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BACKGROUND

At the UF Health Cancer Center (UFHCC) Clinical Research Office (CRO), part of our mission is training the next generation of cancer scientists and leaders. Recognizing the relative lack of awareness among graduating students about clinical research as a career path, along with the common inexperience of medical students with clinical research, the 1-year internship program was launched in 2019. The program introduces UF graduates to new career paths while supporting our clinical research teams operationally.

GOALS

The goal of this program was to introduce graduates to the exciting world of clinical research as a potential career or as a stepping stone to advanced degree programs.

METHODS

Interns join the CRO each spring and fall as Clinical Research Assistants (CRAs).

Eligibility Criteria for Interns

- Bachelor's Degree
 - Basic science
 - Health related sciences
- GPA \geq 3.2
- Complete 6 week Orientation

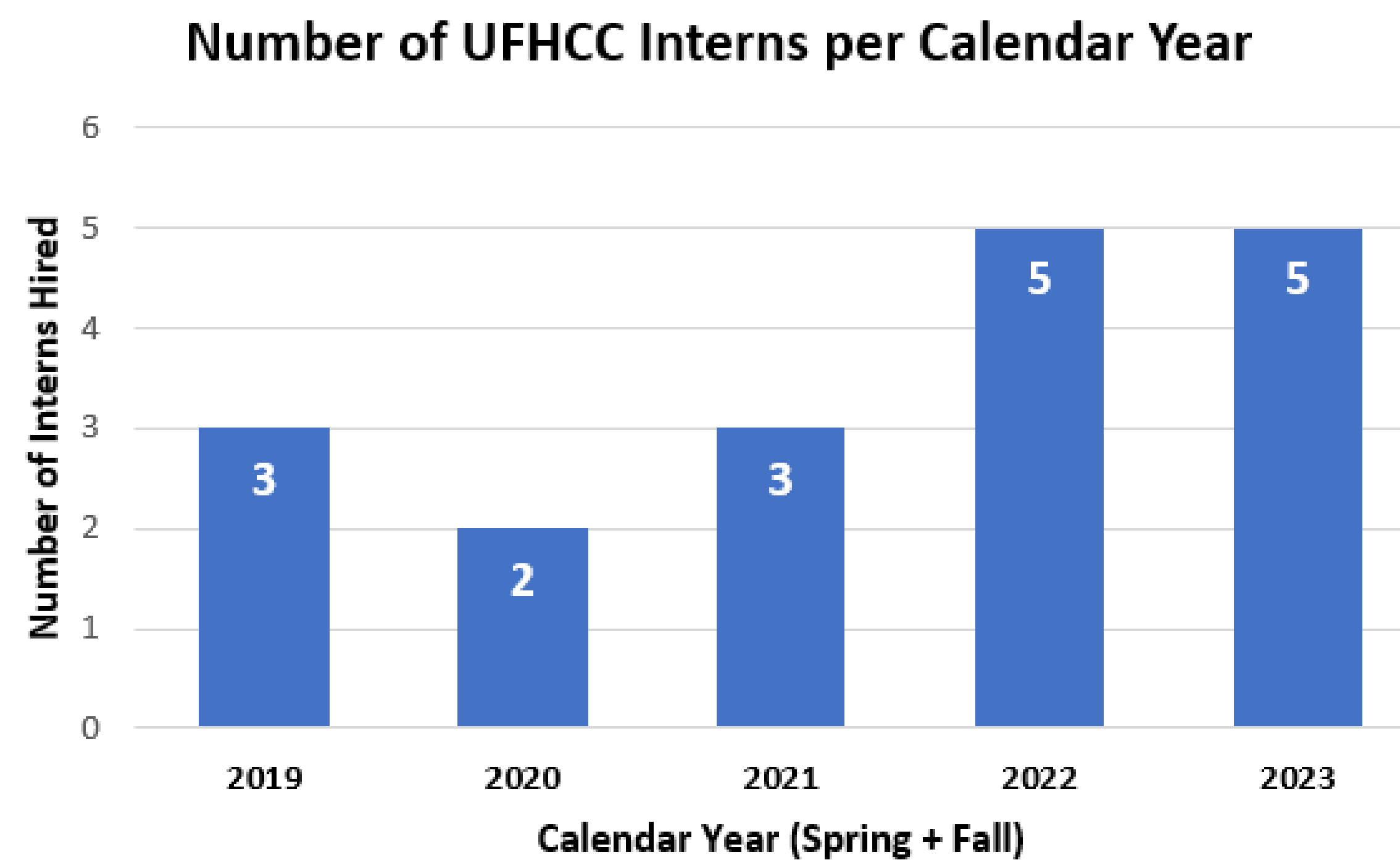
Training by CRO Mentor

- Laboratory processing
- Log creation
- ECGs
- Regulatory process

Interns have served as coordinators for non-interventional studies with tasks including obtaining consent, sample collection/processing, maintenance of specimen trackers, and team updates. While engaging in these activities, interns glean knowledge on topics such as Good Clinical Practice, ethics, monitoring and auditing, and general oncology.

OUTCOMES

In 2022, we increased number of interns onboarded (see chart below). In 2023, 3/5 interns were under-represented minorities.



Post Internship Paths for 14 Interns Completing Program

- 50% enrolled in Medical School or other advanced degree
- 50% career in clinical research
- 100% cited intern experience as key to success

Additional Benefits

- Provide support to full time research staff
- Increased time for patient care and protocol adherence
- Identifies interns with keen interest and aptitude for research
- Decreased staff turnover when hiring interns following completion of the program

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This program has allowed us to effectively support full-time research staff with reduced financial burden while also providing new graduates with real-world experience. Future directions include expanding to other areas of CRO, and collaborating with CaRTEC and PED to promote clinical research at local high schools and events for increased awareness and recruitment opportunities.

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