Since 2013, UI Health SPS has employed at minimum 3 externs per year. Training is ongoing throughout the year and longitudinal, pharmacist-guided projects are transferred to new hires just prior to when the senior extern(s) transition to their APPE rotations.

One of the main operational roles that externs play is managing the medication delivery service for UI Health SPS. The students perform the packaging of temperature-controlled medications and the hand off with the delivery company.

In addition to assisting with general pharmacy fulfillment functions such as filling specialty and non-specialty medications, conducting monthly clinical assessment surveys with patients, coordinating medication refills, counseling patients under the supervision of a pharmacist, receiving and transferring prescriptions, and performing medication reconciliations, externs also manage several individual and group projects.

Each extern-managed project is tailored to match their interests.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that a significant amount of work can be done remotely, including much of the work done by full-time SPS staff, pharmacy inherently requires on-site contributions. For UI Health SPS, there has been an increased reliance on pharmacy externs for in-person operations since March of 2020.