



SSCI Fund for Academic Medicine (FAME) Donor Report Reporting Period: 2009 - 2026

Introduction:

We are pleased to present the SSCI Donor Report for the reporting period of 2009 – 2026. This report highlights the impact of your generous contributions and the progress made towards achieving our shared goals.

Executive Summary:

During this reporting period, the Southern Society for Clinical Investigation has been dedicated to the advancement of medical research and the exchange of knowledge, information and ideas. Its members are committed to mentoring future generations of physician scientists and clinician educators while promoting careers in academic medicine. With the support of donors like you, we are able to make significant strides in providing a forum for the exchange of medical research and education at the SSCI Annual Meeting, providing travel awards to the meeting, supporting medical research with research grants and visiting professor programs, and publishing our journal, *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*.

Financial Overview:

Total Individual Contributions Received: ~\$483,000

Total Donations from *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*: \$160,000

Impact of Contributions:

The contributions support four major activities of the SSCI and are outlined below.

- A. **Annual Southern Regional Meeting (SSCI/SSPR co-sponsors).** The annual meeting of the SSCI is the society's premier event. The meeting takes place over three days in New Orleans and features career development workshops for trainees and junior faculty, translational research talks by SSCI award winners and plenary lectures by nationally renowned experts, parallel sessions for trainees and junior faculty to present research talks and/or case reports, and networking/mentoring sessions. This past year, the SSCI hosted the third year for Tinsley Harrison Scholars Program which supported nine (and two returning Scholars from 2025) promising early career trainees to present their research at the meeting and participate in career development workshops.
- B. **Awards Program.** The SSCI has been supporting a very robust travel awards program to the SRM meeting over the past 27 years. These awards support medical students, residents, fellows and early career faculty to present their research at the meeting. Furthermore, the SSCI recognizes the top research presentations and mentors at the meeting. The annual meeting has grown from 666 attendees in 2014 to 850 attendees in 2026. Abstract submissions have grown from 532 in 2014 to 778 in 2026. The number of travel awards, however, has remained approximately the same. Additional funds need to be raised in order to increase the number of travel awards to the meeting. The current awards and annual funding amounts include:

Research Travel Awards - \$20,000
Michael S. & Kathy J Bronze Young Investigator Awards - \$2,325
SSCI Young Investigator Award in General Internal Medicine - \$575
Tinsley Harrison Scholar Awards - \$15,000
AJMS Tinsley Harrison Award - \$1,000
Poster Awards - \$500
Solomon Medical Student Awards - \$1,750
Early Career Awards - \$1,000

- C. **Research Scholar Award Grant Program.** The SSCI has provided one research award to a junior faculty conducting basic, clinical or translational research. The Research Scholar Award grant program has existed for seven years. These awardees have received a grant for \$27,500 since the inception of the program. The SSCI would like to increase the number of research grants provided to promising early career faculty.

Grant Distribution since 2019:

Number of Grants Awarded: 7
Total Grant Amount: \$192,500

Grantee Testimonials:

**2019 Research Scholar Award Recipient – Michael H. Woodworth, MD, MSc, FIDA
“Temporal Dynamics of MDRO Eradication After FMT”**

The SSCI Research Scholar Award was hugely impactful at a critical stage early in my career. As an Infectious Disease physician scientist, large startup packages to support research costs and hiring staff are the exception rather than the norm. Cumulative support from this award in combination with my K23 and other grant funding allowed me to hire a research nurse and supply costs for conduct of the first randomized, controlled trial of fecal microbiota transplantation in renal transplant recipients. This work was published in Science Translational Medicine in November, 2023. Our experience from this trial was also critical in demonstrating feasibility of two additional clinical trials that have been funded by the CDC through the Prevention Epicenters Program. I am deeply grateful to the SSCI and for this award and its lasting impact on my research and my career.

Michael H. Woodworth, MD, MSc, FIDSA
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Emory School of Medicine

2020 Research Scholar Award Recipient - Abolfazl Zarjou MD, PhD, FASN
"Targeting Ferritin in Vascular Calcification Associated with CKD"

I am writing to extend my deepest gratitude to SSCI for providing essential pilot funds that had a transformative impact on my research program, propelling it to new scientific grounds and enabling my team to achieve significant milestones that would have otherwise been unattainable. As a recipient of this generous support, I am thrilled to share the effects it had on our research efforts.

First and foremost, the SSCI funding allowed us to initiate a groundbreaking project focused on myocardial adaptive response to ferritin heavy chain deletion. This initial seed funding was crucial in overcoming the common hurdle of limited resources that is a significant and frequent challenge of early career investigators. With these funds, we were able to cover the costs of preliminary experiments, which laid a robust foundation for our study.

One of the most notable impacts of this pilot funding was the ability to generate preliminary data that was instrumental in securing additional grants from larger funding bodies. The data collected through SSCI's support demonstrated the feasibility and potential impact of our research, making our subsequent grant applications more compelling and successful.

In conclusion, the pilot funding from SSCI was a cornerstone of our research program, providing the necessary resources to initiate, expand, and sustain our project. It has facilitated critical data collection, fostered collaborative efforts, and supported the growth of scientific efforts. I am profoundly grateful for SSCI's support and look forward to continuing to advance our research, inspired by the opportunities this funding has unraveled.

Abolfazl Zarjou MD, PhD, FASN
Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Alabama at Birmingham

2021 Research Scholar Award Recipient – Andrew D. Schreiner, MD, MSCR
"Improving the Diagnosis Of Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Primary Care Patients Using Natural Language Processing"

I had the tremendous honor of receiving the SSCI Research Scholar Award in 2021 for my project titled, "Improving the Diagnosis of Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Primary Care Patients Using Natural Language Processing." The funding allowed our team to invest in technology that was critical to the success of our electronic health record-based research to improve the diagnosis of chronic liver disease in primary care. The Award allowed us to rapidly accelerate our projects as we built preliminary data for competitive federal R03 and R01 grant applications. The Award also raised the profile of our research team's work at our institution and allowed us the opportunity to broadly disseminate our findings and collaborate with interdisciplinary research teams at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and beyond. The Research Scholar Award directly created critical preliminary data for the funding of an Award at MUSC through the South Carolina Translational

Research Institute (SCTR) and the receipt of an R03 Award from NIDDK (R03DK129558) titled “Improving the Diagnosis and Fibrosis Risk Assessment of Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Primary Care Patients with Abnormal Liver Chemistries.” The support of the SSCI and the mentorship provided by Dr. Don Rockey have significantly enhanced my career in academic medicine. I cannot thank SSCI enough for this career-changing opportunity.

Andrew D. Schreiner, MD, MSCR, FSSCI
Associate Professor of Medicine
Medical University of South Carolina

2022 Research Scholar Award Recipient – Shigeki Saito, MD, MSCR
"Inhibition of Histone Deacetylase 8 (HDAC8) as a Therapy for Pulmonary Fibrosis"

I am grateful to have been a beneficiary of the SSCI Research Scholar Award. By providing the resources and support as I started my early research career, it allowed me to study the genomics and epigenetics of pulmonary fibrosis, using technology which may not have been otherwise afforded. Through this project with the mentored training, I was able to advance my career through publications, presentations, and developing preliminary data for future projects and additional funding. The SSCI was an essential part of my maturity as a researcher, and I am deeply thankful.

Shigeki Saito, MD, MSCR
Associate Professor of Medicine
Tulane University School of Medicine

2023 Research Scholar Award Recipient - Monica Chang-Panesso, MD
"Tubular Senescence and Proliferative Capacity of the Aging Kidney"

I want to express my profound appreciation and gratitude to the donors and the SSCI for establishing the SSCI Research Scholar Award. This award provided me with critical support at a time that is difficult to navigate as an early-stage physician scientist, the transition to an independent scientific career. At this stage, it is important to be able to focus on the science rather than the finances in order to have a great scientific base to build on and advance the field of medicine; but at an early stage, this is difficult to accomplish if there is not enough financial support.

The SSCI Research Scholar Award was crucial in my career development as a physician- scientist. Soon after receiving the SSCI award, I opened my lab, and the SSCI Research Scholar Award provided supplemental support to my K08 award to perform experiments focused on studying the repair response of injured tubular epithelial cells in the kidney.

I was able to publish the findings of these studies at *JCI Insight* and obtained my first senior author publication in 2024. With the support from the SSCI award, I was also able to perform additional experiments to generate preliminary data for my first R01 application, which I obtained in the summer of 2025, therefore, achieving a major milestone in my career as a physician-scientist. Thanks to the SSCI Research Scholar Award, I was able to transition to an independent physician-scientist, and I will always be grateful and honored to have received this support.

Monica Chang-Panesso, MD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine

2024 Research Scholar Award Recipient – Fabian M. Bock, MD, PhD
"RAC1 and the Actin Cytoskeleton in Renal Tubular Repair"

The SSCI Research Scholar Award provided critical additional funding during a very vulnerable early career startup phase. Institutional support and the moderate research budget on the K08 are often not enough to quickly ramp up a research operation that is necessary to generate the data for R01-level funding. The SSCI funding allowed me to pay for additional technician support that helped me to generate reporter cell lines. With these cell lines I could perform super-resolution imaging of subcellular biological processes in diseased cells with a specificity that has rarely been achieved before. This support also facilitated additional mouse experiments and pathological assessments in our tissue core that were fundamental to my research project on the cytoskeleton in kidney injury. Thanks to all this I have now a senior author publication under review at a high impact journal. This will undoubtedly be a critical step towards independent R01 level funding. I will forever be grateful to the SSCI for this generous support and the opportunities they have created.

Fabian Maximilian Bock, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

2026 Research Scholar Award Recipient – Chao He, MD, PhD
"Stiffness Drives Macrophage Fibrotic Programming Via Coupled Metabolic and Epigenetic Rewiring"

I am tremendously grateful to the donors for the SSCI Research Scholar Award. This award is providing critical support at an important stage of my career as I work toward becoming an independent physician-scientist. In today's challenging research funding environment, this generous support has allowed us to study human lung tissues using new technologies and generate important preliminary findings for my upcoming NIH R01 grant application. My research focuses on understanding why pulmonary fibrosis, or scarring of the lung, develops and progresses, with the goal of finding better treatments for patients.

The SSCI Research Scholar Award has made a meaningful difference not only in advancing our research, but also in helping me take the next critical step toward research independence. I am deeply grateful for the donors' investment in early-career investigators and their commitment to supporting discoveries that may ultimately lead to better treatments for patients.

Chao He, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Baylor College of Medicine

D. Visiting Professor and Educational Exchange Program. The SSCI supports visiting professors and early career scholars to member institutions upon request. The visiting professors do not receive honorarium; however, the SSCI supports the travel of the professor. The SSCI will fund up to ten requests for visiting professors each year. We would like to maintain support for these requests.

Acknowledgments:

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our donors, partners, and supporters who have made our work possible. Your commitment to the SSCI's mission has fueled positive change and made a lasting difference in future careers of many academic physicians.

Conclusion:

The SSCI is deeply grateful for your continued support and partnership. Together, we are making a meaningful impact in the mission of the society. We look forward to continuing this journey with you. Please let us know if you are interested in making a contribution to the SSCI for 2026. We also have opportunities for named lectureships and awards.

Contact Information:

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