



THRIVING

the iTHRIV Newsletter

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Creating THRIVING Researchers through Mentorship

Mentorship is a critical component in the field of scientific research. Mentors provide guidance, support, and advice to early career researchers, helping them navigate the complex and competitive world of translational health research. A good mentor can be a valuable asset for anyone in the research workforce, providing not only technical expertise but also important insights into the scientific community, the research process, and career development. Accordingly, iTHRIV is committed to supporting the development of all members of the research workforce.

The [iTHRIV Scholars Program](#) (iTSP) provides a cornerstone for iTHRIV to grow the next generation of clinical and translational scientists in Virginia. This competitive program prepares trainees to excel in a transformed biomedical research environment in which digital data drives health care hypotheses, interventions, and health quality evaluation. “One of the most important roles of a mentor is to provide guidance and support to their mentee during the research process. This includes helping the mentee to develop research ideas, design experiments, and analyze data. A mentor can also provide feedback on grant proposals, papers, and presentations, which can be critical in getting them published or funded,” states Jason Papin, iTSP co-PI. “A mentor can also provide advice on navigating the political landscape of academia, such as how to navigate relationships with collaborators and colleagues.” In addition to learning from their mentored iTHRIV research project, Scholars come together one afternoon each week to engage in activities designed to help prepare them for a successful future in clinical and/or translational health research. These weekly sessions also provide an opportunity for peer mentoring, another important contributor to a successful academic career.



Inspiring Diverse Researchers in Virginia ([iDRIV](#)) is a year-long program designed to support brilliant and quality investigators who are from nationally underrepresented groups. The program seeks to accomplish this through education, coaching, mentorship, and sponsorship. “iDRIV is designed to provide impactful support and mentorship to accelerate the career trajectories of diverse young faculty,” says Sana Syed, Program Director for iDRIV. “Mentorship can also help to promote a culture of inclusivity and diversity within the scientific community, as mentees are likely to carry forward the values and practices they learn from their mentors.”

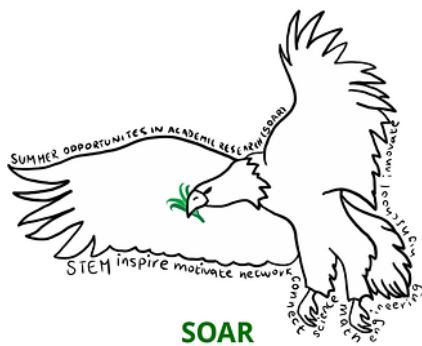


Inspiring Diverse Researchers In Virginia

The Research Administration Mentoring Program and University Partnership ([RAMP UP](#)) is focused on supporting the success and professional development of Research Administrators. “Creating a sense of community is vital for our workforce as many of us do not work directly with a team. It is extremely beneficial to have someone who understands your work and can help navigate challenging questions or complex issues,” explains Kayla Calvo, iTHRIV Director of Finance and Program Director of RAMP UP. RAMP UP is a one year program that provides mentor training, topical workshops, and creates a community of practice for Research Administrators. One of the goals of this program is to improve retention rates across the research administration workforce.

Importantly, the scope of iTHRIV’s mentorship is not limited to early career research faculty and staff. There are also offerings for high school and college-aged students: Summer Opportunities in Academic Research (SOAR), Collaborative Undergraduate Biostatistics Experience (CUBE), and Data Justice Academy (DJA) in the School of Data Science. These are short, intensive summer programs designed to give young people from underrepresented groups the opportunity to work on impactful research projects. Participants get hands-on experience in informatics, biostatistics, data science, and problem-solving. While SOAR exposes high school aged community members to career options in STEM, CUBE and DJA focus more on undergraduate students developing technical skills such as coding and data visualization. All of these programs provide the students with professional development opportunities and information about potential career paths.

In partnership with the UVA School of Medicine Biomedical Science Graduate Program, iTHRIV also offers training workshops for mentors to optimize mentoring practices. Supporting mentors is critical to ensuring the success and growth of the research workforce.



iTHRIV's various mentorship programs foster a sense of community and inclusivity and promote diversity and equity across the research workforce. By sharing their experiences and insights, mentors can inspire and motivate the next generation of researchers, helping to cultivate a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that can drive innovation and progress in the field. “For most senior faculty, mentoring and sponsoring the next generation is one of the most fun things we do,” says Karen Johnston, Director of iTHRIV. “I find that we learn as much from them as they learn from us.”

iTHRIV is supported in part by the National Institutes of Health through the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (award number UL1TR003015). A Commonwealth collaboration of the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Carilion Clinic, and Inova, iTHRIV unites the research infrastructure of these flagship institutions to accelerate innovation in health-related research with the latest advances in clinical and translational science. iTHRIV is committed to engaging with community voices to understand the health-related priorities of our affected communities.

Meet iTHRIV Scholar Patricia Rodriguez Lozano, MD

With the celebration and recognition of National Heart Month in February, iTHRIV would like to recognize one of its new scholars. Patricia Rodriguez Lozano, MD of the University of Virginia is exploring a novel therapy to treat microvascular disease in women.

[Watch the short video to learn more about her and her research!](#)

**PATRICIA
RODRIGUEZ LOZANO,
MD**

UVA

*Novel Therapy to treat
Microvascular Disease in Women*

iTHRIV
UL1TR003015 / KL2TR003016

University of Virginia Health System
Patricia Rodriguez, MD
Cardiology

iTHRIV Under the Microscope: Andrea Zhou, ME

Andrea Zhou is a Data Scientist with iTHRIV. Andrea has been a part of the UVA community since 2013, where she completed her undergraduate degree and later worked as a research assistant in the McNamara Lab at the Cardiovascular Research Center. After working as a medical scribe in the Departments of Emergency Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery, Andrea left for the Virginia Department of Health but returned to UVA in January 2022 to start her current role at iTHRIV.

As a Data Scientist at iTHRIV, Andrea works with a team to provide Concierge Analytics support to health researchers with analytical questions about complex clinical and research datasets. Her responsibilities include designing custom data management and analysis workflows, training project research coders and student workers, and contributing to translational research projects. Andrea is motivated by the knowledge that her work influences how translational health research is conducted and disseminated, ultimately having the potential to positively impact the health of others.



Andrea credits her success in this role to her creative thinking, attention to detail, and ability to find optimal solutions.

In her free time, Andrea enjoys powerlifting, playing tennis, and baking. She also enjoys house-sitting and dog-sitting, as well as learning new hobbies.

Meet an iTHRIV Scholar Mentor

Samantha Harden

Associate Professor, Graduate Program Faculty,
Virginia Tech, Department of Human Nutrition,
Foods, and Exercise

“Dr. Harden is a leader in the field of implementation and dissemination as well as 500 hour registered yoga instructor. Her motto of “beginning with the end in mind” has enhanced my understanding of intervention development. In research and life, she reminds all of the value of breath and movement.”

-Shannon Armbruster, MD



Resource Highlight – Data Sharing Resources

[2023 NIH Data Management and Sharing Plan Policy & Resources](#)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has recently announced a new data sharing policy that will go into effect on January 25, 2023. This new policy is in line with the NIH's mission to promote the advancement of biomedical research and improve public health. By making data more discoverable and accessible, other researchers will be able to build on the work of previous studies and accelerate the pace of discovery.

Under the new policy, all investigators who receive NIH funding must submit a data management and sharing plan as part of their grant application. This plan must include details on how data will be shared, preserved, and accessed by other researchers. In the case of human subject research, NIH recognizes in [supplemental guidance](#) that research data “can allow inferences to be made about a participant’s identity, even if the information is de-identified according to HIPAA or the Common Rule”. Thus, sharing detailed data might only be appropriate in the context of a controlled-access repository or under the terms of a data sharing contract.

iTHRIV has a curated set tools and guides to assist researchers in complying with the policy while protecting privacy of research subjects. Resources include, but are not limited to: webinars, templates, and sample language. To learn more about and access the complete list please visit: <https://portal.ithriv.org/#/resource/1689>. iTHRIV also worked with the UVA Patient Privacy Office to establish guidance around aggregation of patient data prior to publicly sharing in order to protect from re-identification through inference. This guidance is linked on the resource page.

The new NIH data sharing policy is a significant step forward in promoting transparency, accessibility, and collaboration in biomedical research. All investigators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the new policy and take advantage of the resources provided. Please, do not hesitate to reach out to iTHRIV regarding access to the iTHRIV Commons or with any other questions you might have: ITHRIVADMIN@uvahealth.org.