

Center for Discovery & Innovation

Member of Hackensack Meridian *Health*

Summer Research Scholars Program

June 01 – August 14

2026

at the

HMH Center for Discovery and Innovation (HMH-CDI)

111 Ideation Way

Nutley, NJ 07110



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Program OVERVIEW

The Summer Research Scholars Program at the HMH Center for Discovery and Innovation (HMH-CDI) provides an authentic and rigorous introduction to the world of biomedical research. By embedding high-school and undergraduate students in HMH-CDI's labs, we offer them a critical, hands-on experience contributing to meaningful projects under the close guidance of expert mentors. The program is designed to build a strong foundation of practical skills and critical thinking, solidifying their passion for science and preparing them for the next steps in their academic and professional journeys.

Program COORDINATORS

FACULTY COORDINATORS



Milena Kordalewska, PhD

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Alvin Makohon-Moore, PhD

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ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR



Jessy Lopez-Correa

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2026 Program SPONSORS

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Career Accelerator Internship Grant Program (CAIGP)

New Jersey Health Foundation, Inc.

Social Service and Education Grant # PC 295-26

Pulver Science Scholars Program
in collaboration with Colby College

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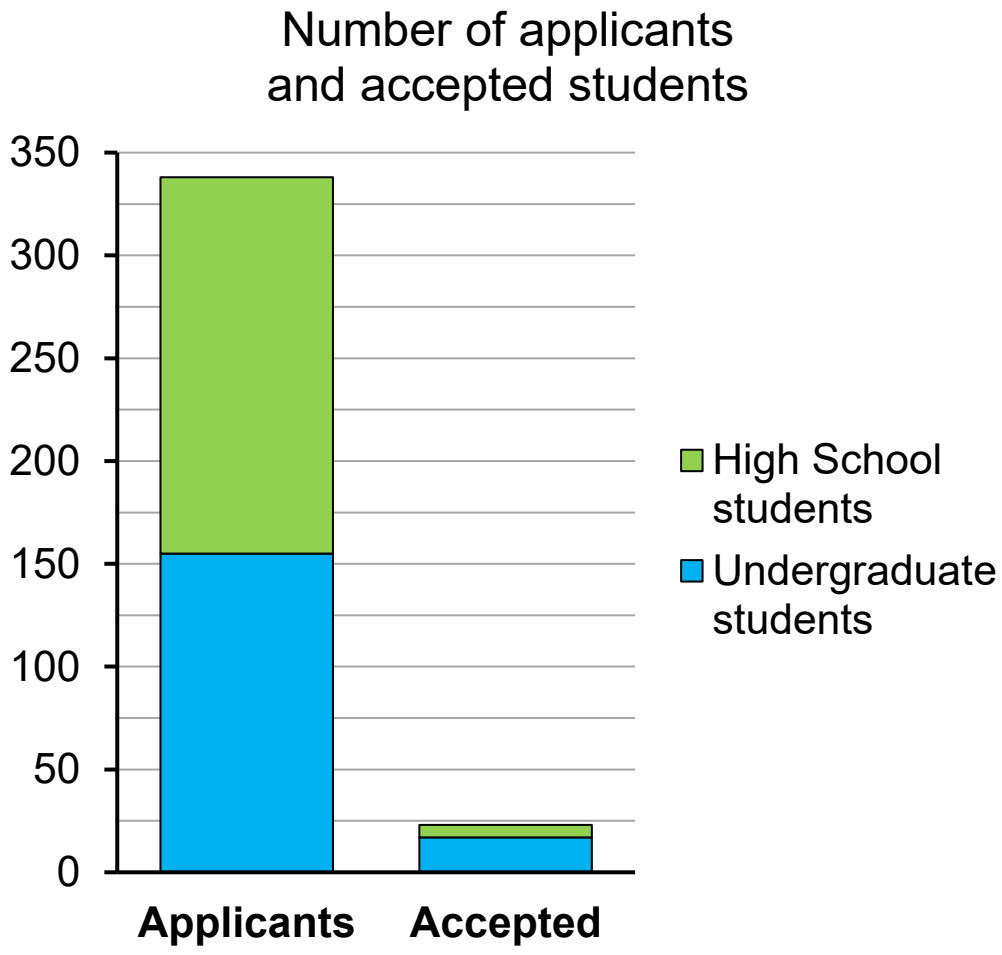
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Program APPLICATIONS & ADMISSIONS

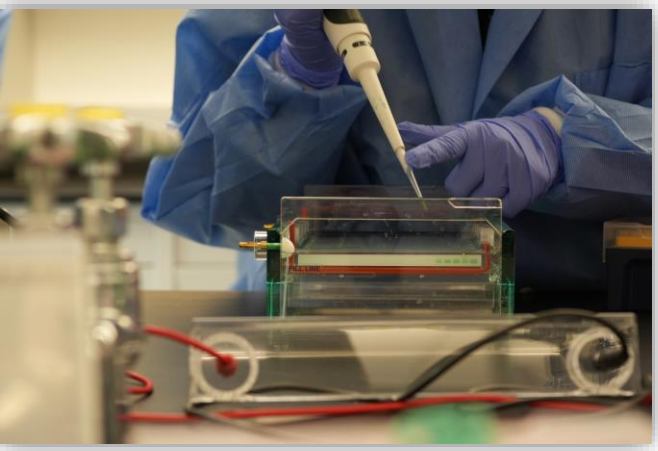
Lab placements for the CDI Summer Research Scholar Program are highly competitive (2026 success rate = 6.8%). To foster an intimate and rigorous learning experience, we offer a **limited number of spots** each year to our most outstanding applicants.

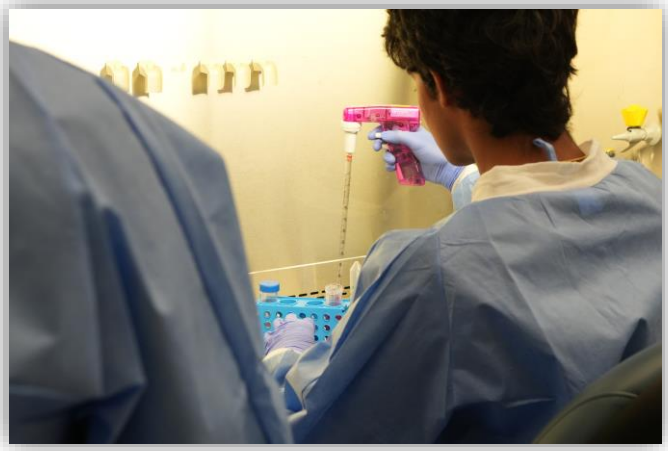
Early and thoughtful applications are strongly encouraged.



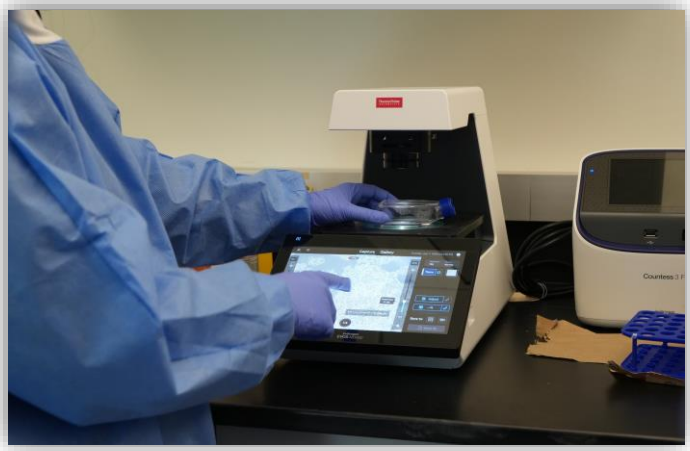
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Hands-On Research Experiences





Our Summer Students are essential contributors to the translational research projects at the HMH-CDI. Collaborating directly with Principal Investigators and lab members, students engage in the full scientific process, including hypothesis development, data collection, and final analysis. Through this immersive experience, they gain critical real-world research skills and make a meaningful, tangible contribution to our mission.





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Meet the Principal Investigator (PI)

Through the ‘Meet the PI’ series, our Summer Scholars gained direct access to CDI's research leaders and their work. The sessions highlighted the incredible diversity and translational potential of the CDI's science, connecting lab research to real-world health outcomes.

Just as importantly, Summer Scholars heard about the personal journeys of each PI, discovering that the path to running a lab is filled with curiosity, perseverance, and unique twists and turns. The series transformed the abstract idea of 'a scientist' into a tangible, human, and achievable goal.

The series included two Fireside Chats with the CDI leadership (...)

Chief Scientific Officer



David S. Perlin, Ph.D.

Director of the Cancer Prevention Precision Control Institute (CPPCI)



Lisa Carter-Bawa, Ph.D., MPH, APRN, ANP-C, FAAN, FSBM







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Meet the Principal Investigator (PI)

(...) and 17 presentations by the CDI's Principal Investigators (PIs) followed by engaging discussions (over pizza!).



INFECTIOUS DISEASES
Wassihun Aragaw, Ph.D.
Neeraj Chauhan, Ph.D.
Uday Ganapathy, Ph.D.
Barry Kreiswirth, Ph.D.



CANCER & IMMUNOLOGY
Manpreet Bariana, Ph.D.
Piero Dalerba, M.D.
Olivier Loudig, Ph.D.
Ji-Yeon Shin, Ph.D.
Ben Tycko, M.D., Ph.D.
Yi Zhang, M.D., Ph.D.



IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE
Elissa Faro, Ph.D.



NEUROSCIENCE
Bon-Mi Gu, Ph.D.
Jiali Li, Ph.D.



PHYSICIAN SCIENTISTS
Judy Aschner, M.D.
Adam Mayer, M.D.

BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH
Ilona Fridman, Ph.D.
Gary Kwok, Ph.D.



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Career Chats

A cornerstone of the professional development programming, four ‘Career Chats’ provided our Summer Scholars with invaluable insights into the diverse career landscape of research and health sciences. Through engaging presentations focused on roles beyond that of a Principal Investigator, followed by Q&A sessions, our scholars discovered a spectrum of opportunities where scientific training is highly valued.

Sean Fitzgerald, M.P.H., R.B.P.
Director of Biosafety

Ya'el Kramer, M.S.
Director of Biorepository Operations

Madhuvika Murugan, Ph.D.
Program Manager, Drug Discovery and Development

Andrew Nelson, D.V.M.
Director of Research Animal Models



Chintan Patel, M..S, C.C.R.P.
Manager of Clinical Research

Elan Shoulders, M.P.H.
Manager of Community Outreach and Engagement



Leigh Ann Tulleson, B.S.
Senior Animal Care and Compliance Specialist
HMH IACUC Coordinator

Matthew Zimmerman, B.S.
Manager of the DMPK Core

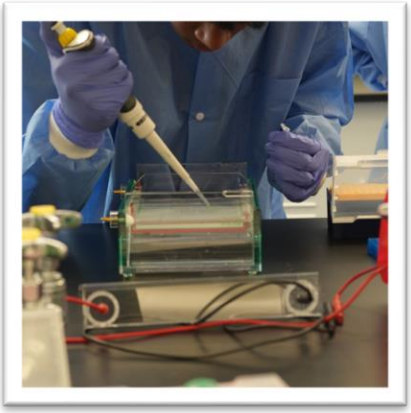


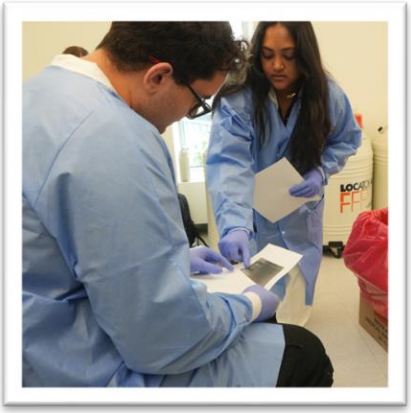


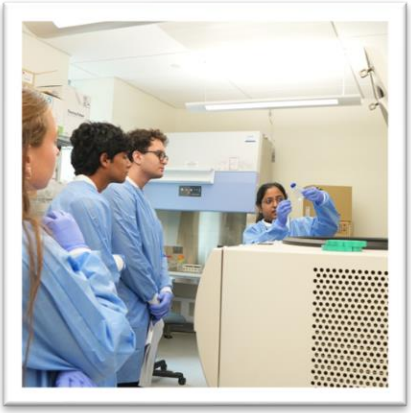


Workshops

During our one-day **Basic Lab Techniques Workshop**, Summer Students practiced essential laboratory skills, including proper pipetting, nucleic acid extraction, PCR, and cell culture under the expert guidance of Drs. Syeda Maryam Azeem and Vidhyalakshmi Acharya.







Beyond the bench, Summer Students leveled up their professional and analytical skills through two dynamic workshop series. In the **Scientific Communication Playbook**, students learned about scientific writing (Dr. Shor), public speaking (Drs. Derry-Vick & Fridman), and effective results presentation (Drs. Kordalewska & Makohon-Moore). Next, they dove into data during **the Digital Biomedical Scientist's Toolkit**, which offered them hands-on training in biostatistics (Ms. Lozy), bioinformatics (Dr. Madrid), and computational applications in medicinal chemistry (Dr. Merritt).







CDI Summer Research Day 2026

The event started with a welcome address from Dr. David Perlin, CDI's CSO, and Dr. Alvin Makohon-Moore on behalf of the Program Coordinators.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

We were incredibly excited to have **Dr. Holly Sutterlin,** a distinguished molecular microbiologist and the Co-Founder, President, and COO of Prokaryotics, as the Keynote Speaker. Dr. Sutterlin delivered an inspiring talk on building a career in biomedical science, providing our Summer Students with countless valuable tips for their future.



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CDI Summer Research Day 2026





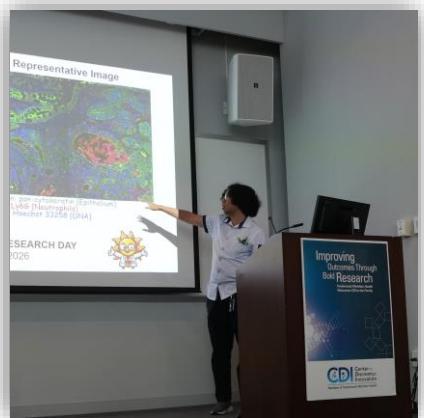


The CDI Summer Research Day served as the culmination of an intensive Summer Program, celebrating the dedication and intellectual curiosity of our student researchers. The event provided a dynamic platform for each student to present the findings of their exciting and diverse projects, which spanned a remarkable range of disciplines. The quality and depth of the research showcased were a testament to the students' hard work and the invaluable guidance of their CDI mentors, marking a successful and inspiring conclusion to a summer of discovery.

Forty-four students presented their research during this event on August 12, 2026







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CDI Summer Research Day 2026





