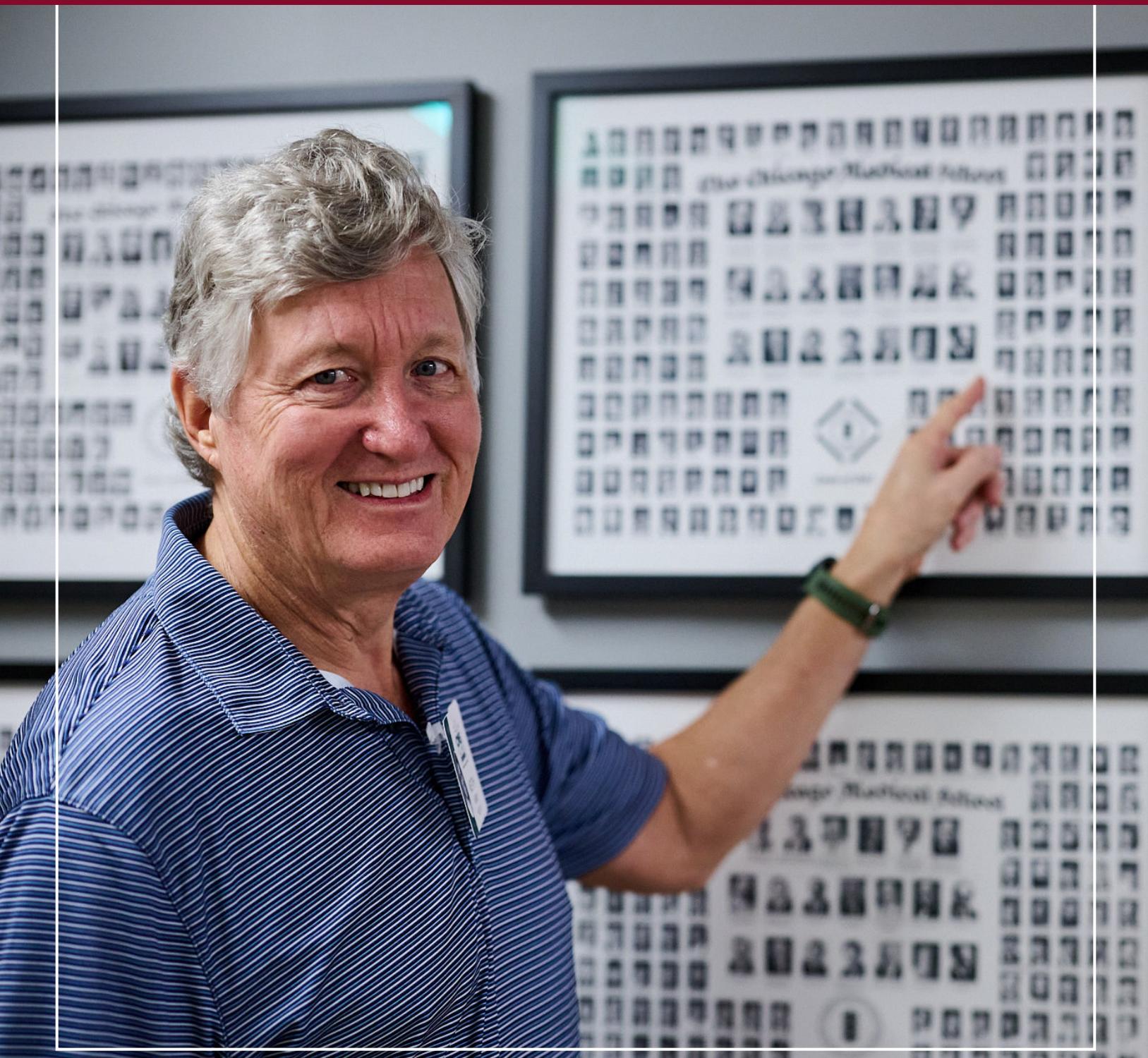




# CMS NEWS

The Chicago Medical School Newsletter

FALL 2025 | ISSUE 38



# Dean's Message

## CMS News

Fall 2025

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**Cover Image:** Keith Kirby, MD '87, locates his class photo in the Chicago Medical School Class of 1987 composite during the CMS Reunion Weekend.

**Contact Information:**  
Office of the Dean  
Chicago Medical School  
Rosalind Franklin University  
3333 Green Bay Road  
North Chicago, IL 60064  
[www.rosalindfranklin.edu/cms](http://www.rosalindfranklin.edu/cms)



Greetings from the Dean's Office!

In the spirit of the approaching Thanksgiving holiday, I'd like to open this message by expressing my gratitude to all the CMS faculty, staff, alumni, and clinical affiliates who commit their time and energy to teaching and training our students. It takes a tremendous amount of dedication and teamwork to carry out our mission of training capable, compassionate future physicians, and I am truly thankful for all the individuals who work together to ensure the smooth operation of our medical school.

We recently had the chance to show our appreciation for our faculty and affiliate partners during the annual CMS Faculty and Friends Recognition Dinner, which we held in October with nearly 140 guests in attendance. Please join me in congratulating the faculty who were honored during the ceremony: Dr. Janice L. Gilden received the Excellence in Graduate Medical Education Award; Drs. Veronica Guerraro and Tomasz M. Jarzembowksi received the Clinical Preceptor Award; Dr. Lisa S. Thompson received the Excellence in Community Service Award; Dr. Kim Fasula received the Excellence in Educational Innovation Award; Dr. Erin N. Howe received the CMS Junior Faculty Investigator Award; Dr. Amiel Rosenkranz received the CMS Distinguished Faculty Award; Drs. Raj Chovatiya and Kenneth J. Tomchik received the Excellence in Clinical Education Award; and Drs. Frank Maldonado, Jeanette Morrison, Daniel Peterson, Nikki Dixon, Antwione Haywood, Netali Ginsberg, and Monique Jones received the Dean's Special Recognition Award. Additionally, two of our clinical partners, Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center and Silver Cross Hospital, received the Affiliate Site Award.

In September, it was time to celebrate our alumni as we welcomed many of our past graduates back to campus for our CMS Reunion Weekend. Our visiting alumni reconnected with each other and got to engage with some of our wonderful students. We were also proud to recognize three distinguished alumni for their outstanding contributions to medicine and the biomedical sciences, exceptional service, and early career achievement: Dr. Sanford M. Archer (Class of '83) received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Achievement, Dr. Steven Kirshblum (Class of '86) received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Service, and Dr. Vivian Wong (Class of '14) received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Early Career Achievement.

I've also enjoyed meeting additional alumni at recent events — both in my own travels and when alumni visit our campus. In September, I had lunch with Neelum Aggarwal, MD Class of '92. In October, I joined several alumni for dinner in Chicago: Sheri Dewan, MD Class of '05; Kim Dary, MD Class of '04; Rukhsana G. Mirza, MD Class of '01; Kina C. Peppers, MD Class of '01; Leonard Levites, MD Class of '00; Fernando Orellana, MD Class of '00; Thomas J.

Kirages, MD Class of '98; Joseph M. Maurice, MD Class of '93; and Dennis L. Vickers, MD Class of '82. Just last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with Elson Lai, MD Class of '07, in California, where I also attended an alumni brunch hosted by Stephanie Mandelman, MD Class of '90, and her husband Shane Damelin at their home. I always enjoy these opportunities to meet alumni and their families and hear the latest updates on their lives and careers.

There have been several important leadership changes on campus recently. Dr. Michael Allswede, who joined CMS in 2021 as our Assistant Dean of Clinical Education, has taken on a new leadership role within Chicago Medical School and Rosalind Franklin University. As of October 20, Dr. Allswede now serves as Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, CMS; Vice Chair for Clinical Sciences, CMS; and Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs, RFU. In these roles, he will oversee clinical partnerships, develop new rotation sites, maintain relationships with affiliated hospitals and health systems, and collaborate across RFU's colleges to strengthen clinical education and residency opportunities. I am confident that he will use his knowledge and expertise to ensure that our students receive the rigorous clinical training opportunities to best prepare them for their future careers.

I would also like to welcome Dr. Aron Sousa, who joined us this month as the new President and CEO of Rosalind Franklin University. Dr. Sousa formerly served as dean of the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and executive dean of the MSU Health Colleges, where he also played a role in building a nationally recognized public health research program in Flint, Michigan. I look forward to seeing what Dr. Sousa's leadership and dedication to public health will bring to our university. I also want to take a moment to thank our retiring President and CEO Dr. Wendy Rheault for more than 40 years of administrative service at RFU, including six years as President and four years as Provost. I thank her for her dedication and service to our university and wish her a very happy and well-deserved retirement.

As we celebrate new beginnings and look forward to the coming year, I want to say a few words about our ongoing application process as we search for the future members of our CMS Class of 2030. As of November 3, 2025, we have received 16,442 applications — a 38% increase from last year! As we continue to conduct

applicant interviews and send out decisions, I am confident that this year's very competitive application cycle will bring us some exceptional future doctors. I look forward to working with them, and with the rest of our Chicago Medical School community, to advance public health and care for our nation's health and well-being.

As Winter Break approaches and another year draws to a close, I hope each of you are able to take some time to relax and spend time with family, friends, or other loved ones. As you reflect on everything you've achieved in 2025 and consider your goals for the coming year, I join you in anticipation of the opportunities and accomplishments that 2026 will bring. I wish all our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends Happy Holidays and a joyful and healthy New Year.

Sincerely,



Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD  
Dean, Chicago Medical School  
Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs, RFUMS





Agbai Kalu, Carl Marcellin, and Amy Swift-Johnson, MD '06, alongside current Black Men in White Coats executive board members and fellow CMS student volunteers, at their event at Zion-Benton Township High School.

## Exposure, Inspiration, Mentorship

*The RFU Chapter of Black Men in White Coats visited a local high school to inspire and encourage students to envision a career in medicine.*

The look of awe on the faces of Zion-Benton Township High School students said it all as many of them witnessed their first live human heart. Guided through an immersive “Day in the Life of a Cardiologist” experience, organized by RFU students, these young learners were introduced to a world that once felt like a distant dream. For some, medicine had seemed unattainable, yet the smell of formaldehyde in their very own high school and the powerful sight of Black Men in White Coats made that dream feel closer than ever.

On Thursday, September 11, the newly chartered **Black Men in White Coats (BMWC)** Chapter at RFU hosted its first major community outreach initiative. Under the leadership of Chapter President and Co-Founder **Agbai Kalu**, CMS '28; Vice President and Co-Founder

**Carl Marcellin**, CMS '28; and a dedicated group of student volunteers across multiple RFU programs, the team brought the mission of BMWC directly into the community by engaging with students at Zion-Benton Township High School.

The day's theme was “A Day in the Life of a Cardiologist.” Designed to be interactive and inspiring, the visit sought to provide local high school students, many of whom come from backgrounds historically underrepresented in medicine, with meaningful exposure to careers in health care. For students who may not otherwise have access to physicians or mentors in the medical field, opportunities like these can spark curiosity, open doors, and help them envision a future in medicine that they might not have previously imagined.



Throughout the day, the RFU team led students through a series of hands-on activities and discussions that simulated the journey of a cardiologist caring for patients. From learning how to use a stethoscope to understanding how lifestyle and genetics influence heart health, the students were immersed in the clinical mindset of a physician. Volunteers shared personal stories about their own paths to medicine, the challenges they encountered, and the motivations that drive them to serve patients. By bridging personal narrative with medical science, the BMWC members aimed to demystify the profession and make it more relatable.

One of the central goals of the event was to address the gap in representation within the field of medicine. Studies consistently show that Black men remain significantly underrepresented in medicine, a reality that can discourage younger students from considering medicine as a viable career path. The BMWC RFU Chapter was established with the mission to change that narrative through supporting current students and by actively mentoring the next generation. By going directly into classrooms, speaking face-to-face with students, and providing tangible experiences, the chapter demonstrated what it means to turn mission into action.

For the high school students, the experience was more than just an academic exercise. Many expressed

excitement at hearing directly from medical students who looked like them, shared similar backgrounds, and could serve as role models. Seeing representation in such a tangible way was empowering and gave students a sense of possibility about their own futures. For the RFU students, the event was equally meaningful, reinforcing their responsibility not only to pursue their own education but also to lift others as they climb.

The event at Zion-Benton High School marked just the beginning of the BMWC Chapter's work at Rosalind Franklin University. Agbai, Carl, and their fellow members plan to continue hosting similar outreach events, building mentorship pipelines, and fostering long-term relationships between RFU and local schools. Their hope is that by consistently engaging young people, they can create a culture of inclusion, mentorship, and inspiration that extends well beyond a single visit.

Ultimately, the outreach was a powerful example of how grassroots efforts driven by passionate students can have a profound impact on both the local community and the future of medicine. The BMWC Chapter's presence at RFU is a reminder that representation matters, mentorship changes lives, and exposure at a young age can set the stage for transformational career journeys. ■



## CMS Faculty and Friends Recognition Dinner

Chicago Medical School held its annual Faculty and Friends Recognition Dinner on October 8 at the Hilton Chicago-Northbrook, to celebrate the outstanding achievements and contributions of our faculty and clinical partners. During the event, the school awarded special recognition to several individuals and groups who have put forth exemplary efforts to educate, mentor, and train our students over the past year.

**Janice L. Gilden**, MD, MS, FCP, FACE, professor of medicine and director of the CMS endocrinology fellowship program, received the CMS Excellence in Graduate Medical Education Award, given to an educator who exemplifies the highest standards of graduate medical education through expert mentorship, leadership, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

**Veronica Guerraro**, MD, lecturer of surgery, and **Tomasz M. Jarzembowski**, MD, clinical assistant professor of family medicine, received the Clinical Preceptor Award, given to private preceptors based on their engagement with the administration, involvement with CMS, and student feedback.

**Jessie Folk**, MD, assistant professor of emergency medicine, and **Manoj Kumar**, MD, internal medicine resident, were honored as this year's Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) inductees.

**Regina de Leon Gomez**, MD, FACOG, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, was selected as the 2025 Aequitas Health Honor Society Faculty Fellow in recognition of her work in climate advocacy.

**Lisa S. Thompson**, MD, assistant professor of surgery, received the CMS Excellence in Community Service Award, which acknowledges an individual who is committed to serving the underserved population at CMS, its communities, and its clinical affiliates.

**Kimberly Fasula**, PhD, MS, MPH, RDH, PHDH, director of assessment and interprofessional education, received the CMS Excellence in Educational Innovation Award, given to an individual who demonstrates innovation in teaching and learning approaches, with a focus on curriculum and instructional development.

**Erin N. Howe**, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, received the CMS Junior Faculty Investigator Award for her research dissecting the molecular mechanisms driving metastatic breast cancer. This award recognizes a promising researcher for their significant contributions to their field.

**J. Amiel Rosenkranz**, PhD, MS, professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology and director of the Brain Science Institute, received the CMS Distinguished Faculty Award,

the highest honor that the medical school bestows upon its faculty. It is awarded to a faculty member who brings honor and prestige to CMS through their outstanding commitment to the school and sustained contribution to teaching, service, research, and/or patient care.

**Raj Chovatiya**, MD, PhD, MSCI, FAAD, associate professor of medicine, and **Kenneth J. Tomchik**, MD, lecturer of medicine, received the CMS Excellence in Clinical Education Award, awarded to educators who demonstrate empathy and respect for students, create a culture that encourages student expression of ideas, act as an exemplary role model, and exhibit professional values and standards.

Two of our clinical partners, **Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center** and **Silver Cross Hospital**, received the CMS Affiliate Site Award, granted in recognition of everything the sites and their faculty, staff, and administration do to provide a rigorous and educational clinical teaching environment for the CMS students who rotate there.

**Frank Maldonado**, MD, FCCP, professor of medicine and executive chair of clinical sciences; **Jeanette Morrison**, MD, FACP, vice dean for medical education and executive vice dean for CMS; and **Daniel Peterson**, PhD, professor

of neuroscience and director of the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, received the Dean's Special Recognition Award, which recognizes individuals who have gone above and beyond in their hard work and dedication to CMS. This award was also bestowed upon the members of the JumpStart Program team: **Nikki Dixon**, DNP, MSN, MEd, director of student development and learning success; **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, associate dean for student affairs; **Netali Ginsberg**, MD, interim director of pathway success; and **Monique Jones**, MD '93, interim assistant dean for career and specialty advising.

Congratulations to all our award winners, as well as everyone who was nominated! We thank you for everything you do for our school, our students, and our community. ■

**Clockwise from top left:** Dr. Arpita Patel-Mehta, Dr. Nutan Vaidya, and Dr. Kim Fasula. Dr. Carl Correll, Dr. Erin Howe, and Dr. Joseph Reynolds. Dr. Melissa Chen and Dr. Regina de Leon Gomez. Dr. Netali Ginsberg and CMS Dean Dr. Archana Chatterjee. Dr. Beth Stutzmann, Dr. Robert Marr, Dr. Holly Hunsberger, and Dr. Daniel Peterson. Dr. Michael Allsweide with Dr. James Dunphy, representing Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center.

**Opposite page:** CMS faculty from the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center.





# *Educate, Advocate, and Empower*

*In a new series, the Pediatrics Interest Group invites experts each month to explore critical child health issues and advocacy actions.*

As part of their new Educate, Advocate, and Empower series, the **Pediatrics Interest Group** is hosting a series of talks by expert physicians and researchers in the field to discuss a variety of important topics that are crucial to both future pediatric providers and to healthcare professionals as a whole.

During the month of September, the Pediatrics Interest Group, in collaboration with the Emergency Medicine Interest Group, hosted **Elizabeth Henschen**, DO, a Pediatric Hospitalist, leading researcher, and attending physician at Advocate Children's Hospital in Park Ridge. Dr. Henschen spoke on gun violence, the leading cause of childhood death, as she highlighted research, advocacy, and practical strategies for discussing firearm safety and safe storage with families and patients. She helped demystify conversations with patients and how, as aspiring healthcare professionals, RFU students can approach discussing firearm safety with their patients and families. Attendees learned valuable strategies for keeping patients informed and engaged in preventative measures. Additionally, Dr. Henschen contextualized the topic of gun violence and its direct effect on patient health and safety in the present day and further described its application to healthcare, inspiring her audience to stand up as advocates for their patients' health and safety so that RFU students can keep their patients protected.

During October, the Pediatrics Interest Group, in collaboration with HEAL (Healthcare Engagement, Advocacy, and Legislation), hosted **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, Dean of Chicago Medical School and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs, RFU. Dr. Chatterjee is also a Pediatric Infectious Diseases specialist who serves on the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. She discussed vaccine hesitancy and disparities in access, which are very pertinent topics to keep in mind as growing healthcare professionals. She elaborated on the importance of building trust amongst patients and providers, and how establishing trust can produce several long-term effects on preventative care and create support for families in making informed decisions about their health and well-being. Lecturing on the history of several vaccines in their initial stages, Dr. Chatterjee created parallels in vaccine education and hesitancy, allowing students to think critically about the value of the care they are providing to patients now and how to best serve patient populations in an era of misinformation. By equipping her audience with the tools they need to approach patient conversations, Dr. Chatterjee effectively motivated her students to engage in open-minded conversations with patients about vaccines to improve patient health outcomes. ■

**Above:** Dr. Chatterjee discussed vaccine hesitancy and disparities.

# The Challenge Initiative

*The RFU Fitness Challenge is back for its second term to inspire and empower students, faculty, and staff to prioritize physical health and mental well-being through fun, engaging challenges.*

“The Challenge” is a four-week fitness and wellness initiative that has engaged students, faculty, and staff in a series of fitness workshops and events. Started by current second-year medical students **Izza Khurram**, **Sarah Eyles**, **Nilasha Sen**, **Julieanne Cabang**, and **Christopher Currie**, the initiative encourages the RFU community to prioritize physical and mental health and well-being. As future healthcare professionals, the students aim to lead by example, demonstrating the importance of incorporating regular physical activity into a busy life. The program also seeks to show how small, consistent steps can make a big impact.

The students founded the fitness challenge during their first year of medical school, with the first round taking place last spring. The second round took place this fall, beginning on September 15 and lasting through October 12. During the initiative, participants track their weekly movement minutes, complete weekly short surveys, and engage in weekly challenges. The program includes free classes offered by nearby gyms, opportunities to build community, and raffle prizes for those who complete the

weekly challenges. In offering weekly classes, workshops, and other activities, the students collaborated with faculty, local partners, and other student organizations, fostering a supportive environment where movement, motivation, and community come together.

Events this fall included a guided “Mindfulness Meditation” session hosted by **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, CMS associate dean for student affairs, who led participants through breathing and awareness techniques to help reduce stress, improve focus, and cultivate calm. Dr. Haywood also led a core/abs workout session. Students also tracked their weekly movement minutes through other activities such as Pilates classes and even the Chicago Lifetime Half-Marathon!

The initiative encourages healthy habits while fostering connection across the CMS community. It has encouraged community, collaboration, and personal growth, and the students are excited to share the impact it has had! ■



*Dr. Haywood alongside Izza Khurram, Sarah Eyles, Alexis Olson, and Bella Trancoso at the Core/Abs workout session run by Dr. Haywood in partnership with The Challenge.*



*Challenge participant Armon Green after finishing the Chicago Lifetime Half-Marathon.*

# The LATINO MEDICAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION



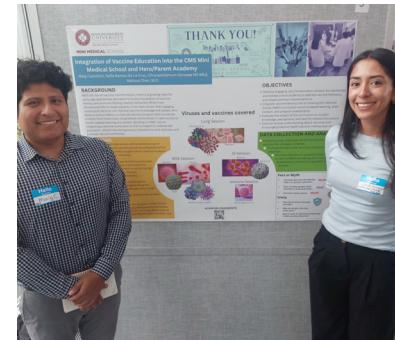
## *Student Conference Attendance*

In September, CMS students and faculty attended the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) National Conference and the University of Chicago Biological Sciences Division "Impact and Action" Retreat. Our students and faculty presented seven posters in total: four on CMS research related to our Mini Medical School and Parent/Hero Academy programs, and three on Principles of Professionalism, Health Care, & Health Equity (P2H2) and Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) projects. Congratulations to all the students who were able to showcase the work and research going on at Chicago Medical School, with a special focus on our community outreach programs! ■

**Above:** CMS students, faculty, and staff at the LMSA National Conference.



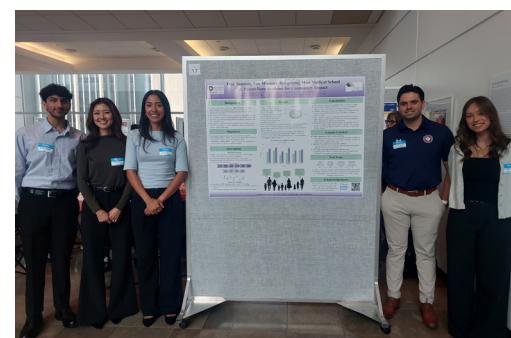
CMS students, faculty, and staff at the University of Chicago retreat.



Maig Castellon and Sofia Ramos de la Cruz, both CMS '28.



Carl Marcellin, Charles Bieleu Nkamga, Iris Siguenza, and Agbai Kalu, all CMS '28.



Shivam Malhotra, Lucia Cho, Sofia Ramos de la Cruz, Mitchell Cyganiak, and Vanessa Paus, all CMS '28.

# SYNAPSES

*A Creative Journal of the Chicago Medical School*

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# ICC Clinic Champions

Several CMS students have been recognized as “ICC Clinic Champions” in recent issues of the Rosalind Franklin University Health Clinics’ monthly newsletter. This feature highlights Interprofessional Community

Clinic (ICC) students who go above and beyond in service and leadership. We’re spotlighting those students here, along with their nominations from the ICC Faculty Leadership Team.

## Elizabeth James, CMS '28; Zohaib Ahmed, CMS '28; and Samantha Pardini, CMS '29 — Care Coordination Executive Officers



*Elizabeth James*



*Zohaib Ahmed*



*Samantha Pardini*

Elizabeth, Zohaib, and Samantha have consistently gone above and beyond, tirelessly working behind the scenes to ensure the smooth operation of our clinic. The work of a care coordinator often goes unseen, but it's absolutely essential to the success of the ICC. Elizabeth, Zohaib, and Samantha are responsible for leading a team of students that contact every patient before and after each appointment for all of the ICC's services. They do this in all languages, ensuring every patient receives the support they need. Their dedication doesn't stop when clinic hours end; they work through summers and every break, consistently delivering a high standard of care.

Their commitment to patient care and the ICC is unmatched. With the launch of several new services, they've been contacting more patients than ever. They have been relentlessly persistent in tracking down patients who can be challenging to find, often working after hours to ensure no one slips through the cracks. They assist patients with registering for our GoodPill mail-order pharmacy, through which the ICC funds chronic medications for our patients.

A recent challenge highlighted their exceptional skills and dedication. When a specific medication became unavailable through GoodPill, they have been instrumental in navigating the complex situation. They coordinated with clinicians to find acceptable substitutes, communicated with different pharmacies, and carefully explained the new instructions to each affected patient. Their meticulous and thoughtful approach is ensuring that patients receive their necessary medications with minimal interruption.

In addition to their patient care, they've also organized key trainings for their care coordinator students and the entire ICC. An upcoming training will focus on trauma-informed care and how it translates into effective patient communication, a testament to their dedication to improving care for everyone at the clinic.

Please join us in celebrating Elizabeth, Zohaib, and Samantha for their incredible work, unwavering commitment, and for truly embodying the spirit of the ICC.

## **Morgan Perry, CMS '28 — ICC Executive Officer of Patient Education**



Morgan brings unwavering dedication to the clinic — nearly every Thursday night, she's on-site

organizing the ICC's no-questions-asked Food Pantry, ensuring it's stocked with nutritious staples and fresh produce. She has been the driving force this year in collaborating with local food banks to develop new partnerships. Morgan has also been a consistent presence at community outreach events, including the recent 'Breakfast and Breast Exams' initiative in Waukegan.

Currently, Morgan is leading the development of the ICC's first-ever Lifestyle Medicine Service, expanding our ability to care for patients holistically. Her reliability, attention to detail, and joyful spirit make her not only a standout leader, but also an outstanding collaborator. We're proud to recognize Morgan's exceptional contributions to the ICC community.

## **Iris Siguenza, CMS '28, and Shantalle Martinez, CMS '28 — ICC Executive Officers of Interpreting Services**



***Iris Siguenza***

Through their tireless dedication, Iris and Shantalle have made an incredible impact on patients with limited English proficiency and those without insurance. Week after week, their commitment shines through — ensuring that language never becomes a barrier to receiving care. Whether recruiting and training volunteer interpreters, coordinating schedules, or personally stepping in to provide support (which occurs with just about every ICC clinic, even throughout the summer), both have consistently gone above and beyond to serve patients with compassion.



***Shantalle Martinez***

Their efforts not only strengthen the clinic's ability to provide inclusive care but also foster an environment of collaboration and service among volunteers. Iris and Shantalle's leadership is a shining example of what it means to lead by serving others. We are inspired by the professionalism, empathy, and heart they bring to their roles. These qualities will undoubtedly carry forward into their future careers as physicians. Please join us in celebrating and congratulating Iris and Shantalle for their exceptional work and well-deserved recognition! ■

# Interprofessionalism in Action

**RFU students host the third annual High Performance Lab, a continuing education opportunity for EMS members from across the Midwest.**

On November 8, members of the **RFU EMS Advocacy** student organization put on the third annual **High Performance Lab** (HPL), inviting emergency medicine service (EMS) members from across the Midwest to come to RFU to learn high-intensity, life-saving skills. This year over 40 EMS students and practitioners came to practice on fresh frozen cadavers, performing skills such as intubation, cricothyrotomy (creating a surgical airway by making an incision in the neck to allow for ventilation), intraosseous injections (injecting a substance directly into the bone marrow), and many more.

This event is extremely important to the EMS community members who have attended, as these skills are infrequently needed, but lifesaving when used. Additionally, it is incredibly difficult to simulate these skills without access to a professional anatomy lab and recently deceased un-fixed cadavers. Using fresh frozen (un-fixed) cadavers that have not been preserved with embalming chemicals enabled the EMS students to practice these crucial life-saving skills on human tissue that most closely resembles the tissue of living patients.

This lab was designed, implemented, funded, and improved each year entirely by RFU students from RFU EMS Advocacy — the university's Emergency Medical Services activism student organization — most of whom were previous EMS workers who saw a gap in their training. Direct training of the EMS workers is overseen by Trauma and Emergency medicine doctors and advanced practice practitioners in a small-group, hands-on setting focusing on simulation and repetition of skills.

After the EMS sessions, similar sessions were taught for RFU students, particularly those in Chicago Medical School interested in emergency medicine and trauma surgery. These student sessions expanded on the skills and reflected a more advanced scope of practice, and were designed to get students interested in the specialty rather than train mastery.

The board of EMS Advocacy hopes to further expand the lab in the future, inviting more EMS professionals, teaching more skills, and growing RFU's connection to the world of EMS. If you are interested in supporting this outreach endeavor, please reach out to the board of EMS Advocacy! The board can be reached at [emsadvocacy@rfums.org](mailto:emsadvocacy@rfums.org). ■



# Summer Research Poster Session

The university held its annual Summer Research Poster Session on October 29, inviting medical, podiatry, and pharmacy students to present their work to the student and faculty communities. 117 medical students from the Class of 2028 presented 91 posters detailing research they had conducted during the summer.

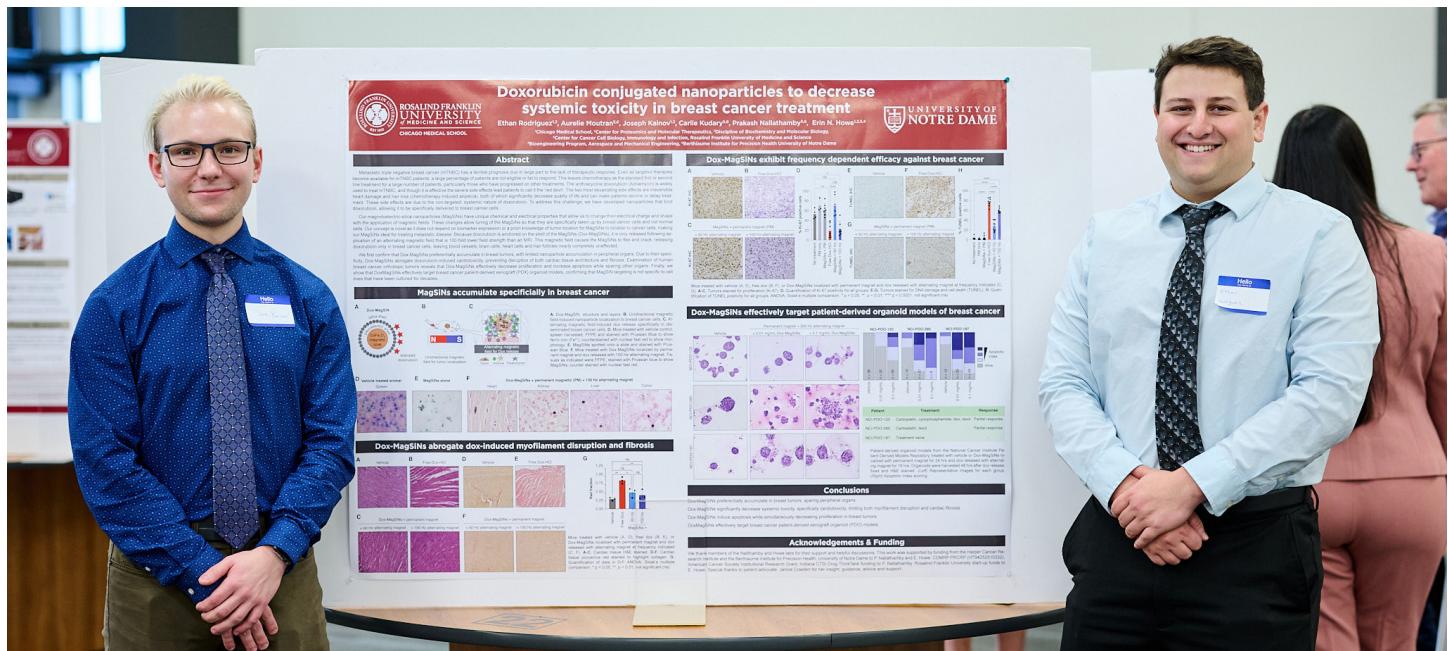
Congratulations to the CMS poster competition winners:

## First Place:

**Ethan Rodriguez** and **Joseph Kainov**

“Doxorubicin Conjugated Nanoparticles to Decrease Systemic Toxicity in Breast Cancer Treatment”

Mentor: Dr. Erin Howe



Joseph Kainov and Ethan Rodriguez with their poster.



Mary Kosoyan and Alexis Olson with Dr. Robert Marr.

## Second Place:

**Alexis Olson** and **Mary Kosoyan**

“Assessing the Impact of Linguistic Accessibility in Healthcare on Explaining Latine Chronic Health Inequities in Lake County, IL”

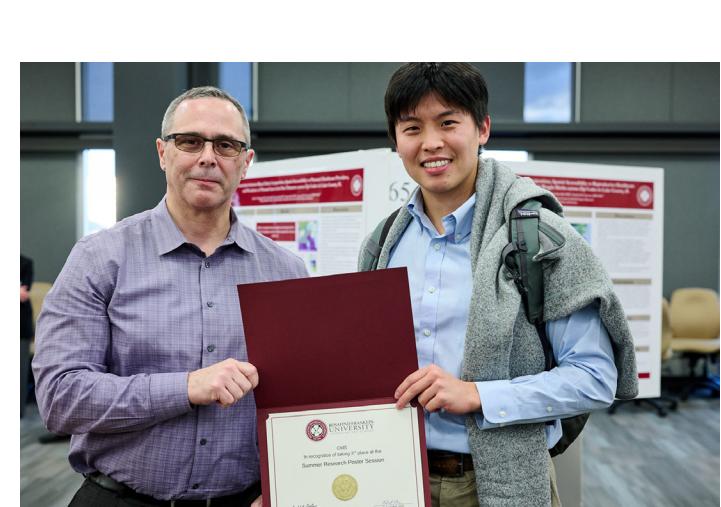
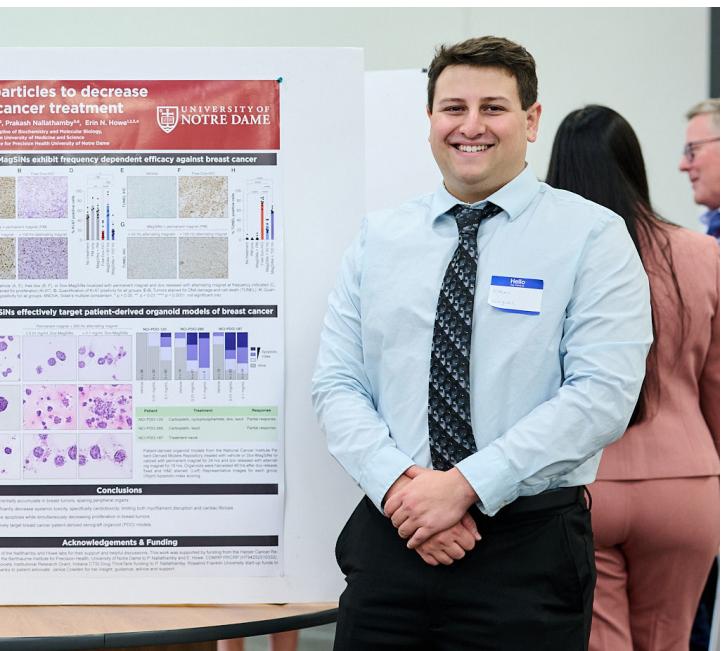
Mentors: Dr. Amanda Simanek and Dr. Namhee Kim

## Third Place:

**Samuel Liu**

“A Comparison of the Host Inflammatory Response between Peptide Amphiphile-Based Scaffolds and Recombinant BMP-2 in a Rat Model”

Mentor: Dr. Erin L. Hsu ■



Samuel Liu with Dr. Robert Marr.



# *10th Annual WiSH Symposium*

## *“Women’s Leadership Under the Microscope”*

RFU held its tenth annual Women in Science and Healthcare (WiSH) Symposium on September 25, marking a decade of commitment to celebrating women’s achievements and addressing gender disparities in biomedical research and health care. This year’s theme, “Women’s Leadership Under the Microscope,” celebrated women’s leadership in science and health care and featured a keynote presentation from **Ngozi Ezike**, MD, president and CEO of Sinai Chicago Health System and former director of the Illinois Department of Public Health.

During her presentation, titled “Why Me: A Black Woman’s Journey in Healthcare Leadership, from COVID and Beyond,” Dr. Ezike talked about her path to leadership at Sinai Chicago and reflected on what it means to lead as a Black woman in health care. She also shared her experiences as director of the Illinois Department of Public Health — a role she held during the worst waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Ezike, who graduated from UC San Diego School of Medicine as one of a very few Black women in her class, talked about the importance of mentorship and role models, especially for members of marginalized

communities who may face prejudice and additional pressures. She recounted that during her time as medical director at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center of Cook County, she was careful to wear her white coat even on 90° days, because if she didn’t, she was assumed to be a mother of one of the detainees, despite having a badge to get into the building.

“Those things continue to affect you, as you try to deal with those pressures while you’re actually trying to do the work that you’re supposed to be doing,” she said. Today, as a mentor, she strives to be a “positive input” to counterbalance the “negative impacts” that women or people of color may get from others who question their right to be there.

During her time as medical director at the detention center, Dr. Ezike led efforts to begin an immunization program to prevent flu strains from spreading throughout the congregated youths during the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic. Her experience in this area proved to be an advantage over a decade later, when the COVID-19 pandemic began as Dr. Ezike was serving as Illinois’ top public health official. As director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, she delivered

daily briefings in English and Spanish, advocated for vulnerable communities that were being hit hardest by the pandemic, and worked to prevent the spread of COVID in the state's prisons and jails.

In her current role as president of Sinai Chicago Health System, leading one of Chicago's essential safety net hospital systems, Dr. Ezike continues to serve vulnerable communities with a focus on promoting health equity. "Health is at the foundation of improving the lot of mankind," she said. "Ensuring that we have compassionate people being prepared to go out and serve mankind is a very laudable goal, and I'm proud to be part of the community that is doing that."

After her keynote presentation, Dr. Ezike joined a panel discussion on "New Challenges to Women's Leadership" that also featured Chicago Medical School Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD; **Alex Zanowick-Marr**, MPH, CMS '28, vice president of RFU's Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC); **Brian Uzzi**, PhD, professor of sociology at Northwestern University; and moderator and symposium co-chair **Lise Eliot**, PhD, professor of neuroscience and WiSH co-founder. The panelists discussed the importance of having women in leadership roles, ways to get medical students involved in leadership early in their careers, and the ways in which the concept of leadership has changed over the years.

Alex, who — along with the ICC president — oversees multiple specialty panels that provide care to uninsured and underinsured North Chicago communities, discussed what leadership looks like to different generations. "I

believe that women's leadership is not necessarily a fixed destination, but an evolving practice," she said. "For my generation, we don't want to use the formulas that we've inherited; we want to reshape them. And we want to center that on wellness, equity, and inclusion — leadership that's collective as opposed to focused on the individual."

Dr. Chatterjee also talked about the importance of collaborative leadership, which includes mentoring others to aspire to future leadership. Through her work with organizations like the AAMC's Council of Deans and Drexel University's Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) program, Dr. Chatterjee has been dedicated to mentorship throughout her career. She noted the change in the last several decades from "command-and-control" leadership to a more collective leadership style. "It's a more collaborative and empathetic environment," Dr. Chatterjee said. "It's an environment in which we inspire, encourage, and provide tools to other people to be leaders along with us."

The WiSH Symposium was launched in 2016 to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Rosalind Franklin, the university's namesake, by highlighting the accomplishments of female scientists and clinicians while also addressing gender disparities in the fields of science and medicine. Each year focuses on a different aspect of gender disparities in STEM fields, with past topics including gender bias, sexual harassment, intersectionality, and the gendered impacts of climate change on health. The WiSH Symposium and Speaker Series explore ways to confront and overcome these disparities. ■



**Dr. Ngozi Ezike**



**Dr. Archana Chatterjee**



**Alex Zanowick-Marr**



## Student Research Fair

We welcomed our clinical research partners to campus on October 6 for the CMS Student Research Fair. Representatives from the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, the Sinai Urban Health Institute, Advocate Aurora Research Institute, and the

Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research presented their programs to CMS students interested in pursuing clinical and health-related research opportunities. ■

# EMED Suture Clinic



On September 25, the **Emergency Medicine Interest Group (EMED)** hosted a suture clinic where interested students could learn suture skills from three emergency medicine physicians. **Gregory Skladzien**, MD, assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy; **Chenni Indiraraj**, MD, clinical anatomy laboratory instructor; and **Michael Zdon**, MD, our recently-retired professor and discipline chair of surgery, demonstrated suturing techniques to students and provided guidance as the students practiced their skills.

Dr. Zdon retired in July after 38 years as a full-time faculty member. During his time at CMS, he led several suture clinics organized by student groups, as well as serving as chair of surgery and director of the CMS surgery residency program. We were glad to have him back for the afternoon to share his expertise with students! ■





## CMS Reunion 2025: A Weekend of Connection and Purpose

We were delighted to welcome back and reunite with our Chicago Medical School reunion classes ending in 0 and 5 on September 19-20. The weekend was a fantastic opportunity for alumni to reconnect with classmates, meet CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, and engage with faculty, staff, and our amazing students.

More than just a celebration, the reunion is a powerful reminder of the resilience, compassion, and purpose that fueled our alumni's journey to becoming physicians. The event-filled weekend included an immersive on-campus experience, class-led dinners, and the CMS Alumni Signature Event, which featured a reception and the presentation of the Distinguished Alumni Awards.

### Back on Campus: Simulation and the Future of Health

While on campus, alumni dove into an interactive experience at RFU's Center for Advanced Simulation in Healthcare. Interim Provost **Jim Carlson**, PhD, PA-C, CHSE-A, led the session, giving alumni an inside look at the latest training methods for medical students.

Dr. Carlson also previewed the in-progress buildout of RFU's new virtual health system, a future-focused

initiative designed to improve critical thinking, enhance response times and prepare future healthcare providers for real-life emergencies. This forward-looking space will ultimately result in more effective patient care and safety. Alumni shared enthusiasm about the space and learning opportunities for students. Alumni were also impressed with the John J. Sheinin, MD, PhD, DSc Gross Anatomy Laboratory. For many alumni, touring the space instantly brought back vivid memories of their own intense, foundational medical school days.

### Student Insights and Alumni Connections

Following the morning session, guests gathered for the Alumni and Student Networking Lunch and met current CMS students, including **Lanie Lobdell**, CMS Class of 2029. Lanie shared her inspiring journey to medicine, which was solidified during her time as a scribe:

"I was always interested in medicine, but didn't find my passion until I worked in the ER at a county hospital. I started to really understand what it meant to be a physician beyond the traditional definition. The teamwork and dedication of my coworkers in the face of trauma and difficult circumstances reaffirmed my love for healthcare and set a standard of practice that I strive toward every day."

Lanie, who was recently awarded the **Joyce G. Chams, MD '89, and James S. Spitz, MD '89, Honorary Endowed Scholarship**, also expressed her gratitude for the support CMS alumni provide to students. "As the first in my family to attend medical school, the path has not always been easy," she said. "I am incredibly grateful that I chose to pursue this dream, and receiving support from those who have walked this road before me further reaffirms that I am exactly where I am meant to be...Our alumni have set a standard of selflessness that has benefitted all those who have come after them, and we are forever grateful for that support."

After lunch, alumni heard from Associate Dean for Student Affairs **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, on the critical role of CMS Student Affairs in supporting student success and their journey through medical school. Dr. Haywood answered audience questions ranging from student rigor to changes with student loans. The day concluded as alumni traveled back to Chicago for a cocktail hour and their class dinners. The 50th and 60th celebrations were

particularly special, when attendees were presented with their 50th reunion medallions.

Saturday began with an insightful alumni-led discussion over coffee, facilitated by **Peter Orris**, MD '75, and **Bradley Hersh**, MD '80, at the Chicago Marriott Magnificent Mile. The timely conversation, "Physicians as Agents of Change," explored how alumni have used their medical training beyond clinical care, highlighting their impactful work through advocacy, policy, and public health.

The reunion weekend concluded on Saturday evening with a final celebration of our reunion classes and with 2025 CMS Alumni Award Recipients: **Sanford Archer**, MD '83; **Steven Kirshblum**, MD '86; and **Vivian Wong**, MD '14, PhD '12. Each year, Chicago Medical School proudly recognizes distinguished alumni for outstanding contributions to medicine and the biomedical sciences, exceptional service, and early career achievement. ■

**Clockwise from top left:** Bradley Hersh, MD '80, MPH; Ted Booden, PhD, CMS Dean Emeritus; and Andy Okhuereigbe, CMS '29. CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee; Tom Maher, CMS '28; and Sanford Archer, MD '83. Michael Ragen, MD '85; Ann Ragen; Coralee McKay, MD '85; and Michael Hovda. Jennifer Cichon, MD '00; Vija Bell, MD '00, MS '96, MS '95; and Sathnam Papa, MD '00, mark their 25th reunion. Kim Carnazzola, MD '90, and Justine Li, CMS '27. Harvey Kalan, MD '75. Lanie Lobdell, CMS '29.

**Opposite page:** Members of the CMS Class of 1995 celebrate their 30th reunion.



# Chicago Medical School Distinguished Alumni Awards

Congratulations to **Sanford M. Archer**, MD '83; **Steven Kirshblum**, MD '86; and **Vivian (Wai Chong) Wong**, MD '14, PhD '12, who received awards during the CMS Alumni Reunion Weekend.

## Sanford M. Archer, MD '83

**Sanford M. Archer**, MD '83, is the **2025 CMS Distinguished Alumni Award for Achievement** recipient, which recognizes CMS alumni who have made a significant impact in the field of medicine and efforts that have brought distinction to the Chicago Medical School. Soon after graduating from Chicago Medical School, Dr. Archer completed his residency in otolaryngology at the University of Iowa, then the top program in the U.S. Following his residency, he was recruited to the University of Kentucky to establish and develop an otolaryngology program. Within two years, he had assisted in creating a residency training program that now has 20 residents and 20 faculty members. Dr. Archer is currently a tenured professor in otolaryngology with a dual appointment in the Department of Pediatrics and is completing his 36th year on faculty at the University of Kentucky.

As a physician, Dr. Archer delivered state-of-the-art care to Kentucky, a state previously lacking access to ENT care, by helping establish a major tertiary care facility. He founded the state's first clinic for voice and swallowing disorders, developing it into a nationally renowned program with recruited speech-language pathologists.



Dr. Sanford M. Archer

He was also the first ENT physician in the state to provide both endoscopic sinus surgical expertise and pediatric airway services. Under his guidance, the ENT program has been

recognized as a US News and World Report Top 50 ENT program. In addition to his clinical work and program development, Dr. Archer is a respected leader and researcher. He has been highly active in the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, serving as chair of both the Quality Improvement and Rhinology and Paranasal Sinus Committees. He received its Distinguished Service Award for his extensive volunteer work. As a researcher, he served as medical director for a novel intranasal drug delivery device system. Several of these devices have been commercialized, including a single-dose administration of naloxone used by paramedics nationwide and a hydromorphone nasal spray licensed by the DOD for military pain management. Dr. Archer also served as an editor for the Oto-HNS journal, a reviewer for several other otolaryngology journals, and a chair for practice management guidelines.

Dr. Archer is also committed to mentorship of medical students and residents, offering his expertise to students at both the Chicago Medical School and the University of Kentucky.

## Steven Kirshblum, MD '86

**Steven Kirshblum**, MD '86, is the **2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for Service** recipient, which recognizes CMS alumni who have unselfishly devoted time and service in a professional capacity or in the broader community. Dr. Kirshblum is the chief medical officer of the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. He serves as professor and chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS), where he is also director of medical student education and leads initiatives to advance disability education for all students.

Dr. Kirshblum also serves as the co-director of the Kessler Foundation Center for Spinal Stimulation, engaging in neuromodulation research for individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI). He is a prolific researcher and author, including editing four textbooks in SCI Medicine, more than 250 peer reviewed publications, as well as a children's book on SCI. Dr. Kirshblum developed the disability education for NJMS students, which has a



Dr. Steven Kirshblum (right) with CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee and Katalina Kuzanga, CMS '27.

mandatory clerkship in PM&R, ensuring that all medical students learn how to care for persons with disability. Dr. Kirshblum's dedication to compassionate care has earned him the admiration of his patients and peers alike. Notably, he served as the spinal cord injury physician for Christopher Reeve ("Superman"), a role for which he was famously recognized in the recent Amazon film production, "Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story."

His love for education inspired him to mentor fellow students and trainees, earning him the CMS Dean's Award at graduation. This same dedication continues to guide his impactful contributions to the field today. Dr. Kirshblum is a staunch advocate for initiatives promoting cultural competence within healthcare teams and has mentored medical students, residents and fellows to empower future generations of compassionate, patient-focused physicians.

Dr. Kirshblum has held leadership roles in several national organizations, including past president of the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals, the American Paraplegia Society, and the Governing Board of the American Spinal Injury Association. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation. He has been married for 41 years and has 3 children and 8 grandchildren.

## Vivian (Wai Chong) Wong, MD '14, PhD '12

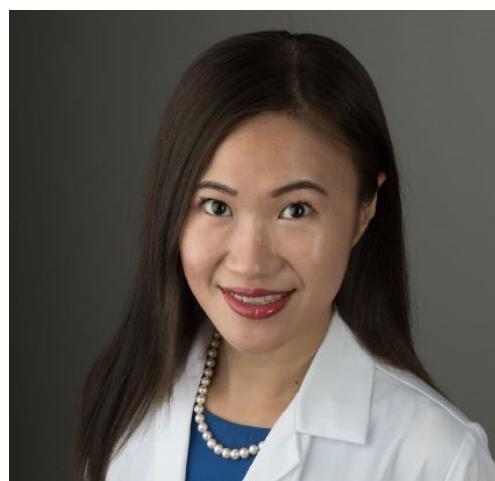
**Vivian (Wai Chong) Wong**, MD '14, PhD '12, is the **2025 CMS Distinguished Early Career Achievement Award**

recipient, which recognizes CMS alumni who have achieved early distinction that proudly reflects the power of a Chicago Medical School education. Dr. Wong is a board-certified dermatologist with a decade of experience in dermatology research and clinical care. Her foundation of excellence was established early in her career when she graduated from CMS with Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) honors. Her dual MD and PhD in Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology reflects her deep commitment to both medical science and patient care.

Since then, Dr. Wong has rapidly established herself as a leader in dermatology, particularly in the fields of hair loss research, medical education, and innovation. Dr. Wong currently practices at Skin Wellness Physicians in Florida and holds academic appointments as clinical assistant professor at

Rosalind Franklin University and clinical instructor for the internal medicine and transitional residency programs at Naples Community Hospital, where she plays a vital role in training the next generation of physicians. She also serves as an advisor to the RFU student interest group in dermatology. In this capacity, she actively mentors medical students, guiding aspiring dermatologists and shaping future leaders in medicine. Formerly on the faculty at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Wong directed the Hair Loss Clinic and has authored more than 300 publications and presented at more than 50 national and international conferences to further advancements in dermatology. Her work spans hair disorders, skin of color, and dermatologic innovation,

earning her more than 40 awards and recognition in national media. Recognized for her outstanding patient care, she has been voted as a "Top Doctor in Naples" for many years. ■



Dr. Vivian Wong



Dr. Olivier (center) with George Rattin, RFU Executive Director of Development, and Dr. Archana Chatterjee, CMS Dean.

## Dr. Mildred MG Olivier Receives an Award Honoring a Legacy of Leadership and Impact

Congratulations to **Mildred MG Olivier**, MD '88, nationally renowned ophthalmologist and healthcare equity advocate, who received the John Bradley STEMM Award for Inspirational Leadership from the CPASS Foundation. The award honors exceptional individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, or Medicine, and whose inspirational leadership has helped attract, encourage, and guide promising students — particularly those historically underrepresented in STEMM — into successful health and science careers.

Dr. Olivier embodies that mission in both her personal journey and professional legacy. A graduate of Loyola University Chicago and Chicago Medical School, she is a long-serving champion for equity in medical education,

a tireless mentor to young professionals, and a respected voice in national and international efforts to eliminate blindness in vulnerable populations. Through more than 25 years of leadership with initiatives like the Rabb-Venable and VISION programs — and national service with organizations such as the American Academy of Ophthalmology — she has empowered hundreds of aspiring physicians to pursue and achieve their dreams.

“Receiving this award from CPASS, and having it presented by John Bradley himself, is profoundly meaningful to me,” said Dr. Olivier. “Through my connection to CAHMCP [the Chicago Area Health and Medical Careers Program], Mr. Bradley introduced me to the Chicago Medical School — an introduction that changed my life and allowed me to pursue my dream of becoming a physician. To now be

recognized as part of a legacy that continues to open doors for others is both humbling and deeply moving.”

In addition to being an alumna of Chicago Medical School, Dr. Olivier served as a member of the CMS faculty and administration from 2012 to 2022, before leaving to accept a position as Associate Dean at Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine – St. Louis Campus. In this role, she is leading the development of a new Doctor of Medicine program in St. Louis while continuing her lifelong commitment to mentorship, professional development, and advocacy.

**CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, attended the CPASS Foundation's STEMM Pathways to Health Equity

Breakfast Symposium on October 4 at the University of Chicago, where Dr. Olivier received her award. We're proud to join the CPASS Foundation in honoring Dr. Olivier's extraordinary impact as she inspires the next generation of healthcare leaders.

“I've had the privilege of knowing Dr. Olivier for many years,” said Dr. Eric E. Whitaker, Board Chairman of the CPASS Foundation. “She is the rare kind of leader who moves with both vision and compassion. Her impact stretches from the exam room to the lecture hall, from policy tables to student mentorship circles. It is only fitting that we recognize her with the John Bradley Award — because she is, in every sense, a builder of pathways.” ■

## Dr. Mark Zimmerman Presents Marshall A. Falk, MD '56 Lectureship at RFU

We welcomed **Mark Zimmerman**, MD '90, to campus on September 23 to deliver the Marshall A. Falk, MD '56 Lectureship. Dr. Zimmerman, who currently serves as Chief of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at South County Psychiatry in Cranston, Rhode Island, spoke on the topic “Symptom Management or Symptom Elimination? What Should be the Goal of Treatment of Depression in Real World Clinical Practice?”

**Marshall A. Falk**, born in Chicago in 1929, graduated from Chicago Medical School in 1956 and began his career in family medicine before completing his residency in psychiatry. He joined the CMS faculty in 1965, where he went on to serve as Professor, Acting Chair, and ultimately Dean of the medical school. Dr. Falk was deeply committed to education, mental health advocacy, and community service. In recognition of his lifelong contributions, the CMS Class of 1956 established the Marshall A. Falk, MD Lectureship to honor his legacy. ■



## Other Alumni News

**Jerome Ritz**, MD '72, was appointed to the board of advisors of CGT Global, a biotechnology company accelerating access to life-changing cell and gene therapies.

**Lalima A. Hoq**, MD '97, MPH, FACP, completed a mission to Guatemala with HELPS International, a non-profit organization providing health care, education and agricultural programs in underserved, rural areas. She worked with a team of clinicians to treat patients who have lived with untreated health conditions for years. Dr. Hoq is medical director for wellness informatics at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Network in Los Angeles, and chair of the board for the Cedars-Sinai Medical Group.

**Jason J. Luke**, MD '06, was appointed chief medical officer of Strand Therapeutics, a developer of programmable mRNA treatment options for cancer and other life-threatening diseases. ■



### Rushvi Bhow

Executive Administrative Assistant,

CMS Dean's Office

Time at CMS: 1 year, 2 months

Rushvi Bhow grew up in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in western India. She earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Gujarat University, and an MBA degree from Nirma University. After several years working in the accounting and e-commerce industries, Rushvi applied to her first job in the education field, working at the Mudra Institute of Communications and Arts (MICA) in Gujarat. At MICA, Rushvi worked in the Dean's Office as senior manager.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she met her husband, a U.S. citizen, and moved to the United States. During the period following the pandemic, she was able to continue her work at MICA remotely, but she eventually had to find a job closer to her new home — Illinois. She began working at a wholesale jewelry company in Chicago, but she missed the experience of working in an educational setting. In 2024, while searching for job positions at Chicagoland universities, she came across one of Rosalind Franklin University's LinkedIn posts and applied to work at CMS, joining the Dean's Office team in September 2024.

As Executive Administrative Assistant of the CMS Dean's Office, Rushvi coordinates all aspects of professional administrative support to Dean Archana Chatterjee, while also serving as a friendly face to all students, faculty, and other guests who come through the Dean's Office. When asked to describe a typical day in her position, Rushvi remarked that her day is never the same: she manages the Dean's calendar and busy travel itinerary, welcomes leaders from the medical school's clinical sites and other affiliate partners when they visit the RFU campus, and assists with CMS events, while also assisting with the day-to-day administrative functions of the Dean's Office. "I think I have a really good support system in the Dean's Office, which makes it easy to make everything work," Rushvi said.

And the support system goes both ways: "Rushvi plays an important role in keeping our office organized and our projects on track," said Rushvi's supervisor. "Her steady support is greatly appreciated."

From her position at the reception desk for the Dean's Office, Rushvi has the opportunity to meet all kinds of people, something she identified as her favorite thing about working at CMS. "I love the people. I get to know so many different things!" she said, noting that she talks to faculty from various medical and scientific fields. "It's always fun to connect with people and talk with them." She also enjoys working at an institution dedicated to serving the larger community, and she sees the school's mission of service reflected in the people she works with. "The purpose of the school is to serve the community, and when you see the staff and leadership doing the same thing, I think that's one of the best achievements you can have as a medical school," she said.

Outside of work, Rushvi enjoys traveling with her husband and trying local foods wherever she goes. She's also busy as a "husky mom" to a very energetic seven-month-old Siberian husky puppy named Sushi! ■

## Awards & Accomplishments



**Najla Arshad**, PhD, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, received a one-year, \$26,937 grant from the MPN Research Foundation for her research study, "Development of Nanobody-Based Targeted Therapy for Myeloproliferative Neoplasms."

Congratulations to the 2025 graduates from our **CMS/Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital internal medicine residency program**, who achieved a 100% pass rate on their board exam. "I'm incredibly proud of our residents and the top-notch training they're getting here," said **Dr. Maryna Shayuk**, residency program director. "This success is a direct result of your hard work, teamwork, and the culture of excellence we've built together."



The 2025 graduating class of residents

**Vidyadhara DJ**, PhD, MSc, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, won the 2025 CMS Scheppe Scholar Award for his grant proposal, "Mechanisms for Auxilin-Linked Presynaptic Degeneration in Parkinson's



Disease." This one-year \$60,000 award, provided by the Scheppe Foundation, provides support for promising young faculty members in the early stages of their careers in academic medicine.

Congratulations to **Chrysanthemum (Chrysee) Gorospe**, MS, MEd,

coordinator for community health and engagement programs, who received a Summer 2025 GEM Award from the university. GEM Awards are quarterly awards that recognize RFU staff members who

"Go the Extra Mile" to make the university a better place.



**Arvind K. Goyal**, MD, MPH, MBA, FAAFP, FACPM, clinical associate professor of family and preventive medicine, received the American Academy of Family Physicians' 2025 Public Health Award, which recognizes individuals who are making extraordinary contributions to the health of the American public.



**Regina de Leon Gomez**, MD, FACOG, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and Clinical Foundations of Medicine (CFoM) course director, was selected as the 2025 Aequitas Health Honor Society Faculty Fellow. Dr. Gomez' work in climate advocacy since 2017 includes public policy efforts to address environmental health disparities, such as urging the Illinois Pollution Control Board to adopt clean vehicle standards, and — here at CMS — integrating climate curriculum into medical education. In her nomination, a student wrote: *"In just a few years at CMS, Dr. Gomez has made incredible strides as a medical educator and faculty mentor to me and countless other*

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CMS students. She has been a strong advocate for increasing education on the health effects of climate change. In the past three years, Dr. Gomez has been a dedicated faculty mentor to CMS Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC) and over a dozen students who have shown interest in climate advocacy. She has also increased discussion of this topic through hosting innovative workshops and lectures on climate advocacy, and related topics through the CFoM course. Overall, Dr. Gomez has dedicated so much time and energy towards mentoring my clinical career and my passion for climate advocacy. She is a strong example of a physician-advocate. I look to her example for the type of physician I hope to be in the future."

presentations at Elgin Mental Health Center on October 7 and November 4. Her talks, titled "Foundations of Resilience" and "Resilience in Practice" were part of a "Resilience & Conflict Management: Where Team Building Meets Personal Fulfillment" series.



**Maureen Benjamins**, PhD, assistant professor of medicine at CMS and senior research fellow at the Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI), was featured in a recent episode of the *Voices of Health Equity* podcast. Hosted by the Center for Community Health Equity (a joint venture of

DePaul University and Rush University), the podcast documents the stories of researchers, healthcare providers, and other health equity advocates. Dr. Benjamins discussed her 20 years working at SUHI, her path into equity research, and more.

Dr. Benjamins also co-authored a new study titled "Adolescent Volunteering in the United States: Associations with Friendship and Behavior Outcomes," published in the journal *Children and Youth Services Review*. The study used a nationally representative sample of U.S. adolescents to explore relationships between volunteering, friendships, and conduct problems. published a commentary, "Safety-Net Providers: A Missing Piece of the Health Equity Research Landscape," in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*. The article examines SUHI as a case study and proposes concrete solutions for expanding the role of these institutions within public health research.



The university's **Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC)** has earned a 2025 Gold Rating from the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (NAFC) for the third consecutive year. This national recognition reflects the ICC's

sustained commitment to delivering high-quality, patient-centered care to medically underserved populations and meeting the quality standards established by the NAFC.



**Roxane Rohani**, PharmD, MSc, BCACP, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was sworn in as the President of the Northern Illinois Society of Health-System Pharmacists (an affiliate chapter of the Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists, or ICHP) during ICHP's Annual Meeting in September.

## Presentations & Publications

**Dima Arbach**, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, gave two medical grand rounds

**Rebecca Bieber**, CMS '27, presented her research, titled "The Therapeutic Potential of Journaling in Mitigating Stress Among Parents of Children in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit: A Pilot Study," at three recent



conferences: the Society of Critical Care Medicine Midwest Region Annual Conference, held September 15 in Indianapolis, IN (where her abstract won second place); the Annual Narrative Medicine Conference, held September 19 in Park Ridge, IL; and the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference, held September 28 in Denver, CO.

Two faculty members from the Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research gave presentations at the annual meeting of the Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Sciences, held September 10 in Pittsburgh, PA.

- **Yvette D. Castañeda**, PhD, MPH, MBA, research assistant professor of foundational sciences and humanities, presented a talk titled “Integrating Food Insecurity Interventions into Primary Care: Evaluating the Feasibility and Acceptability of Integrating an Online Food Delivery Service for Diabetes Management” in a panel session on Community Engaged Intervention Research. The talk reported findings from a study funded by the Chicago Center for Diabetes and Translational Research that assessed the acceptability and feasibility of an intervention aimed at addressing food insecurity among patients in the Interprofessional Community Clinic via a collaboration with the clinic’s community partner, the Adelante Center.
- **Amanda M. Simanek**, PhD, MPH, center director and associate professor of foundational sciences and humanities, presented two posters. The first poster, titled “Ripple Effects: Association Between Race/Ethnic Composition, Water Contaminants, and Chronic Disease Prevalence Across Census Tracts in Lake County, IL,” reported findings from a project carried out by **Ali Panahikarvand**, CMS '27, in Summer 2024. The second poster, titled “Understanding the Drivers and Modifiers of Race/Ethnic Inequities in Ease of and Satisfaction with



Dr. Castañeda



Dr. Simanek

Access to Healthcare,” reported findings from research conducted with the assistance of **Aditi Kumar**, CMS '27, in Summer 2024.



**Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs for RFU, co-authored an article titled “Length of Tenure of U.S. Medical School Deans Who Started in Their Position From Academic Years 1959–1960 to 2018–2019,” published in *Academic Medicine*.



**Vidyadhara DJ**, PhD, MSc, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, co-authored an article in *Nature Communications* in collaboration with researchers from Yale University. The article, titled “Synaptic Vesicle Endocytosis Deficits Underlie Cognitive Dysfunction in Mouse Models of GBA-Linked Parkinson’s Disease and Dementia with Lewy Bodies,” uncovered mechanisms of cognitive decline in Parkinson’s disease and Dementia with Lewy bodies. For decades, Lewy body accumulation — toxic clumps of alpha-synuclein — was thought to be the main driver of dementia. Dr. DJ’s work challenged this view by showing that GBA mutations can impair cognition independently of Lewy body pathology. Using single-nucleus RNA sequencing and advanced mouse genetics, Dr. DJ and his Yale collaborators demonstrated that synaptic vesicle recycling/endocytosis deficits alone are sufficient to disrupt cognition, even without protein aggregates. This important finding redirects the field toward new therapeutic targets beyond Lewy body clearance.



**Nicole C. Ferrara**, PhD, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience & Psychiatric Disorders, delivered a virtual

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medical grand rounds presentation on October 8 titled “The Impact of Social Instability on Amygdala Function and Social Development.”

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**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases and Therapeutics, gave an invited talk titled “Sex, Anxiolytics and Psychosocial Stress: Vulnerabilities to Aging and Alzheimer’s Disease” at the Women’s Health Research Cluster in Toronto. She also presented a poster titled “Understanding and Targeting Neuropsychiatric Symptoms in Aging, Alzheimer’s Disease and Throughout Menopause” at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference.



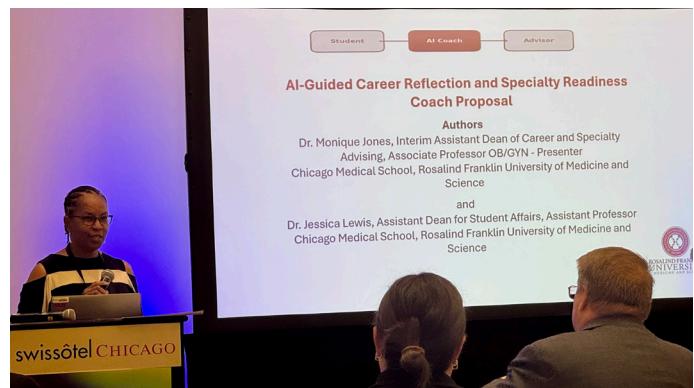
Additionally, Dr. Hunsberger and **Vidyadhara DJ**, PhD, MSc, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, spoke at “Purple for a Purpose,” an outreach event hosted by Memories in the Mix, a community-driven organization dedicated to raising awareness about Alzheimer’s disease, with a particular emphasis on educating young people about brain health. All proceeds from the event went to the Alzheimer’s Association to further fund critical Alzheimer’s research.



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**Monique Jones**, MD '93, interim assistant dean for career and specialty advising, was a semifinalist for the Bright Ideas Showcase at the AMA ChangeMedEd Conference.

This showcase invited medical educators to present innovative ideas for harnessing the power of AI to transform medical education in a positive way. Dr. Jones’ innovative idea proposal was titled “AI-Guided Career Reflection and Specialty Readiness Coach Proposal” and was co-authored with **Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean for student affairs.



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**Agbai Kalu**, CMS '28, was selected to present his summer research poster, titled “Diversity in U.S. Dermatology Clinical Trials: A Cross-Sectional Review of Skin of Color Reporting Practices and Barriers to Inclusion,” at the 2025 National Medical Association (NMA) Conference in Chicago

through the Nth Dimensions Summer Scholars Program. He proudly placed 3rd in the NMA Dermatology Research Symposium Section. His research highlights the persistent gaps in clinical trial representation for dermatologic conditions that disproportionately impact patients with skin of color.

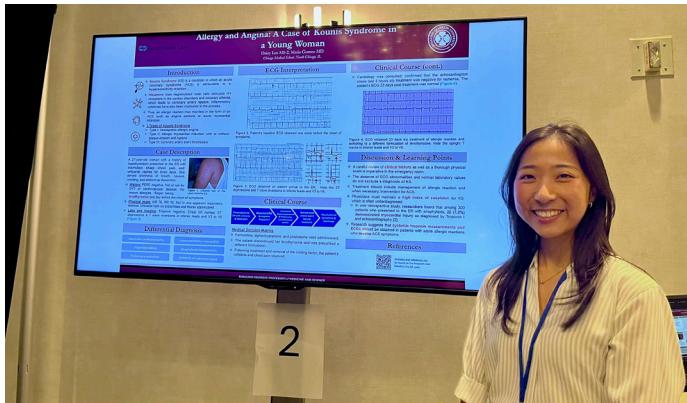
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**Daisy Lee**, CMS '28, was selected to present her poster, titled “Allergy and Angina: A Case of Kounis Syndrome in a Young Woman,” at the American College of Emergency Physicians’ national conference. In this forum, she competed alongside medical students from across the country, each presenting unique cases of rare or under-recognized disease processes to a national audience.

**Maria V. Gomez**, MD, FACEP, assistant professor of

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foundational sciences and humanities, was a co-author on the poster.



Daisy with her poster

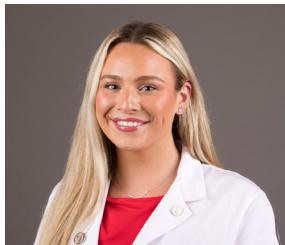


**Caroline Madigan**, CMS '26, was selected to present her poster, titled "From Flu to Flaccid Paralysis: An Interesting Case of GBS," at the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation annual assembly, held October 22-25 in Salt Lake City, UT.

**Richard Moraga**, CMS '28, and **Theresa Hopkins**, CMS '27, co-first authored a manuscript titled "Exploring the Oncogenic Potential of Human Papillomavirus in Subungual and Plantar Squamous Cell Carcinoma: A Review of the Literature," published in *Cancers*.



Richard Moraga



Theresa Hopkins

**Arpita Patel-Mehta**, MD, MPH, discipline chair and education director of family and preventive medicine, met with students for a lunch event on the topic "What

Is Family Medicine?" During the event, hosted by the Family Medicine Interest Group, Dr. Patel shared her personal journey to family medicine and reflected on her experiences along the way. She also highlighted the wide range of opportunities available within family medicine, including fellowship possibilities, careers in OB/GYN care, and private practice options.



**Hector Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, and Latinx students and community liaison, co-authored an article titled "Developing Competencies to Advance Health Care Access and Quality for Latino, Hispanic, and Spanish Origin Populations: A Consensus Statement," published in *JAMA Network Open*.

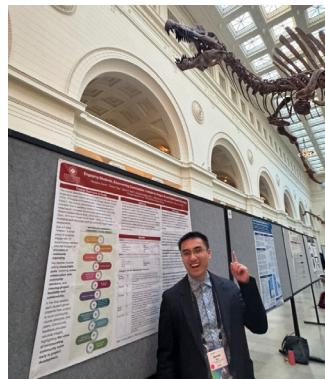


A work from the lab of **Neelam Sharma-Walia**, PhD, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, titled "Lipoxin A4 Treatment Exhibited Anti-Angiogenic and Anti-Inflammatory Effects on Kaposi's Sarcoma-Associated Herpesvirus (KSHV)-Related Primary Effusion Lymphoma (PEL) Tumors in NOD/SCID Mice," was selected for podium presentation at the 2025 International Meeting on Lipid Mediators in Health and Disease, held October 8-10 in Bethesda, MD.

Fourth-year medical student **Tommi Tsao** presented a poster titled "Engaging Students, Empowering Communities: A Model for Project-Based Health Equity Education" at the AMA ChangeMedEd Conference at the Field Museum. The poster was a team effort, with co-authors including **Aroosha Aamir**, CMS '26; **Neha**

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**Basti, MD '25; Nathaniel Ung, CMS '26; Alexander Ellyin, MD '25; Susanna Calkins, PhD, director, Nexus for Faculty Success; and Melissa Chen, MD, assistant dean of community health and engagement and clinical director of the Interprofessional Community Clinic.** This work highlighted how innovative, project-based approaches can prepare future health professionals to advance health equity and strengthen communities.



*Tommi with his poster*



**Janice H. Urban**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics and director of the Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders, and colleague William F. Colmers, PhD, of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, co-authored an invited commentary on “The Role of HCN1 Channels in Resilience and Susceptibility to Witnessed Social Defeat Stress,” published in *Biological Psychiatry*.

## Events and Other News

Five CMS students completed an **academic year internship at the Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI)**, working with a SUHI mentor on public health research activities such as literature reviews, writing manuscripts, and developing data products. To date, 55 CMS students have participated in this program, resulting in 25 joint publications. An additional 160 CMS students have participated in the CMS-SUHI summer internship, now in its 13th year.

The five students, all from the CMS Class of 2027, assisted on the following research projects over the course of the 2024-2025 academic year:

- **Maggie Carey** — Worked with the staff of SUHI's Center for CHW Research, Outcomes, and Workforce Development to study Community health worker

career trajectories.

- **Julia Kirkpatrick** — Conducted a literature review for a study on loneliness and substance use in a large Chicago sample of adults.
- **Atif Malik** — Contributed to a paper on racial inequities in mortality due to opioid overdose. For this manuscript, part of the *Unequal Cities* initiative, Atif assisted with the literature review and data visualization.
- **Michael Lee** — Contributed to a paper on racial inequities in mortality due to opioid overdose. For this manuscript, part of the *Unequal Cities* initiative, Michael assisted with the literature review and data visualization.
- **Alyce Oh** — Contributed to a literature review on cultural, racial, ethnic, and sociodemographic stigmas affecting colon cancer screenings. Alyce worked with a health services researcher from Sinai Chicago's GME department.



*Maggie Carey*



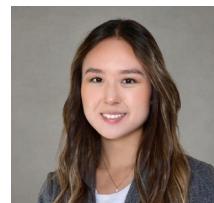
*Julia Kirkpatrick*



*Atif Malik*



*Michael Lee*



*Alyce Oh*

Congratulations to the following members of the CMS Class of 2029 who were elected to house council leadership positions!

### **Emanuel House:**

**Maansi Bhasin**

**Katerina Poulos**

**Jasmeen Sidhu**

### **Finkel House:**

**Jenna Ogi**

**Abhisek Pusty**

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**Rebecca Thomas**

**Lipschultz House:**

**Mahanoor Murtaza**

**Marc Joseph Rollon**

**Trisha Shukla**

**Portes House:**

**Amra Kajdic**

**Jeannie Mei**

**Joshua State**

Congratulations to **Krishi Korrapati**, CMS '27, who completed an Ironman Triathlon this fall! Krishi participated in the event on September 7 in Madison, WI.



On September 17, the CMS Office of Community Health and Engagement hosted an event titled **First Aid on Youth Mental Health**, with 20 CMS student leaders in attendance. CMS partnered with the Family First Center

of Lake County and the Round Lake Area District Family Liaison to put on this event.



From left to right: Melissa Chen, MD, assistant dean of community health and engagement and professor of medicine; Manny Hernandez from the Family First Center of Lake County; Gaby Zapeda, a parent of one of the students in the university's Science Saturdays program; Maria Colunga, Round Lake Area District Family Liaison; Hector Rasgado-Flores, PhD, Latinx students and community liaison and professor of physiology and biophysics; and Chrysee Gorospe, MS, MEd, coordinator of community health and engagement programs.

On September 22, CMS leadership, including **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS; **Frank Maldonado**, MD, executive chair of clinical sciences; and **Amanda M. Simanek**, PhD, MPH, director of the Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research, visited the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center, one of our community partners.



Dr. Frank Maldonado; Kimberly Burke, director of healthcare operations at the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center; Dr. Archana Chatterjee; Dr. Amanda Simanek; and Christopher Hoff, executive director of the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center.

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**Elizabeth Schmid**, CMS '29, and Cavan Pellegrino, CHP '26, submitted the winning suggestion, "Bone Jovi," in a recent competition to name the Boxer Library's resident model skeleton for the 2025-26 academic year. The contest generated over 70 submissions and more than 200 votes across the top five suggestions.



Elizabeth (left) and Cavan with the newly-named Bone Jovi.

On October 1, the Latino Medical Student Association hosted a reception to observe **National Latinx Physician Day**. Attendees celebrated community, culture, and the vital contributions of Latinx physicians, scientists, and healthcare workers. National Latinx Physician Day also serves to inspire the next generation of Latinx students to pursue medicine and to confront the health inequities that continue to impact Latino communities.



On October 4-5, **Caroline Madigan**, CMS '26 (National President); **Delaney Griffiths**, CMS '27 (Finance Chair); and **Mia Fidanzo**, CMS '27 (Technology Chair), helped host the Society of Student Run Free Clinics (SSRFC) annual conference as elected members of the SSRFC Operating Committee. More than 500 healthcare professional students, advisors, and professors attended the conference, held at the University of Illinois Chicago, to present on free clinic initiatives and research.

At the conference, **Lana Trautman**, CMS '28, was elected to the SSRFC Operating Committee as the Conference Coordinator Elect.



The SSRFC Operating Committee



Lana Trautman, Caroline Madigan, and Delaney Griffiths

The CMS Office of Community Health and Engagement hosted its first **IMPACT Journal Club** meeting on October 20, inviting the medical school community to

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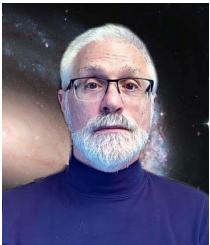
consider scholarly articles related to medicine, policy, and advocacy. **Samantha Pardini**, CMS '29; **Isabella Trancoso**, CMS '28; and **Bruce Goldberg**, MD, assistant professor of medicine, led the discussion of the article "Racial Disparities in the Utilization of Shoulder Arthroplasty in the United States: Trends from 2011 to 2017" (Farley KX, Dawes AM, Wilson JM, et al., *JBJS Open Access*).



Samantha Pardini



Isabella Trancoso



Dr. Goldberg

**Nathaniel Ung** and **Lily Morache**, both CMS '26, were nominated to represent CMS at the 9th annual meeting of the Illinois State Neurological Society, held October 25 in Chicago. Physicians and medical students gathered for networking and education with colleagues from across the state.



In October, the **Molina Healthcare Charitable Foundation**, in collaboration with Molina Healthcare of Illinois, announced a \$25,000 grant to Chicago Medical School in support of the **CMS Mini Medical School (MMS) program**. Our MMS was founded in 2022 to encourage children from historically marginalized communities to explore their interest in science. During the six-week program, fourth through eighth grade students receive an introduction to health sciences and medical professions and participate in experiments and lessons taught by medical students.

This grant from the Molina Healthcare Charitable Foundation will help us continue to expand this important program. ■





In August, a group of our third-year medical students celebrated the completion of their shelf exam with a pickleball tournament! The students gathered at Big City Pickle in Fulton Market, where they were also joined by some M4s.

**We want to hear from you!**

To submit information or news for upcoming issues, contact Candice Kosanke at [candice.kosanke@rosalindfranklin.edu](mailto:candice.kosanke@rosalindfranklin.edu).



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