UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
MPOWERING THE STATE

Bridging Distance to Care: The Healthcare Housing Project

SUMMER 2026
May 26 – July 31

Focus Areas:
Caregiver Support, patient and family-centered care, health-related social Needs

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The selected student will support **The Healthcare Housing Lab**. The Healthcare Housing Lab (https://www.umaryland.edu/provost/healthcarehousinglab/) is committed to advancing understanding of healthcare housing as a crucial support for patients and caregivers who live in healthcare deserts or need to travel for medical care. Guided by our vision of a society where everyone, regardless of location, has the support and resources to access the healthcare they need, our mission is to provide practical solutions and evidence-based insights that enhance healthcare access, reduce the stress associated with medical care, and promote health equity for diverse populations.

Our flagship initiative, the **Healthcare Housing Navigator**, exemplifies our commitment to human-centered, accessible resources. This comprehensive, user-friendly platform consolidates healthcare housing options into a single, searchable map, created in collaboration with the Healthcare Hospitality Network and an interprofessional team of students and volunteers. Designed to simplify the search for essential lodging during medical treatments, the Navigator empowers patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers with quick, reliable access to supportive housing across the United States. This map was created with the support of a team of student researchers in late 2024.

When facing a health crisis or chronic condition, individuals and families can be forced to travel great distances to access the healthcare they need. This challenge is particularly salient for those living in rural communities, who on average live between three and four times further from hospital-based care than those living in urban communities. The location of care is critical for healthcare access and health outcomes, and distance to care impacts individuals of all demographics, ages, and conditions.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Healthcare Housing Lab is dedicated to advancing understanding of healthcare housing as a vital support for patients and caregivers in healthcare deserts or those who need to travel for medical care. With a vision of ensuring equitable healthcare access for all, regardless of location, the lab explores the impact of temporary housing on health outcomes and develops practical, evidence-based solutions to enhance access, reduce stress, and promote health equity.

- **Proposed Activities for the UM Scholar**
  - Support the development and enhancement of the Healthcare Housing Navigator, a searchable map consolidating healthcare housing options.
  - Participate in ongoing research, including data collection and analysis for the comprehensive healthcare housing census.
  - Collaborate with the interprofessional team, including students and faculty, and our community partner the Healthcare Hospitality Network.

- **Specific Projects and/or Tasks**
  - Refine and test the user interface of the Healthcare Housing Navigator.
  - Conduct literature reviews on healthcare housing and its impacts.
  - Analyze qualitative and quantitative data for ongoing research studies.
  - Assist with the preparation of materials for peer-reviewed publications and stakeholder presentations.

- **A Typical Day Might Include**
  - Reviewing research findings and integrating insights into project tools.
  - Collecting data to enhance the Healthcare Housing Navigator.
  - Collaborating with team members during virtual or in-person meetings.
  - Engaging in data management or map enhancement tasks using ArcGIS.
  - Drafting content for reports or presentations.

- **Training the Student Will Receive**
  - Training in the use of ArcGIS and other mapping tools.
  - Research methods training, including data collection and analysis.
  - Mentorship from faculty and project leaders on healthcare equity and housing.

- **Learning Objectives**
  - Understand the intersection of healthcare access and housing.
  - Develop skills in mapping tools like ArcGIS.
  - Gain experience in interdisciplinary collaboration and research.
  - Contribute to actionable solutions addressing health-related social needs.

IDEAL CANDIDATE

This ideal candidate for this project is a student studying public health, health administration, public policy, sociology, gerontology, GIS, health services research, global health and/or have an interest in healthcare access, health equity, and rural health. The Healthcare Housing Lab is also open to other majors and backgrounds that align with this interest or project.

An ideal candidate for this project is also someone who is motivated to make a difference and eager to learn. Curiosity matters—a kind of impossible curiosity that drives you to dig deeper, ask questions, and figure things out. You don't have to know everything (really, you don't), but you do need the drive to keep learning.

Experience with biostatistics or statistical software is a plus, but not a requirement. Just as important are great people skills, a strong work ethic, and the ability to work collaboratively while taking initiative.

ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Students may be from UMCP's College of Behavioral & Social Sciences, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Arts and Humanities, College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences, Philip Merrill College of Journalism, A. James Clark School of Engineering, Robert H. School of Business, Graduate School, School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, School of Public Policy, or School of Public Health are encouraged to apply.

PROJECT LOCATION

This project will be conducted in a hybrid format, with flexibility for the student to work in person on UMB's campus, remotely via Zoom, or hybrid as a combination of the two. Meetings will be held weekly, with the expectation that the first two will be in person on Baltimore's campus.

PROJECT LEAD/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jenny Owens, ScD, MS; Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, Office of the Provost
Associate Professor, School of Graduate Studies at UMB

BIO: https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/content/people/name-756148-en.html
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More than one student will potentially be considered for this project.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

- 10 weeks/400-hour student research project conducted with schedule mutually defined and agreed upon by the student and mentor.
- The project is funded by the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: *MPowering the State* (MPower) and is a part of the UM Scholars program.
- The selected student will receive a stipend for their work, to be paid in multiple installments over the 10 weeks.
  - o **$5,500** for undergraduate students
  - o **$6,500** for graduate students
- Work is expected to occur during typical business hours; Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.
- To be eligible, the student must be enrolled in the Fall 2026 semester.
- Traveling to and from UMB, as well as parking, is the responsibility of the student and costs are included in the stipend.

APPLY HERE