



THE ALBERT  
SCHWEITZER  
FELLOWSHIP®

## Columbus-Athens Schweitzer Fellows Program *Frequently Asked Questions*

**More questions?** Contact the Program Co-Directors, Drs. Lizzie Fitzgerald and Maria Gallo, at [Columbus-AthensASF@osu.edu](mailto:Columbus-AthensASF@osu.edu)

- **I'm not in medical or nursing school, but I am interested in tying my field in to improve the health and well-being of communities. Am I still eligible?**  
Yes! This is an interdisciplinary program, and we are looking for applicants from any field in which the Fellow can create a health-related community project. Diversity of thought and perspectives will enrich the experience for each class of Fellows. For example, previous Fellows have been pursuing careers in education, business, music, law, social work, and more! We think expansively about health and realize that many factors contribute to the health and well-being of our communities.
- **When do I have to complete my 200 hours of service?**  
You can complete your 200 hours of service at any time from May 1 to April 30. Some Fellows start their hours during the summer, some don't start until autumn. Some Fellows complete all of their hours in a couple of months and some spread them out over the entire year. It is up to you and what your project entails. We do encourage spreading the hours as much as possible to have enough time to overcome any unforeseen roadblocks or delays.
- **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 most Fellows, it has meant the uninsured, especially people who are poor or near poor, minorities and immigrants (including undocumented immigrants), the disabled, and seniors living on fixed incomes. Any group of people that you can conceive of who 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 and interacting in some meaningful way with your target population. Examples include providing health information workshops, leading a fitness class, tutoring, providing screening exams at a health fair, and linking residents to needed health services. Research, fundraising and policy based projects are not eligible activities. You are allotted 50 hours of administrative time for project planning and the remainder 150 hours should be spent on direct service activities.
- **What health-related topic should I address?**  
Schweitzer Fellows focus on health as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO): a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Rooted in this holistic understanding of health, Schweitzer projects address not only clinical health issues, but also the social determinants of health—defined by the WHO as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and which are mostly responsible for health inequities. The options are broad to allow your interests and creativity to lead you to a project that will have impact.
- **Where can I get some ideas about projects other Fellows have done?**  
Pick an ASF Chapter page on the national website. Click on "Fellows & Projects," and read the project descriptions.

- I notice that some students at other sites have done their projects with another student. Is this an option?**

Yes, but with a few caveats. First, more will be expected from the project; that is, the project should have even greater potential for lasting impact. If you partner with another student, you both will need to fulfill all the program requirements (e.g., each Fellow will complete 200 hours) and participate in all of the Fellowship activities.
- Is the orientation retreat really mandatory? What if I already have obligations for that time?**

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 a critical component of the Fellowship.
- How about these monthly meetings, am I expected to attend all of them?**

A hallmark of the Schweitzer Fellows Program is the regular contact with other Fellows from disparate fields. The monthly meetings reinforce the rapport established at Orientation and provide opportunities for Fellows to acquire leadership skills and feedback from their peers concerning their projects. Participation in monthly meetings is mandatory.
- Does each new Fellow have to think of his/her own project, or could I continue a project that has been started by another Fellow?**

Fellows can either start a new project or continue and expand upon an established project. Applicants who wish to continue a project should propose ways of improving the project and should explain why adding their perspective or training into the project will benefit the community.
- I have never really done something like this before. Does that lower my chances for being awarded 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 would 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 can do so.
- Does the project that I propose in my application have to be the project that I actually do during the Fellowship year?**

Most Fellows carry out the project that they propose, but they often have to fine-tune their ideas. A few Fellows might have to make major changes after being accepted into the program. In the application, we are more interested in hearing your ideas and about the population that you would like to work with, and we understand that plans and ideas can change over time. You can even propose two 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 staff can help you develop your ideas 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 use their Schweitzer project for credit within their curriculum. The Fellowship is designed to be an added component to your educational experience that enables you to develop your abilities as a leader in service. The Fellowship is an opportunity to complete a community service project and 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. This is your opportunity to follow your passion.