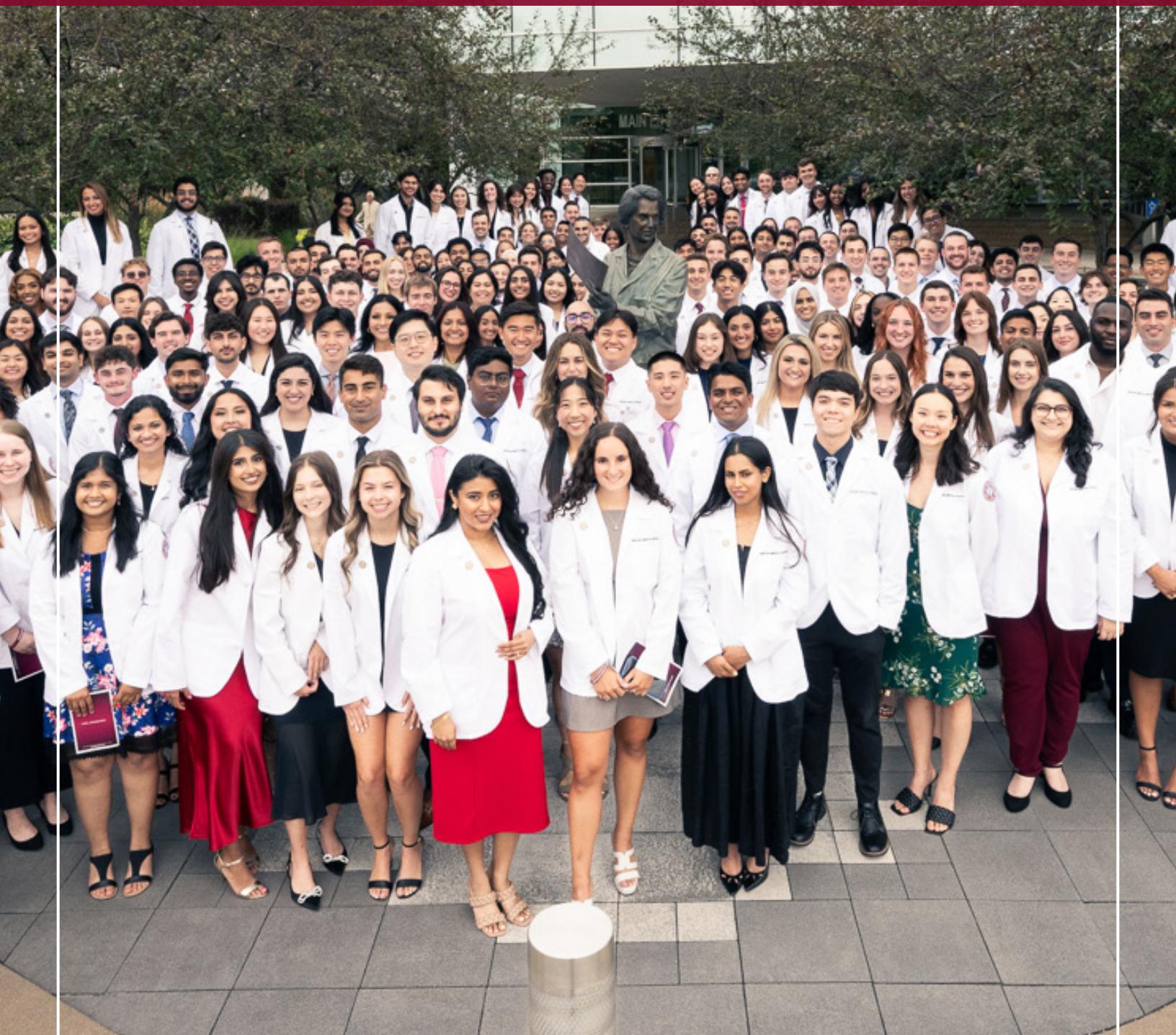




# CMS NEWS

## The Chicago Medical School Newsletter

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**Cover Image:** The Chicago Medical School Class of 2028, after their White Coat Ceremony.

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# Dean's Message

Greetings from the Dean's Office!



This summer has been a busy and exciting time as we celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2024 and welcomed the Class of 2028 to campus. In the weeks between those two events, we've had ample opportunities to celebrate our outstanding students, faculty, and alumni.

On May 31, we celebrated Chicago Medical School's 110th Commencement. One hundred and sixty-five graduates, including two students graduating with combined MD/PhD degrees, received their medical degrees during the ceremony, which was held in downtown Chicago at the Credit Union 1 Arena. Bradley Hersh, MD Class of '80, MPH, FACP, gave the commencement address, congratulating the graduates and sharing lessons from his experiences as an epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and CDC Liaison Officer to the World Health Organization. Thank you to Dr. Hersh for sharing his wisdom and advice with our 165 newest alumni as they prepare to embark on their careers.

We also celebrated student accomplishments in many forms in a series of events that included the CMS Student Awards Ceremony and the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Induction Ceremony. During the awards ceremony — the start of a new tradition at Chicago Medical School — students were recognized for their academic, research, and service accomplishments. Forty-nine students received awards and honors across 15 categories, honoring their achievements in areas such as leadership, scholastic achievement, dedication to health equity, and service to the school's mission. During the AOA ceremony, we welcomed 30 members of the Class of 2024 (and 8 junior members from the Class of 2025) into this prestigious honor society. We also had the pleasure of welcoming three alumni initiates, chosen for their leadership, scholarship, and service: David Bordo, MD Class of '97, Chief Medical Officer of Ascension Illinois Market and Ascension Resurrection Hospital; Clive K. Fields, MD Class of '88, Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer of VillageMD; and Laura Lucero, MD Class of '00, Chief Medical Officer of Beloved Community Family Wellness Center. Additionally, Dr. Roseanne Oggioan received the faculty award while Drs. Allison Fassett, Induja Rajendran, Gina Rickert, and Neelpreet Toor received the resident awards.

Earlier this month, we welcomed the CMS Class of 2028 to campus for orientation, culminating in their White Coat Ceremony. Family and friends gathered together to celebrate the incoming students as they participated

in this rite of passage, symbolizing their entrance into the medical profession. The students heard from second-year medical student Hussein Mustafa and CMS alumnus Basil K. Williams Jr., MD Class of '11. Dr. Williams congratulated the Class of 2028 for everything they had achieved to get to medical school, and he shared advice and lessons he had learned during medical school and his early career.

The Class of 2028 is the largest class in recent history at CMS with 203 students — two more than last year! The class is composed of about half men and half women with the percentage of women being slightly higher at 52%. From a geographic perspective, the Class of 2028 comes to us from 26 different states, with almost half of them (96) coming from Illinois. Our new students come from all walks of life: two of them have served in the military, 45 of them have master's degrees, and one has a PhD. Forty-five students are the first in their families to go to college. The incoming class brings a broad variety of knowledge with them to CMS, including over 7,700 hours of clinical experiences, and majors ranging from biology to history to electrical engineering. I am glad that each of these students has found a place at CMS, and I wish them the best as they begin their medical education.

One of our school's greatest strengths is our faculty and the wisdom and training they impart to our students. I would like to acknowledge several faculty members who have recently taken on new leadership and mentoring roles. Dr. Brenda Affinati, Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, has taken on an additional role as the Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs at RFU. Dr. Melissa Chen, medical director for the Interprofessional Community Clinic, has taken on the additional role of Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for CMS, following the retirement of Dr. Myrtis Sullivan. Finally, Dr. Joseph Reynolds, Director of the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, will serve as the interim vice dean for research for CMS following Dr. Ronald Kaplan's retirement on September 30. In addition to these leadership roles, we've welcomed four faculty members to new mentoring positions as learning community mentors for the Class of 2028: Drs. Rabia Bhatti, Andrew Dahlem (CMS Class of 2013), Jean Kim, and Maria Gomez.

After many years of distinguished service, we said farewell to four cherished faculty members who retired this summer. Thank you to Dr. Lisa Ebihara, Associate Professor of Physiology and Biophysics; Dr. Monica Oblinger, Professor of Cell Biology and Anatomy; Dr. Heinz Steiner, Professor of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology; and Dr. Barbara Vertel, Professor of Cell Biology and Anatomy, for a combined 130 years of teaching at Chicago Medical School! I wish each of them a happy and enjoyable retirement.

Over the last few months, I've had the pleasure of visiting several of our wonderful alumni during my travels, and also welcoming some of them to campus when they were in the Chicago area. On my June trip to Los Angeles, I visited Sharon Hame, MD Class of '91; Leo Li, MD Class of '91; and Jason Bromberg, MD Class of '96, and on a visit to Washington, DC, I was able to have dinner with Wesley Dickerson, MD Class of '05; Marcel Horowitz, MD Class of '58; and Maneesh Jain, MD Class of '05. Alumni who have recently visited the RFU campus include Daniel S. Cohen, MD Class of '89, and Claudia Capurro, MD Class of '91, who visited with their daughter; Stuart Meyer, MD Class of '60; and of course Dr. Basil K. Williams Jr., who was here for our White Coat Ceremony. I enjoy catching up with our alumni, and I look forward to seeing many more alumni at the upcoming CMS Reunion Weekend on September 20-21.

As classes get underway and students and faculty alike get back into the swing of things, I wish all our students, faculty, staff, and residents well during the academic year ahead of us. May you find happiness and success in all your endeavors.

Sincerely,



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



# Commencement

## *Congratulations to the Class of 2024!*

Rosalind Franklin University celebrated its 110th Commencement on May 31 at the Credit Union 1 Arena in Chicago. Graduates' families, friends, and the RFU community gathered to honor and celebrate the Class of 2024 as our 165 new doctors — including two graduates with a combined MD/PhD degree — received their medical degrees, joining a network of more than 22,000 RFU alumni.

The CMS graduates will go on to become physicians, researchers, teachers, and community leaders. During the ceremony, **Wendy Rheault**, PT, PhD, FASAHP, FNAP, DipACLM, RFU President and CEO, extolled the graduates' ability to make a difference in the lives of the patients they will serve, whether by providing compassionate care or by working to solve the complex scientific problems that can impact human health. "The degree conferred on you today represents both the knowledge you have gained and your commitment to service," she said. "As health care, science, and technology continue

to converge, I have every confidence that you will meet the challenges ahead. You can build a future in which every person has the opportunity to achieve their full health potential."

Scholl graduate **Phillip Kulpinski**, DPM '24, gave the student address, commanding his fellow graduates for engaging in "the relentless pursuit of knowledge and discovery" embodied by the university's namesake, Dr. Rosalind Franklin. Dr. Kulpinski described how Dr. Franklin served as an inspiration to members of the Class of 2024, who overcame obstacles and personal challenges in their pursuit of their goals. He also declared that the knowledge, training, and experience gained at RFU had prepared the graduates to face whatever challenges and opportunities await them in the future.

"As we stand at the threshold of that future, let us cast our gaze forward with a vision — a vision



where the Class of 2024 continues to break barriers, innovate, and lead with compassion,” he said. “Our vision should be one of inclusivity, progress, and a steadfast commitment to making a positive impact on the world.”

Keynote speaker **Bradley Hersh**, MD '80, MPH, FACP, one of the nation’s top epidemiologists and CDC liaison officer to the World Health Organization, spoke to the graduates about some of the lessons he had learned in his career. A champion of public and population health, Dr. Hersh has served at the forefront of battles against emerging infectious diseases including COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, polio, and measles. He spent more than 30 years working around the globe as an epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, then as a senior advisor with the United Nations Joint Program on AIDS (UNAIDS) in Geneva, Switzerland. He spent most of the COVID-19 pandemic in Geneva, where he was able to observe the U.S. response to the pandemic from afar.

From these observations, Dr. Hersh offered graduates four recommendations for improving health and wellness in the U.S. population: 1) focus on prevention, which is more effective and efficient

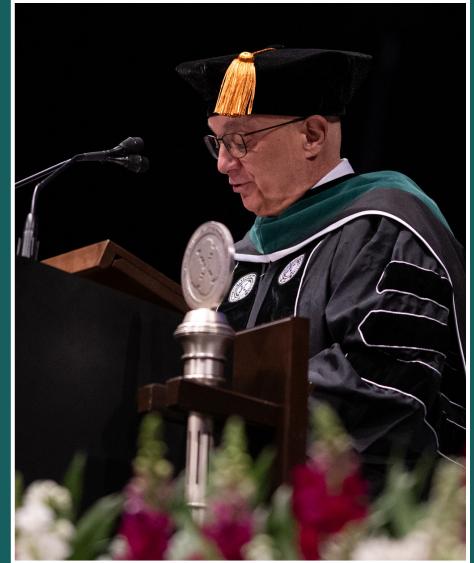
than treatment; 2) work toward reducing health disparities and achieving health equity; 3) find a mentor and become a mentor; and 4) become agents of change, working to improve the U.S. healthcare system for the benefit of patients. “Over the past 44 years,” Dr. Hersh said, “the focus of my work has been achieving health equity so that all persons and communities have a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, **Kimberley Darey**, MD '04, CPE, FACOG, led the graduates in reciting the Declaration of Geneva as they avowed their commitment to the ethical principles of the medical profession.

Congratulations to the Chicago Medical School Class of 2024! ■

# *Congratulations* to the **CLASS of 2024**





# CMS Student Awards Ceremony

Chicago Medical School held its first annual CMS Student Awards Ceremony on May 28, celebrating the outstanding scholarship, service, research, and leadership of our students. Although many of these awards and honors have been given annually for years, this was the first time that all the recognition activities were brought together under a single event. The event also recognized students who had received awards and honors at other ceremonies, such as the Alpha Omega Alpha inductees, the Gold Humanism Honor Society inductees, and the winners of the RFU Student Leadership Awards.

Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding accomplishments!

## Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society

The Aequitas Health Honor Society was formed in 2021 to recognize a society of fellows dedicated to the cause of health equity and to eradicate health disparities in all shapes and fashion.

**Varsha John**  
**Melissa Kulon**

**May Li**  
**Aliza Siddiqui**

## Ronald Bangasser, MD '75 Memorial Award

Recognizes demonstrated leadership in medical school. This award commemorates the commitment that Dr.

Bangasser had for organized medicine and service to his colleagues.

**Eric Mettetal**

## CMS Dean's Award for Service to the School

Established in 1974 to give recognition to graduating students who have been active in school functions and have demonstrated a continuing interest in the future of the school.

**George Duncan**

**Melissa Kulon**

## Chief Prosector Award

Recognizes and rewards exemplary skills in cadaver dissection, advanced understanding of Clinical Anatomy, and teamwork. Dr. Mervyn Sahud, CMS Class of 1964, funds this award each year.

**Arjuna Karikaran**  
**Eun Kim**

**Koseph Lewis**

## CMS Student Service Award

Recognizes students who have demonstrated excellent achievement in working with persons and communities that are underrepresented in medicine.

**Stephane Joachim**  
**Reema Rashed**  
**Charles Tate**

**Favour Oladipupo**  
**Jennifer Vu**

## Distinction for Excellence in Interprofessional Healthcare

Recognizes students who embody the Interprofessional mission of the university and will go on to advance Interprofessional collaborative practice after graduating from RFU.

**Varsha John**  
**Melissa Kulon**  
**Marie Nunez Duarte**

**Anant Amar**  
**Jamie Mara**  
**Tiffany Shu**



### **Martin Gecht, MD '44 Memorial Award**

Recognizes student efforts in community service projects including development, leadership, assessment, and inspiration of community projects. This award honors Dr. Gecht's love of CMS and commemorates his commitment to the community.

**Marycarmen Flores**

### **Melvyn Leichtling, MD '48 Oncology Research Award**

Established in 1977 to give assistance to students who submit an outstanding research proposal related to the field of oncology.

**Isabella Han**

### **MD with Distinction in Research**

Awarded to students who complete a substantial committee-refereed research program during the course of their medical studies.

**Daniel Borsuk**  
**Khalil Qadri**

**Yasmine Choroomi**  
**Victoria Jane Horak**

### **Ronald M. Reifler Primary Care Award**

Awarded to a graduate who will be continuing their career in primary care. This award commemorates Mr. Reifler's love of learning and enthusiasm for helping others to reach their potential.

**Tiffany Shu**

**Roni Klein**

### **Eugene J. Rogers, MD '46 Memorial Award for Excellence in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**

Awarded to a graduate who will be continuing their career in the specialty of physical medicine and rehabilitation.

**Dylan Tookey**

### **John J. Sheinin Research Award**

Presented for originality and creativity in a research project conducted while a medical student.

**Roni Klein**



### **CMS Tutoring Excellence Award**

This award recognizes peer to peer tutors who have shown exceptional performance in four areas: Academic Knowledge, Professionalism, Creativity and Reliability.

**Daniela Maciel** (M1)  
**Sophia Galluccio** (M2)

**Philip Lulek** (M3)  
**Sarah Arora** (M4)

### **USPHS Excellence in Public Health Award**

Awarded by the U.S. Public Health Service to medical students who demonstrate commitment to public health.

**Angela Chen**

### **Excellence in Health Equity Course Award**

Recognizes student authors of the top 10% of community-facing health equity projects designed by M3s for the CMS health equity course.

**Destin Swartz & Vijay Nellutla**  
**Jessica Moreno & Neha Basti**  
**Ruxandra Griza, Derek Lee, & Mohummed Malik**  
**Paul Ciolek & Kelly Costa**  
**Kate Fahey & Ireland Flannery**  
**Marie Nunez Duarte**  
**Megan Mazander & Neha Patchipala**  
**Christina Guyn, Farah Channaa & Lekha Chirala**  
**Sonal Singh**  
**Joseph Rumenapp** ■

**From left to right:** Varsha John receives a certificate from the Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society, presented by Dr. Myrtis Sullivan and Dr. Archana Chatterjee. Angela Chen receives the USPHS Excellence in Public Health Award from Dr. Antwione Haywood. Stephane Joachim receives the CMS Student Service Award from Dr. Jeanette Morrison and Dr. Chatterjee. Marycarmen Flores receives the Martin Gecht, MD '44 Memorial Award from Dr. Hector Rasgado-Flores and Dr. Chatterjee.



## RISE Leadership Conference

### *“Developing Future Leaders in Academic Medicine & Science”*

This summer, **Katalina Kuzanga** and **Justine Li**, both CMS '27, were selected by the Chicago Medical School Dean's Office to attend the RISE Leadership Conference at the AAMC headquarters in Washington, DC. The two-and-a-half-day leadership development seminar is designed for students entering their second year of medical school, and students must be nominated by their institution in order to attend.

Katalina and Justine joined student leaders from medical schools across the country as they

participated in workshops, group discussions, and panels focused on developing the skills they will need to be effective, empathetic leaders. Attendees learned strategies and tactics to help them improve interpersonal and team communication, enhance productivity, establish wellness practices, engage in mentoring, and develop strategies for being part of a successful team. The skills gained at this conference will help students thrive in medical school and in their future careers as physicians. ■



“As a CMS leader, it was an honor to be nominated to go to the RISE leadership conference. The seminars were truly focused on developing myself as a person so with that I am able to be a better leader and ultimately a better physician. The experience changed my life and I bring the teachings and lessons with me going forward!”

“The RISE Conference was actually one of the highlights of my summer! The sessions inspired greater self awareness and highlighted qualities of leadership that suited our individual personalities. The moderators successfully created a judgement-free environment where I was willing to be vulnerable and open about how to be a more emotionally intelligent student and leader.”

**Katalina Kuzanga**

CMS Class of 2027



**Justine Li**

CMS Class of 2027



# *White Coat Ceremony*

CMS welcomed the Class of 2028 to medical school on August 9 with the White Coat Ceremony, the rite of passage that marks the beginning of medical students' journey toward becoming physicians. Family and friends of the Class of 2028 gathered to watch the students cross the stage and receive their first white coat from their learning community mentor, a faculty member who will advise and guide them over the next four years.

Begin in 1993 by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, the tradition of the white coat ceremony emphasizes the importance of compassionate, humanistic patient care. As students put on their white coats, identifying themselves as physicians-in-training, they are reminded of the solemnity and dignity of the profession they are embarking upon, and the traits they will need to develop to be effective healthcare

providers. The ceremony was also an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments and efforts that had brought the students to medical school.

"It's a symbolic step into the world of medicine and a life committed to service," said **Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean for student affairs. "Today we share in the joy of their achievements."

CMS alumnus **Basil K. Williams Jr.**, MD '11, spoke to students in the keynote address, sharing advice to help them in medical school and their future careers. Dr. Williams is the Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and an associate professor of ophthalmology at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami. He was elected to the Gold Humanism Honor Society during his time as a student at CMS, and he was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha





**“It really is an honor to wear a white coat, to be a physician. That is something that is extremely powerful.”**

**- BASIL K. WILLIAMS JR., MD '11, KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Honor Society during his residency at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. He was named Fellow of the Year during his vitreoretinal surgery fellowship, and again during his ocular oncology fellowship. He currently serves as chair of the ophthalmology section of the National Medical Association.

Dr. Williams congratulated the Class of 2028 and encouraged them to remember everything they had achieved to get to medical school. “It really is an honor to wear a white coat, to be a physician,” he said. “That is something that is extremely powerful.”

Drawing from his own experience in the field of ophthalmology, Dr. Williams talked about the importance of research to find solutions to problems that haven’t been addressed yet. He urged them to think about things that they didn’t understand and look for ways to improve the patient experience, not being content to do things a certain way just because they had always been done that way. “Allow yourself to be driven by that curiosity. Push the field forward,” he said. “I look forward to seeing the wonderful things that you will do in your career.”

**Ahmad Hussein Mustafa**, CMS '27, class president, also addressed the new class, welcoming them to CMS and offering advice based on his own experiences so far. He advised them to enjoy the moment, remember the big picture of why they went into medicine, and focus on maintaining a healthy work/life balance. He also encouraged the new students to strike a balance between confidence and humility, always remembering their own value but also being willing to learn from others. “Everyone you interact with has something valuable for you to learn, and as a doctor you set out to never stop learning,” he said.

Before the students received their white coats, Brenda Affinati, MD, associate dean of clinical affairs, who serves as the medical school’s Gold Humanism chapter advisor, spoke to them about the value of humanism in health care. Reminding the Class of 2028 of the oath they would take as medical students, Dr. Affinati urged them, “Please take a moment to consider how you will embody these values and keep compassion and empathy at the core of all that you do, starting today, as you begin your journey toward being a physician.” ■

# Promoting a Healthy Diet for Older Adults

*Article submitted by Jungyun Ko, CMS '25*



In 2020, 55.8 million adults were 65+ years old, which comprised 16.8% of the United States population. This number is expected to increase over time, and estimation shows that up to 90 million Americans will be older adults by 2030.

According to CDC National Center for Health Statistics, up to 85.6% of adults age 65+ years old live with at least 1 chronic condition. About 56% of older adults live with 2+ chronic conditions, and 23.1% of older adults live with 3+ chronic conditions. Leading chronic diseases that affect seniors include arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, COPD, cancer, stroke, kidney disease, and asthma. Lifestyle factors, such as tobacco use, malnutrition, and sedentary activities, can greatly contribute to these chronic disease onset and progression. We will take a closer look at how poor nutritional status, or malnutrition, can affect the older population and their quality of life.

## What exactly is malnutrition?

Unlike the common misconception that malnutrition only targets vulnerable populations like those who

are severely underweight or who are in a state of food insecurity, malnutrition can affect anyone at any age. Malnutrition is defined by the lack of proper nutrition, and it can be a form of undereating or overeating. Undereating can lead to malnutrition if an individual is not consuming enough calories or nutrients needed daily. Overeating, on the other hand, is consuming excess calories than the needed amount, and it is associated with having a diet mostly composed of poor nutritious qualities such as fatty fried foods or processed, high in sugar foods.

## Why are the older population at higher risk of malnutrition?

Although anyone can be affected by malnutrition, older adults are particularly at risk due to multiple factors. There are physiological changes associated with aging, such as loss of appetite or reduction of food intake. Other contributing factors include metabolism changes leading to longer periods of digestion, impaired hormonal response that regulates hunger and satiety, poor oral health leading

to difficulty chewing, and sensory impairment of tongue and smell which can all affect taste of food. Besides physiologic factors, there are social factors such as limited income, social isolation, transportation issues, and access to healthy food options which all can contribute to poor dietary patterns as well.

### How does malnutrition affect health for older adults?

It is estimated that up to 25% of the older population are malnourished. This rate may likely be an underestimation due to additional unreported cases. Furthermore, 60% of older adults who are hospitalized are malnourished. Malnutrition is associated with higher mortality and morbidity rates, higher cost of health expenses, slower recovery, and longer hospital stays. In addition, dementia, depression, and frailty/muscle loss are all associated with poor nutrition, which carries a heavy burden for individuals, their families, and the healthcare system.

### What are important nutrients for older adults?

It is important to be aware that different types of nutrients are needed for each life stage of an individual. Although each diet should be tailored to an individual's health status and needs, it is generally recommended to consume 25-30 calories/kg body weight for older adults. However, the focus should be shifted more towards what type of foods are consumed, like its nutrient contents rather than counting the caloric intake.

Each type of macronutrient (protein, fat, and carbohydrates) has different roles in providing energy, maintaining body structures, and supporting various functions. A balanced diet composed of macronutrients is essential for overall health. Consumption of 25-30g of protein per meal is recommended for muscle formation and prevention of frailty or muscle loss. Which means that same proportion of protein needs to be consumed in

breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Sources of healthy protein are found in soy products, eggs, lean meats, legumes, and seafood. Fats, like unsaturated fatty acids, contribute to cellular structure and cognitive function, and these healthy fats are found in nuts, seeds, avocados, fish, and olive oil. Carbohydrates serve as steady fuel, and they can be great sources of fiber which promotes gut health and prevents constipation. Complex carbohydrates such as whole grain, colorful vegetables, and fruits are recommended, with an average of 31g/day for men and 21g/day for women.

In addition to being mindful of eating macronutrients, micronutrients also play an important role for health maintenance. Calcium and vitamin D consumption ranges from 1000-1200mg/day and 600-1000IU/day, respectively, to promote bone health and prevent loss of bone mineral density. The vitamin D intake levels differ per sun exposure, and those with limited exposure may need up to 2000IU/day. Both calcium and vitamin D can help reduce fractures related to falls and osteoporosis, which is found in higher prevalence especially among postmenopausal women with drop in estrogen levels that can limit calcium absorption in the body. Foods high in calcium include dairy products, salmon, fortified cereals, and vitamin D can be taken as supplements, sun exposure, egg yolks, and fatty fish.

Another important micronutrient is zinc which is involved in many cellular processes and helps against decreased appetite, frailty, depression, and poor immune response. Current recommendation is 11mg/day for men and 8mg/day for women with an upper limit up to 25-40mg/day if taking supplements. Dietary sources of zinc include seafood, whole grains, nuts, poultry, and red meat, and absorption from animal products is higher than plant-based products.

Vitamin B complex is composed of multiple B vitamins that have a wide range of roles in cellular

metabolism, energy production, and nervous system. For older adults, key vitamins to pay attention to are B12, B6, and B9 because they can affect cognitive function, and B9/B12 deficiency can also lead to anemia. Current recommendation for B12 is 2.4 mcg/day, B6 is 1.5mg for women and 1.7mg for men, and B9 (folate) is 400mcg. B complex vitamins are found in high amounts in animal products such as lean red meat, fish, eggs, poultry, and oats, whole wheat, chickpeas, broccoli, and leafy greens.

### What should we watch out for dietary supplements for older adults?

The usage of dietary supplements is highest among the older US population, with up to 70% of older adults reporting to take  $\geq 1$  supplements. Women had higher rates than men 76% and 62% respectively. These supplements ranged from multivitamins/multi-minerals, vitamin D, vitamin B complex, calcium, herbal supplements, and more. In addition, up to 54% of older adults took 1-2 supplements, and up to 29% took  $\geq 4$  supplements. Many older adults utilize these dietary supplements to help meet the needed nutritional requirements per day. With such a high prevalence of dietary supplement usage among the older population, it is important to monitor how much people are consuming because there are dangers of toxicity secondary to overloading with these vitamins and minerals. Many older adults are also taking multiple medications, and some of these supplements can interfere with certain medications. Although supplements can definitely help older patients to fulfill their daily requirements, a thorough review of medications and a discussion of proper usage of these dietary supplements need to be addressed with the patient's healthcare provider.

### General tips on eating healthy

Changing eating habits can be challenging across all age groups. However, there are numerous benefits of mindful eating. Building a colorful plate is a good start to building a nutrient dense meal. For instance, a good example of a nutritious meal would be baked salmon with roasted colorful vegetables

such as bell peppers and broccoli with a smaller portion of whole grain pasta. Safely preparing foods is just as important to avoid food poisoning, and staying hydrated is also recommended to avoid dehydration. Lastly, staying connected to other people and socializing while eating can promote healthier dietary patterns for older adults.

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# Day of Service

During orientation week, incoming students participated in a day of service. In keeping with Chicago Medical School's emphasis on community service, the CMS Class of 2028 volunteered at Bernie's Book Bank (where nearly 47,000 books were sorted), and the Waukegan Park District (where work was done at Bowen, Roosevelt, King, and Bedrosian parks). Students from the university's other schools volunteered at sites including Midwest Veterans Closet, Lambs Farm, Roberti Community House, Northern Illinois Food Bank, and Reading Power. ■





## RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: VA Research Week

In a series of events held the week of May 13th, researchers from Rosalind Franklin University and our next-door affiliate, the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC), presented seminars and a poster session highlighting some of the research being done at and between the two institutions.

For 99 years, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Research and Development program has been improving the lives of veterans and Americans through health care discovery and innovation.

Did you know that VA research teams were behind developing effective treatments for tuberculosis, inventing the CAT scan and the pacemaker, and performing the first-ever liver transplant? More recently, VA researchers have been critical to supporting the PACT Act, women's health, telehealth, suicide prevention, the President's Cancer Moonshot, and more.

This year's National VA Research Week was held May 13-17. The theme was "Building Community Through Research." Researchers from RFU and the



FHCC teamed up to celebrate clinical and academic contributions to both the veteran and the health science communities.

Speakers who presented their research included:

- **Raúl J. Gasmuri**, MD, PhD, professor of medicine and director of the Resuscitation Institute at RFU, and ICU director and chief of critical care at the FHCC, who spoke about his research “Myocardial Protection During Resuscitation from Cardiac Arrest”
- **Amanda M. Simanek**, PhD, MPH, director of RFU’s Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research and associate professor of humanities and health care, who presented “Taking a Community-Driven Approach to Addressing Health Equity in Lake County, IL”

- **Jacob Furst**, PhD, a professor from DePaul University’s College of Computing and Digital Media, who presented “Using Machine Learning and Neural Networks in Magnetic Resonance Imaging to Ease the Burden of Identifying Edema and Fracture of the Foot and Ankle”
- **Heather Kamath**, AuD, CCC-A, audiologist and vestibular program manager at the FHCC, spoke about “Vestibular Function and Balance in People with Diabetes Mellitus.”

We look forward to seeing the continuing research that will come from RFU’s partnership with the FHCC! ■

# RFU Hosts Pharmacology Annual Meeting

*The university welcomed pharmacologists, clinicians, and students to campus for the annual meeting of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics-Great Lakes Chapter.*

The 37th Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Chapter of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET-GLC) was held at Rosalind Franklin University on June 21. This scientific conference was organized by **James O'Donnell**, PhD, MS, president of ASPET-GLC and CMS associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, and co-sponsored by RFU's Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders. Over 165 pharmacologists, biologists, clinicians, and students from academia and the pharmaceutical industry were in attendance, including 39 members of the RFU community. Represented institutions at the conference included thirteen universities, two healthcare centers, and four pharmaceutical or biotech companies.

The theme of the conference was "Advances in Pharmacology and Neurobiology of PTSD and Anxiety Disorders." The keynote speaker was Ann Rasmussen, MD, of Boston University and the VA National Center for PTSD, whose presentation was entitled, "Incorporating the Neurobiology of PTSD into Treatment Development: Serendipity versus Design." The symposia featured six other renowned experts in the fields of pharmacology and neuroscience of PTSD and anxiety disorder. Speakers evaluated novel pharmacological strategies for these conditions, including the use of psychedelics, neuropeptides, and inhibitors of cannabinoid-



*The conference's Career Development "Lunch and Learn" workshop.*

metabolizing enzymes. Insights into neurobiological mechanisms of these diseases were also explored.

The conference included presentations from several RFU-affiliated speakers. **Amiel Rosenkranz**, PhD, professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology and director of RFU's Brain Science Institute presented "Stress Dampens Prefrontal Cortical Regulation of Amygdala in Rats," and **Nicole Ferrara**, PhD, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, presented "Developmental Differences in Fear Elevation and Supporting Neural Circuitry." **Joanna Dabrowska**, PhD, PharmD, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology and neuroscience and ASPET-GLC councilor, coordinated the conference's Young Investigator Symposium and the Researcher-Clinician Connection Lunch and Learn Event. The interprofessional lunch and learn event provided many opportunities for cross-disciplinary



Dr. James O'Donnell



Dr. Joanna Dabrowska receives a service award from Dr. O'Donnell.



The conference poster session.



The Pharmacology Educator session.

collaboration and learning; scientists who study mental health disorders were grouped with clinicians who treat these disorders. Many of the participating clinicians were affiliated with RFU's Psychiatry and Behavioral Science discipline or the Lovell Federal Health Care Center, which has major clinical and research interests in PTSD and anxiety disorders.

A Career Development Workshop offered the opportunity for trainees to learn about a variety of biomedical careers from RFU faculty and mentors from AbbVie. The conference also included the Chicagoland Pharmacology Educator Symposium, which was organized by Dr. O'Donnell. In this event, faculty who teach pharmacology in a variety of healthcare programs or research PhD programs discussed best practices for pharmacology education. Lastly, a tour of the Innovation and Research Park (IRP) introduced attendees to RFUMS' Helix 51, an incubator for biomedical startups and early-stage and international companies.

The poster session at the conference featured 54 poster presentations from a wide variety of other pharmacology subfields, including studies evaluating the efficacy of new pharmacological agents as well

as studies elucidating novel pathophysiological mechanisms underlying disease. Poster session award winners from RFU included:

- **Rachel Chudoba**, PhD '24, research associate: Second place, postdoctoral category. "Effect of Sex and Estrous Cycle on BNST-CRF Neuron Activity and Their Role in Defensive Behaviors." Dr. Joanna Dabrowska's lab.
- **Elise Webber**, SGPS '26: First place, graduate student category. "Psilocybin and Alzheimer's Disease: Exploring Pathways and Products of Altered Plasticity." Dr. Beth Stutzmann's lab, in a collaboration with Dr. Holly Hunsberger's lab, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics.
- **Kameron Kaplan**, SGPS '26: Third place, graduate student category. "Alprazolam Impairs Fear Memory and Alters Dorsalventral CA1 Neuronal Ensembles in Female Mice." Dr. Holly Hunsberger's lab.
- **Lainey Toennies**, laboratory technician: Second place, undergraduate student category. "Sex Differences in Memory Retention and Social Behaviors After Social Isolation in Alzheimer's Disease Mice." Dr. Holly Hunsberger's lab. ■

# Leadership Updates

*Several faculty members have taken on additional leadership roles within Chicago Medical School and the university.*



*Clockwise from top left: Drs. Brenda Affinati, Melissa Chen, Joseph Reynolds, Kaleem Malik.*

## Dr. Brenda Affinati: Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs

Starting this summer, **Brenda R. Affinati**, MD, FACP, took on an additional role as the Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs at the university. In this position, she will collaborate closely with CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee to support the clinical education needs of RFU and develop and manage relationships with our clinical partners. Dr. Affinati will help achieve the university's strategic goals for clinical education by optimizing our alliances with clinical partners to enhance clinical educational opportunities. Her responsibilities will also include chairing the Directors of Clinical Education Committee at RFU and preparing the Clinical Partnership report for the RFU Board of Directors.

Dr. Affinati has been a faculty member at Chicago Medical School since 1998. She has served as the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs since 2021, ensuring that clinical rotation sites meet all needs for CMS

students. In this role, she established agreements with Ascension Illinois, granting RFU students access to 14 hospitals across the Chicagoland area; Froedtert South, covering all RFU programs; Lurie Pediatric Faculty and Silver Cross Hospital, offering CMS students quality inpatient and outpatient pediatric experiences; and the Lake County Children's Advocacy Center, allowing students from all RFU schools to engage with their vital services. For the past year, she has chaired the Directors of Clinical Education Committee, working to reduce information silos and promote collaboration between RFU programs.

## Dr. Melissa Chen: Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Melissa Chen**, MD, has taken on the role of Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, following the retirement of Dr. Myrtis Sullivan. Dr. Chen brings extensive experience and a strong dedication to fostering inclusive environments and advancing

equity in education and healthcare. In addition to this new role, Dr. Chen continues to serve as the medical director for the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC), RFU's student-led pro bono clinic.

Throughout her career, Dr. Chen has demonstrated dedication in various leadership roles, including medical director at the ICC and course creator/director for Principles of Professionalism, Healthcare, & Health Equity (P2H2) at CMS. Beyond her professional roles, Dr. Chen has created a welcoming and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and community members. Her work in health equity education, from curriculum development to clinical practice, has been outstanding. Her commitment to fostering community and approachability aligns seamlessly with our core values.

In her new role, Dr. Chen will continue to drive efforts to shape education within our institution through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are confident that her leadership will contribute significantly to our ongoing mission of creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for all.

### **Dr. Joseph Reynolds: Interim Vice Dean for Research**

**Joseph Reynolds**, PhD, will serve as the interim vice dean for research for Chicago Medical School following Dr. Ronald Kaplan's retirement on September 30. In this role, Dr. Reynolds will provide leadership for research activities within CMS, and liaisons with research activities throughout the university through the office of the Executive Vice President for Research, RFUMS.

Dr. Reynolds, who joined Chicago Medical School in 2013, has served as Director of the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection since March 2023, after previously serving in the interim position. He is also Director of the H.M. Bligh Cancer Research Laboratories, Chair of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and holds a faculty appointment as associate professor and discipline

chair of microbiology and immunology. He has held other important roles, including Chair of SEPAC and Co-Chair of the RFU-DePaul Grant Review Committee.

### **Dr. Kaleem Malik: Assistant Dean for CMS Global Health**

CMS Distinguished Alumnus **Kaleem Malik**, MD '96, MS '92, joined the CMS Office of Faculty Affairs and Equity this summer as our new Assistant Dean for CMS Global Health. Dr. Malik, a Trauma/Emergency Medicine physician with over 20 years of experience in hospital and healthcare leadership, has been deeply involved in humanitarian efforts worldwide. His dedication to equity in healthcare and strategic support for vulnerable populations will be invaluable in advancing future CMS Global Health initiatives for faculty. As the Assistant Dean for CMS Global Health, Dr. Malik will be responsible for the office's vision and mission related to global health faculty experiences and the relationships and resources necessary to accomplish these goals.

Dr. Malik was appointed by President Biden and approved by the White House to serve on the Board of Scientific Counselors at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He is the recipient of the American Red Cross Hero of the Year in Disaster Medicine and is the Director of Medical Disaster Response for Humanity First USA under the direction of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization. He avidly supports global humanitarian efforts and works with several agencies delivering humanitarian relief efforts, and he continues to advocate and speak at numerous global health forums.

We congratulate Dr. Affinati, Dr. Chen, Dr. Reynolds, and Dr. Malik on their new roles at CMS, and we look forward to the positive impact they will make on the school's missions of education, research, and service. ■

# Farewell to Retiring Faculty

*Four faculty members retired this summer after dedicating a total of 130 years of service to CMS! We thank them for their contributions and wish them a happy and relaxing retirement.*



*Dr. Monica Oblinger*

**Monica Oblinger**, PhD, professor of Cell Biology and Anatomy, retired after 40 years at CMS. Dr. Oblinger joined CMS as an assistant professor in 1984, and rose through the ranks to tenured Associate Professor in 1991 and full Professor in 1995.

Dr. Oblinger established a successful research program at CMS focused on neural regeneration in the central and peripheral nervous systems, as well as the role of estrogen in neuroprotection and pain. Her work, published in 53 papers and book chapters, was supported by several grants, including multiple NIH R01s. Several of her trainees have gone on to their own careers in academia and industry.

A prolific and talented teacher, during her 40 years at CMS/RFU she taught in 15 courses for students in CMS, Scholl, Pharmacy, CHP and SGPS. She taught more than one-third of the lectures every year in both the Summer Clinical Anatomy and Fall Clinical Anatomy courses. In recent years she also directed and taught in the Pharmacy School's Introduction to Pharmacogenomics and Molecular Biology course. A popular lecturer with the students, Dr. Oblinger received many teaching awards, including the CMS Overall Outstanding Basic Sciences Professor, the RFUMS Award for Excellence in Teaching, and just

recently, the Most Excellent Professor award from the CMS Class of 2025.

Dr. Oblinger strongly believed that service contributions are an essential role of every faculty member. She served on over 30 committees at RFU, chairing many of them. Some notable roles were 8 years as RFU Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 19 years as Chair of the RFU Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and a 3-year term as faculty representative on the RFU Board of Trustees. Additionally, she served on several grant study sections and reviewed manuscripts for numerous journals.

We thank Dr. Oblinger for her four decades of service to the medical school and university. In retirement, she looks forward to travel and spending more time with family, dividing time between homes here and in Wisconsin.



*Dr. Barbara Vertel*

**Barbara Vertel**, PhD, professor of Cell Biology and Anatomy, retired after 37 years on the CMS faculty. Dr. Vertel joined CMS as an associate professor in the Department of Biological Chemistry and Structure in 1987, which shortly thereafter was split into Cell Biology and Anatomy (Dr. Vertel's home department) and Biochemistry and Molecular

Biology. She subsequently was awarded tenure and then became full Professor in 1994.

Dr. Vertel's scientific career in both research and education is built on a long-standing fascination with structure/function relationships, cells, and particularly, the musculoskeletal system. Her research program was focused on the cell/molecular/developmental biology of cartilage, emphasizing the roles of intracellular trafficking and quality control in the formation and function of cartilage extracellular matrix in health and disease. Her studies with nanomelia, an animal model of chondrodystrophy, provided some of the first evidence revealing ERAD (ER-associated degradation), which is an important, hitherto unknown, intracellular process for quality control. Dr. Vertel's work was published in 54 papers and book chapters, and was supported by 16 grants, including 8 NIH R01s. A consummate cell biologist, Dr. Vertel was director of the RFU Electron Microscope Facility for 20 years, and co-director of the Werner Straus Live Cell Imaging Laboratory for 13 years. At RFU she was awarded the Morris Parker Award for distinction in research by a senior investigator. Additional testaments to her impact in the field are her more than 100 invited talks, service on several NIH study sections, and manuscript reviews.

Her contributions to education reflect the appreciation of biological structure in the context of cell/molecular/developmental biology, and a desire to share her knowledge with students. Back in the late 1980s, she was recruited to CMS to modernize the medical school histology courses by incorporating cutting edge cell/molecular biology into what was classical histology. This perspective has inspired her teaching ever since. At CMS/RFU she taught in 13 courses related to these topics of interest, serving as course director for 7 of them. As the cell biology/histology discipline coordinator, she is most proud of adapting and integrating basic cell biology and histology into the ever-maturing CMS curriculum.

Students greatly appreciated Dr. Vertel's warm personality, enthusiasm and genuine concern for their academic success, further evidenced by her long-term participation as a faculty mentor in our ISEP program for students underrepresented in medicine.

Dr. Vertel also contributed greatly to our institution, serving on over 50 committees over the years. Notable examples were her establishment of the on-going Molecular and Cellular Sciences seminar program (she was committee chair for 22 years), 8 years as Chair of the CMS Faculty Appointment, Promotion and Tenure committee, and several years as an in-house grant writing consultant.

We thank Dr. Vertel for her 37 years of dedicated service to the medical school and university. In retirement, she will be splitting her time between Chicagoland and Tucson, where she will be enjoying more family time (including two granddaughters) and the benefits of the southwest, particularly in winter months.



*Dr. Lisa Ebihara*

**Lisa Ebihara**, MD, PhD, associate professor of Physiology and Biophysics, retired after 29 years at CMS. Dr. Ebihara joined CMS in 1995 and has offered numerous contributions to the university in her time on the faculty.

Dr. Ebihara served as a valued member of the Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics Research Center. Her basic research program has achieved

significant success, securing numerous NIH grants, and she successfully renewed her primary research grant three times from 1994 to 2013. Her research focuses on gap junctions in the lens of the eye, studying the physiology and biophysics of various connexins in lens function and the diseases caused by mutations in connexins. By merging her backgrounds in electrical engineering and clinical research, Dr. Ebihara has made substantial contributions to understanding the mechanisms of cataract formation, leading to numerous invitations to speak nationally and internationally.

In addition, throughout her career Dr. Ebihara has played a pivotal role in teaching various aspects of medical physiology. Up until her retirement, she served as the overall course director of the Cardiovascular-Pulmonary-Renal (CPR) block for the M1 curriculum and was the basic science co-director for the pulmonary section of the course. Additionally, she has contributed to the Integrated Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences (IGPS) and the Biomedical Sciences (BMS) programs.

We thank Dr. Ebihara for nearly three decades of service to the medical school and the university and wish her all the best as she embarks on the next phase of her life.



Dr. Heinz Steiner

**Heinz Steiner**, PhD, professor of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology, retired after 24 years at CMS. Dr. Steiner joined the medical school in 2000 as an assistant professor and rose to tenured

professor in 2012. From 2011-2022 he served as chair of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology. In 2018 his laboratory joined the newly formed Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair.

Dr. Steiner's research interests have centered on the clinically important role of the striatal circuitry of the brain's basal ganglia in response selection, movement initiation, and habit formation. Loss of dopamine release from this region underlies Parkinson's Disease, whereas over-release elicited by psychostimulants such as cocaine and methylphenidate plays a role in drug addiction. His expertise on the molecular effects of methylphenidate in the striatum is internationally recognized. One of the most significant findings of his research program was the unexpected discovery that in animal models the common combination in humans of the psychostimulant Ritalin with the antidepressant Prozac significantly increases the risk for cocaine addiction and later relapse. In this current and last year of research with us, Dr. Steiner and his colleagues identified a substitute antidepressant that avoids this risk, which has important potential for clinical application.

Beyond his research contributions, Dr. Steiner has positively impacted the careers of our medical, graduate, podiatry, basic biomedical science, and physician assistant students through his lectures on Neurobehavioral Health. The students praised the clarity of his presentations, which he often peppered with humor. His service extends beyond the college and university. As an internationally recognized expert in basal ganglia and drug addiction, he has served on several journal editorial boards, as a reviewer for numerous journals, and as an ad hoc member on multiple national and international grant review panels.

We thank Dr. Steiner for sharing his long and distinguished career of research, teaching, and service with us at CMS. We wish him a relaxing, fun-filled retirement. ■

# CMS Curriculum Retreat



On May 14, 2024, the Office of Medical Education hosted a springtime curriculum retreat, held on-campus in the Innovation and Research Park. This workshop-style retreat provided guests an opportunity to actively and collaboratively evaluate the effectiveness of current curricular structures and activities in the M4 year of the curriculum while considering initial findings from the Comprehensive Phase III Review Task Force. Guests also engaged in round table discussions on opportunities and strategic initiatives for curricular, co-curricular, and non-curricular enhancements for early academic success in Phase I/M1-M2 years of the curriculum.



Over 40 participants attended the retreat, and guests included members of the CMS Curriculum Committee, members of the Comprehensive Review of Phase III Task Force of the Curriculum Committee, administrative leadership and staff from the Offices of Medical Education and Student Affairs, and course-directing faculty and leadership from the Department of Clinical Sciences. Additional attendees included members from the Office of Faculty Affairs and Equity, the Office of Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion, and student leaders from CMS classes of 2024-2027. ■





## *Alpha Omega Alpha* Induction Ceremony

Chicago Medical School held its 60th annual Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society Induction Ceremony on May 28, welcoming 30 members from the Class of 2024 and 8 junior members from the Class of 2025 into AOA. **Reid Colliander**, MD '24, received the Ashley Evans Professionalism Award. In addition to the students, we honored alumni, residents, and faculty.

This year's alumni initiates were **David Bordo**, MD '97, Chief Medical Officer of Ascension Illinois Market and Ascension Resurrection Hospital; **Clive K. Fields**, MD '88, Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer of VillageMD; and **Laura Lucero**, MD '00, Chief Medical Officer of Beloved Community Family Wellness Center. **Roseanne Oggioan**, DO, assistant professor of pediatrics and Clinical Skills course director and lab director, was honored as the faculty initiate, and four residents received awards: **Allison Fassett**, MD, psychiatry resident; **Induja Rajendran**, MD; internal medicine resident; **Gina Rickert**, DO, psychiatry resident; and **Neelpreet Toor**, DO,

psychiatry resident. All four resident recipients were from Chicago Medical School's residency programs with the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center.

CMS alumnus **Parimal Sura**, MD '10, internal medicine specialist at Advocate Health Care, was the AOA visiting professor. He delivered a medical grand rounds presentation titled "Unlearning Medicine" at noon, had lunch with the AOA inductees, and later spoke at the ceremony.

Alpha Omega Alpha is a national honor medical society dedicated to improving the medical profession by recognizing high educational achievement, honoring gifted teaching, encouraging the development of academic and community leaders, supporting the ideals of humanism, and promoting service to others. Election to AOA is an honor signifying a lasting commitment to scholarship, leadership, professionalism, and service. ■



Dr. Parimal Sura, AOA visiting professor



Reid Colliander, MD '24, Ashley Evans  
Professionalism Award recipient, with  
Emma Steffer, MD '24



Fatima Baig



Dr. Roseanne Oggian, faculty  
initiate, with Dr. Amy Pabst,  
AOA councilor



Dr. Induja Rajendran, resident  
awardee



Christopher Cutler, MD '24; Reid Colliander, MD '24;  
Med Jimenez, CMS '25; Reed Berlet, CMS '25;  
and Alexander Kazmer, MD '24



Aman Mohapatra, MD '24, and Murad Alostaz,  
CMS '25



# Student Dean Corner

Student dean Rikki Makwana addresses the CMS student body.

Hello Chicago Medical School!

I want to extend a warm welcome to the class of 2028! I hope that you all enjoyed your time at orientation and are ready to hit the ground running! The next few years of your lives may be difficult academically and personally, but I can assure you that you will grow so much because of it. Embrace the struggle and be aware that you are not alone—the friendships you make during your time in medical school will last a lifetime. I am eager to get to know you, hear about your unique stories and backgrounds, and provide whatever help and mentorship I can.

My name is Rikhil “Rikki” Makwana (he/him) and I am the current Student Dean of the medical school taking over for my predecessor Donia Momen who has left me with some huge shoes to fill. For those of you who don’t know me, I am from Southern California (as are many of us it seems!). From a curricular perspective, I have a strong interest in research, health policy, and the art of medicine. As far as my specialties of interest are concerned, I am undecided! However, I have been treating each of my rotations as if it were the one I was applying to for residency and have found portions of each to love.

Extracurricularly, I love cooking (my specialty are meals that are quick and nutritious), trying new restaurants in Logan Square (I can share suggestions for those in need), and listening to audiobooks—just finished Thoreau’s *Walden* and

am in need of suggestions! If any of you are ever in need of a chat, feel free to reach out! I would love to meet each and every one of you.

I would like to thank Dean Chatterjee for being such an inspiring mentor figure to work with. Each of our meetings leaves me feeling a bit wiser and more prepared for the future. Additionally, Donia Momen, the past student dean, has been so kind and helpful in easing me into this new role where there is a lot to learn. I hope to make you proud! My fellow student leaders and the rest of the Chicago Medical School faculty and administration have been wonderful to work with and I can’t wait to see what we can accomplish together.

My overarching goal for my term is to create a tighter knit community of scholars who are as adept on the wards as they are in the classroom. I hope to do so by advocating for additional funding and resources for our student groups at the university level, by collaborating with other student leaders and our faculty at the medical school level, and by taking the time to talk with and learn about you all on a personal level. The future of Chicago Medical School is bright!

Respectfully,

Rikhil Makwana  
Student Dean 2024-25  
Chicago Medical School c/o 2026  
Rikhil.makwana@my.rfums.org



Binita Pandya



A cooking class at the Roberti Community House

## *CMS Student Selected for Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program*

***Binita Pandya will spend the next year working with the Roberti Community House to address unmet health and wellness needs within the Waukegan community.***

**Binita Pandya**, CMS '27, was selected for the Schweitzer Fellowship, a year-long service-learning program that provides graduate students in health-related fields with opportunities to design and implement innovative projects that address the health needs of underserved Chicago communities. Each Fellow devotes at least 200 hours of direct service with existing community-based organizations. In addition to helping community organizations amplify their capacities to help the underserved, the Schweitzer Fellowship experience is meant to help these aspiring health professionals strengthen their skills and confidence as future leaders in service.

For her service project, Binita is partnering with the Roberti Community House, a gathering place for the Waukegan community that seeks to nourish, educate, and empower community members by providing meals, educational programs, and community

support. She spent the summer participating in the Junior and Master Chef programs, which provide youth cooking classes that focus on nutrition and how to make healthy, affordable meals. Binita provided short lectures on nutrition while helping cook various recipes with the kids.

Through her conversations with community members, Binita was able to identify an unmet need, and she designed a project proposal to address that need. Her service project, which was approved in August, will focus on the idea of health agency. Over the coming months, Binita will be working with the youth and adult communities at Roberti, hosting workshops to teach actionable ways to improve health and manage chronic disease through things like diet, exercise, stress management, diabetes education, and health communication. ■

# Climate and Health Care



Ayesha Mohammad



Christian Arcelona

*Last year, Ayesha Mohammad and Christian Arcelona, both CMS '26, served as co-leads of the CMS chapter of the Planetary Health Report Card, working to bring climate education to the CMS curriculum and to the local community.*

The **Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC)** is an international, metric-based tool for evaluating and improving planetary health content in health professional schools. The report looks at the "multitude of ways that the environment can affect health, including climate change, pollution, biodiversity shifts, reconfiguration of biogeochemical cycles, land use changes, and resource scarcity".

The Chicago Medical School chapter of the PHRC was co-founded by **Neha Basti** and **Allison Monie**, both CMS '25, and CMS students first presented their findings from the PHRC publication in Spring of 2023. Since then, students have met with various levels of leadership in the medical school and larger university, including the President's Cabinet to pursue changes in policy and curriculum. RFU's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan includes teaching the effects of the environment on health and well-being, and the 2023 CMS Curriculum Committee Task Force on Common Societal Problems identified the health effects of climate change as one of six top priority items.

The PHRC project has contributed to the curricular integration of climate health education in the medical school. The 2023-2024 academic year marked year two for CMS's PHRC publication. In

courses such as Clinical Foundations of Medicine, Scientific Foundations of Medicine, and the second-year Endocrinology block, education about the impact of healthcare on the environment, endocrine disruptors, the effect of pollution on pulmonary health, the importance of a healthy environment for nutrition, and clinical case discussions are now a part of CMS curriculum. The PHRC provided opportunities for students to meet with course directors of first and second-year problem-based learning sessions ("schema cases") and discuss ways to formally integrate climate health into schema cases for upcoming years.

The PHRC project team coordinated with the larger student body and helped support the establishment of the Illinois Clinicians for Climate Action Student Section (the state affiliate of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health). Student members are beginning work on the Healthy Democracy Campaign Vot-ER, a platform that helps empower patients to exercise their right to vote for better health.

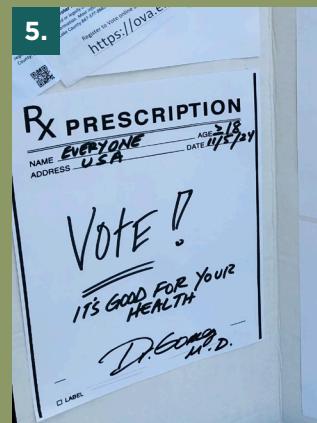
Any college or student group is welcome to participate in PHRC or the Healthy Democracy Campaign. ■

# Spreading Climate-Related Health Information

For the second year, RFU and CMS students reached out to the community in a grassroots education effort by participating in the Mano a Mano Back to School event, held August 3 at Mundelein High School. The event brought in about 250 families, who stopped by RFU's booths and tables to learn about health advocacy, the effects of environmental factors on human health, and best practices for staying healthy.

Student climate advocates and representatives from the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) provided patient education on how people can best protect their health in the face of the changed climate. Students also distributed native seed packets, generously donated by the League of Women Voters Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Mount Prospect Chapter. Students and faculty also provided voter registration information, encouraging community members to vote for their health. ■

**1.** Martha Smith and Ryan Han, both CMS '26, at a booth with a poster activity, native seed distribution, and an AirNow QR code providing climate-related health information on topics like pollution, heat, asthma, allergies, and cardiovascular health. **2.** A crowd at the ICC's table. **3.** A member of the community adds her drawing to a poster activity provided by the ICC's booth. In the background: Martha Smith, CMS '26; Jeffrey Damaschke, PT, DPT, PhD, ICC faculty; and Guanjin Chen, podiatry student. **4.** Regina de Leon Gomez, MD, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, and Robert Iglesias, CMS '26, with a mock voting activity to encourage voter registration. **5.** A "prescription" to vote.



# Graduate Medical Education (GME) News

## Residency and Fellowship Graduation

Chicago Medical School celebrated its 35th Annual Residency and Fellowship Graduation with an on-campus ceremony held June 13. Congratulations to all our graduating Internal Medicine residents, Psychiatry residents, and Internal Medicine subspecialty fellows! ■



Graduates from the Internal Medicine residency program, Northwestern Medicine-McHenry



Graduates from the Cardiovascular Disease and Interventional Cardiology fellowship programs, with program director Dr. Sandeep Khosla



Graduates from the Psychiatry residency program, with program director Dr. Paul Hung



Graduates from the Internal Medicine residency program, Lovell Federal Health Center, with Lolita Edwards

# Graduate Medical Education (GME) News

## Psychiatry Residency Awards



Chicago Medical School's psychiatry residency program celebrated excellence in academics, service, patient care, and teaching during their annual graduation dinner and awards ceremony, held June 14.

The winners of the psychiatry residents' **annual poster competition**, held in April, received their awards at this ceremony. **Ryan Stefancik**, DO, received first place. **Hamed Shafiuuddin**, MD, and **Ji in Choi**, MD, received second place. **John Yang**, MD, received third place, and **Gina Rickert**, DO, was awarded the "faculty choice" prize.

**Dr. Shafiuuddin** also received the **Collegiality and Humanism Award**, given in honor of Dr. Chandra Vedak, a CMS associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences. This award is given in recognition of "going the extra mile" for fellow residents.

**Jeremy Wolfe**, MD (junior resident) and **Neelpreet Toor**, DO (senior resident) received the **Marc Fahami**

**Award for Passion in Psychiatry**, awarded to two residents each year for demonstrating a passion for the field of psychiatry and care of psychiatric patients.

**Connor Haszto**, MD '23, was named **Resident Teacher of the Year**, an honor awarded by medical students in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences for excellence in teaching medical students.

The following faculty (all assistant professors of psychiatry and behavioral sciences) also received awards, nominated by psychiatry residents. **Deepa Nadella**, MD, R '21, received the **Clinical Teacher of the Year Award**, while **Charles Mitschow**, MD, and **David Sholtes**, DO, received the **Academic Teacher of the Year Award**. **Ioana Sandu**, MD, received the **Faculty Service Award**, and **Jenifer Gunther**, MD, and **George Gettys**, MD received the **Psychiatry-GME Distinguished Service Award**.

Congratulations to this year's award recipients, and congratulations again to our graduates! ■

# Graduate Medical Education (GME) News

## Welcoming Our New Residents

### Internal Medicine Residents ► (Northwestern), Class of 2027

**Front row:** Dr. Tanzeela Shuja, Dr. Preksha Shah, Dr. Lavanya Nagarajan, Dr. Sindhu Gujjari, and Dr. Ekow Pinkrah.

**Back row:** Dr. Yuliana Kvasha, Dr. Angeliqua Grange, Dr. Giullia Burkhardt da Silveria, Dr. Yoana Palatianos de Araujo, Dr. Ahmad Abdelkhalek, Dr. Nicolas Gisellie, Dr. Mevlut Ozmen, and Dr. Siad Adam.



### ◀ Internal Medicine Residents (FHCC), Class of 2027

**Front row:** Dr. Fnu Resham, Dr. Amel Saad, and Dr. Rimsha Akhter.

**Back row:** Dr. Raghu Halappa Nagaraj, Dr. Bilal Makhdoom, and Dr. Muhammad Asif Saleem.

**Not pictured:** Dr. Michael Botros, Dr. Madiha Fathima, Dr. Santhosh Kottoor, and Dr. Gagandeep Singh.

# Graduate Medical Education (GME) News



## ► Psychiatry Residents, Class of 2028

Dr. Stephanie Moss, Dr. Ali Mahmoud, Dr. Brandon Fleres, and Dr. Andrew Nunez.

**Not pictured:** Dr. Abdullah Damra and Dr. Shaman Bhullar. ■

## Psychiatry Wellness Day



The psychiatry residents had a Wellness Day on June 20, heading down to Chicago to take a Lake and River Architecture Tour. ■

# Graduate Medical Education (GME) News

## Other GME News



**Noel M. Deep**, MD, R '00, a graduate of the CMS Internal Medicine Residency program, was elected to the board of regents of the American College of Physicians (ACP), the national organization of internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists and medical students.

**Hekmat Khoukaz**, MD, and **Neda Svrakic**, MD, are the new co-chief medical residents for the CMS/FHCC internal medicine residency program.



Dr. Hekmat Khoukaz



Dr. Neda Svrakic



**Stephanie Moss**, MD, PGY-1, psychiatry resident, authored a perspective article that was published in *Psychiatric News*. Dr. Moss was inspired to write her article, titled “Unmasked: The Legacy of Jonathan

Fryer and the Ongoing Battle Against Stigma in Psychiatry” after attending a session about Dr. Fryer at the 2024 American Psychological Association conference.

Dr. Moss continued her discussion on the stigma around mental health in a perspective piece that drew similarities between gymnastics and medicine.

That article, titled “A Leave of Absence — From Medicine or the Olympics — Is Not a Sign of Weakness” was published online on *MedPage Today*.

Dr. Moss was also accepted for the Doximity Op-Med Fellowship Program. During this one-year program, she will work on pieces of original narrative writing that chronicle (among other possible topics) patient encounters, opinions about health and medicine-related topics, and personal experiences within her specialty. This will be an opportunity for Dr. Moss to share her insights and perspectives across the largest community of healthcare professionals in the country.

**Yuan Zhang**, MD, a postdoctoral fellow in the reproductive medicine and immunology program, received the Dr. John Gusdon Memorial New Investigator Award for Clinical Science from the American Society of Reproductive Immunology (ASRI) for her research paper “Unbalanced Immune Homeostasis at the Maternal-fetal Interface in Women with Embryo Implantation Failure Caused by Hyperlipidemia,” presented during the ASRI Annual Meeting in Houston. Dr. Zhang’s award marks the fourth time since 2015 that a member of RFU has earned the Gusdon Award. ■



# Alumni News

## The CMS Class of 1973 Visits Wrigley Field



The **Class of 1973** continues to find ways to gather after their 50th reunion, and even had their picture taken on Wrigley Field wearing Chicago Medical School t-shirts at the Chicago Cubs vs. St. Louis Cardinals game on August 3! The group consisted of **Charles Beck**, MD '73; **Steven Horwitz**, MD '73 and his wife **Donna Horwitz**; **David Joseph**, MD '73; **Alan Mensch**, MD '73; **Dennis Pessis**, MD '73 and his wife **Amy Pessis**; **Ronald Rawitt**, MD '73; **Stephen Rheinstrom**, MD '73; and **Joe Sanfilippo**, MD '73, MBA. ■

# Alumni News

## Dr. Jennifer Afranie-Sakyi Receives Award from the American Society of Hematology



Congratulations to **Jennifer Afranie-Sakyi**, MD '19, who has been selected by the American Society of Hematology (ASH) to participate as one of nine outstanding fellows in the 2024 ASH Minority Hematology Fellow Award (MHFA). This award encourages early-career researchers from historically underrepresented groups in the U.S. and Canada to pursue career in academic hematology.

Each MHFA awardee will receive \$100,000 for a two- to three-year period to guarantee protected time for clinical or laboratory-based hematology research projects, to develop additional skills in the conduct of research, and generate preliminary data. They will have the opportunity to attend the ASH Annual Meeting and Exposition,

where they will present their research findings at the Promoting Minorities in Hematology event at the end of their research term.

Dr. Afranie-Sakyi is a fellow in the Medical Oncology-Hematology Fellowship Program at Yale Cancer Center. Her research is focused on understanding neurocognitive outcomes in adults with sickle cell disease. ■

## Alumni Visits



Wesley Dickerson, MD '05; Marcel Horowitz, MD '58; Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, dean of CMS; George Rattin, RFU executive director of development; and Maneesh Jain, MD '05, in Washington, DC.



Michael Ellison, EdD, CMS associate dean for admissions; Mr. George Rattin, Dr. Archana Chatterjee, Sharon Hame, MD '91; Leo Li, MD '91; Jason Bromberg, MD '96; and Brenda Affinati, MD, CMS associate dean for clinical affairs, at an alumni dinner gathering in Los Angeles.

# Alumni News

## Alpha Omega Alpha Initiates

Three alumni initiates were honored at Chicago Medical School's 60th annual Alpha Omega Alpha induction ceremony on May 28: **David Bordo**, MD '97, Chief Medical Officer of Ascension Illinois Market and Ascension Resurrection Hospital; **Clive K. Fields**, MD '88, Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer of VillageMD; and **Laura Lucero**, MD '00, Chief Medical Officer of Beloved Community Family Wellness Center. Dr. Fields wasn't able to attend the ceremony because his flight was cancelled due to the weather, but we were happy to have Dr. Bordo and Dr. Lucero on campus for the event. ■



Dr. David Bordo with AOA Councilor Dr. Amy Pabst



Dr. Laura Lucero

## Other Alumni News

**Jeffrey Sherman**, MD '81, FACP, was named a Pinnacle Lifetime Member by The Inner Circle, in recognition of Dr. Sherman's contributions to medical innovations and advocacy.

**Ronald Moss**, MD '87, was named chief medical officer at Polaryx Therapeutics in Paramus, New Jersey.

**Kaleem Malik**, MD '96, MS '92, was appointed as the CMS assistant dean for global health, effective July 1. Dr. Malik will use his vast experiences with worldwide humanitarian efforts to advance future CMS Global Health initiatives for faculty. Dr. Malik also serves on the Board of Scientific Counselors for the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**BrIDGET A. Martell**, MD '97, MA, was appointed to the board of directors of Delcath Systems, Inc., an

interventional oncology company focused on the treatment of primary and metastatic cancers of the liver.

**Kimberley DAREY**, MD '04, was included on the *Becker's Hospital Review* 2024 list of Black Healthcare Leaders to Know. Dr. DAREY is president of Endeavor Health Elmhurst Hospital in Evanston, Illinois.

**Asal Rahimi**, MD '06, MS '02, joined the Alliance in Reconstructive Surgery Foundation board of directors.

**Finly J. Zachariah**, MD '08, was named an emerging leader in hospice and palliative care by the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine.

**Adonis S. Saremi**, MS '06, MD '10, was promoted to chief medical officer at digital healthcare company Noom. ■

# Campus Events



The university held its annual Staff Awards on June 24. Congratulations to the 8 CMS staff members who were nominated for awards: Jamal Turner, diversity coordinator, was nominated for the Photo 51 Impact Award. Jessica Hartlaub, administrative coordinator, medical education, and Lainey Toennies, a research technician in the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease & Therapeutics, were nominated for the Rising Star Award. Jocelyne Garcia, administrative coordinator for admissions; Marissa McCarthy, lead administrative coordinator for medical education; Maria Palakunnel, research center coordinator for the Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders; Joy Tso, psychiatry residency program administrator; and Lori Wasion, administrative coordinator for medical education, were nominated for the Unsung Champion Award.



RFU's Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) held its second pediatrics clinic on August 24, after a successful inaugural clinic in July. This clinic provides school and sports physicals for uninsured children in Lake County, which was identified by RFU community partners as an area of greatest healthcare need. Students from RFU's nursing, medicine, pharmacy, physician assistant, and physical therapy programs, as well as ICC pediatrics faculty, provided these services. The clinic aims to fill a gap in care by meeting the need for these required physicals, empowering patients to enter the school year prepared to learn and play.



CMS alum Basil K. Williams Jr., MD '11, came to campus for the CMS Class of 2028's White Coat Ceremony, where he was the keynote speaker. Here he poses with Ahmad Mustafa, CMS '27, the student speaker, and the CMS house reps from the Class of 2027, who pinned a house-specific pin to each student's white coat during the ceremony, welcoming them to their new learning community within CMS. Front row, from left: Calis Lim, Justine Li, Elizabeth Snider, and Alis Serban; Back row, from left: Brianna Lau, Maddison Paladino, Katalina Kuzanga, Dr. Basil K. Williams, Sabina Kalata, and Ahmad Mustafa.



### Crystal Bloom

Business Operations Manager,  
CMS Dean's Office  
Time at CMS: 10 years

Crystal Bloom started at Chicago Medical School as an administrative assistant in the Department of Medicine. When the Department of Clinical Sciences was created in 2016, combining the individual clinical departments (including Medicine) into one, Crystal transitioned into the newly formed department, supporting all of the clinical science disciplines. Her role at CMS has evolved from there.

She became the Clinical Science Department's Business Operations Coordinator in 2019, and was promoted to Business Operations Manager in 2021, transitioning into the Dean's Office. In her current role, Crystal works closely with each cost center within the medical school to ensure smooth, adequate operations as a whole. Aside from overseeing the CMS budget, she also trains and onboards new administrative assistants.

During her time at CMS, Crystal has updated or developed new policies and processes to better streamline operations throughout the medical school. "I enjoy identifying gaps and then finding a resolution that will help everyone work more efficiently," Crystal said. "My favorite thing about my role in CMS is being a point person for everyone. With my time here, ability to learn quickly, and willingness to help, I have become a valuable resource and I am happy to help!"

Others in the medical school appreciate Crystal's contributions to CMS. Crystal's supervisor said, "I am incredibly proud to acknowledge Crystal for her exceptional hard work and the tremendous value she brings to our institution. Crystal is not just a team member but a powerhouse of talent, dedication, and innovation. Her relentless pursuit of excellence and her unwavering commitment to our mission have been nothing short of inspiring. Crystal consistently exceeds expectations, delivering results that elevate purpose and set new standards for success. Her ability to anticipate needs, solve complex problems, and lead with heart and intellect makes her irreplaceable. We are beyond fortunate to have someone of her caliber, and I am profoundly grateful for all she does. Crystal's contributions are indeed the cornerstone of our achievements, and I look forward to witnessing the continued impact she will undoubtedly make." ■

# School & Department News

## Awards & Accomplishments

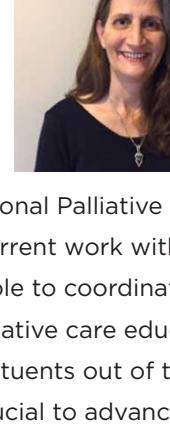


Weihang “Valerie” Chai, PhD, director of the Center for Genetic Diseases and professor of microbiology and immunology, received a two-year, \$1,202,541 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for her research of Coats Plus Disease.” Dr. Chai, \$115,000 NIH grant for her  
ular Modulator of RPA and RAD51 instability.”

study "Molecular Basis of Coats Plus Disease." Dr. Chai also received a one-year, \$115,000 NIH grant for her research study "Molecular Modulator of RPA and RAD51 in Maintaining Genome Stability."



**Catherine Deamant**, MD, professor of clinical medicine and faculty lead for palliative care education, has joined the team at RFU's DeWitt C. Baldwin Institute for Interprofessional Education as the Lead Faculty for Interprofessional Palliative Care Initiatives. In addition to her current work within CMS, Dr. Deamant will expand her role to coordinate interprofessional efforts around palliative care education for RFU students, faculty, and constituents out of the Baldwin Institute. This position is crucial to advancing collaborative care and teamwork in addressing the needs of patients with complex and chronic conditions.

A professional headshot of Catherine Deamant, MD. She is a woman with long, dark brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black V-neck top and a necklace with a small, light-colored pendant. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.



In May, **Raúl Gazmuri**, MD, PhD, FCCM, director of RFU's Resuscitation Institute and professor of physiology and biophysics, received the Monica Ply Research Innovation Award from

RFU. The \$59,667 grant was awarded for Dr. Gazmuri's research project titled "Does Selective Peripheral  $\alpha$ 2-Adrenoceptor Stimulation during Cardiac Resuscitation Improve Survival with Favorable Neurologic Outcome Compared to Epinephrine?"

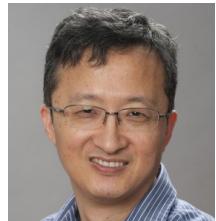


**Johnny He**, PhD, professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection, received a five-year, \$3,391,990 NIH grant for the research study “Positive Allosteric Modulator PNU-120596 to Treat HIV-Associated Neurocognitive



A professional portrait of Holly Hunsberger, PhD, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black blazer over an orange top. The background is a blurred laboratory environment with various pieces of equipment and glassware.

**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, received a two-year, \$25,305 grant from Ataraxia to study “The impact of POLY:IC on Neuronal Activity.”



**Hongkyun Kim**, PhD, associate professor of cell biology and anatomy, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection, received a two-year, \$434,225 NIH grant for his research study “Homeostatic Regulation of CaV2 Voltage-Gated Calcium Channels at Synapses.”



# School & Department News

**Robert Marr**, PhD, CMS assistant dean for research and associate professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases and Therapeutics, was awarded a two-year, \$434,225 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for his research study “Pharmacological Inhibition of NEP-like Enzymes in Traumatic Brain Injury and Dementia.”

Infection; and **Robert Marr**, PhD, associate professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, and assistant dean for research, CMS, were recognized as 2024 Researchers to Know by the Illinois Science & Technology Coalition. This honor spotlights university researchers throughout Illinois who are driving innovation and making a positive impact on their respective fields.

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**Lisa Michaluk**, MSEd, director of faculty affairs, completed the AAMC Medical Education Research Certificate (MERC) Program in July 2024. The MERC program is intended to provide the knowledge necessary to understand the purposes and processes of medical education research, to become informed consumers of the medical education research literature, and to be effective collaborators in medical education research.

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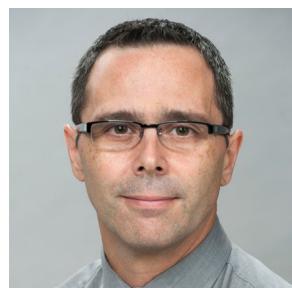
 **Daniel A. Peterson**, PhD, professor of neuroscience and director of the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, received a two-year, \$429,925 NIH grant for his research study “Generation of Parkinson-Derived Human Glial Progenitor Cells for Dopaminergic Neuronal Conversion.”

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Two CMS faculty members, **Neelam Sharma-Walia**, PhD, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and



Dr. Neelam Sharma-Walia



Dr. Robert Marr



**Siddharth Suresh**, CMS '26, had an abstract accepted for presentation at the AMSA Future Physicians for Change conference. Siddharth attended the conference, held May 30 – June 1 in Washington, DC, and won first place in his category for his poster and presentation titled “The Impact of Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities on the Burden of COVID-19.”

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**Carissa Van Ausdall**, assistant dean of business operations, was elected chair of the RFU Executive Staff Council for 2024-2025. The Staff Council serves as the official liaison between staff and other university constituencies, providing a visible and proactive voice on issues having significant impact on staff members.



# School & Department News

Its purpose is to represent the concerns of staff, to serve the staff community through education and information sharing, and to provide the perspective of staff in university planning, projects, and decision making.

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**Rahul Vijay**, PhD, DVM, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, and Carolina Calôba, SGPS '26, were awarded the American Association of Immunologists' Careers in Immunology Fellowship, which supports the career development of young scientists by providing eligible principal investigators with one year of salary funding for a trainee in their lab.

## Presentations & Publications

**Weihang "Valerie" Chai**, PhD, director of the Center for Genetic Diseases and professor of microbiology and immunology, was invited to give a presentation at the DNA Dynamics Webinar Series called "Social DNAing" on July 11.

This webinar series was attended by researchers from across the world who are studying genomic instability.

Dr. Chai also gave a presentation at the 8th JCA-AACR Special Joint Conference on June 29, titled "The Molecular Renaissance in Colorectal Cancer: From Basic Science to Therapeutics." The conference was held jointly by the Japanese Cancer Association (JCA) and the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) and took place in Kyoto, Japan.

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Dr. Carl Correll



Dr. Mirek Dundr

**Carl Correll**, PhD, associate professor and vice chair of biochemistry and molecular biology, Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics, was first author on an article titled "Crossing Boundaries of Light Microscopy Resolution Discerns Novel Assemblies in the Nucleolus," published in *Histochemistry and Cell Biology*. **Mirek Dundr**, PhD, associate professor of cell biology and anatomy, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was the corresponding author on the publication.

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**Kim Fasula**, PhD, MPH, director of assessment and interprofessional education, presented a talk titled "Teeth to Toe: A Comprehensive Approach to Integrated Dental and Primary Care" on July 24 at the Illinois Primary Health Care Association Conference. On August 1, Dr. Fasula and **Jeanette Morrison**, MD, executive vice dean for CMS and vice dean for medical education, presented at the University of Illinois at Chicago's 24th Annual Health Professions Education Summer Conference. In their presentation, Dr. Fasula and Dr. Morrison shared their work in designing a framework for distinction programs and highlighted our two new distinction opportunities at CMS: the Distinction in Medical Education and the Distinction in Nutrition and Health Promotion.



Dr. Fasula presenting at the IPHCA conference.

# School & Department News

CMS alumna **Adriana Fresquez**, MD '22, PhD '20, was first author on a paper in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* entitled "STIM1-Dependent Store-Operated Calcium Entry Mediates Sex Differences in Macrophage Chemotaxis and Monocyte Recruitment." Additional authors include Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection research staff **James (Jimmy) Hogan**, **Patricia Rivera**, and **Kristen Patterson**; Kanakadurga Singer from the University of Michigan Ann Arbor; as well as **Joseph Reynolds**, PhD, center director; and **Carl White**, PhD, associate professor and vice chair of physiology and biophysics.



and reconciling setbacks or failures with familial/societal expectations.



**Alissa Kainrath**, CMS '26, recently presented a poster titled "The PharmFree Campaign at AMSA: Evaluating the Conflict of Interest Policies at the Top 30 Medical Schools in the United States" at the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) National Convention, where it won second place in the AMSA Academy Scholars Programs and Institutes Category.

This project is associated with AMSA's PharmFree program, which was established in 2002 to promote evidence-based prescribing practices and eliminate conflicts of interest in medicine. The initiative began with the AMSA Scorecard in 2007, assessing the transparency of medical schools' conflict of interest (COI) policies. Over the years, as medical schools and academic medical centers have aligned their policies with high standards set by the AAMC and the Institute of Medicine, the PharmFree program has continued to adapt and uphold its mission of transparency.

Alissa, who is the president for the CMS chapter of AMSA, is currently serving as a PharmFree Fellow and working on releasing an updated version of the AMSA Scorecard. This ongoing effort aims to create and distribute resources such as toolkits, educational materials, and training sessions, empowering medical students to advance the core goals of evidence-based medicine and reduce conflicts of interest in the medical field.

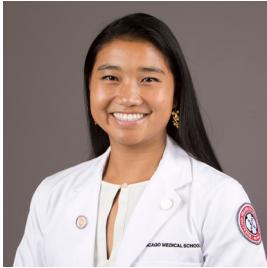


**William Frost**, PhD, director of the Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair and professor and discipline chair of cell biology and anatomy, co-authored the article "Division of Labor for Defensive Retaliation and Preemption by the Peripheral and Central Nervous Systems in the Nudibranch Berghia," published in *Current Biology*.



**Paul Hung**, MD '10, R '14, assistant professor of medicine and director of the CMS psychiatry residency program, was invited to be a mental health rep at a summer camp in Indiana for Midwestern Asian-American youth, ranging from high school to college-age young adults. Some of the topics Dr. Hung discussed included being a minority in the Midwest and in mental health,

# School & Department News



**Brianna Lau**, CMS '27, was first author on an article titled "Chest Wall Pain After Single-fraction Thoracic Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy: Dosimetric Analysis from the iSABR Trial," published in the journal

*Radiotherapy and Oncology*. This project was presented at the 2024 European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) Annual Meeting, held May 3–7 in Glasgow, Scotland, UK.

**Elliot Levine, MD '78, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, recently authored an article titled "The Ethics of Some Placebo-Controlled Randomized Controlled Trials," published in the *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine*.**

**Max Loh**, PhD '21, postdoctoral research associate, was first author on an article titled “INSPIRE Program: Eleven Years of Promoting STEM and Healthcare Careers Among Low-Income, Under-Served, Minoritized High School Students,” published in the *Journal for STEM Education Research*. CMS-affiliated co-authors include **Cecilia Pena-Rasgado**, senior research associate; **Reema Rashied**, CMS '25; and **Hector Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics.



Dr Max Loh



Dr. Pena-  
Rasgado



Reema  
Rashied



Dr. Rasgado-  
Flores

**Eric F. Mettetal**, CMS '24; **Jigisha Gohel**, CMS '27; **George Peek**, MS, CMS '26; and **Kate Fahey**, CMS '25, along with co-authors from Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, presented a poster titled “Disseminating Information at Two Medical Schools: Insights on Improvement Areas and Best Practices” at the AAMC 2024 Group on Student Affairs (GSA), Careers in Medicine (CiM), Organization of Student Representatives (OSR) National Meeting, held April 18-20 in San Francisco. The CMS students and their peers from Columbia University are OSR representatives at their respective institutions. The students presented a review of insights and suggestions regarding the dissemination of information between administrative faculty and medical students. Faculty co-authors on the project were **Jessica Lewis**, PhD, assistant dean for student affairs, and **Jeanette Morrison**, MD, executive vice dean for CMS and vice dean for medical education.



Eric Mettetal



*Jigisha Gohel*



George Peek



*Kate Fahey*

**Hector Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, gave several recent presentations. He presented “Music as Medicine” at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - Facultad de Estudios Superiores in Cuautitlán, Mexico; “How to Sustain a Successful Research Career” and “Why are LHS+ Physicians/ Scientists Important?” at the Listos Conference held by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) in Puerto Rico; and “Advancing the Research Pathway for URIM Faculty” at



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the AAMC Minority Faculty Leadership Development Seminar in Chicago.

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**Roxane Rohani**, PharmD, MSc, BCACP, assistant professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, presented a poster at the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental

Therapeutics-Great Lakes Chapter Annual Meeting titled “Pharmacological Interventions to Mitigate Premature Aging in Patients with HIV.”

Dr. Rohani was also selected by the Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists to be featured in the council’s Leadership Spotlight for their quarterly newsletter. In the spotlight, Dr. Rohani talked about her career, her leadership and mentorship experiences, and advice she would give to student pharmacists.

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**Neelam Sharma-Walia**, PhD, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, delivered an oral presentation and presented a poster at the International Symposium on EBV [Epstein-Barr Virus] & KSHV [Kaposi’s Sarcoma Herpesvirus], Related Agents and Diseases, held June 29-July 3 in Boston. The presentations showcased research conducted by Dr. Sharma-Walia and several CMS students and staff working in her lab. Dr. Sharma-Walia also co-chaired the “Virus-Host Interactions II” session at the symposium.

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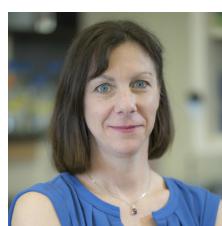


Dr. Neelam  
Sharma-Walia

Her oral presentation was titled “Aquaporin 3 (AQP3) Regulates Oxidative Stress and the Life Cycle of Kaposi Sarcoma Herpesvirus (KSHV) in its Associated Cancers,” and featured work done by **Olivia Powrozek**, laboratory research assistant; **Warren Nakazawa**, CMS ’25; **Melanie Klemond**, MD ’24; **Alexander Van Den Avont**, CMS ’25; Christopher Kywe, SGPS ’27; **Xiaomeng (Maggie) Shao**, research assistant; **Serdar Gayybov**, research technician; **Lindsay Holic**, CMS ’26; **Morgan Mroz**, MD ’24; **Justin Whalley**, PhD, assistant professor of foundational sciences and humanities; and **Dr. Neelam Sharma-Walia**.

Her poster was titled “Kaposi’s Sarcoma-Associated Herpesvirus (KSHV)-Associated Primary Effusion Lymphoma (PEL) Tumor Formation in NOD/SCID Mice Is Inhibited by Treatment with the Anti-Inflammatory Lipoxin A4,” and featured work done by **Jayashree A. Chandrasekharan**, MS ’15, research assistant; Sabrina Najibi, PharmD ’22; **Alexandru Marginean**, MD ’16; **Olivia Powrozek**; **Serdar Gayybov**; **Jack Pinkerton**, CMS ’26; **Steffy Thomas**, CMS ’26; **Amina Janjua**, CMS ’26; **Natalia Chalupczak**, CMS ’26; and **Dr. Neelam Sharma-Walia**.

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**Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, director of the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics and professor and discipline chair of neuroscience, presented an invited talk titled “Common Calcium Denominators in Degenerative Diseases: Alzheimer’s, Down Syndrome and TBI” at the Gordon Research Seminar on Calcium Signaling in Barga, Italy, on July 3.

Dr. Stutzmann also co-authored an article titled “Hippocampal CA1 Pyramidal Neurons Display Sublayer and Circuitry Dependent Degenerative Expression Profiles in Aged Female Down Syndrome Mice,”

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published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*; and “NCLX Controls Hepatic Mitochondrial Ca<sup>2+</sup> Extrusion and Couples Hormone-Mediated Mitochondrial Ca<sup>2+</sup> Oscillations with Gluconeogenesis,” published in *Molecular Metabolism*.

**Justin Whalley, PhD, assistant professor of foundational sciences and humanities, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, recently co-authored the article "High-Throughput Mass Spectrometry Maps the Sepsis Plasma Proteome and Differences in Patient Response," published in *Science Translational Medicine*. The study analyzed a deeply assayed proteome from 1,611 patients to enhance our understanding of the sepsis response state and disease processes. It identified potential biomarkers and advanced opportunities for a precision medicine approach to treating sepsis.**

A portrait photograph of Justin Whalley, a man with short brown hair and a slight smile, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is outdoors, with a grassy field and trees in the background.

## Events and Other News

In June, **Kim Fasula**, PhD, director of assessment and interprofessional education, and **Amanda Lund**, DO, assistant professor and assistant education director of internal medicine, attended the 2024 NBME Invitational Conference for Educators (NICE) in Philadelphia. This educational workshop focused on current techniques and best practices for assessment in medical education.



In June, a CMS team that included **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, Dean of Chicago Medical School and RFU Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs; **Brenda Affinati**, MD, CMS Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and RFU Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs; and **Michael Ellison**, EdD, CMS Associate Dean for Admissions, met with members of municipal leadership from the City of Lancaster, CA to discuss ideas focused on the expansion of clinical sites in northern California. CMS finalized an affiliation agreement with Palmdale Regional Medical Center in Los Angeles this past spring.



**Ellen Lamm**, research center coordinator in the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, retired on August 6 after 19 years of service to the university! Faculty and staff gathered to say goodbye, express their appreciation for Ellen's contributions to RFU, and wish her well in her retirement.



# School & Department News

RFU held its first annual **“Pop In for Charity”** interprofessional service event on campus on August 14. Students from all of RFU’s programs were invited to stop by to make blankets for Heartland Hospice and decorate cards and pack period supply kits for Keeping Families Covered. The event was organized by the leadership of the interprofessional HIPS 515 course with support from the RFU Division of Student Success and Wellness.



**Carissa Van Ausdall** is now Chicago Medical School’s Assistant Dean of Business Operations. This title change (from Director of Business Operations) reflects the growth and expanded responsibilities that Carissa has undertaken in recent years. As Assistant Dean of Business Operations, she will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping strategic initiatives, fostering collaboration across departments, and advancing our institution’s mission and goals. The change to Assistant Dean represents Carissa’s comprehensive oversight of business operations, strategic planning efforts, and commitment to enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness for CMS.



The lab of **Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, has a new collaboration with industry partner Ataraxia, for novel drug testing in mice. Dr. Hunsberger and her team study sex differences in aging and Alzheimer’s disease (AD), and the effects of anxiety on the progression of AD and dementia.

**Nutan Vaidya**, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and equity, is serving as director of the AAMC Group on Faculty Affairs (GFA) Mentoring Circles Program. The GFA Mentoring Circles Program serves to connect mentors with a group of mentees to help them 1) learn about the GFA, 2) engage with GFA colleagues, and 3) find ways to expand their involvement in the GFA.

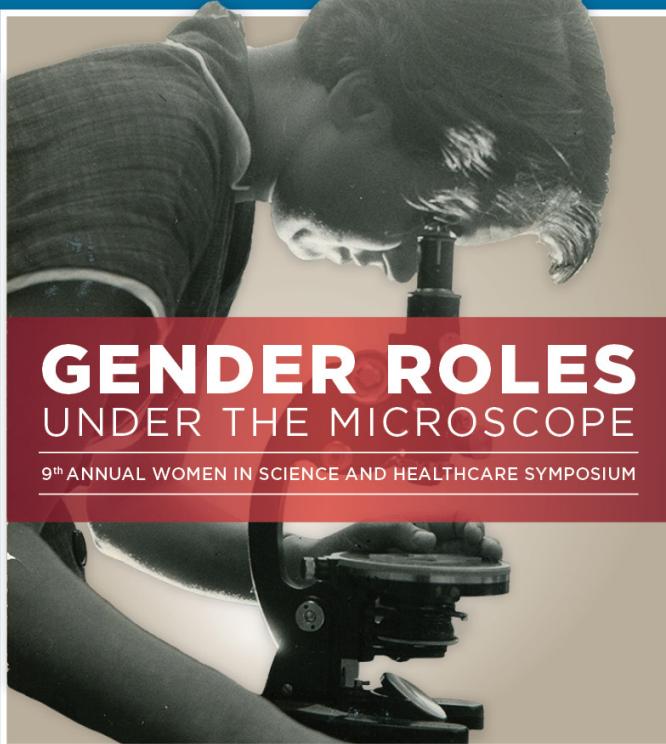


We recently welcomed **Josh Matsuura** to the CMS Office of Student Affairs as the new Coordinator of Student Programs. Josh was formerly the Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Success at the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, & Engineering of Indiana University-Bloomington, where he focused on high-impact practices, student leadership, retention pathways, and digital media. Luddy is also Josh’s alma mater, where he studied intelligent systems engineering with a concentration in bioengineering.



Outside of academia, Josh is a black belt in Shotokan karate, and he loves competing and coaching at local, national, and international tournaments. The highlight of his time in karate was being selected to represent Team USA in 2017 at the World Shotokan Karate Championships in Italy. Josh also loves hiking, composing music, and traveling in his free time. ■

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26  
SEPTEMBER

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CENTRAL



### KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND PANELIST

Glass Walls: Shattering Gender  
Barriers in Science and Healthcare

**Amy Diehl, PhD**

President

Amy Diehl Consulting LLC

### PANEL DISCUSSION TO FOLLOW

Copies of Dr. Diehl's book "Glass Walls" will be available for purchase and  
signing immediately after the event from 5:00-5:45 p.m.



REGISTER ONLINE:  
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