition Initiatives

Goal 5.1: Provide faculty engaged in scholarly activity in one of the areas of strategic importance an opportunity to be formally recognized for their efforts

- **Activities:**
 - Provide annual recognition to a faculty or staff member demonstrating outstanding contributions in research for each of the three areas of strategic importance
 - Provide annual recognition for a faculty or staff member demonstrating outstanding engagement in student research mentorship

- o Communicate achievements in faculty scholarly activity to WCU and WCUCOM newsletters, websites, and social media platforms, showcasing contributions to strategic priority areas

Goal 5.2: Provide students engaged in scholarly activity an opportunity to be formally recognized for their efforts

- **Activities**

- o Develop and implement a "Graduation with Research Distinction" pathway for students with exceptional research engagement
- o Recognize annually students participating in research scholars programs (Delta Scholars, DHW Scholars, OMM Scholars, STARS Scholars and STARS UNITE, SROY, and those participating in Research Years, etc.)
- o Communicate achievements in student scholarly activity to WCU and WCUCOM newsletters, websites, and social media platforms, showcasing contributions to strategic priority areas

This strategic plan demonstrates WCUCOM's commitment to advancing osteopathic knowledge, fostering student and faculty development, and addressing critical issues in cultural competency and health disparities.