

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the benefits of participating in the RHCT?

Successful completion of all track requirements will result in a designation of “Scholar in Rural Health Care” on the student’s transcript and in the commencement program. A certificate of completion will be issued at the time of graduation along with the student’s UTMB diploma. Participation will also be reflected in the student’s MSPE (“Dean’s letter”).

What is required to become a RHC Scholar?

Tracks will entail 5-6 months of clerkship, elective and selective experiences, culminating with the completion of a scholarly project.

Throughout the 4 years of medical school, RHCT students must attend a predetermined number of offerings (lectures, workshops and/or seminars) that are designed to provide specific training related to the practice of rural medicine. *Current Year 3 students will be advised on meeting the completion requirements.

RHCT opportunities exist during the following curricular times:

- ▶ Summer block between **Years 1 and 2**,
- ▶ **Year 3** (Family Medicine clerkship, Pediatrics clerkship – ambulatory component, Internal Medicine clerkship – ambulatory component, elective month, December holiday month, and/or cluster clerkships – 2 to 4 months in a community completing multiple clerkship requirements),
- ▶ **Year 4** allows for several experiences through electives, selectives, and required credits in an “Acting Internship”, Ambulatory Community Selective, and Basic Science and Humanities Selective. Basic Science and Humanities Selective credit may be obtained during activities related to finalizing the scholarly project.

Would electives at another medical school apply for RHCT credit?

Yes. Prior approval by the Rural Health Care Track Committee would be required, as would any requirements imposed by UTMB Enrollment Services and the other medical school in question. Many medical schools offer electives, primarily to Year 4 students, which would provide an excellent compliment to your RHCT focus. A list of medical schools with opportunities specifically in rural medicine and/or community medicine will soon be provided on this website if not already posted.

Is housing provided?

The availability of housing depends on the rural site chosen. With enough advance notice, AHEC will often be able to secure student housing in a majority of communities.

Are slots in the RHCT limited / WHEN do I need to commit to the RHCT?

No. Class of 2011 and 2012 students (current Year 2 and Year 3 classes) are asked to commit to participation by the end of Period 1 (July 28th) so that adequate planning can be done to be sure all of the “specialty track” requirements can be met.

Incoming Class of 2013 students (Year 1) are asked to commit to the program by the end of Year 1, prior to the beginning of the summer block during which preclinical preceptorships are available for enrollment.

For all students, it is best to communicate with a Co-Director as early as possible regarding your needs in terms of preceptors, site locations, Period(s) during which you wish to rotate at a chosen site, and housing status.

Registration for UTMB electives approved for RHCT credit is done via e-connect. RHCT students are required to contact these elective Course Directors 30 days in advance in order to make plans to focus on an aspect of rural medicine as part of the course. (see “UTMB Electives Approved for RHCT Credit” link on the RHCT homepage for a list of approved electives)

Do I need to be committed to a residency in primary care in order to participate in the RHCT?

No. Students intending to apply for a residency in any field of medicine are welcome to participate in the RHCT.

What happens if I chose not to complete the RHCT?

Electives and other activities are open to interested students who do not intend to complete the entire track. If one commits to the RHCT and decides not to complete all related requirements, all courses taken to that point remain on the student's transcript, although recognition as a "Rural Health Care Scholar" would not occur upon graduation.

Will the teaching I receive in a rural health setting be comparable to that in Galveston?

Course evaluations and focus groups with students having completed rotations in rural settings in the past have been overwhelmingly positive. Specific advantages cited by students included:

- ▶ *"I was impressed that rural doctors have so much interaction with community members and events that occur there. Since there is so much continuity of care from birth to old-age, across generations of families, the doctor is treated with a great deal of respect and has an important role."*
 - ▶ *"Going on home visits."*
 - ▶ *"It is very important to develop trust among these patients who may be indigent, not likely to seek medical care early, and/or are immigrants."*
 - ▶ *"Doctors deal with a wide range of problems, experience long-term relationships with patients and families (continuity of care), and could participate as a strong member of the community by advocating and contributing to civic groups and events."*
- "This was an adventure made me discover an interest in rural medicine I did not know about before."*

Can I participate in more than one SOM special program?

Yes. Students may participate in two special program tracks under the following conditions:

- ▶ *An overall curricular plan is provided by the student and prior approval is obtained from Directors of both program tracks.*
- ▶ *Requirements for both tracks are met in full.*
- ▶ *No more than two courses can apply to both tracks concurrently.*
- ▶ *A scholarly project must be completed for both tracks or one very large project including aspects of both programs can be done after prior approval by both track Directors.*