



# CMS NEWS

The Chicago Medical School Newsletter

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**Cover Image:** M4s Nathalie Gijsbers, Anne Leung, and Zachary Cherian celebrating Match Day on March 20.

**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)

# Dean's Message



Greetings from the Dean's Office!

It's been an exciting time on campus and beyond as we come to the end of the academic year. Since I last wrote to you, we celebrated the Chicago Medical School Class of 2026 on Match Day, and now we're preparing to see them graduate in a few days! We have also had other events and activities celebrating the achievements of our M1-M3 students and our wonderful faculty.

We observed Match Day on March 20, celebrating with our senior medical students as they discovered where they will be completing their residencies. This milestone is always such an exciting event to witness, and I was happy to share in the joy and exhilaration our students felt as they opened their envelopes and saw the results of their years of hard work. Please join me in congratulating the Class of 2026 for achieving a 96% match rate! I wish them the best of luck as they begin their residencies this summer, knowing that they are well-equipped for this next stage of their career.

For the first time, we held our Match Day celebration in collaboration with DePaul University, one of our longstanding partners. Several of our medical students who matched that day came to CMS through our pathway program with DePaul. And speaking of our partners, I was pleased to see that two of our students matched into a residency program with the SW Healthcare Medical Education Consortium in Palmdale, California. We finalized an affiliation agreement with Palmdale in 2024, and our first students rotated there this past fall. Having two of our students heading to a Palmdale residency program strengthens our relationship with them, and our students who rotate there in the future may be able to see some familiar faces.

In addition to our students' excellent matches, I'm pleased to announce that all three of our residency programs matched at 100%, with all available residency positions being filled for Internal Medicine and Psychiatry. We look forward to learning more about our incoming residents and seeing what they will bring to the CMS community and our programs.

Much of the focus lately has been on our fourth-year students, but I want to take a moment to highlight some of the activities of our other classes. The M3 class had their annual Clinical Poster Day in April, with 75 students presenting 57 posters about the cases they encountered during their clerkship rotations. Congratulations to the students who received prizes for their outstanding posters, and to everyone who shared their clinical experiences with our faculty judges!

Our first-year students have also been leaving their mark, with five M1 students recently going to Washington, DC to attend the AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference. While in DC, the students also visited the offices of our state senators and representatives, advocating for the REDI Act and increased NIH funding. I recently traveled to DC myself, joining other medical education leaders

for a Capitol Hill Advocacy Day, as described within the pages of this newsletter. Advocating for better policies for our country's patients, healthcare workers, and scientists is an important aspect of improving the health of our nation and making a difference in patients' lives, and I'm very proud to see our students getting involved in this process so early in their medical education.

Another recent accomplishment was the release of our 10th annual volume of Synapses, our creative journal which showcases the writing and artistic talents of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, residents, and fellows. Each year I am amazed and impressed to see the talent, creativity, and emotional poignancy demonstrated by our community as they explore the many facets of medicine and the human experience through art, photography, poetry, and prose. I hope each of you has the chance to read the latest volume of Synapses and enjoy these works of art and writing.

Our students accomplish so many things partially due to the support and dedication of our faculty, who devote their time and energy to teach and train our students through basic science knowledge, clinical education, and research. I especially want to shine a spotlight on the six CMS faculty members who received awards at the University Faculty Awards Ceremony earlier this month. Congratulations to Drs. Holly Hunsberger, Raj Chovatiya, Kimiko Suzue, Joseph Reynolds, Nutan Vaidya, and Héctor Rasgado-Flores, who were honored for their research, teaching, mentoring, and service.

I also want to extend a warm welcome to one of our newest faculty members: Paige Arneson-Wissink, PhD, who joined the university's Center for Genetic Diseases this year as an assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology. Dr. Arneson-Wissink's work is centered around understanding the molecular mechanisms of cachexia recovery. Cachexia, or muscle wasting, contributes to up to 25% of cancer-related deaths, and Dr. Arneson-Wissink's lab seeks to improve the quality of life of patients with (and survivors of) cancer cachexia.

Moving on to some alumni news, I've had the pleasure of meeting several alumni during my recent travels. In March, I visited Aaron Feingold, MD Class of '76 in New Jersey; Margaret Levy, MD Class of '76, Allan Goldberg, MD Class of '77, and Richard Goldfarb, MD Class of '83 in Philadelphia; and Frank Pratt, Class of '81, Bobby Katz, Class of '86, David Hoffman, MD Class of '94, and Lalima Hoq, Class of '97 in Los Angeles. Earlier this month, I traveled to northern California with President Aron Sousa and colleagues from the RFU Office of Institutional Advancement. We attended an alumni reception,

generously hosted at the home of two CMS alumni: Betty Kung and Albert Shen, both MD Class of '94. In addition to our two hosts, we met Donald Lesser, MD Class of '59; Perry Shoor, MD Class of '71; Thomas Nuckton, MD Class of '93; Daniel Solomon, MD Class of '94; Tanja Kujac, MD Class of '96; Ginger Schechter, MD Class of '96; Teresa Tang-Solomon, MD Class of '97; Steven Chao, MD Class of '03; and Julia Ding, MD Class of '15. On the same trip, I also had the opportunity to visit Mervyn Sahud, MD Class of '64, and Theresa Kepic, MD Class of '85. It was wonderful to catch up with all these alumni and their families, and I look forward to continuing these visits on future trips.

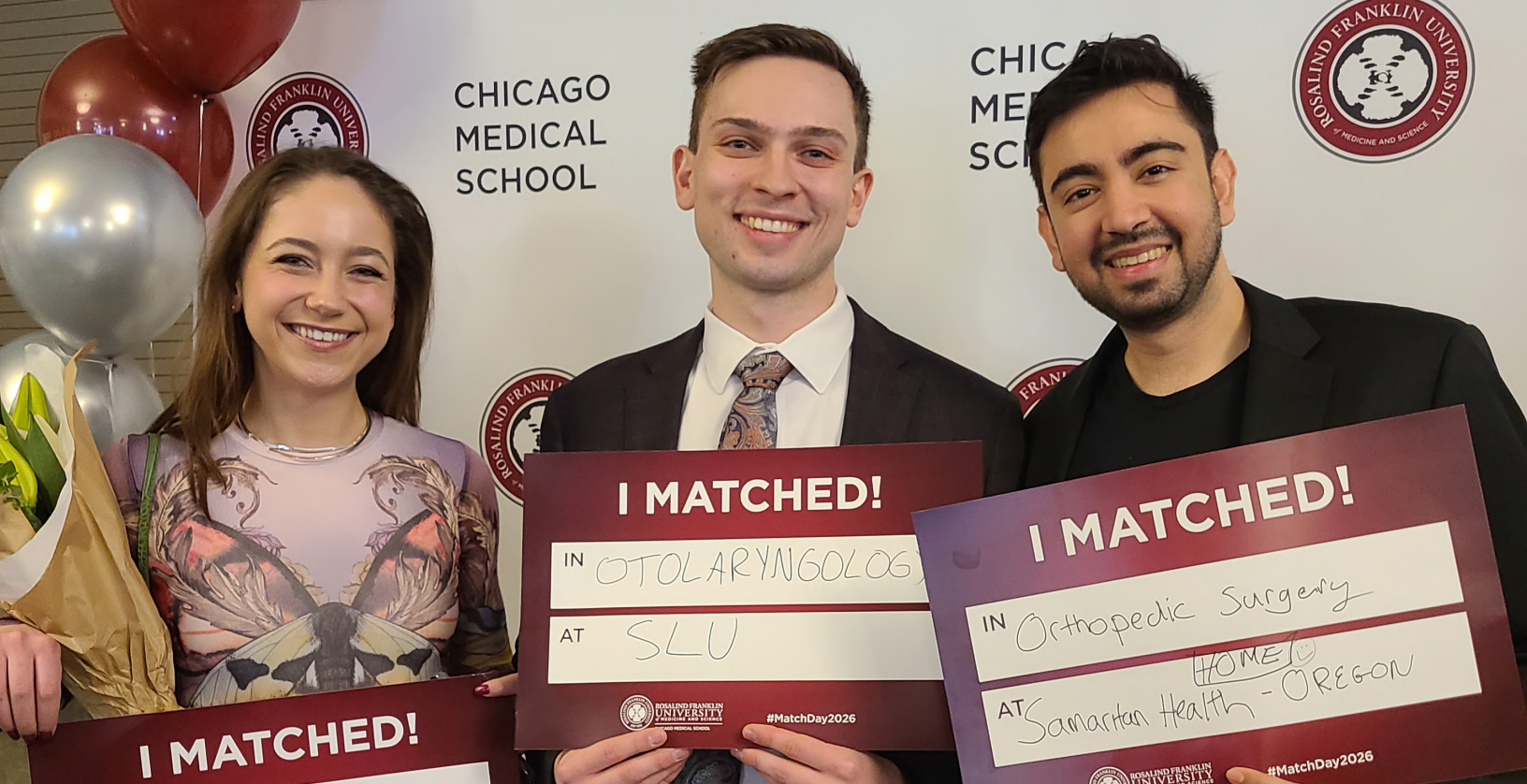
I have one more topic that may touch the hearts of many of our alumni: I join CMS, our university, and the greater Chicago medical education community in remembering with gratitude the life of Dr. John Bradley, who recently passed away. Dr. Bradley was a co-founder of the Chicago Area Health and Medical Careers Program (CAHMCP), the precursor to our current Pre-Matriculation Program. He had a profound impact on the lives of many CMS students who have since graduated and are now practicing medicine. Three of our alumni have shared heartfelt tributes to Dr. Bradley recalling his mentorship and guidance, and we have printed those tributes in this newsletter. Dr. Bradley's legacy lives on in these alumni and the many more physicians he inspired.

The coming days will be full of excitement as we celebrate our Class of 2026 at the university's 112th Commencement Ceremony on May 29. On May 28, we will hold our inaugural CMS Aesculapian and Awards Ceremony, a new signature tradition recognizing excellence and marking the transition from learner to physician. Graduating students will receive their long white coats and be coated by their choice of mentor, faculty member, or family member. I'll have more news to share about these celebrations when I next write to you. Until then, I wish all of you a joyful summer, good health, and much happiness.

Sincerely,



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



Lucienna Wolf, Marcin Marciniak, and Divesh Sachdev

# MATCH DAY!

*Celebrating the Class of 2025 as they placed into residency programs*

On March 20, Chicago Medical School celebrated Match Day with the Class of 2026. Family, friends, mentors, and faculty gathered for the celebration as the students simultaneously opened the envelopes that would reveal where they were going for the next stage of their training. For the first time, the medical school collaborated with DePaul University, one of RFU's long-term partners, for this event, hosting the celebration at DePaul's Student Center Ballroom.

The fourth-year medical students gathered in the ballroom as CMS and RFU leadership addressed the soon-to-be-graduates. It was a moment of anticipation and celebration, as students reflected on all the hard work and dedication over the past four years (and beyond) that had led them to the next step of their professional journeys.

"The work, the weight, the excitement — all of it comes down together in this moment," **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, associate dean for student affairs, told the students, before encouraging them to always remember their love

for medicine and the people who have supported them in their journey.

"Today matters. Your match matters," Dr. Haywood said, "but it's not the full story. Wherever you go, you're bringing your habits, your resilience, your perspective, and your commitment to this work with you. And that's what defines you far more than any location or program name."

**Stephanie Dance-Barnes**, PhD, dean of DePaul's College of Science and Health and dean of the DePaul/RFU pathway program, congratulated the students on their accomplishments. "To each of you who are matching today, this moment represents years of discipline, sacrifice, resilience, and belief in something bigger than yourselves," she said. "Regardless of the path that brought you here today, it's a powerful milestone in your journey towards becoming a physician."

Students also heard from RFU President and CEO **Aron Sousa**, MD, FACP. This was the first CMS Match Day for Dr. Sousa, who joined RFU in November 2025 — and,

impressively, he managed to attend portions of Chicago Medical School's celebration in Lincoln Park as well as Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine's celebration on the RFU campus in North Chicago. Before heading back to RFU to address the podiatry students, Dr. Sousa reminded the medical students that they would have many opportunities in their careers to say 'yes.'

"Match Day is only one step of many," he said. "There will be many opportunities for you to teach students, to teach your fellow residents, to engage in your community, to be a leader in your discipline, to help this country deal with the public health and healthcare issues that are such a struggle for so many of our neighbors. The wonderful thing about Match Day is that this is just the next step for you joining us as colleagues."

CMS Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, also addressed the Class of 2026. "The Match process is one of the most unique and defining experiences in medical education. It is a reminder that medicine is not just about individual success, but about becoming part of a broader community dedicated to service, healing, and advancing healthcare," she said. "As you open your envelopes and learn where your journey will take you next, know that you are not just matching into a program, you are stepping into a role that will allow you to change lives, advocate for patients, and contribute to the future of medicine. Embrace the opportunities ahead with the same passion and dedication that have brought you to this moment."

**Bryce Alderson**, CMS '26, class president, congratulated his classmates and also took the time to bestow some words of encouragement and affirmation. "You are special, each and every one of you, in all of your intricacies and all of your imperfections," he said. "There is no one else just like you, and that is worth celebrating each and every day."

Finally, the big moment arrived, and the countdown began to the time when students at medical schools across the country would open their envelopes from the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP). Opening the envelopes is both a milestone and a turning point, as students discover where they will be heading after graduation to begin their residencies — and possibly their future practices, as about half of all physicians remain in the same state where they completed their residency program. (For

some specialties, doctors stay even more local — for family medicine physicians, for example, a recent study has found that more than half of graduates practice within 100 miles of their program, and nearly a quarter practice within just 5 miles.)

The CMS Class of 2026 achieved a match rate of 96%, reflecting both individual achievement and the school's continued strength in preparing future clinicians. Students matched into top residencies at university health systems, medical centers, and hospitals across the country, including: UCLA Medical Center; Tulane University School of Medicine, LA; Boston University Medical Center; ISMSS Mount Sinai Morningside-West, NY; Rush University Medical Center, Chicago; Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, MA; Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education, MN; Cook County Health and Hospital System, Chicago; Rutgers New Jersey Medical Center; University of Chicago Medical Center; Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, NH; University of Alabama Hospital-Birmingham; Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, MD; Brown University Rhode Island Hospital; UC Davis and UC Irvine medical centers; and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, CA.

Dean Chatterjee expressed gratification for the school's continued strong match outcomes. "Our fourth-year students are close to completing the first step in fulfilling their calling — a lifelong commitment to learning and service to their patients and communities," she said. "Their resolute spirit, hard work, and focus have brought them to Match Day and will help them adapt to the next phase of their medical education through residency training. We are truly proud of our students and grateful to have been part of their journey to become doctors." ■



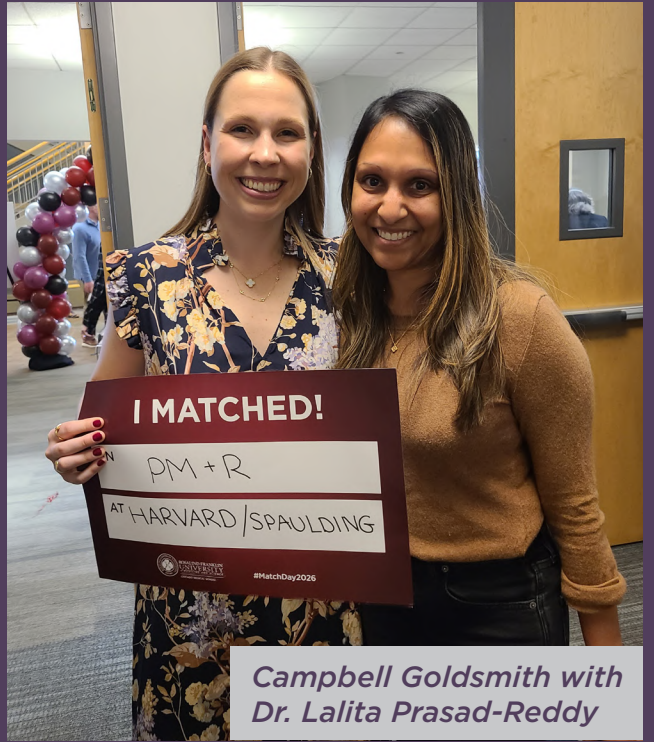
*Nareh Megerdichian puts a pin in the map after matching into an anesthesiology program at UC Davis Medical Center, CA.*



*Reina Nagasaka*



*Abigail Farkash*



*Campbell Goldsmith with Dr. Lalita Prasad-Reddy*



*Jacob Wolf*



*Siddharth Suresh*



*Nancy Shrestha*



*Hyerin Yoon and Eric Cho celebrate their couples match*



*Zachary Cherian*



*Class President  
Bryce Alderson*



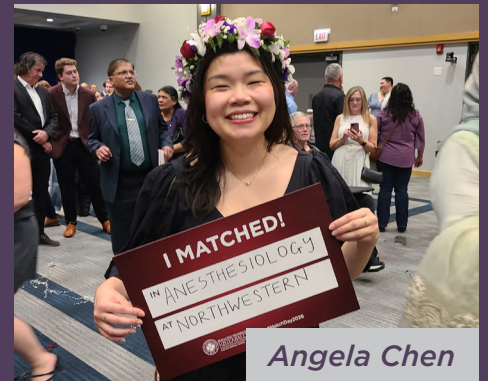
*I Matched!  
Manasvi Paudel*



*Vincent Loyal, Austin Sovell,  
and Margaret Kwiat*



*Alayna Dieter*



*Angela Chen*



*Lauren Ehrlich*



*Margaret Barcinski*



*Angela Kein*

# M3 Clinical Poster Day

CMS held its 11th annual M3 Clinical Poster Day on April 22, giving students from the Class of 2027 a platform to present posters showcasing their hard work, clinical experiences, and the valuable lessons they gained throughout the year as they completed their clinical rotations. We had a great turnout, with 75 students presenting 57 engaging posters.

Thank you to all the students, staff, faculty, and judges who came to support our third-year students, and congratulations to the following students for their winning poster presentations:

**Ehab Abdelhamid, Omar AbuZeid, and Sabina Kalata**  
(Co-authors: Dr. Mitali Roy and Dr. Saakshi Pothina, Advocate Christ Medical Center)  
“Acute GI Blood Loss Differential”

### Thomas Finn

(Co-authors: Dr. Harrah Chiang and Dr. Andrew McDonald, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital)  
“Chronic Myeloid Leukemia Developing Secondary to Successful Treatment of Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia”

### Bennett Grenier and Paige Anschutz

(Co-author: Dr. Daniel K. Choi, Advocate Children’s Hospital)  
“Multi-System Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis Mimicking Neuroblastoma: A Case of Extensive Bony, Pulmonary, and CNS-Adjacent Involvement in 7-Month Old”

### Isabella Han

(Co-author: Dr. Umair Afzal, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital)  
“Triple M Overlap Syndrome: A Case of Pembrolizumab-induced Myocarditis, Myositis, and Myasthenia Gravis”

### Jack Joseph

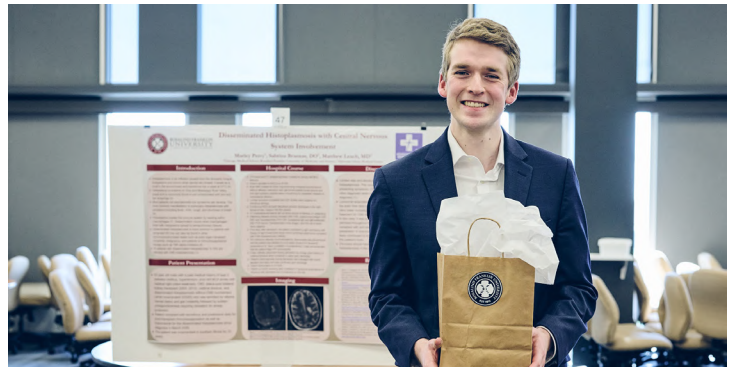
(Co-author: Dr. Amir Heydari, Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital)  
“Excision of a Large Splenic Cyst”

### Miranda Malone

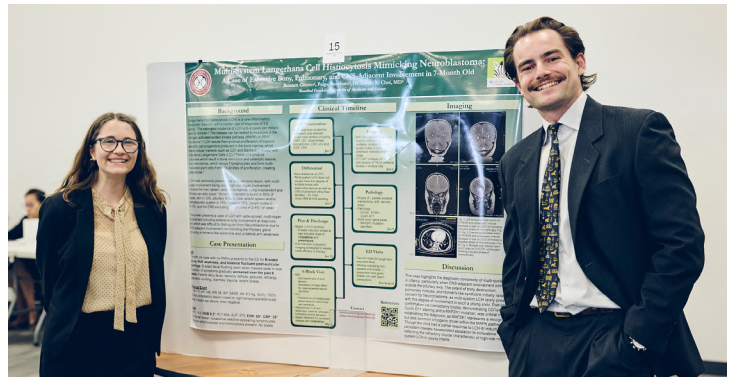
(Co-authors: Dr. Santhosh Kottoor and Dr. Rimsha Akhter, Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center)  
“Uncompensated Hemolytic Anemia: A Convergence of Viral Triggers and Latent Metabolic Defect” ■



Omar AbuZeid, Ehab Abdelhamid, and Sabina Kalata



Thomas Finn



Paige Anschutz and Bennett Grenier



Isabella Han



Jack Joseph



Miranda Malone



M1 Class Council members Ruth Thomas, Konrad Malik, Julia Grzegorzcyk, Class President Andy Okhuereigbe, Vice President Elizabeth Akfaly, Casey Besse, Jenna Ogi, and Armon Green.



Dr. Jeanette Morrison addresses the Class of 2027 during the town hall's open feedback session.

## M1 Town Hall

The **M1 Class Council** organized a Town Hall for the Class of 2029 on March 3, in collaboration with the CMS Office of Student Affairs, who gave curriculum updates and offered support and advice. The Class Council organized the town hall for their peers so that students could share their ideas and suggestions. The event included an open feedback session where all students had the opportunity for their voices to be heard. ■



Andy Okhuereigbe, Julia Grzegorzcyk, Collin Shen, Casey Besse, Elizabeth Akfaly, and Konrad Malik.

# The LATINO MEDICAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) Part 1

The **Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)** chapter at RFU demonstrated an exceptional level of achievement this academic year through sustained programming, educational initiatives, community service, and advocacy that consistently reflected the school's mission of advancing health equity, mentorship, and culturally responsive healthcare. Through intentional collaboration, innovative programming, and deep engagement with our campus and surrounding communities, the CMS/RFU LMSA chapter created meaningful opportunities that supported students across the healthcare pipeline while uplifting Hispanic/Latinx and other historically marginalized populations.

Students in the RFU chapter of LMSA are committed to education and professional development, as exemplified through several recurring programs designed to empower healthcare trainees with culturally competent skills and mentorship. One of their cornerstone initiatives was **Cafecito**, an interactive medical Spanish program held throughout the year. Using materials from Dr. Pilar

Ortega's widely respected medical Spanish textbooks, this event created a welcoming learning environment where participants practiced clinical communication through structured case-based exercises. The program offered both beginner and advanced tracks, allowing students to develop foundational language skills or engage in complex patient scenarios that emphasized culturally responsive provider-patient communication. By creating a peer-learning environment grounded in mentorship and community, Cafecito equipped future healthcare professionals with tools to better serve Spanish-speaking patients while strengthening pathways for students interested in working with diverse communities.

LMSA also focused on building an inclusive and supportive community for students from backgrounds underrepresented in medicine. Last August, LMSA collaborated on organizing and hosting a **Back-to-School Cookout** welcoming over 50 incoming students from programs including medicine, pharmacy, podiatry,

physician assistant, and physical therapy. This event created an early opportunity for students to connect with peers, learn about support networks, and see representation within healthcare training programs. This event was created in an effort to address feedback the organization received last year, in which students expressed that they would have been eager to join the LMSA community at an earlier time in the school year. That same month, LMSA participated in the university-wide **Student Organization Fair**, where seven members engaged incoming students in conversations about health disparities, culturally responsive care, and advocacy in medicine. These efforts resulted in 37 new members joining LMSA's communication platforms, helped establish ten mentorship matches across multiple training levels through a newly piloted mentorship initiative, and connected incoming M1s to the opportunity to attend the upcoming LMSA National Conference. Five

first-year medical students and five pre-medical students joined the group representing RFU at the conference.

Recognizing the importance of sustained mentorship in addressing barriers faced by students underrepresented in healthcare, LMSA launched a chapter-wide mentorship program during the 2025-2026 academic year: **the LMSA Pilot Mentorship Program**. Through a structured matching process in which LMSA students created and administered survey forms, mentors and mentees were paired based on shared interests, career goals, and lived experiences. The pilot program resulted in ten successful mentorship pairings connecting pre-medical students in the Pre-Matriculation Program, CMS students, pharmacy trainees in RFU's pharmacy program, and Scholl podiatry

**Opposite page:** *The RFU chapter of LMSA at the LMSA National Conference in Chicago.*



*The Back-to-School Cookout, co-hosted by LMSA, the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), and Black Men in White Coats (BMWC).*



*LMSA representation at the Student Organization Fair in August.*



*LMSA students at the opening reception for the Latinx Heritage gallery exhibit.*



*Students created traditional decorations during LMSA's Papel Picado "Crafternoon Tea" event.*

students to upper classmen in these fields, embodying the importance of interprofessional collaboration to succeed within these healthcare fields. Mentors and mentees met at least monthly and together decided their preferred methods of communication for support. By fostering longitudinal mentorship relationships and creating space for guidance on professional development, research opportunities, and work-life balance, this initiative strengthened community across disciplines and provided essential support for students navigating healthcare training as students under-represented in medicine.

This pilot mentorship program initiated partnerships with two high schools and one undergraduate institution in the Chicagoland area, with whom LMSA students are working to develop earlier mentorship opportunities, engagement with RFU pathway programs, and guidance for students interested in pursuing careers in healthcare. Interest in the program quickly expanded, not only from external institutions but also through referrals from other affinity organizations on campus that connected the LMSA students with high school students they believed would benefit from LMSA mentorship and resources. Due to the strong demand, the LMSA leadership board has established a waitlist for student mentorship, and are actively working to build a sustainable structure that allows these longitudinal mentorship relationships to continue under future LMSA leadership boards.

In addition to their professional development and mentorship programming, LMSA also celebrated and uplifted Latinx culture and representation in medicine through several cultural and educational programs. During Hispanic Heritage Month, the chapter hosted a **Latinx Heritage Gallery Reception** highlighting the achievements of Latinx scientists and physicians. They also collaborated with the Division of Student Success and Wellness on a **Papel Picado Crafternoon Tea event**, where students learned about the cultural significance of traditional decorations while creating pieces that were later used to decorate the organization's Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration. LMSA's **Día de los Muertos event** — one of the largest gatherings of the year with more than 80 attendees across multiple RFU programs, RFU faculty, and staff — honored

loved ones through a community altar and cultural presentation while raising funds for the Waukegan Center for Immigrant Progress. These programs created spaces for cultural pride, reflection, and community connection while educating participants about Latin American traditions and history and strengthening community connections across campus.

Collectively, the RFU LMSA chapter's efforts reflect a sustained commitment to educational programming, mentorship, service, cultural celebration, and advocacy. The impact of the LMSA students' work extended beyond individual events by establishing long-term systems that support students and communities. Their accomplishments have been recognized nationally, as the RFU chapter was selected as a finalist and received the **2026 LMSA Midwest Chapter of the Year Honorable Mention Award**, chosen among 54 chapters across eight Midwestern states. This recognition highlights chapters that exemplify the LMSA mission through service, mentorship, education, and advocacy to advance the health and well-being of Hispanic/Latinx communities.

Congratulations to the students in the RFU chapter of LMSA for everything they've accomplished during the 2025–2026 academic year. Their leadership, programming, events, and mentorship have had an important impact on our campus community and have contributed to the empowerment of future healthcare professionals. The next issue of CMS News will contain Part Two of this Student Spotlight on LMSA and the many activities they've organized over the past year! ■



*LMSA's Día de Los Muertos event, which invited members of the RFU community to remember and honor their loved ones.*

# Student Advocacy in DC

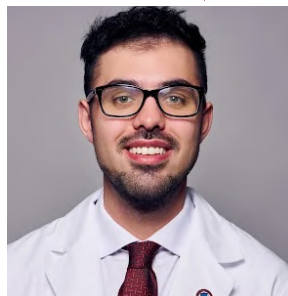
This spring, a group of first-year CMS students went to Washington, DC to attend the AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference, where they learned about ways to advocate for better healthcare policies. While they were in DC, the students visited the offices of Illinois and Florida senators and House representatives, advocating for the REDI Act (a proposed bill that would allow medical residents to defer their student loans interest-free while they complete their internship or residency program), pharmacy benefit manager reform, and increased NIH funding. ■

*Pictured from left to right: Students Armon Green, Konrad Malik, Megha Patel, Thomas Kunstbeck, and Alec Wilson, all from the CMS Class of 2029.*



“Spending time in Washington, DC showed me that our voices as medical students carry more weight than we often realize. Speaking directly with staffers turned policy from something abstract into something personal and reminded me that meaningful change in healthcare doesn’t just happen in clinics, but in conversations, relationships, and the willingness to advocate for our patients beyond the exam room.”

**Armon Green**  
CMS Class of 2029



“My favorite part about the Medical Student Advocacy Conference was meeting medical students from around the country who were just as eager to step outside the classroom and clinic to advocate for the needs of our patients and profession. There is no doubt that the future of medicine is in terrific hands thanks to all of us who will continue to speak up for what is right.”

**Konrad Malik**  
CMS Class of 2029



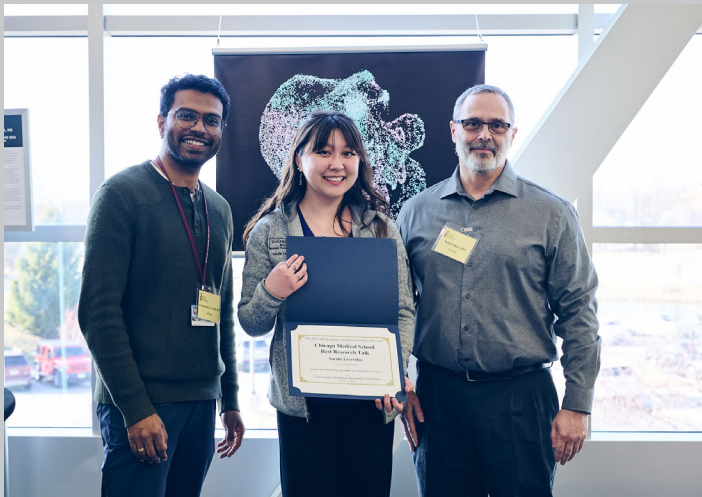
# All School Research Consortium

The university held its 21st annual All School Research Consortium (ASRC) on March 18, showcasing research from RFU students, postdoctoral trainees, residents, and undergraduate research interns. The program featured research talks, more than 90 poster presentations, and a keynote address on “Why We Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Remembering What Matters,” delivered by **Charan Ranganath**, PhD, director of the Memory and Plasticity Program and professor in the Center for Neuroscience and Department of Psychology at University of California at Davis.

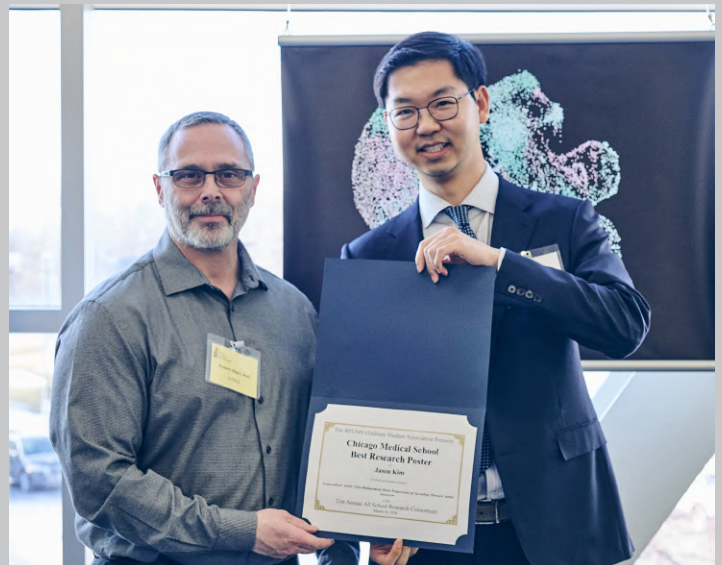
Congratulations to the CMS students who received awards for their presentations! **Natalie Loveridge**, CMS

'28, received the CMS Best Research Talk Award for her presentation titled “Synaptic Mechanisms Underlying LRRK2-Associated Parkinson’s Disease,” and **Jason Kim**, CMS '28, received the CMS Best Research Poster Award for his poster titled “Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement Slows Progression of Ascending Thoracic Aortic Aneurysm.”

The day concluded with the opening of the annual “Art from the Benchtop” exhibit, a selection of creative works produced during or inspired by research being conducted at RFU, submitted by students, faculty, and biomedical research staff. ■



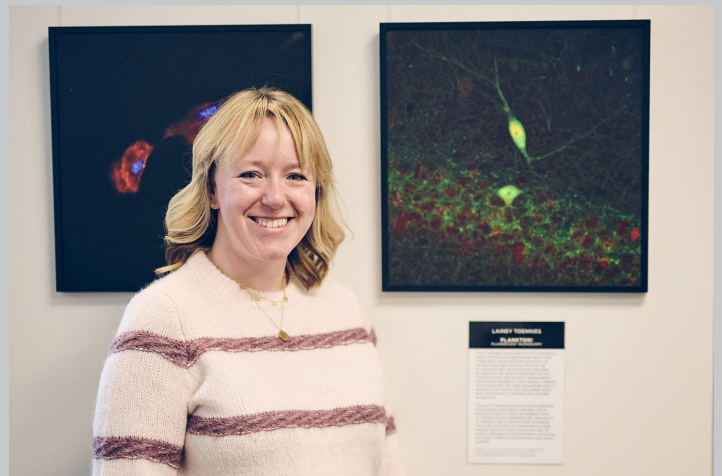
Natalie Loveridge with Dr. Robert Marr, assistant dean for research, and Dr. Vidyadhara D J, assistant professor of neuroscience.



Jason Kim with Dr. Robert Marr.



Makena Horne, CMS '29, with her artwork during the “Art from the Benchtop” opening reception.



Lainey Toennies, BS, a lab technician in the lab of Dr. Holly Hunsberger, with her artwork.



*Pictured from left to right: Dr. Robin Dyer (CMS/Baldwin), Stacey Kim (CMS/Population Health), Amanda Thomson (COP), Sabina Kalata (CMS), Audrey Hetzer (COP) and Dr. Abbie Lyden (COP/Baldwin)*

## CLARION Champions

*An interprofessional team of RFU students from Chicago Medical School, the College of Pharmacy, and the College of Health Professions' Population Health program won the national case competition.*

On April 18, an interprofessional team of Rosalind Franklin students won first place in the CLARION National Case Competition, an interprofessionalism-focused case competition held annually at the University of Minnesota. The team included **Sabina Kalata**, CMS '27; **Stacey Kim**, CMS/CHP '27 (Population Health); **Audrey Hetzer**, COP '28; and **Amanda Thomas**, COP '28. The team was coached by **Robin Dyer**, MD, assistant professor of internal medicine (CMS/Baldwin) and **Abbie Lyden**, PharmD, associate professor of pharmacy practice (COP/Baldwin), and sponsored by the Baldwin Institute.

Over the course of several months, the students engaged in a collaborative analysis of a case describing a patient's journey through the continuum of care for colorectal cancer. The team analyzed the case through multiple

lenses; prevention, education, care access, patient support, and health systems science. The students presented their proposal to a panel of judges as part of an intercollegiate competition involving other universities from across the country.

In addition to placing first overall in the competition, the team also won the Health Equity Innovation Award, and Audrey Hetzer was awarded Best Presenter. 2026 marks the second consecutive year that an RFU team has earned both Best Presenter and Health Equity Innovation Awards at this national competition.

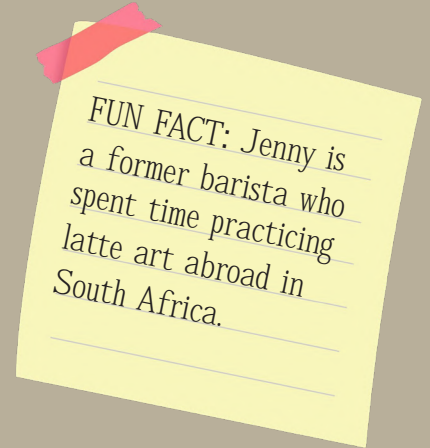
We are extremely proud of this team, whose dedication and excellence embody the mission and vision of our university. ■

# Humanism In Practice

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Jenny Lee, M3



In this quarterly feature from the CMS chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, students, staff, or residents share practical ways they incorporate humanism into patient care. Jenny is a third-year medical student (Class of 2027).



### **Can you share about a humanistic clinical experience you have had?**

During my clinical rotations, I asked to be involved in the care of a Vietnamese-speaking patient with an autoimmune condition. At the time, a key clinical question was whether his dysphagia was truly improving, or whether what we were hearing reflected a barrier in communication rather than a change in disease. In that moment, language shaped not only the history; it shaped clinical interpretation itself.

From the beginning of the encounter, language changed what was possible. What had been brief, uncertain descriptions in English became clear, structured accounts once we spoke in Vietnamese. What became evident was not a change in the patient's experience, but a change in our ability to hear it. Once language barriers were removed, what had appeared ambiguous became clinically consistent, and what had seemed uncertain revealed a clear trajectory. What stayed with me most was the shift in the room itself. The patient stopped translating himself. There was no longer hesitation in searching for words, just an unguarded clarity in describing his experience as it was lived. It clarified for me that humanism in medicine is not only about empathy, but about accuracy: about ensuring that a patient's voice is not softened, lost, or reshaped by the limits of communication.

Since then, I've carried a deeper sense of responsibility into each encounter: to recognize when language may

alter what is perceived, and to step into that gap — not to speak for patients, but to restore their ability to be fully heard.

### **What have you learned about humanism in medicine?**

Humanism in medicine is often defined less by what we intend, and more by what we are trained to overlook. In clinical spaces, I've seen how quickly people can be



*Jenny and her best friend after completing her first half marathon, the NorthShore Classic Half Marathon. Not your typical runners, just two medical students from rural roots chasing big dreams!*



*Fresh off the plane, holding a sea urchin in Veracruz, Mexico during a global health internship.*

filtered through shortcuts — titles, roles, evaluations, or perceived expertise — before they are ever fully understood. In response, I've tried to return to presence: slowing down when possible, listening beyond the immediate clinical framing, and allowing a patient's story to unfold without premature interpretation.

The moments that stay with me are rarely those that add new information, but those where something already present is finally allowed to surface. Medicine is hierarchical, but it is also relational. Some of the most meaningful growth has come from engaging peers whose backgrounds and lived experiences differ from my own. At its core, humanism is not a perspective to adopt, but a discipline to practice: the repeated choice to see people beyond the roles they occupy, and to remain long enough in each encounter for their full humanity to come into view.

***Share a piece of advice for future medical students about how to cultivate a humanistic environment in medicine.***

Future medical students are often told to “remember humanism,” but I've learned it is something that must be actively built into the environments we help shape. Begin with humility in how you see patients, peers, and yourself. It is easy in training to rely on titles, evaluations, or perceived expertise as shortcuts for understanding people. Humanistic care requires resisting those shortcuts and returning, consistently, to the person in front of you rather than the hierarchy around them.

Equally important is how we learn from one another. Intentionally seek out perspectives shaped by experiences different from your own. In clinical care, humanism is sustained through small, deliberate choices: slowing down when possible, making space for patients' narratives to unfold, and choosing presence when efficiency would be easier. A humanistic environment is not inherited; it is practiced. It is built through repeated choices to see people fully, to value difference, and to remain open long enough for shared humanity to become visible. ■



## *Lunar New Year*

The RFU community gathered on February 28 to celebrate the Lunar New Year with community, culture, and connection, in an event hosted by students from the **Vietnamese Medical Students' Association**, the **Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA)**, and the **Philippine Medical Association**. The celebration featured traditional games, cultural performances, origami tutorials, karaoke, music, and

food. Attendees were invited to learn about the cultural and historical significance of Lunar New Year across different countries, and take part in fun activities celebrating themes of health, renewal, and good fortune.

Thank you to our students for hosting this joyful evening of culture, wellness, and community. ■

# Black History Month Showcase

The CMS chapter of the **Student National Medical Association (SNMA)**, in cooperation with the RFU Division of Community and Campus Outreach, hosted the annual Black History Month Showcase on February 27. The showcase served as the grand finale of SNMA's program of events throughout February in observance of Black History Month.

Students, faculty, and staff shared their talents with the university community during a night of music, dance, singing, and more. This year's showcase theme focused on "Black History Through the Eras: Healing, Resilience, and Legacy." CMS alumna **Kimberley Darey, MD '04**,

MBA, CPE, president of Elmhurst Memorial Hospital, delivered a special keynote presentation, and attendees enjoyed a delicious dinner from a local restaurant, Jr Smokehouse BBQ. ■

**Clockwise from top left:** Keynote speaker Dr. Kimberley Darey, with RFU President Dr. Aron Sousa. SNMA co-president Tsion Habtamu, CMS '28. The CMS chapter of SNMA. Nana Yaa Biney, Tsion Habtamu, Charles Bieleu Nkamga, and SNMA co-president Agbai Kalu, all CMS '28. Darryl Stackhouse, campus security officer, with Carl Marcelin, CMS '28, on piano.





# Schweitzer Fellows



Congratulations to **Daniela Maciel**, CMS '27, and **Mitchell Leus**, MPH, CMS '29, who were selected for the 2026–27 class of Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows! This year-long service-learning program helps graduate students design and implement innovative projects to address the health needs of underserved Chicago communities. As part of the fellowship, Daniela and Mitchell will each partner with a local organization over the next year to carry out a service project in the Chicago community.

Daniela’s project focuses on advancing reproductive justice in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago by expanding equitable, culturally grounded access to family planning and contraceptive care for undocumented and uninsured reproductive-aged women through trusted community partnerships and low-barrier services.

For his project, Mitchell will facilitate a weekly peer-support and social-services navigation program in partnership with Pride in Aging at Center on Halsted, a community organization in Chicago’s historic LGBTQ+ neighborhood. This project seeks to reduce social isolation, cultivate community support, and address mental health disparities among aging LGBTQ+ community members in Chicago.

Founded in 1996, the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program cultivates aspiring health and human services professionals to be informed, concerned, and involved with addressing health inequities. Each year, the Schweitzer Program provides 26 exceptional students with opportunities to design and implement projects to improve the health and well-being of underserved Chicago communities. ■

## Planetary Health Workshop

All first-year medical students participated in a Planetary Health Workshop on April 9 as part of their Clinical Foundations of Medicine (CFoM) course. Through a panel discussion and a series of eight breakout sessions led by clinicians and other healthcare experts, students learned about the many ways that climate change impacts community health and how they can help future patients whose health is affected by air pollution, extreme heat, or other environmental factors.

“A lot of faculty have gathered here today because we believe that we can teach this to you, so that you are in a better position to care for future patients — and those patients include us,” **Dr. Regina Gomez**, CFoM course director, told students at the start of the workshop. “Our community needs you.” ■



*Drs. Amita Thakerar Patel, Esther Calderon, and Amy Pabst*



*Panelist Dr. Marc Glucksman during the workshop*



*Students in a breakout session led by Heidi Woods, MS, APN*



*Dr. Regina Gomez with panelists Dr. Marie Cabiya and Peter Orris*

# CMS-Led TBI Research Team Recognized as “Top Poster” at AAP Annual Meeting

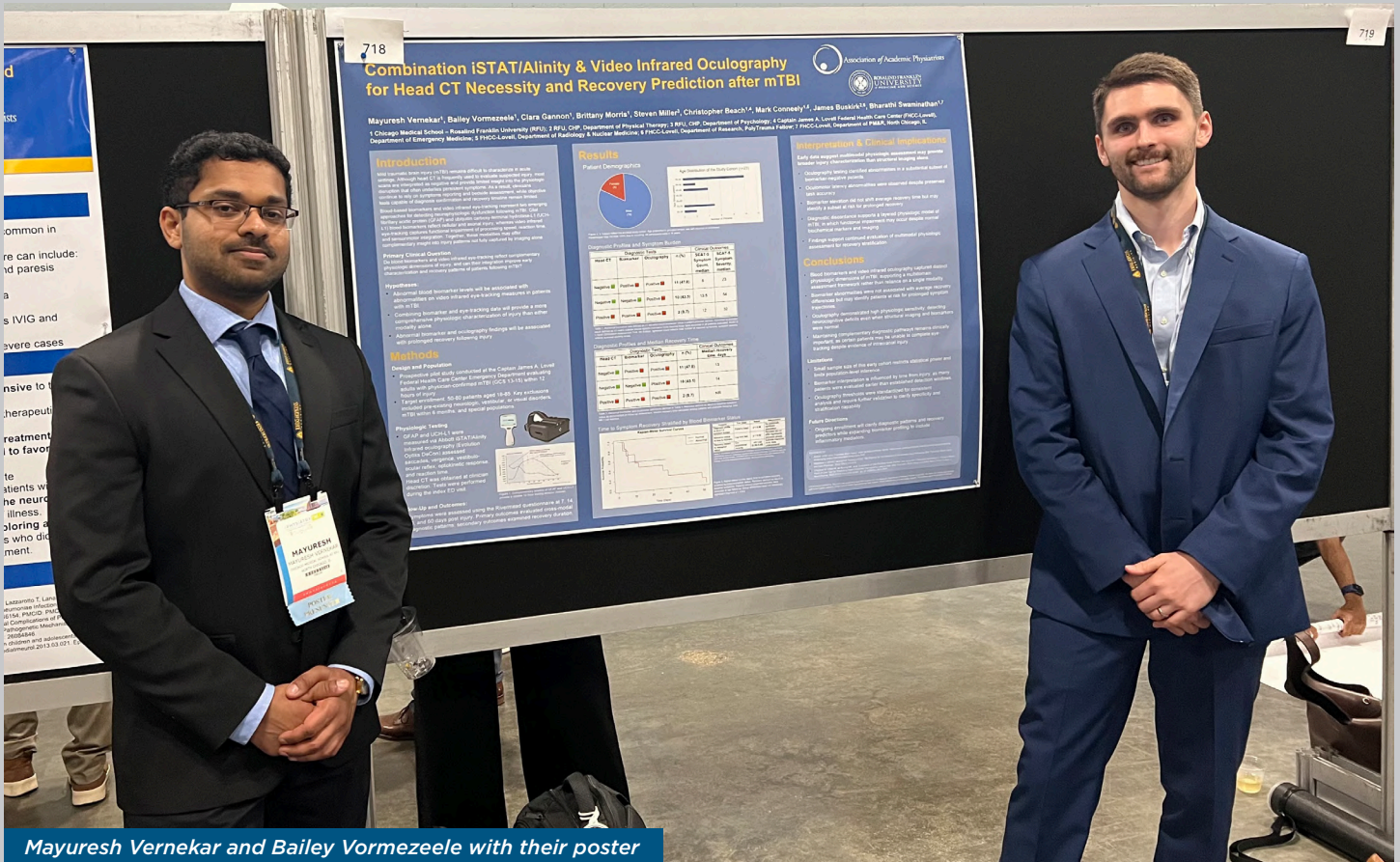
A multidisciplinary research team from Chicago Medical School, in collaboration with the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC) and RFU, recently presented their work on diagnostic biomarkers and video infrared oculography in mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) at the 2026 Association of Academic Physiatrists (AAP) Annual Meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The project, titled “Combination iSTAT/Alinity & Video Infrared Oculography for Head CT Necessity and Recovery Prediction After mTBI,” is led by **Bharathi Swaminathan**, MD, and James Buskirk, PT, DPT, PhD, MS, Ed, and focuses on advancing early detection and rehabilitation pathways in mTBI through the integration of point-of-care blood biomarkers and infrared video-oculography. The work is particularly aimed at improving diagnostic precision in CT-negative patients and supporting more efficient post-TBI care pathways across Veterans Affairs and civilian health systems.

At the conference, the presenting team — **Mayuresh Vernekar**, CMS '28, and **Bailey Vormezeele**, CMS '27 — attended and delivered the poster presentation on behalf of the study group. The poster was selected as a “Top Poster,” placing it among 12 distinguished projects recognized for excellence during formal review at the meeting.

The study highlights the growing role of point-of-care technologies and clinical decision-support tools in veteran-centered care and TBI recovery. The project continues to expand with the involvement of additional medical students and trainees contributing to ongoing data collection and pilot development.

The team anticipates future dissemination of this work at upcoming venues, including VA Research Week at RFU and the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM) World Congress in May 2026. ■



Mayuresh Vernekar and Bailey Vormezeele with their poster



*Dr. Gomez, Sam, and Servando with Flight for Life physicians*

## *High School Shadow Day*

Students from Waterford Union High School got a close-up look at potential career paths in health care, learning from CMS students and an interprofessional team of healthcare experts.

On April 23, two first-year medical students participated in a career exploration event for teens in nearby Racine County. Waterford Union High School (WUHS)'s High School Shadow Day was organized to expose high school students to different avenues and specialties in the healthcare field.

**Sam Pardini** and **Servando Garcia-Chavez**, both CMS '29, along with CMS faculty **Maria Gomez, MD**, worked with an interprofessional team to lead a trauma and critical care simulation lab, along with relevant procedures. The team included experts representing lab, pharmacy, EMS, trauma, ER, flight medicine, IT, radiology, obstetrics, nursing, physical therapy, and administration.

WUHS students from the high school's Sports Medicine Class and HOSA-Future Health Professionals club participated in the event, which was held at Advocate Aurora Medical Center in Mount Pleasant, WI. The high school students were able to shadow the healthcare experts as they moved through the simulated scenarios, giving them a glimpse into some future career paths. ■





## The Clothesline Project

**Angela Schroeder**, CMS '28, with the support of the RFU Division of Community and Campus Outreach and the student organization **White Coats Against Sexual Violence**, coordinated a display in partnership with the Zacharias Center of Gurnee to bring "The Clothesline Project" to RFU to recognize Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The Clothesline Project is an interactive exhibit that shares messages of resilience, healing, and hope from individuals and communities affected by sexual violence. The project began in 1990 when a group of women in Massachusetts created a space for survivors to express their experiences and be heard. Since then, colleges, crisis centers, and community organizations across the United States and around the world have hosted Clothesline Project events to raise awareness and bear witness to the impact of sexual violence.



The exhibit features shirts created by survivors, each one decorated with personal messages,

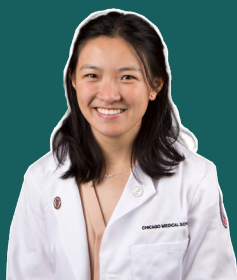
artwork, and reflections of their experiences. Hung together on a clothesline, the shirts create a powerful and visible display that highlights both the prevalence of this violence and the strength and resilience of those who have experienced it.

This display serves several purposes: to honor survivors and remember those who have lost their lives to violence, to support healing for those directly affected and their loved ones, and to educate communities about the reality and impact of sexual violence.

The Zacharias Center, the only rape crisis center serving Lake County for more than 40 years, lent RFU a collection of shirts created by survivors they have supported. The Zacharias Center provides free medical and legal advocacy, counseling, and support services to survivors of sexual assault and abuse. While the Clothesline Project was on display in RFU's lower IPEC hallway, members of the university community were also invited to write an anonymous note of encouragement, strength, and hope for survivors of sexual violence. The messages were then shared with individuals receiving support services at the Zacharias Center to remind them that their community stands with them. ■

# Community and Campus Forum

Chicago Medical School was well-represented at RFU's fourth annual Community and Campus Forum, presented by the RFU Division of Community and Campus Outreach on April 17. This year's theme was "Lived Experiences in Healthcare and Science." The event featured a full day of community-led presentations and guest speakers examining how lived experiences have impacted the journeys of health professions students, residents, faculty, biomedical scientists, providers, and patients.



**Jenny Lee**, CMS '27, gave a presentation titled "The Illusion of Understanding," which explored the cultural and systemic barriers that could make immigrant patients appear "noncompliant" even when a translator is used. Language access alone, Jenny explained, does not guarantee

understanding in clinical care; limited health literacy, cultural frameworks of illness, and systemic barriers can influence patient decision-making in immigrant communities. As the daughter of Vietnamese refugees, Jenny is committed to serving immigrant and refugee communities and improving how patients understand and experience their care, particularly in the context of communication and health literacy.



**Lainey Toennies**, BS, lab technician in the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, presented "Stop the Clot: Knowledge as the Best Anticoagulant." Her presentation was based on her own experience surviving two pulmonary embolism diagnoses during her undergraduate

years. Today, Lainey is an active patient volunteer with the National Blood Clot Alliance, and she seeks to increase awareness of venous thromboembolism. Her goal is for more people to know the signs and symptoms of a blood clot in order to change the standard of care from reactive treatment to proactive (prevention and early diagnosis). "I aim to show that knowledge and compassion are the ultimate tools for empowering patients and saving lives," Lainey said.



**Stacey Kim**, CMS/CHP '28, presented a workshop on the topic "The Bridge of Understanding: Humanizing Healthcare Through the Teach-Back Method" along with podiatry student Deviyani Bajpai and Dr. Moni B. Becerra, chair of the CHP Department of Population Health & Administration. The trio introduced

their audience to the teach-back method, a way of checking understanding by asking patients to state in their own words the healthcare information that was communicated to them during an appointment. Stacey's research interests include public health communication, infectious disease prevention, and health equity. Through her public health research and clinical training, she has observed a persistent gap between medical knowledge and patient understanding, and she is especially interested in improving how healthcare information is communicated to patients, recognizing that many individuals feel intimidated to ask questions or receive explanations in rushed clinical settings.



Finally, **Stephanie Moss**, MD, PGY-2, CMS psychiatry resident, presented "Disability and Disclosure in Medicine." Dr. Moss explored the complexities of disability disclosure for healthcare students and professionals, drawing from her own lived experience with

physical and mental health conditions. She discussed topics such as weighing the risks and benefits of disclosure, understanding legal protections, and securing accommodations. As a chief resident for medical student education, Dr. Moss serves as a mentor to other non-traditional and first-generation doctors. Through sharing her story on social media and her advocacy on her podcast *Life as a Patient-Doctor*, she has created resources for students who have gone through similar academic struggles.

Thank you to everyone from CMS, and RFU's other schools and colleges, who shared their lived experiences and led important discussions on improving public health and health equity, in order to better serve our community. ■

# Dean Chatterjee Named ISMS Physician Leader of the Year

Congratulations to CMS Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, who received the Illinois State Medical Society's (ISMS) **Physician Leader of the Year Award** in recognition of her "extraordinary leadership contributions to the field of medicine and embodiment of the values of the medical profession through service to the public and the profession." Dr. Chatterjee accepted the award at the ISMS Annual Meeting on April 19.

The award recognizes Dr. Chatterjee for her roles as a nationally recognized educator, researcher and specialist in pediatric infectious diseases. As our Chicago Medical School Dean since April 2020, she ushered the school through the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and secured an eight-year accreditation for CMS from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). Under her tenure, CMS has also seen increased student enrollment, expanded clinical partnerships across multiple states, and the tripling of endowed scholarships for under-resourced students.

The ISMS also recognized the trailblazing nature of her career: Dr. Chatterjee is the first woman and person of color to serve as dean of Chicago Medical School, and she is the first woman of South Asian descent to serve as dean of any LCME-accredited medical school.

In addition to her leadership in medical education, Dr. Chatterjee has also demonstrated leadership in the fields of pediatric infectious diseases and vaccinology. She has been a national leader in vaccine science and policy for decades, serving on the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee and multiple other advisory bodies. Throughout her 30-year career, she has co-authored

over 200 peer-reviewed publications and led more than 120 clinical trials, contributing to the licensure of many life-saving vaccines used worldwide.

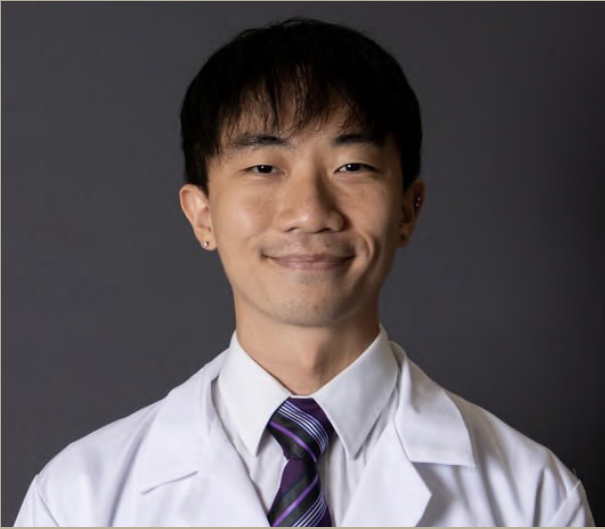
Finally, Dr. Chatterjee has demonstrated a commitment to nurturing and mentoring future leaders in healthcare and academic medicine. Through her public speaking engagements and her leadership in organizations like the Center for Women in Academic Medicine and Science and the AAMC (she has hosted AAMC Council of Deans fellows five years in a row), Dr. Chatterjee has shown that she is dedicated to helping develop leadership talent in peers and others.

Congratulations to Dr. Chatterjee, and we at CMS thank you for your leadership, mentorship, expertise, and deep commitment to the field of medicine! ■

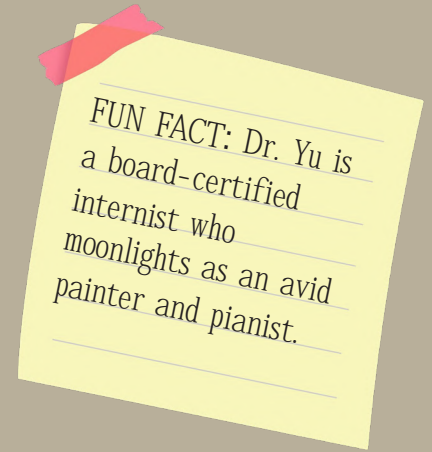


# Humanism In Practice

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Michael Yu



In this quarterly feature from the CMS chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, students, staff, or residents share practical ways they incorporate humanism into patient care. Dr. Yu is an internal medicine resident at Advocate Christ Medical Center.



### ***What drew you to medicine?***

I was drawn to medicine because I wanted to combine my curiosity for science with meaningful interpersonal interaction. I've always felt that medical conditions can deeply affect someone's ability to live fully, and I wanted to help change that. Using my time and effort to help people return to a healthier state so they can do what they love is what really motivated me.

### ***What sorts of interactions have shaped your perception of medicine?***

My father was a general surgeon, and seeing how he used his time and skills to improve other people's lives had a big impact on me. There was never any expectation that I follow his path, but I deeply admired the work he did. His dedication and his sacrifices have made medicine feel both meaningful and admirable to me.

### ***Can you speak to some of the sacrifices you've made throughout your career journey?***

Medicine involves years of training, along with a lot of emotional investment in patients and their outcomes. You work hard to do everything right, but there are things you can control and things you can't, which can be emotionally challenging. It also requires sacrificing personal time, hobbies, and sometimes family moments, as well as carrying the emotional weight of difficult patient outcomes.

### ***How do you incorporate humanism into your daily practice?***

I try to really connect with my patients beyond their medical issues by remembering small, personal details about them. The better you know them, the better care you can provide. On a digital sticky note during clinic visits, I'll jot down things patients share (hobbies, plans they're excited about, etc,... ) so I can bring it up later. Even on the floors in the hospital, simple conversations about life outside of the hospital help to keep things human.

### ***What do you find to be a common barrier to humanism in medicine?***

Burnout is probably the biggest barrier because it slowly chips away at empathy over time. I have no doubt people who enter this career have the biggest hearts. Even the most compassionate people can become emotionally exhausted when they're constantly under pressure. That's why it's important to recognize it early and support each other. Talk to your colleagues, make systemic changes in the workplace. No one should have to navigate a career they love without feeling well supported.

### ***What do you recommend as a means to prevent burnout?***

Preventing burnout requires caring for your well-being both inside and outside of the hospital. A big part of



that is prioritizing things that matter to you personally, like spending time with family, friends, or hobbies you enjoy. It's also about remembering that taking care of yourself allows you to continue taking better care of others. The most important thing is to pay it forward. Do good for others, in the same way others have helped you, and by ripple effect they will pay it forward as well.

***How has your approach to humanism changed in medical school vs. residency, especially in mentoring?***

Becoming a doctor comes with more responsibility, especially when it comes to making decisions and having difficult conversations with patients and their families. Compared to medical school, residency has deepened my ability to form real connections and practice humanism in a more intentional way. In that same vein, medicine is apprenticeship. We go many places on our journey, and learn something new from every mentor we study with. The best thing we can do with that knowledge and guidance is to pay forward to others. Now that I have my own medical students, I want to teach them in ways that will lay a good foundation for their future practice.

***How do you maintain humanism when your reserves feel depleted?***

In those moments, I try not to lose sight of why I chose medicine in the first place, which is to help others. Remember why you do what you do. Remember why you choose to help others. Even when work is overwhelming and there's little time to reflect, I remind myself of that purpose. Having a supportive program like my own that values wellness also helps to maintain balance during those heavier periods. ■

**Above:** *Dr. Yu performs a piece on piano during the 2022 Philippine Medical Association Holiday Candlelight Concert at RFUMS.*

# RFU Faculty Awards



Congratulations to the six outstanding CMS faculty members who were honored for their research, teaching, and service at the university's annual Faculty Awards Ceremony on May 7. We're thankful for all our faculty and everything they do to support our students and our school!



**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases, received the Board of Trustees Research Award, presented to a junior faculty member who has shown promise in research activities, in published work, and grantsmanship.



**Raj Chovatiya**, MD, PhD, MSCI, FAAD, associate professor of medicine received the Lawrence Medoff Award, presented for outstanding performance in clinical sciences in the area of research, teaching, and/or clinical care.



**Kimiko Suzue**, MD, PhD, professor, education director, and discipline chair of pathology, received the Rosalind Franklin Award for Excellence in Teaching, presented to a faculty member to recognize expertise in fostering student learning.



**Joseph Reynolds**, PhD, professor and discipline chair of microbiology and immunology and director of the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection, received the Rosalind

Franklin Award for Excellence in Service, presented to a faculty member who has made outstanding service contributions to the university.



**Nutan Vaidya**, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and engagement and professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, received the Timothy R. Hansen Mentoring Award, presented to a full-ranked faculty

member who has shown outstanding contributions in advising, guiding, and coaching university faculty, either formally or informally.



**Héctor Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, Latinx students and community liaison and professor of physiology and biophysics, received the Deans' Award for Diversity and Inclusion, awarded by the RFU deans

in recognition of outstanding contributions to the enhancement of the university's culture of diversity and inclusion. ■

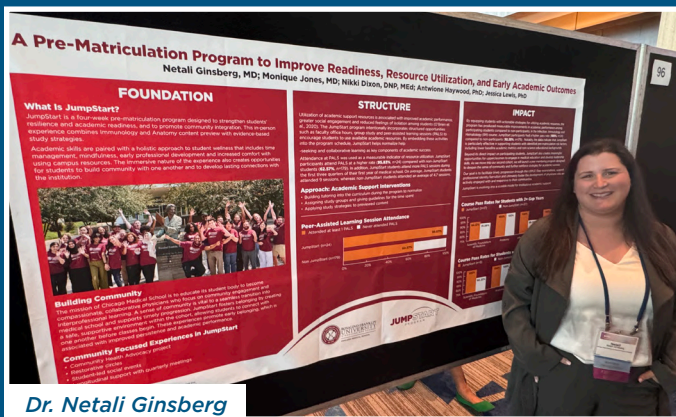
# AAMC Conference Presentations

*CMS faculty, staff, and students have been well-represented at recent AAMC conferences and national meetings, where several groups from CMS have presented posters and small group discussions showcasing some of the work being done at the medical school.*

Two groups from CMS presented posters at the AAMC Group on Student Affairs (GSA)/Organization of Student Representatives (OSR) "Together We Lead" National Meeting, held April 16-18 in Orlando, FL.

**Melissa Chen**, MD, assistant dean for community health and engagement and medical director of RFU's Interprofessional Community Clinic, presented "Teaching Transforms Teachers: Faculty Development Through Facilitation in a Health Equity Curriculum." Co-authors on the poster included **Hyerin Yoon**, CMS '26; **Binita Pandya**, CMS '27; **Susanna Calkins**, PhD, RFU NEXUS for Faculty Success; and **Amy Swift-Johnson**, MD '06, associate professor of family medicine.

**Netali Ginsberg**, MD, director of pathway success, presented "A Pre-Matriculation Program to Improve Readiness, Resource Utilization, and Early Academic Outcomes." Co-authors on the poster included **Monique Jones**, MD '93, assistant dean for career and specialty advising; **Nikki Dixon**, DNP, MEd, director of student development and learning success; **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, associate dean for student affairs; and **Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean of student affairs.



**Lisa Michaluk**, MEd, director of faculty affairs, and **Nutan Vaidya**, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and engagement, presented a poster titled "Once Upon a Faculty: Engagement Through Storytelling" at the AAMC Group on Business Affairs (GBA), Group on Institutional Planning (GIP), and Group on Faculty Affairs (GFA) Joint

Spring Meeting, held April 22-24 in St. Louis, MO. **Dr. Neil Bradbury** was also a co-author on the poster. Their poster detailed the success of the CMS Faculty Affairs and Engagement's "My Life in Academia" series, which hosts quarterly interviews of advanced-career faculty so the medical school community can hear about their lives and careers.



**Dr. Nikki Dixon** and **Dr. Netali Ginsberg** presented a workshop titled "JumpStart: From Acceptance to First Day: Helping Students Start Strong — A Collaboration between Admissions and Student Affairs" at the AAMC Central Group on Educational Affairs (CGEA) Spring Conference, held April 27-29 in Rochester, MN. **Dr. Antwione Haywood**, **Dr. Jessica Lewis**, and **Dr. Monique Jones** were co-authors on the abstract. ■





## *Dean Chatterjee Participates in Capitol Hill Advocacy Day*

CMS Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, visited Washington, DC, on March 26 as part of an AAMC-organized Capitol Hill Advocacy Day. Dean Chatterjee joined more than 30 other leaders from AAMC-member medical schools and academic health systems to meet with lawmakers and congressional staff on Capitol Hill to advocate for policies that ensure access to care and support for medical research and education.

Dr. Chatterjee, along with deans from UChicago Pritzker School of Medicine and Carle Illinois College of Medicine, talked to the teams of Illinois policymakers from the House of Representatives and the Senate, meeting with staff and aides for Senator Tammy Duckworth, Senator Dick Durban, and Representative Jonathan Jackson.

Their advocacy included urging lawmakers to provide robust and sustained investments in the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The leaders further urged policymakers to support the healthcare workforce by investing in Medicare-supported graduate medical

education, reauthorizing and funding the Health Resources and Services Administration's health professions workforce programs, and by providing academic medicine with a National Interest Exception to the recently announced \$100,000 H-1B visa filing fee.

During their meetings with lawmakers, Dr. Chatterjee and the other medical school deans shared examples from their institutions highlighting how federal policies impact the missions of academic medicine. Thank you, Dr. Chatterjee, for your support in advocating for medical research and education, in order to better support our students and better care for the patients and communities we serve. ■

*Above: Dean Chatterjee outside the office of Sen. Tammy Duckworth. Below left: Dean Chatterjee; deans Dr. Mark Anderson and Dr. Mark Cohen; and Carson Conlon, JD, legislative assistant to Rep. Jonathan Jackson. Below right: Dean Chatterjee with other academic medicine leaders in the office of Sen. Tammy Duckworth.*



# Faculty Professional Development Day

The CMS Office of Faculty Affairs and Engagement held an on-campus Faculty Professional Development Day on April 30. About 50 faculty members attended the half-day program, which covered topics including “Understanding Academic Leadership: How Decisions are Made and How Faculty Can Influence Them” and “Leveraging AI to Boost Productivity.” Participants learned how to develop targeted advocacy strategies and leadership competencies to gain a seat at the table to effectively influence institutional outcomes. They also explored the practical trade-offs of integrating AI into medical education, balancing its efficiency and data power against the essential human elements of mentorship, clinical judgment, and professional ethics.

The program also featured an Oxford-style debate on the topic “AI as Teachers,” with faculty members **Neil Bradbury**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics,

and **Frank Maldonado**, MD, professor of medicine and executive vice chair of clinical sciences. Dr. Bradbury and Dr. Maldonado dressed the part, donning black robes and white barrister wigs for their debate! ■



*Drs. Ligaya Marasigan, Frank Maldonado, Nicole Ferrara, Neil Bradbury, Esther Calderon-Gierszal, and Amita Thakerar Patel.*



*Dr. Frank Maldonado dressed for the debate.*



*Dr. Neil Bradbury, ready to debate.*



*The Oxford-style debate.*



*50 faculty members participated in the event.*

## Happy Retirement to Lolita!

*The CMS/FHCC internal medicine residency program bids farewell to Lolita Edwards and wishes her a happy retirement.*

Our Graduate Medical Education team gathered on March 4 to celebrate Lolita Edwards, who retired after 23 years at CMS/RFU! Lolita started in 2003 as the GME secretary. She later moved over to RFU's financial aid office, then the admissions office, then the institutional advancement office, before ending where she had begun: returning to the GME office, where she worked as program administrator for our North Chicago internal medicine residency program until her retirement.

Thank you to Lolita for her years of dedication to our students and residents! We wish her a very happy retirement! ■



## Psychiatry Residency Poster Competition



CMS psychiatry residents presented their research at the 19th Annual Psychiatry Residency Poster Competition on April 16, showcasing their research projects, case presentations, and quality improvement projects. The top three winners will be revealed during the upcoming psychiatry graduation ceremony in June. ■

**Top of page:** Psychiatry residents, with faculty judges and GME faculty and staff.

**Above left:** Dr. Omar Ruyyashi, PGY-3, presents his poster to Dr. Carl Correll.

**Above right:** Dr. Ji In Choi, PGY-3, presents her poster.

## Dr. Harin Shah Wins Golden Apple Award

**Harin Shah**, MD, PGY-3, internal medicine resident, was recognized with the Golden Apple Award for Medical Student Education during a recent faculty recognition dinner hosted by **Dr. Ted Lorenc**, CMS associate professor of medicine and director of medical education at Northwestern Medicine McHenry.

Dr. Shah's unwavering commitment to teaching was deeply appreciated, including his creation of the Resident Lecture Series within the CMS/ Northwestern Medicine McHenry internal medicine residency program.

Dr. Shah shared his thoughts on the award in a LinkedIn post, writing: "I'm honored and grateful to receive the Golden Apple Award. The pursuit of medicine can often feel like a cycle of never-ending exams and constant learning, but moments like this serve as a reminder of the deeper purpose behind the journey. Teaching has been one of the most meaningful aspects of my residency, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to learn alongside medical students, residents, and colleagues who make education a truly collaborative process. I also deeply appreciate and am grateful for the supportive environment that RFUMS fosters within the Internal Medicine residency program, here at McHenry Hospital." ■



## Other GME News



**Ji In "Vivien" Choi**, MD, PGY-3, psychiatry resident, was named an Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society Fellow, in recognition of her leadership and dedicated service in the health equity space.

Congratulations to **Aniqa Zaidi**, MD, second-year Endocrine Fellow, for winning an Early Career Award from the Endocrine Society. ■



## Dr. Vivian Wong, Class of 2014, Comes to Campus

CMS alumna **Vivian Wong**, MD '14, PhD '12, came to campus on March 11 to give a grand rounds presentation titled “Dermatological Emergencies — What’s New in 2026.”

While she was here, she also had coffee with students interested in dermatology and met with **Dean Archana Chatterjee** to receive her Distinguished Alumni Award for Early Career Achievement, which was announced at the CMS Alumni Reunion this past fall. This award 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 who also holds a PhD in Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology. She is on the CMS faculty as a clinical assistant professor of medicine, and she also serves as an advisor to the RFU student interest group in dermatology, mentoring medical students, guiding aspiring dermatologists, and shaping future leaders in medicine. ■



*Dr. Wong by the Chicago Medical School sign.*

**Top of page:** *Dean Chatterjee presents the Distinguished Alumni Award for Early Career Achievement to Dr. Wong.*



## In Memoriam: Dr. John Bradley

We remember with gratitude **Dr. John Bradley**, co-founder of the Chicago Area Health and Medical Careers Program™ (CAHMCP), who recently passed away. The CAHMCP program was the precursor to our current Pre-Matriculation Program (PMP). Dr. Bradley's work with CAHMCP impacted many students who eventually matriculated to CMS and are now CMS alumni, and his legacy continues to benefit current and prospective CMS students who have been enrolled in the PMP program.

A champion for equity in health care and education, Dr. Bradley empowered, mentored, and inspired thousands of students in the Chicagoland area along their journeys to careers in STEM-related fields. His partnership with medical and health professions schools, including RFU, helped create pathways for students historically underrepresented in medicine to pursue their dreams.

Dr. Bradley received a Doctorate of Humane Letters from RFU in 2004 in honor of the many lives and careers he helped transform. His legacy lives on in these physicians, scientists, and health professionals, and through

CAHMCP's ongoing work under the CPASS Foundation (still a partner of RFU) and the Pre-Matriculation Program. We offer our condolences to Dr. Bradley's family, friends, colleagues, and former students. ■



*Dr. Bradley at a CAHMCP Multicultural Summit, held at RFU in 2013. **Top of page:** Dr. Bradley after receiving an award at a 2013 CAHMCP reunion, pictured with Mildred M.G. Olivier, MD '88; Ronald Rembert, MD '00; and Monique Jones, MD '93*



**Left:** Dr. Bradley receiving an honorary degree from RFU President Dr. Michael Welch at the 2004 commencement ceremony. **Above:** Dr. Bradley pictured with Chicago mayor Brandon Johnson, receiving a lifetime achievement award for his work with CAHMCP.

## CMS Alumni Share Their Memories of Dr. Bradley

"Dr. Bradley was an extraordinary man — wise, compassionate, and deeply committed to the success of others. I owe my career and many of my achievements in medicine to his guidance and belief in me. From the moment we first met, when he took a genuine interest in my desire to become a physician, I knew he would play a pivotal role in my life.

He possessed a rare gift: the ability to offer encouragement and wisdom in the face of even the most daunting challenges. More than a mentor, he was a steadfast source of inspiration, particularly for so many Black students pursuing medicine. His impact is reflected in the countless physicians he helped shape, including me.

Though Dr. Bradley is no longer with us, his legacy will live on through those he mentored. I am committed to honoring his influence by supporting and guiding future generations with the same passion and dedication he showed me. He will be deeply missed, forever cherished, and I am profoundly grateful for the time I was able to spend learning from and working alongside him."



**Stephanie McGee  
(née Miles), MD '19**  
Family medicine physician  
with Norton Medical Group  
in Louisville, KY



**Vanessa Rose, MD '20**  
Family medicine physician  
with Northwestern Medicine  
in Chicago, IL

## CMS Alumni Share Their Memories of Dr. Bradley

### A Legacy Doubled: A Tribute to Dr. John Bradley

Over the past two months, as I shared the news of Dr. Bradley's elevation, a single phrase echoed from every physician: "He is the reason I am a doctor today." While that sentence is simple, it carries a gravity that words can barely support. We are talking about a man who was the primary catalyst for an entire two generations of healers. He filled the ranks of the medical community with thousands of individuals driven by a singular, unshakeable goal: to serve.

#### The Power of Two

For those of us who had the privilege of knowing Dr. Bradley well, we remember his quirks as vividly as his wisdom. We laugh when we reminisce about his habit of saying everything twice. What do you know? What do you know?

At the time, it might have seemed like a simple mannerism. But looking back, there was a poetic truth to it. By saying everything twice, he doubled the impact of his message. He ensured the lesson took root. He grew the spirit of service exponentially.

#### A Living Monument

Dr. Bradley didn't build monuments out of stone; he built them out of people who became physicians.

He planted the seed: Instilling the drive to practice medicine.

He nurtured the mission: Focusing always on the community's needs.

He doubled the legacy: Ensuring that his values lived on through each of us.

John, you told us twice so we would remember it forever. We heard you then, we hear you now, and we see your work every time a physician you mentored steps into a patient's room or mentors the next generation.

Thank you, Dr. Bradley. Thank you. ■



#### Monique Jones, MD '93

Assistant Dean for Career and Specialty Advising, CMS

Co-Director, JumpStart Pre-Matriculation Program

Associate Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology



*Dr. Bradley with Dr. Jones at a 2013 CAHMCP reunion and awards ceremony.*



## Visiting Our California Alumni



*Dr. Mervyn Sahud (Class of 1964) displays a certificate he received in 1964 for the Mosby Scholarship Book Award for Scholastic Excellence.*



*Dr. Aron Sousa, Dr. Theresa Kepic (Class of 1985), Dr. Frank Naeymi-Rad, Dr. Archana Chatterjee, and George Rattin.*

CMS Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, accompanied by RFU President **Aron Sousa**, MD, and **George Rattin** from the RFU alumni office, visited several groups of Bay Area alumni on their trip to California this May. First, they had lunch with **Mervyn Sahud**, MD '64. Then they traveled to Napa to have dinner with **Theresa Kepic**, MD '85, and her husband Frank Naeymi-Rad, PhD. The following day, they attended an alumni reception in Atherton, hosted by **Betty Kung**, MD '94, and **Albert Shen**, MD '94. (Their son Collin has just completed his first year at CMS!) ■



*Dr. Chatterjee and Dr. Sousa address the group of Bay Area alumni who attended the reception at Dr. Kung and Dr. Shen's home.*



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Kamilah Banks-Word, MD '14

Long before **Kamilah Banks-Word**, MD '14, knew the term “stigma,” she intuited there was shame around mental-health conditions and had the sense there was no way out for the most vulnerable. Her stepfather’s mother had schizophrenia and wasn’t able to comply with treatment, so she witnessed up close the havoc wreaked by untreated mental-health conditions and their trickle-down effects on the whole family.

Dr. Banks-Word grew up in Cabrini-Green, the former housing project in Near North Chicago. From a young age, she observed a great deal of suffering around her — people talking to themselves, seeming quite unwell, even anguished — which she later came to understand was untreated mental illness, often connected to poverty. These were her neighbors, people in her community she saw almost every day. She recalls asking her mom: “Why is this person sick? What’s wrong?”

Now a child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr. Banks-Word works at the West Town branch of Erie Family Health Center in Chicago, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that treats underserved populations in the inner city and surrounding areas, including many from ethnic minority groups.

FQHC facilities are “safety net” providers that receive federal funding to treat members of minoritized communities in outpatient settings — in other words, patients who likely would not have access to medical care otherwise. Dr. Banks-Word reports that changes in federal funding have made it more challenging for some to get care, including a significant increase in migrants ages 42-64 who are losing health benefits. Erie’s mission is to serve all, regardless of ability to pay or immigration status, so the organization is finding creative approaches to funding, including working with state agencies and private donors, so no one falls through the cracks.

Recent studies have confirmed a suspected causal link between poverty and nine mental-health diagnoses, including illnesses Dr. Banks-Word treats every day in her practice, such as bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and schizophrenia.

The social stigma that has long been associated with mental illness is exacerbated in marginalized communities. Dr. Banks-Word peels back these layers of complexity to first address the shame her patients feel, which is often an obstacle to seeking care. Add to this

caregiver stress, economic hardship and legislation that excludes or makes access to medical care difficult, and we've got a devastating problem of social isolation and untreated illness that causes harm at both the individual and community levels.

Dr. Banks-Word's approach is to treat each patient as a whole person within a family structure and each diagnosis as a specific health problem, working not only with medications but also with natural interventions such as meditation, exercise, therapy, and over-the-counter vitamins and supplements. A holistic approach to care allows her to educate patients in resisting media representations of poverty and mental illness, because she approaches them as people suffering with health conditions, rather than as people who are "crazy" or somehow to blame for their symptoms. It also addresses learned self-stigma, generational shame and "minority

stress" — the extra stress people from minority groups are exposed to as a result of their social position.

Dr. Banks-Word, herself, faced a difficult path to her medical degree, given that "STEM was not exactly a household word" in Cabrini-Green. The support she found in college and medical school — including serving as a National Health Service Corps Scholar and participating in RFU's Pre-Matriculation Program — set her on a course to become a healer, a helper and a doctor. The observant empathy she'd discovered as a child is now employed to help patients heal from stigma and transform their relationship to mental health. ■

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*This article was originally published in the Fall/Winter 2025 issue of Rosalind Franklin University's Helix magazine under the title "Breaking Down Stigma." Article by Kim Westerman; photo by Max Thomsen.*

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## Other Alumni News

On International Women's Day, the CMS chapter of the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) co-hosted "Women in White Coats" featuring an alumni panel and a speed-mentoring dinner, where female physicians and podiatrists shared career triumphs and challenges with students. CMS participants included **Rosaura Licea**, MD '93; **Satnam Papa**, MD '00; **Stephanie Bonne**, MD '06, **Mahreen S. Majid**, MD '08; **Jessie Folk**, MD '12, MS '08; **Kaitlyn Egan**, MD '18; and **Allison Martin**, MD '21.

**Harbinder Singh**, MD '95, joined Saint Francis Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery Associates in Memphis, TN.

**Teresa Alexander**, MD '00, joined OSF HealthCare Saint Katharine Medical Center's OB/GYN clinic at Commerce Towers in Dixon, IL.

**Aaron Bianco**, MD '06, MS '02, joined St. Joseph's Health Orthopedic and Spine Care in Syracuse, NY.

**Amanda Rostkowski**, MD '10, PhD '08, returned to RFU in February to present to the OB/GYN student interest

group on her extensive research in chronic pelvic pain and endometriosis.

**Alina Elperin**, MD '11, joined Forward Focus Concierge Medicine in Highland Park, IL.

**Diana Naderi**, MD '14, was appointed clinical assistant professor of family and preventive medicine at Palmdale Regional Medical Center in Palmdale, CA.

**Kelsi Swanson**, MD '18, joined St. Francis General Surgery in Cape Girardeau, MO.

Two alumni have joined the CMS faculty: **Matthew Alfarano**, MD '19, MS '18, MS '15, was appointed clinical assistant professor of emergency medicine, and **Vanessa Rose**, MD '20, was appointed clinical assistant professor of family and preventive medicine.

**Jeremy Wolfe**, MD '22, was appointed lecturer of psychiatry and behavioral science at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC) in North Chicago, IL. ■

# STAFF CORNER

## Get to know the people who make CMS a great place to study and work!



### Heidi Endicott

Senior Administrative Assistant,  
Office of Faculty Affairs and Engagement  
Time at CMS: 4 months

Heidi Endicott grew up in Arlington Heights, IL, before going to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to get her bachelor's degree in Health Education. She previously worked at the Medical College of Wisconsin in the Biochemistry Department, right up until the time she moved from Wisconsin to Illinois in July 2025. She is happy to be back home in Illinois!

Heidi has also run her own business for over 30 years in a work-from-home setting while raising her daughter as a single mom.

In February 2026, Heidi joined CMS as a senior administrative assistant in the CMS Office of Faculty Affairs and Engagement (FAE). She blends her responsibilities between supporting FAE activities, such as faculty development events and the ongoing "My Life in Academia" series, and supporting Dr. Nutan Vaidya, the vice dean for faculty affairs and engagement. She enjoys learning new things in her role, and that each day at work is different.

"We are so glad to have Heidi on the FAE team!," said Heidi's supervisor. "She jumped right into her senior admin role, bringing a great mix of kindness, efficiency, and a natural ability to connect people — including sparking casual campus chats with her 'Question of the Week' board. She has been a wonderful support, and I'm excited to see her thrive here at CMS!"

"This environment is honestly one of the best I have ever worked in," Heidi said. "Everyone's so kind and encouraging! My favorite thing about RFU is being able to meet so many incredible faculty, students, and staff. I've also really been enjoying the new RFU walking club—it's a great way to get outside and connect with new people."

Outside of work, Heidi is a big reader and has already joined a local book club in her new area. She loves traveling and discovering new places by plane, train, or automobile, as well as hunting for great restaurants with accommodating gluten-free menus.

"If I had to name my superpower, it's meeting new people and learning their stories," Heidi said. "I truly believe in spreading joy wherever I go, whether it's with a smile, an encouraging word, or lending a hand." She wants to end her staff feature with an invitation: "If you ever need a positive word, a bit of affirmation, or even a sparkle sticker, please stop by my desk—I'm always happy to oblige! You can even answer my question of the week!" ■

## Awards & Accomplishments



**Paige Arneson-Wissink, PhD**, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Center for Genetic Diseases, received a three-year, \$747,000 grant from the National Cancer Institute for the research study “Elucidating the Regulation of Hepatic Metabolism in Pancreatic Cancer Cachexia and Recovery.” She will be studying how pancreatic cancer leads to muscle wasting. Known as cachexia, this condition contributes to up to 25% of cancer-related deaths and can significantly affect patients’ strength and quality of life.

Dr. Arneson-Wissink’s research will explore the epigenetic changes behind this process, with the goal of identifying new ways to improve outcomes for patients.

**Nicole Ferrara, PhD**, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, Center for the Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders, has been elected as a Fellow of the International Behavioral Neuroscience Society (IBNS). This honor was bestowed in recognition of her contributions to the field of behavioral neuroscience and to IBNS.



Congratulations to the following students from the Class of 2027 who were selected for induction into the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society as M3s:

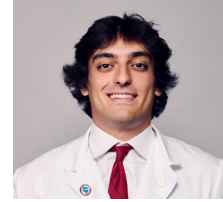
- **Olivia Griffith**
- **Firas Moussa**
- **Eliza Mundenmaney**
- **Safoora Murad**
- **Ani Oganessian**
- **Ethan Oliver**
- **Syeda Shah**
- **Ilana Spitz**

This honor recognizes these students’ commitment to professionalism, leadership, scholarship, research, and service, and their dedication to the ideals of humanism

and service. Inductees will be formally recognized at the CMS Awards/Aesculapian Ceremony on May 28.



*Olivia Griffith*



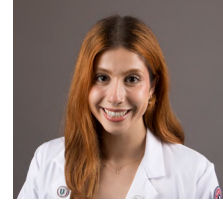
*Firas Moussa*



*Eliza Mundenmaney*



*Safoora Murad*



*Ani Oganessian*



*Ethan Oliver*



*Syeda Shah*

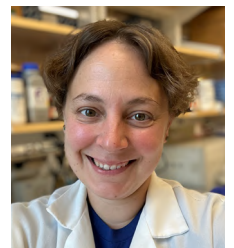


*Ilana Spitz*



**Antwione Haywood, PhD**, associate dean for student affairs, was accepted as a fellow in the 2026-2027 Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® (ELAM) Program. The ELAM program is a year-long part-time fellowship for faculty in schools of medicine, dentistry, public health, and pharmacy. The highly competitive program seeks to prepare its fellows for leadership positions in the health sciences through mentoring, coaching, and networking.

A CMS team led by **Erin Howe, PhD**, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology and vice director of the Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics, received a grant from the American Association for Cancer Research



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to fund their CARES High School Scholars Research Program. This grant will allow Dr. Howe and her colleagues to set up a summer program to help educate and train high school students interested in cancer research, particularly in underserved communities.



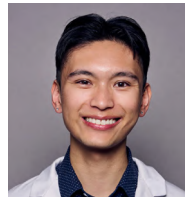
**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, received a one-year, \$63,000 grant from the Alzheimer's Association for her project titled "Understanding Hippocampal Circuits During Perimenopause in AD Mice." This grant is part of the Alzheimer's Association's new Bridge Funding for Disrupted Neurodegenerative Research Grant Program (BFDN), which the Alzheimer's Association created to help support early-career researchers whose work has been disrupted by decreases in NIH funding.

RFU was ranked by ScholarGPS as the number one academic institution worldwide in the field of reproductive immunology (lifetime ranking). This distinction underscores the university's global academic impact, the strength of RFU's translational and clinical research environment, and the important role RFU plays in advancing women's health and reproductive medicine. In the lifetime global individual rankings for this field, **Joanne Kwak-Kim**, MD, MPH, the Agnes D. Lattimer, MD, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Chicago Medical School and director of reproductive medicine and immunology, RFU Health Clinics, was ranked at number 7 worldwide, placing her among the top active scientists worldwide and the highest-ranked clinician-scientist in reproductive immunology.



*Dr. Kwak-Kim*

**Mitchell Leus**, MPH, CMS '29, received an NIH NIDDK T35 Award through Northwestern University's Summer



Research Program for Medical Students for his proposed research project titled "Prevalence and Predictors of Liver Fibrosis Among Adults with Chronic Hepatitis B With and Without HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Multicenter Cross-Sectional Analysis."

**Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean of student affairs, and colleagues in the CMS Office of Student Affairs (**Lauren Hoover**, **Dr. Nikki Dixon**, **Dr. Netali Ginsberg**, and **Dr. Monique Jones**) have been awarded a mini grant from the Learning Communities Institute for their project titled "From Prematriculation to Professionalism: Assessing Learning Communities for Pathway vs. Traditionally Sorted Medical Students." This study will explore how intentionally designed learning communities, particularly those centered around the JumpStart pre-matriculation program, impact students' sense of belonging, academic success, and professional identity formation. The work reflects CMS's continued commitment to innovative, inclusive approaches to student support and mentorship.



*Dr. Lewis*



**Rahi Patel**, CMS '26, received the American Academy of Neurology's Medical Student Prize for Excellence, awarded to graduating medical students who have promising career potential in neurology as seen by their institution's faculty and residents.

Congratulations to **Kayla Talebi**, CMS '26, who was selected to receive the 2026 Excellence in Public Health Award from the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Physician Professional Advisory Committee. The USPHS



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awards this honor to medical students who demonstrate a commitment to public health.



**Isabella Trancoso**, CMS '28, has been selected to serve as Vice Chair of the Ruth Jackson Orthopedic Society (RJOS) National Medical Student Committee for the 2026–2027 academic year. During the 2025–2026 academic year, she served on the RJOS Mentorship Subcommittee, contributing to initiatives that support and connect women pursuing careers in orthopedic surgery. She will continue her leadership within RJOS as Chair of the Medical Student Committee during her fourth year of medical school.

**Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, professor of neuroscience and director, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, received a two-year, \$577,000 grant from NYU Grossman School of Medicine for the research study “Septohippocampal Connectome Dysfunction in Down Syndrome Associated with Alzheimer’s Disease Pathophysiology.”

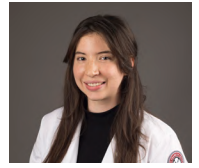


## Presentations & Publications



**Paige Arneson-Wissink**, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Center for Genetic Diseases, has co-authored two publications: “Impaired Adipose Anabolism in Pancreatic Cancer Cachexia Is Reversed by HuR Inhibition,” published in the *Journal of Cachexia, Sarcopenia and Muscle*, and “Interleukin 6 Drives Durable T Cell-Mediated Immunity to Pancreatic Cancer,” published in *Cellular and Molecular Gastroenterology and Hepatology*.

Aequitas Health Fellows **Angélica María Arzuaga**, CMS '27, and **Gloria Essien**, CMS '26, authored an article titled “Cultivating Community Trust: A Student-Led Initiative for Skin Health Equity,” published in the *Aequitas Health Journal*. The article documented the health equity project that Angélica and Gloria designed and implemented throughout this academic year, a community-centered dermatologic health education initiative culturally tailored for Latino residents in Lake County. Their project recently received the 2025 Aequitas Chapter Project of the Year Award.



Angélica María Arzuaga



Gloria Essien



Dr. Chatterjee Dr. Vaidya

**Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs for RFU, and **Nutan Vaidya**, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and engagement, participated in The

University of Texas Medical Branch’s Faculty Leadership Collaborative Mid-Career Bootcamp, a three-day virtual workshop designed for associate professors in academic health. Dr. Vaidya served as one of the event’s hosts, and Dr. Chatterjee was one of the presenters.

Dr. Chatterjee also served as guest speaker at the University of Illinois College of Medicine’s “Pathways to Leadership” webinar on March 18, held in honor of Women’s History Month. Dr. Chatterjee shared her journey to leadership and participated in a dialogue to explore the challenges and opportunities for women in the field of academic medicine.

**Melissa Chen**, MD, assistant dean for community health and engagement and medical director of RFU’s Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC), was a panelist in a virtual event titled “Understanding Health

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Inequities: Interprofessional Stories & Discussion,” hosted by the RFU chapter of the American Public Health Association during National Public Health Week. The interprofessional panel explored how health inequities impact patient care across healthcare disciplines, with a focus on collaboration, real-world clinical experiences, and actionable strategies to promote health equity. Dr. Chen and the other panelists highlighted the specific needs of patients in Lake County encountered at the ICC and surrounding healthcare systems, and discussed how healthcare professionals can work together to provide better care for patients facing health inequities.



Dr. Correll



Dr. Parrella

**Carl Correll**, PhD, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics, and **Naomi Parrella**, MD, adjunct associate

professor at Rush University — and former CMS faculty member! — co-presented a virtual medical grand rounds lecture on April 22 titled “GLP1-RAs from Lizard Venom to Blockbuster Drug: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly.”



**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, presented a poster titled “Targeting Neuropsychiatric Symptoms in Aging and Alzheimer’s: From Benzodiazepines to Psychedelic

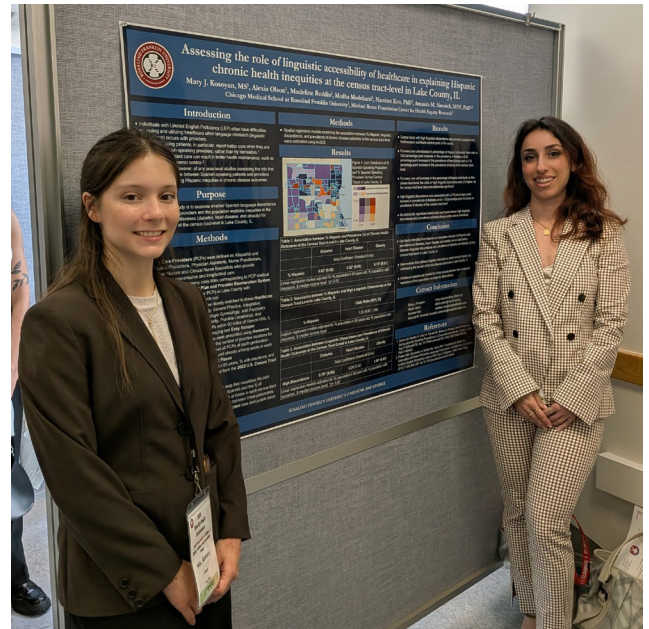
Therapies” at the 64th Annual Meeting of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP). Dr. Hunsberger’s travel for this meeting was supported by an ACNP travel award. Poster co-authors include Kameron Kaplan and Elise Webber, SGPS ’26; **Lainey Toennies**, laboratory technician; **Daniel Steinbrenner**, PhD, senior research associate; **Smriti Gupta**, PhD, postdoctoral research associate; **Namhee Kim**, PhD,

senior biostatistician and Data Core lead, Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research; and **Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, director, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics.

Dr. Hunsberger also co-authored a review paper titled “Psilocybin: Chemical Foundations and Emerging Therapeutic Potential,” accepted for publication in the journal *Mini-Reviews in Medicinal Chemistry*. Dr. Hunsberger’s co-author is **Dr. Shivaputra Patil** from Dominican University, who previously worked at RFU.

Students, faculty, and staff from RFU’s Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research presented two posters at the 2026 Minority Health Conference, held at the University of Illinois in Chicago on April 17.

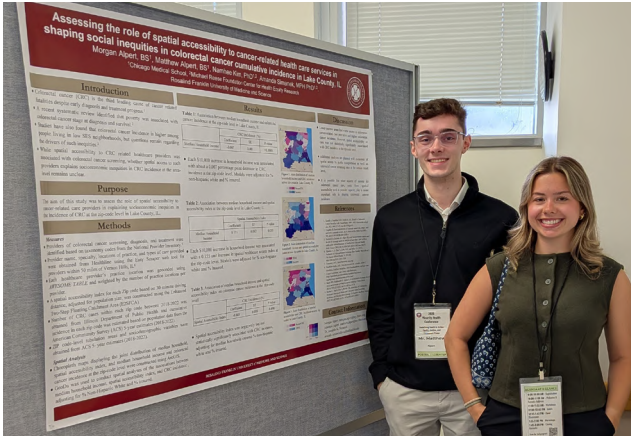
- **Mary Kosoyan**, CMS ’28; **Alexis Olson**, CMS ’28; **Namhee Kim**, PhD, data resource core lead; and **Amanda M. Simanek**, PhD, MPH, center director, presented “Assessing the Role of Linguistic Accessibility of Healthcare in Explaining Hispanic Chronic Health Inequities at the Census Tract-Level in Lake County, IL.”



- **Morgan Alpert**, CMS ’28; **Matthew Alpert**, CMS ’28; **Dr. Namhee Kim**; and **Dr. Amanda Simanek**, presented “Assessing the Role of Spatial

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Accessibility to Cancer-Related Health Care Providers in Shaping Colorectal Cancer Cumulative Incidence in Lake County, IL.”



in a Peripheral Blood Stem Cell Donor,” which he completed during his neurology clerkship.



Richard Moraga (right) at the AAD Annual Meeting.

**Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean for student affairs, co-authored a recently accepted publication in *Medical Teacher*, titled “Drawing the ARC: How Medical Students Shape Their Professional Selves.” This multi-institutional study explores how medical students develop their professional identities, introducing the ARC framework (Action, Reflection, and Connection) as a practical model to understand and support this process. The work offers valuable insights for medical educators seeking to enhance advising, mentorship, and professional identity formation in medical education.



**Arpita Patel-Mehta**, MD, MPH, discipline chair and education director of family and preventive medicine, was invited to serve as a featured presenter at the University of Washington School of Medicine’s Family Medicine Clerkship Faculty Development Meeting, held March 27–28 in Seattle, WA. The meeting brought together clerkship leadership, site directors, and core staff from medical schools across Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho.



**Richard Moraga**, CMS '27, was first author on a report titled “Association of Doxycycline Use for Acne with Sexually Transmitted Infection Outcomes: A TriNetX Retrospective Cohort Study,” published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. He also presented this research at the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting, held March 27–31 in Denver, Colorado.

Richard was also first author on a case report published in *Transfusion and Apheresis Science* titled “Atraumatic Subdural Hematoma Following Filgrastim Mobilization

**Héctor Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, Latinx students and community liaison and professor of physiology and biophysics, contributed a chapter titled “Succeeding Along the Researcher Track from Assistant to Full Professor” to the book *Advancing Latino, Hispanic, or of Spanish Origin Leadership in Academic Medicine*.



**Amanda M. Simanek**, PhD, MPH, director of the Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research and associate professor of foundational sciences and

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humanities, was co-first author on a publication titled “A Randomized Assessment of the Impact of ‘Those Nerdy Girls’ Newsletters on Adult Vaccination Outcomes,” published in *PLoS One*. The article identified that digital-based newsletters can improve knowledge and, in some

contexts, support uptake of adult vaccines, but that knowledge gains did not consistently translate into changes in attitudes or behaviors. Findings highlight the limitations of knowledge-deficit models for adult vaccination promotion.

Dr. Simanek also participated in a Lunch and Learn event titled “The State of Our Health” during National Public Health Week to introduce students to the role of public health professionals, current public health challenges in Lake County, and how students in healthcare fields can get involved in improving community health. Dr. Simanek, along with Dr. Monideepa Becerra from the College of Health Professions, talked about topics such as disease prevention, health education, environmental health, and local health initiatives.

**Rom A. Stevens, MD, FCCM, CMS** professor of anesthesiology and medicine, gave a virtual global health grand rounds presentation on March 25, hosted by the CMS Office of Global Health, titled “Lessons Learned from Medical Humanitarian Work.” Dr. Stevens spoke to CMS faculty and students interested in global health and humanitarian medicine, describing effective ways to provide humanitarian medical assistance after a crisis, including long-term support for recovery, rehabilitation, and capacity building.



Two CMS students presented research at the 2026 NIH Medical Research Scholars Program (MRSP) Research Symposium at the culmination of their year conducting research as NIH Medical Research Scholars. The MSRP

is the NIH’s professional development program for medical, dental and veterinary students seeking future careers as clinician-scientists to advance health through biomedical research.

During the year-long research immersion program, students engage with mentors and advisors in basic, clinical, or translational research investigations.



Rana Yakhshi Tafti

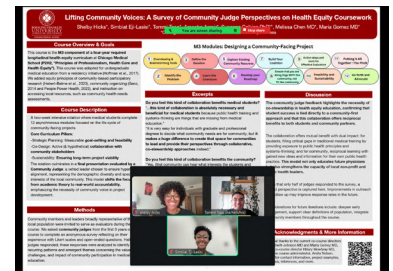


Rikhil Makwana

**Rana Yakhshi Tafti, CMS '27**, presented her project titled “Intestinal Barrier Dysfunction Shapes Neuroinflammation in a Sex-Dependent Manner.” **Rikhil Makwana, CMS '27**, presented his project titled “Automated Tools for the Detection, Classification, and Prognostication of Head and Neck Cancer.”

CMS students delivered two poster presentations during the virtual 2026 National Collaborative for Education to Address the Social Determinants of Health (NCEAS) Annual Conference:

- The first poster, “Teaching Transforms Teachers: Faculty Development Through Facilitation in a Health Equity Curriculum,” was authored by **Hyerin Yoon, CMS '26**; **Binita Pandya, CMS '27**; **Susanna Calkins, PhD, RFU NEXUS for Faculty Success**; **Amy Swift-Johnson, MD '06**, associate professor of family medicine; and **Melissa Chen, MD**, assistant dean for community health and engagement and medical director of RFU’s Interprofessional Community Clinic.
- The second poster, “Lifting Community Voices: A Survey of Community Judge Perspectives on Health Equity Coursework,” was authored by **Shelby Hicks, CMS '29**; **Simbiat Eji-Lasisi, CMS '29**; **Tommi Tsao, CMS '26**; **Aroosha Aamir, CMS '26**; **Dr. Susanna Calkins**; **Dr. Melissa Chen**; and **Maria Gomez, MD**, assistant professor of emergency medicine.



## Events and Other News

**Aidan Butler**, a medical student from the University of Toledo who interned in **Dr. Holly Hunsberger's** lab last summer, presented the research at the University of Toledo's Neurology Research Day, and he won first place in the poster competition! His poster, titled "CNS Drugs Targeting the Neuropsychiatric and Cognitive Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease," listed Kameron Kaplan and Elise Webber, SGPS '26; **Daniel Steinbrenner**, PhD, senior research associate; **Smriti Gupta**, PhD, postdoctoral research associate; **Lainey Toennies**, laboratory technician; **Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, director, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics; and Dr. Hunsberger as co-authors. Congratulations to Aidan!



Aidan (left) receiving his award



Dr. Hunsberger



Dr. O'Donnell

**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, co-hosted the inaugural Great Lakes Chapter American Society for

Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (GLC-ASPET) webinar on April 7, featuring talks from trainees throughout the Midwest. The webinar, on the theme "Biological Mechanisms of Substance Use: From Neural Circuits to Chronic Disease," was initiated by **James O'Donnell**, PhD, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, and organized by Dr. Hunsberger and faculty from the University of Wisconsin-

Parkside, the University of Minnesota, the University of Michigan, and the University of Indiana.

Three CMS students from the Class of 2028 were recently recognized by the university's Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) as "ICC Clinic Champions" — students who go above and beyond in service and leadership in their work at the ICC.



**Hannah Levinstein**, the ICC's 2025 Front Desk Executive Officer, was honored in February. "Hannah's dedication stems from a genuine love of medicine. For her, the clinic is where the science and the heart of healthcare come alive. Her incredible level of accountability was on full display this year as she showed up almost every Thursday — even through the summer — to ensure the front desk was staffed and our patients received consistent care," the ICC Faculty Leadership Team wrote. "Whether she is untangling a complex administrative hurdle or analyzing community health data, Hannah's grit and proactive spirit keep the ICC moving forward."



**Johnathon Rubarth** was honored in March for "his persistence, his vision, and his unwavering commitment to the ICC mission." "It is one thing to collect data; it is another entirely to turn that data into a heartbeat for a clinic," the ICC Faculty Leadership Team wrote. "Johnathon's work goes far beyond technical metrics. Above all, he has always deeply understood the connection between our efforts to measure safety and quality and the care we are privileged to provide for our patients."



**Christopher Currie**, leader of the ICC PADS panel, was honored in April. Chris worked directly with leadership at Providing Advocacy, Dignity, & Shelter (PADS) Lake County so the ICC could identify and meet community needs, including delivering 1,000 lunches and conducting 50 critical health screenings at local shelters. "Chris has

## School & Department News

transformed a student initiative at the ICC into a high-impact service engine for our Lake County neighbors,” the ICC Faculty Leadership Team wrote. “Chris has made it possible to thoughtfully expand the ways in which the ICC provides a vital safety net for the most vulnerable members of our community.”

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**Roxane Rohani**, PharmD, MSc, BCACP, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, and president of the Northern Illinois Society of Health-System Pharmacists (NISHP), worked

with the NISHP board to organize a networking event for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy students in northern Illinois. The event was held at Puttshack in Skokie on March 19.

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CMS students joined students from several of RFU’s other programs to participate in an **interprofessional healthcare student panel** at Advocate Condell Medical Center, for high school students enrolled in the Penwasciz Program. The panel was designed to expose high school students to a range of healthcare pathways, allowing them to hear what the programs look like from a student perspective, directly from current healthcare students who have recently navigated the application process. The panelists discussed topics such as why they became interested in their program, what they currently enjoy about their program, potential career paths after graduation, and any advice they had for high school juniors and seniors. Students from CMS and from RFU’s podiatry, physician assistant, pharmacy, nursing, and pathology assistant programs participated in the panel.

The Penwasciz Program gives Lake County high school students with healthcare interests the opportunity to meet and shadow healthcare professionals in order to get exposure to different career paths. The RFU students were asked to speak about their journey into their respective programs, offer practical advice, and

represent diverse perspectives and stages of pre-matriculation training.



*The Advocate event for high school students in the Penwasciz Program, with the RFU student volunteers standing in the back.*

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First-year medical students in **Portes House** organized a social event in February, going to TopGolf in Schaumburg.



# School & Department News

Rosalind Franklin University held its 39th annual **Dance for Health Equity and Educational Excellence** on February 28, with all proceeds benefiting patient care at the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC). This year's event raised a record-breaking \$64,741 to support the ICC, a student-organized clinic that provides quality healthcare to uninsured and underserved patients in the community while also serving as a valuable educational opportunity for RFU students. A generous \$20,000 gift from the event's signature sponsor, Wintrust, helped achieve the dance's highest fundraising total to date.



ICC Vice President Eesha Singh, CMS '29; ICC President Madeline Marks, CMS '29; Ahya Snyder, DPM '28; and Arben Dardovski, DPM '28, showcase the money raised for the ICC at the dance.

CMS Dean **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, along with other CMS leadership, delivered the annual **State of the Medical School address** on March 9, summarizing each department's accomplishments from 2025 and their goals for 2026.



Members of the CMS Dean's Cabinet

**Kimiko Suzue**, MD, PhD, professor, education director, and discipline chair of pathology, shared her journey, career insights, and lessons learned in navigating academic life as part of the **"My Life in Academia"** series, presented by the CMS Office of Faculty Affairs and Engagement.



Dr. Suzue in conversation with Neil Bradbury, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics.

Our partners (and neighbors) from the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center came to campus on May 11 for their annual **VA Research Week** event. The day started with a symposium on the theme "Launching into the Future of Veterans Care," held in Rhoades Auditorium and featuring keynote speakers **Chris Connaboy**, PhD; **John Bair**, PhD; and **Danielle Ciccone-Courtne**, PsyD. The symposium was followed by a poster session outside the auditorium. ■





*RFU and CMS leadership, including Dr. Aron Sousa, president of RFU; Dr. Archana Chatterjee, dean of CMS; and Dr. Frank Maldonado, CMS executive chair of clinical sciences and RFU associate vice president for medical affairs, met with CMS students and faculty during a site visit to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in May.*

**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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