SHORT ADVISORY GUIDE: MEDICAL STUDENT RESEARCH
There are many factors that will influence your decisions relating to obtaining research experience during your 4 years in medical school. This short guide is focused on considerations especially for Year I & II medical students. It is not intended to be comprehensive and when in doubt you can meet with Dr. Schechter, 323 442-1862, schechte@usc.edu

Students enter medical school with varied backgrounds and interests. Some students have a preliminary or even a longstanding interest in a specific specialty (for example, “I like working with my hands and want to be a surgeon”), while others are open and interested in everything.

Both groups may benefit by having a research training experience and the steps that need to be taken are very similar for both groups of students.
Step by step path to follow:
1. Do your best to identify 1-3 areas of interest as a starting point.
2. A listing of KSOM faculty with federal research grants is posted on MedWeb. It will provide you with the name of the principal investigator (PI), their department, sponsoring agency, title of the research grant and the funding period. IRB-approved clinical projects at the LACoH are also posted.
3. In addition, on the MedWeb & KSOM homepages there are numerous links to investigate many additional options.
4. Once you identify a few projects (~3-5) of interest, do a PubMed literature search to see what the PI and group are publishing. SKIM read the articles to see if your interest is sustained.

http://medweb.hsc.usc.edu/
- Short guide to research
- KSOM faculty with federal research grants
- LACoH clinical research projects
- How to write an abstract with examples
- Guidelines for making poster presentations

http://keck.usc.edu/
The research link provides an overview of:
- Clinical trials
- Medical student research
- Research at KSOM
- Institutes
- Affiliates
- Clinical research

Keep in mind that you are only just making a first step to exploring research opportunities, i.e., don’t be overwhelmed.
Step by step path to follow:

5. Assuming you still have sufficient interest in the research, you can now send an email to the PI.
6. Your email should be concise. “My name is ---. I am a Year I (or II) medical student here at the KSOM. I have been reading about your research and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you briefly to discuss any possibilities to work with you. I am interested to learn more about what you are doing and participating if I can. Please let me know when we might meet, perhaps for coffee.”
7. If you do not get a response from the PI after one week, then try to phone to set up an appointment. Explain to whomever books the faculty member’s time exactly what you said in your email message, i.e., you are a medical student interested to meet Dr. So & So to discuss research, etc.
8. Upon meeting with the PI, reinforce your background, your year in medical school, relevance of any previous research training, etc. By approaching any PI you are complimenting that person since you have read their publications and are basically saying (an implicit message) that you might envision being like them.
Other things to keep in mind:

9. Since you may be meeting with more than one PI, do not feel obligated to accept an offer with the first one you speak with. Be honest, say you are highly interested, but you are speaking with other people as well. As soon as you make a decision and accept the opportunity to work with someone, make sure you inform all others with whom you have met. And, sometimes you can do research with one person and shadow or maintain a relationship with another faculty person. You have many options.

10. Upon meeting with a PI it is fair to ask, “If my contributions to your research prove significant, would you consider me as a possible co-author in the future or to make a presentation at a conference?” You cannot and should not insist, but it is certainly worthwhile to raise the issue professionally with the PI. Rarely would a PI deny this to you, but ultimately the decision is up to the PI.