



ACORN School
of Herbal Medicine

Clinical Residency & Roundtable

Student Handbook

2025-26



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School Information

The ACORN School of Herbal Medicine (referred to as ACORN) offers education in medical herbalism, clinical nutrition, basic physiology, field botany, herbal pharmacy, and other aspects of natural health. Our faculty members are certified herbalists with professional clinical experience and strong backgrounds in clinical nutrition. Our programs are not accredited by any educational agency in the State of California.

ACORN is affiliated with the North American Institute of Medical Herbalism (referred to as NAIMH). ACORN teaches the curriculum created by Paul Bergner, Medical Herbalist and Clinical Nutritionist for NAIMH. Paul founded NAIMH in 2003, and from 2003 until 2012, NAIMH was approved and Regulated by the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Private Occupational School Board. In July 2012 NAIMH relocated to Portland, Oregon. Oregon does not regulate this type of school, but NAIMH has kept and maintain the coursework approved by Colorado. NAIMH is not academically accredited, and students are not eligible for federal government loans. Each ACORN instructor has completed courses with NAIMH, under the instruction of Paul Bergner.

ACORN is owned solely by Heather Luna Keasbey, CCH, CN.

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Our classroom is now online. All classes are held online using video conferencing technology.



*Work with the forces of Nature
to establish a better quality of life for modern living*



Our Philosophy

In the practice of herbalism, we seek to treat the whole person, not the disease. In doing so herbalists employ healing methods intended to increase vitality and support the natural forces within us to restore balance on all levels. Our educational programs emphasize Vitalist principals in which to elevate the quality of life to facilitate deeper and more meaningful relationships with ourselves, our bodies, our community and to the Earth. We offer both a traditional and clinical platform from which to launch herbal practitioners into the life long journey. Using herbs as a way of life is an art. We support the creative process of self-care as a means to offer our services to others.

Our Vision

We invite you to participate in paving the way for a cultural shift in healing the landscape of the human being. As herbalists we employ healing methods that support Nature's innate ability to flourish. On this journey we learn to work with the forces of Nature. We seek to establish a better quality of life in modern living, knowing that health and wellness are not limited to what is perceived in physical form, but must be addressed at all levels of our being. This approach to personalized health care fosters an enriched human experience which directly affects the well-being of our relationships, our communities, and our culture. ACORN School of Herbal Medicine wellness programs are how we want to contribute and best serve our community, both locally and globally.

Understanding Vitalism

“Vitalism in healing is a clinical strategy based on the principle that Life, Nature, and the Great Spirit from which they arise are fully present in all the tissues of the body, and also in the psyche, the spiritual heart, and the soul, sustaining life and health, providing momentum for personal evolution on all levels, and for the fulfillment of the highest purpose in social and spiritual life. Vitalist practitioners employ clinical strategies and methods which support this life power through encouragement of nourishment, digestion, rest, and appropriate activity, identification of purpose in personal life, connection with nature, an active spiritual life, identification, and removal of obstacles to cure on all levels, and avoidance of methods which suppress or distort life processes. The Vitalist incorporates all aspects of science, especially physiology and pathophysiology, but equally values knowledge from traditional herbalism, empirical observation, instinct, and intuition, and is not confined to the narrow materialistic world view that dominates much of modern science, medicine, and social life.”

– Paul Bergner

A.C.O.R.N.

Academic Community Of Radical Nature-cure

Working with plants is working with the forces of Nature. Nature Cure is a healing modality as old as humanity itself. Our contemporary expression of it originated in the mid-1800s. Practitioners used whole food diets, restoration of the circadian rhythm, bathing in healing waters, movement in the fresh clean air, and the skilled application of herbs. This was practiced while spending ample time in natural landscapes and wild places. They found these methods to be curative of many conditions. It is from this tradition that modern naturopathic medicine was developed. In order to facilitate a cure, we must unpack the habits of modern lifestyle and restore the balance of Nature's original instructions in human life. It is our mission to resurrect these principles in the practice of western herbalism today.

We are a learning community and each of us comes to this calling with something to offer. We learn directly from experience, from our own and from each other. Every student on this path has the ability to become a teacher for ourselves, for those we serve, and for one another. The unique effects of herbs on one individual offer experience for all of us in the setting of shared community learning.

We cultivate a ferocious appetite for learning with in-depth study and rigor in our academic work. In defense of Nature's ability to heal, we take a radical stand against those dominant medical practices that suppress life's innate healing processes. We are the resistance against the distorted views of suppression which are known to cause harm and illness.

We have come to call our school the Academic Community of Radical Nature-cure.



***In order to practice herbalism effectively
one must turn towards Nature as the original instructor***

Core Faculty Members



Heather Luna, Clinical Herbalist, Clinical Nutritionist Founder & Director of the ACORN School of Herbal Medicine

Heather is the primary instructor of the Footprints program, supporting instructor of the Advanced program, and supervising clinician of the Free Clinic & Clinical Residency program.

Heather Luna teaches full time at the ACORN School of Herbal Medicine. She has held a private practice since 2002 and has instructed classes in Western Herbalism since 2006. Her clinical work emphasizes vitalist therapeutics with the use of herbs, nutrition, and Nature Cure practices. This includes custom herbal formulation, individualized nutrition protocols, coaching through food intolerance, therapeutic bodywork and uterine massage. She specializes in individual support for cultivating healthy lifestyle habits adapted for the conditions of modern living.

Heather is a graduate of the Rocky Mountain Center of Botanical Studies and the North American Institute of Medical Herbalism. After completing 4 years of formal training, she continued to pursue private studies under Ann Drucker, Ms. Beatrice Waight, and Paul Bergner. She now maintains hundreds of client case records which illustrate that vitalist strategies work to achieve outstanding clinical results. It is her passion for Nature which guides her practice with the use of herbs, nutrition, bodywork, and apitherapy. Heather holds a lineage in the vitalist tradition and has a mission to pass it on.



Paul Bergner, Medical Herbalist, Clinical Nutritionist Founder of North American Institute of Medical Herbalism

Paul is the creator of our course curriculum ~ he is the voice on all audio recorded lectures and it is his work in Vitalist Medicine that we will primarily study.

Paul Bergner has studied and practiced natural medicine since 1973, with formal studies in naturopathy, medical herbalism, clinical nutrition, traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, flower essences, yoga therapy, and bodywork, including undergraduate studies in pre-medicine and psychology, and 50 semester hours of doctoral level medical studies at National College of Naturopathic Medicine. He has edited the Medical Herbalism journal since its founding in 1989, and has written seven books on medical herbalism, nutrition, Chinese medicine, ethnobotany, and naturopathic medicine. He has also edited periodicals on clinical nutrition and naturopathic medicine.

Paul directed the clinical herbalism programs at Rocky Mountain Center for Botanical Studies and the NAIMH for eighteen years, training more than 230 certified clinical herbalists in an 1100+ hour education that culminates in an eight-month internship program. He is currently on the regular and clinical faculties of the Colorado School for Clinical Herbalism in Boulder, CO, and the School for Traditional Western Herbalism in Portland, OR. He has been adjunct faculty in nutrition at Naropa University, visiting faculty in nutrition and pathophysiology at the Tai Sophia Institute, and nutrition faculty at the Seven Bowls School of Nutrition. In addition to directing the NAIMH, he teaches herbal Materia medica and therapeutics, clinical nutrition, basic medical sciences, clinical skills, medical history and philosophy, and nature studies.



Clinical Residency & Roundtable Program

Class Schedule 2025-26

*****EXPANDED PROGRAM*** See below for details**

See the Clinic Program School Calendar at the end of this handbook for the full class schedule.

First Day of Class: September 15, 2025

Last Day of Class: August 24, 2026

School Breaks:

- October 20-24, November 24-28, December 22-January 2, February 16-20, April 13-17, June 1st

Program Overview

Our **Clinical Residency & Roundtable Program** is our third-year program that brings students into the field of clinical experience. All of the rigorous study our students have completed in the first-year program *Footprints in Medical Herbalism* and our second-year program *Advanced Herbalism in the Vitalist Tradition* bring them to the precipice of actively working in a community clinic setting.

This Program is based on the Roundtable clinical format. Student Clinicians will attend the ACORN School's monthly Free Clinic as interns to run complete private intake and then follow up sessions with actual clients. Student Clinicians will write up each case and submit it to the faculty and student body for review and collaborative feedback. Interns gain the experience and insight of every case that comes through our clinic.

Consecutively Student Clinicians will attend one roundtable meeting each week for teachings and discussion of topics that arise in clinical practice. Roundtable Meetings create a sacred space to share the challenges, insights, and moments of celebration of working in a clinic. Come to these ready to be your most authentic self.

WE HAVE EXPANDED OUR CLINIC PROGRAM! Please note that the hours and duration of the program has increased from previous years. **It is now a year-long program, with more than 200 additional hours of clinical training.**

When it comes to clinical experience, the more the better. What makes our clinic unique is a rigorous focus on follow-up care. Chronic health conditions do not resolve in a single visit. Transformations of serious and chronic diseases occur with continued care over an extended time. It often takes several visits over months for disease patterns to disappear.

Our extended program hours allow for more time working with clients to help them achieve their goals. There is nothing more rewarding than being able to facilitate client transformations to the point where they no longer have the condition they came in with. This is the experience we want our clinicians, and our clients, to have. With our new expanded program, you will gain an abundance of real-life training to carry you into your own clinical practice.

General Enrollment Information

Application & Deposit Due Date: 9/1/25

- You must have previous herbal education & training to apply (see Prerequisites).
- Prospective students must fill out an application for enrollment.
- There is a non-refundable \$50 application fee.
- Once your application is accepted there is a deposit required to hold your place in the program.
- You must be 18 years of age or older to attend classes.

Prerequisites

This program has prerequisite requirement of a minimum of 400 hours of pre-clinical training in vitalist herbalism, having attended our Advanced Herbalism in the Vitalist Tradition program or the equivalent. Prior to Advanced training students must have a minimum of 300 hours of Foundational herbalist education, having attended our Footprints in Medical Herbalism program or the equivalent. Together, this totals a minimum requirement of over 700 hours of study with the specific education in the methods of vitalist healing strategies to enter into our Clinical Residency and Roundtable program. Students who complete both our first- and second-year programs are certified in over 800 hours of Vitalist Herbalism. Those who go on to complete this Clinic Program, will have accumulated over 1400 hours of formal herbal education.

Hours

The Clinic Program is a total of 621 hours

- **Roundtable – 66 hours**
Weekly meetings for case discussion. Meetings often consist of lesson topics that are relevant to cases in the clinic, and provide clinician support.
- **Client Face Time – 230 hours**
Time spent working directly with clients.
- **Case Analysis – 205 hours**
Time spent on client research, case assessment, and written case reports.
- **Case Review – 120 hours**
Time spent reading case reports and providing collaborative feedback on every case that comes through the clinic.

Tuition

Total Program Cost \$5000

- **\$1150 - Tuition Deposit:** due upon acceptance
- **\$3850 - Tuition Balance:** can be paid in full due on 10/4/25 or in monthly payments – see next page

Tuition Monthly Payment Plan

All tuition payments are auto-billed on the 4th of the month (dates given below). Contact the school directly to make custom payment arrangements.

Upon Acceptance	10/4/25	11/4/25	12/4/25	1/4/26	2/4/26	3/4/26	4/4/26	5/4/26	6/4/26	7/4/26	8/4/26
\$1150 Deposit	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment	\$350 Tuition Payment

How Class Works

1st Day of Class: **September 15, 2025**

Last Day of Class: **August 24, 2026*****

The Clinic Program is held online using Zoom for both Roundtable meetings and Free Clinic appointments.

- Weekly Roundtable Meetings on Zoom: Mondays 3:00 – 4:30 pm PST
- Monthly Clinic Days: 2nd Saturday of the month October – July, starting at 10:00 am PST
- Interns will perform thorough Client Intakes (average 2 hours) and Follow-up Sessions (1 hour).
- Clinic appointments are held on Zoom, allowing us to work with clients all over the country.
 - Students Clinicians must have their own Zoom account to host follow-up appointments, which will be scheduled independently from posted Free Clinic dates.
 - Students then have the option to record their Zoom sessions and watch them later for deeper learning and recollection of client stories.
- Each client case will be reviewed by Paul Bergner & Heather Luna, before presenting collaborative feedback to all interns.
- Student Clinicians will submit written cases with a complete analysis breakdown for community review.
- Faculty and community feedback will be given on your clinic cases via Google docs.
- Casework: All case write ups and clinic handouts must be turned in as a Google Doc file and shared via our Google Drive “Roundtable” folder. Case work submitted in other formats (Word, Pages, PDF, etc) will NOT be reviewed or receive feedback.

Requirements to Earn Certificate

Completion of the *Clinical Residency & Roundtable* program earns the student a certificate from the ACORN School of Herbal Medicine if the following criteria are met:

- **Attendance:** Student Clinicians must attend all weekly Roundtable Meetings on time.
- **Clinic Days:** Student Clinicians must attend all monthly Free Clinic Days on time.
- **Casework:** Student Clinicians must complete and submit all client casework and case readings on time.



Clinic Policy for Student Clinicians

- If for any reason a Student Clinician does not want to work with a particular client, they may decline the session and inform the Director of their decision.
- Student Clinicians are required to show expressed interest and compassion for the clients they do choose to work with.
- Client confidentiality must be maintained and all case records scrubbed for peer review. No names, places of work or school should be mentioned.
- Student Clinicians are required to follow through with each client they commit to. This means complete a case write up and communication with the client after each session via phone or email to discuss treatment plan options and establish a connection for future follow-up visits.
- Cases must be added to the Case Reading Log for feedback.
- Once a protocol has been agreed upon by both the client and the clinician, the client must receive a written treatment plan containing all necessary instructions.
- All Herbal Formulas must be rendered through the school pharmacy. To dispense a remedy or formula to a client send an email to the school at herbalists@acornherbschool.com with a request to fill the order.
- Student Clinicians must attend weekly Roundtable meetings and monthly Free Clinic Days. No more than 3 Roundtable absences and 1 Clinic Day absence will be permitted in order to graduate.
- All clinic cases shared within the group must be read by each clinic intern and provide proof that they have done so. This is the standard of community learning.

IMPORTANT: Failure to comply with Clinic Policy will result in dismissal from the program.

Contact ACORN School Director Heather Luna with any questions.

School Policies

Communication with the Director

If you are having any difficulties with payments, homework, or attendance please contact the Director so we can establish a means to help you get back on track.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The ACORN School of Herbal Medicine does not discriminate based on disability, race, religion, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital status, national origin, or ancestry.

Postponement of Start Date

If the Clinical Residency & Roundtable Program has a postponement of its starting date, due to unforeseen circumstances, all students will be notified immediately via phone, text and/or email. A new date will be set as soon as possible.

School Closures

ACORN may cancel or reschedule a class due to an unforeseen circumstance. If this happens students will be notified as soon as possible.

Conduct Policy

- All students are expected to act with common decency and respect to the other students and faculty members.
- Showing up to class intoxicated, making rude and derogatory comments, and being disrespectful to anyone in our class setting is against our standards of respect and human dignity.
- Any violation of school policies may result in permanent dismissal from school of the faculty member, staff member and/or student.

Dismissal

Any student may be dismissed for violations of school policy, as specified in this Student Handbook. A student also may be withdrawn from classes by ACORN if they do not prepare sufficiently or neglects coursework.

Student Complaints

Student complaints of any nature should be brought to the attention of the school Director in order to be resolved.

Attendance

An overall attendance rate of at least 90% is required to graduate from the Clinic Program. Student Clinicians must be prepared to attend weekly Roundtable Meetings, monthly Free Clinic Days, complete client intakes and perform follow-ups. If attendance & tardiness requirements are not being met, students will have a meeting with the Director and be given a written probation. Continued attendance problems are grounds for dismissal from the program.

There are 44 Roundtable Meetings and 10 Clinic Days during the school year.

Student Clinicians are *only* allowed to miss 3 Roundtable Meetings and 1 Clinic Day.

If students are unable meet these criteria, contact the director immediately.

1. Absences

If a Student Clinician will be absent for any reason (sick or otherwise) they are required to notify ACORN via phone or email no later than 24 hours before the Roundtable Meeting or Clinic Day appointment. List the reason for the absence and the expected date of your return. If a Student Clinician is a “no call – no show” for any Roundtable Meetings or Clinic Days, this is grounds for dismissal from the program.

- Roundtable Meeting Absence - only 3 allowed:
 - Students are required to turn in all casework due for Roundtable by the due date.
 - Students are required to make up missed Roundtable hours by watching the recorded Zoom Roundtable Meeting and submitting written reflection notes.
- Clinic Day Absence - only 1 allowed:
 - If a student misses more than 1 Clinic Day appointment, dismissal from the program is warranted. A mandatory meeting with the Director will be scheduled to discuss discontinuation of enrollment.

2. Tardiness

Student Clinicians are expected to **arrive on time for Roundtable Meetings** with proper materials and all assignments completed. They are also expected to **arrive 5 minutes early to Clinic Day appointments** to be prepared to perform an intake.

- Roundtable Meeting Tardiness
 - Students arriving more than 15 minutes late for Roundtable meetings will be docked one full day of attendance (maximum 3 absences allowed).
 - Excessive tardiness will constitute a meeting with the Director and a written probation. Specific terms will be determined by the Director at the time of the meeting.
- Clinic Day Tardiness
 - Student Clinicians arriving more than 15 minutes late to a Clinic Day appointment will not be allowed to perform their client intake and will be counted as one missed clinic day.
 - A second tardy is grounds for dismissal.

3. Leave of Absence

Student Clinicians who are unable to continue classes for medical reasons or severe personal problems will be required to take a leave of absence until they are able to return to class. A meeting with the Director is required to determine how to move forward with their enrollment. Proper documentation will be needed to grant this request.

Case Write-ups/Casework

- All Case Write-ups must be submitted via the Case Reading Log by the due date.
- Late case write-up submissions will not receive feedback in time for follow-up sessions. If a case write-up is turned in late their follow up visit may be rescheduled, but the student will be placed on probation. In the clinic we work as a team. When a student turns in late work it directly effects the relationship with their client and holds up the entire roundtable process.
- **All casework must be completed in order to earn a certificate.** If missing casework is not resolved within 7 days after the due date, a certificate will NOT be awarded.

Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition payments are auto-billed on the 1st Tuesday of the month for 8 consecutive months starting in October and ending in May. For Students not using auto-billing, all payments are due by the dates posted on the Enrollment Agreement Form. Payments not received on time are subject to Late Fees that begin accruing 7 days after the due date. Students may be prohibited to attend classes until payment has been made.

- **Late Tuition Payments**

Payment is considered late on the 7th day after the due date.

- **Late Fees**

Starting on the 7th day, a Late Fee is assessed at \$10.00 per day until the payment is made. Late Fees will be due at the same time as the past due payment.

- **Credit Card Declined**

If a credit card provided declines the student will receive a digital invoice that will be due within 7 days and before Late Fees are assessed and further action is taken.

- **Bad Check Written**

If a check written to ACORN comes back as insufficient funds, there will be a one-time bad check fee of \$25.00 that will be added to the payment due.

The student will be given notice immediately and will have one week to provide payment before Late Fees are assessed and further action is taken.

We will no longer accept checks from the student and will require a credit card moving forward.

- **Financial Hardship**

If you experience a financial hardship that prevents you from making tuition payments, please contact the Director as soon as you know you cannot make your next payment. The Director can hear your case and try to work out a reasonable arrangement to make up payments and keep you enrolled.

Refund Policy / Withdrawal from the Program

If you decide not to attend the Clinic Program after you have paid your deposit and signed the Enrollment Agreement, please send your *request to withdraw* in writing (letter or email) to ACORN, attention: Heather Luna. See below for details on what is refundable and what is not.

- **Tuition Deposit**
 - Withdraw from the program before the 1st day of class: You will receive half of your paid deposit back.
 - Withdraw from the program after classes begin: You will not receive any deposit back.
- **Tuition Balance Paid in Full**
 - If you have paid for the program in full and wish to withdraw, you will be refunded from the next month's billing cycle until the end of the program. For instance, if you withdraw in December, you will receive January through August tuition back.
- **Tuition Balance Monthly Payments**
 - Monthly tuition payments made to ACORN are non-refundable.
 - If you withdraw from the Clinic Program mid-month after you have paid the monthly payment, you will not receive a refund for that month.

Placement Assistance

ACORN does not offer employment placement assistance to graduates. We make no guarantee, expressed or implied, of future employment.



Clinic Residency & Roundtable Program

School Calendar 2025-26

Mondays 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm PST

September 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- 1st Day of School
- Regular School Days
- No School
- Free Clinic Days
- Last Day of School