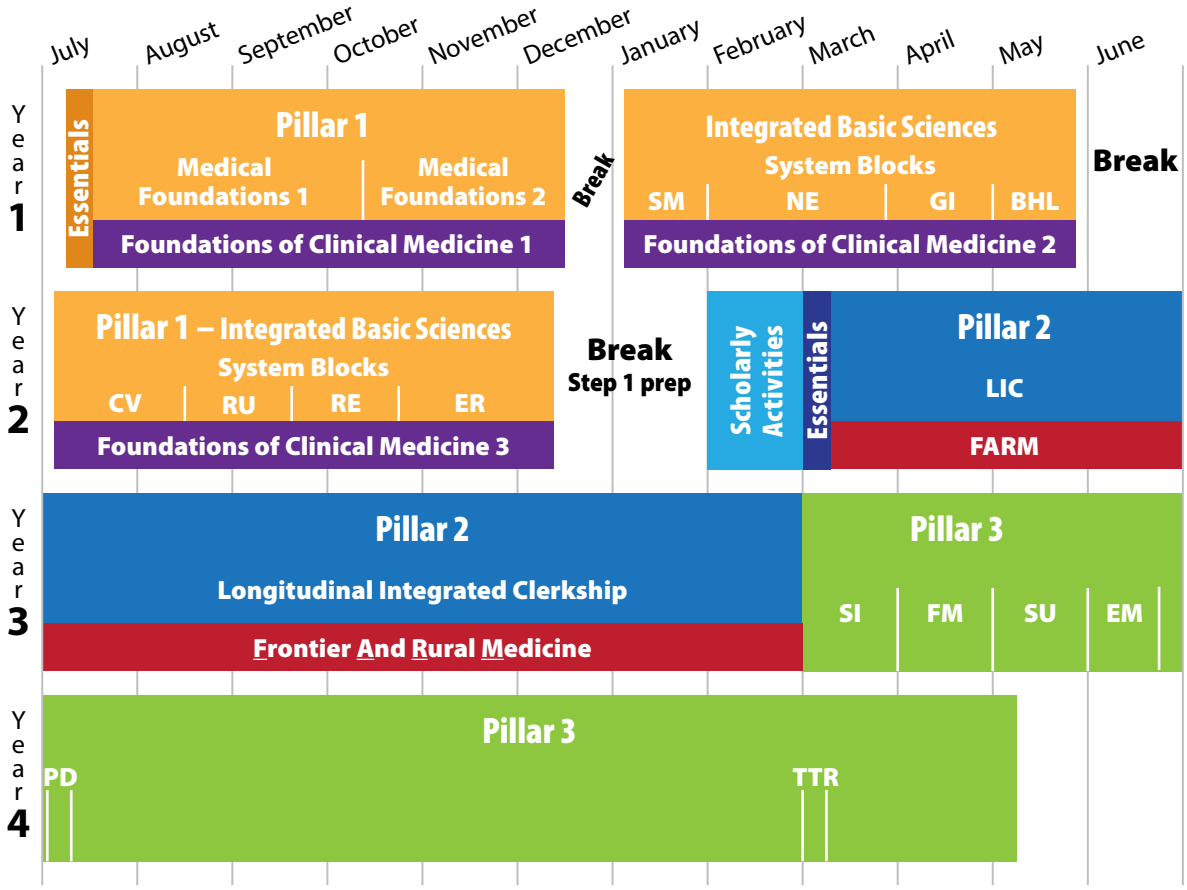
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA
SANFORD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Together in teaching, innovation and compassion

Three Pillar Curriculum



Pillar 1 System Blocks

- **SM** Skin-Musculoskeletal
- **NE** Nervous System
- **GI** GI-Hepatobiliary
- **BHL** Blood/Hemo/Lymph
- **CV** Cardiovascular
- **RU** Renal-Urinary
- **RE** Respiratory
- **ER** Endocrine-Reproductive

Pillar 3

- **SI** Sub-Internship
- **FM** Rural Family Medicine
- **SU** Surgery Subspecialties
- **EM** Emergency Medicine
- **PD** Professional Development (Student Affairs)
- **TTR** Transition to Residency

Pillar 1

Students participate in foundational biomedical sciences in parallel with foundational clinical sciences. The clinical foundation courses are integrated with two medical foundations courses and eight organ system courses. The grading is pass-fail in the first phase of the curriculum. The Pillar 1 curriculum has been developed with an emphasis on limited lectures, early clinical exposure, active learning, case-based small groups and high-fidelity simulation.

Pillar 2

Students participate in a longitudinal integrated clerkship which interleaves 7 clinical disciplines with hospital-based education, formal didactics, and a focused rural family medicine experience. Students are located on one of three clinical campuses – Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and Yankton- and in rural communities across the state through the Frontier and Rural Medicine (FARM) Program. The first semester of Pillar 2 is graded pass-fail, while the 2nd semester of Pillar 2 introduces letter grades.

Pillar 3

All students complete selected required rotations including two surgery sub-specialty experiences, an emergency medicine rotation and an acting internship (sub-internship). Students will also participate in a capstone rural family medicine experience during this phase of the curriculum. The remainder of this time students have the flexibility to pursue elective rotations, research, away rotations and global health experiences. Students can also select from a variety of courses on medical ethics, medical humanities and health policy. Grading in this phase of the curriculum is based on letter grades. A transition to residency course and a professional development course serve as the final requirements in the M.D. program.

*Scholarly Activities Course Enrollment

To enroll in the Scholarly Activities Course, students must pass Step 1 by the first Monday in February. Students that require extra study time can request a delay and if they have successfully passed by the beginning of March will begin LIC and complete the Scholarly Activities Course at the end of Pillar 2.

Authority: Medical Education Committee, Updated: 08/22/2025