



## Students Have a Busy Summer of Outreach, Education and More

For many of our medical and graduate students, the answer to the question “What did you do on your summer vacation?” is especially impressive and inspiring. Here’s a sampling of how our students spent their summers: connecting with younger generations, giving back to the local community and assuring the future of key College of Medicine programs.

### Health Sciences Summer Camp for Middle Schoolers

The Drexel Office of University and Community Partnerships hosted a summer camp for middle school students from July 15-19, as part of the Drexel ExCITE Center’s Young Dragons program. Drexel faculty, staff and students volunteered to lead and assist with hands-on activities aimed at introducing the campers to health science topics and jobs in the health care industry.

The camp offered activities like tours of the SIM Center, Gross Anatomy Lab and Histotechnology Lab; demonstrations about physical exercise; and a discussion about resilience. The campers also learned about nutrition, cells and project management, and created community health murals.

Volunteers included 43 members of the Drexel community, representing the College of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies, School of Engineering, College of Nursing and Health Professions, and Dornsife School of Public Health. The College of Medicine’s student participants were second-year MD students Alfred Fustakji, Jessica Lu and Kelly Minard.

### Career Development and Health Awareness Summer Program

The City of Philadelphia has substantially high rates of child adversity, including child abuse, food insecurity, community violence, substance abuse and more. Given the heightened exposure of Philadelphia’s youth to adverse childhood experiences, Doger Norceide and Vikki Rueda-Juarez, second-year medical students, started a Career Development and Health Awareness summer program that provided 12 young men aged 15 to 17 with a paid, week-long immersion program held June 24-28.

This initiative was a collaborative effort between Drexel University College of Medicine, the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Summer Fellowship Grant, the City of Philadelphia

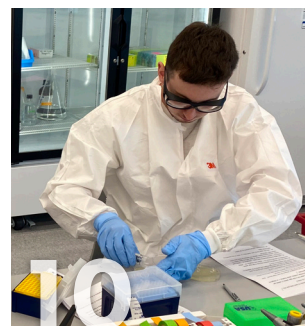
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TriNetX platform expands clinical research opportunities



Reshma Jagsi honored with 2024 Marion Spencer Fay Award



Cell and Gene Therapy Academy welcomes young innovators



Middle school participants and Drexel volunteers at the Young Dragons summer camp.

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# pulse

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## Dean's Message

Fall is an exciting time for our College of Medicine community, and this one is no exception. We welcomed 304 MD students and 275 biomedical, career-oriented and pre-med/pre-health graduate students to our ranks in August, during an exciting orientation week and a successful White Coat Ceremony. We also recently onboarded 56 new faculty during our virtual New Faculty Orientation.



Charles B. Cairns, MD

Growth also continues among our academic campuses. This summer, Haven Behavioral Hospital became an affiliate training site for third-year MD students' required psychiatry rotations and fourth-year psychiatry electives. Haven specializes in the care of adults who are experiencing mental health crises. The hospital offers both inpatient and outpatient services.

It's also my pleasure to announce some new leadership roles. In the Office of Educational Affairs, Seema Baranwal, MD, has been named associate dean

of institutional effectiveness and the William Maul Measey Chair in Medical Education, while Bisan Salhi, MD, PhD, has been promoted to associate dean for student affairs, community health and inclusive excellence at the West Reading Campus. In addition, Niki Kelley has been appointed associate dean of graduate administration, operations and finance for the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies. Finally, Amy Althoff, MD, has assumed the role of chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and HIV Medicine, in addition to her work as medical director of the Partnership Comprehensive Care Practice. Please join me in thanking all of them for their leadership and dedication to the College of Medicine.

Fall also brings with it several exciting events for the College of Medicine. I look forward to learning more about our trainees' research endeavors at Discovery Day on November 7 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. The event is a great source of pride for all involved in our research enterprise, and this year will be no exception. The annual Marion Spencer Fay award and lecture is also a point of pride for our community. This year, the event will take place during Discovery Day and will honor Reshma Jaggi, MD, DPhil, for her transformative research and her work to eliminate racial and gender disparities in patient outcomes and the medical profession.

Finally, I am proud of our culture of service and engagement at the College of Medicine. There are 168 faculty members currently serving on standing committees of the faculty, representing all departments and regional medical campuses. This is in addition to our faculty who serve on University-wide committees and the Faculty Senate. In times of change, having engaged faculty who are willing to give of their time and energy to shape the future of our institution is critical to our growth and success. I am equally grateful for our professional staff, who continue to ensure that the College's administrative functions seamlessly support our departments and programs.

### Charles B. Cairns, MD

Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean  
Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs

## Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew Explores Black Infant Mortality in Documentary

Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, MD, MEd, MPPM, professor and academic chair, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, recently participated in the filming of “The Ebony Canal,” a documentary about the crisis of infant mortality, particularly in Black and other communities of color. Information about the film, which was narrated by Viola Davis and directed by Emmy Award winner Emmet Alaquiva, is available at [TheEbonyCanal.com](http://TheEbonyCanal.com).

### **How serious is the problem of infant mortality in the U.S., and how does race factor into the statistics?**

In 2022, the United States infant mortality rate was around 5.5 per 1,000 live births. However, the rate for Black infants was 10.9, for American Indian/Alaska Natives it was 9.1, and for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders it was 8.5.

Preterm birth is one key cause of infant mortality. In 2022, on average in the United States, around 10% of births were preterm. Of these, preterm birth rates were highest for Black infants (14.6%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives (12.2%), Hispanics (10.0%), whites (9.4%) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (9.2%).

### **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health found that Black infants are also at increased risk for low birthweight and related complications, sudden infant death syndrome and other health problems. How do physicians typically try to prevent these issues?**

Many clinicians who understand the maternal and infant crisis we have faced for decades are already advocates for Black women. But there are many who practice unconscious and implicit bias based on learned stereotypes and perceived values. Ongoing education and conversations — involving all practicing clinicians, health care workers, supportive staff, doulas and family members — that challenge these biases are critical interventions that can save lives immediately.

Most evidenced-based studies reveal common threads of interventions that promise a new model of care, including:

- Better and earlier access to care
- Support for informed decision-making through community education, health literacy, social resources and community-based organizations
- Better research on minority health issues
- Elimination of racial bias and improvements in cultural humility and congruency among providers

In addition, Nationwide Children’s Collaboratory for Kids and Community Health offers six main strategies to tackle infant deaths:

- Target and address structural and interpersonal racism as fundamental drivers of infant mortality
- Address the social determinants of health across

the life course to advance maternal and child health

- Advance policies that prevent poor birth outcomes and promote women’s health and wellbeing rights
- Improve provision of reproductive health care from preconception through one year of age
- Design and implement a connected and consistent care experience for mothers and babies
- Accelerate innovation, progress and accountability for health equity

### **The Office of Minority Health also reported that Black parents were twice as likely as white parents to receive late or no prenatal care. What barriers to care are Black parents likely to face during pregnancy and after their baby is born?**

The post-partum period, or fourth trimester, has been shown to be the most dangerous period for a mother and baby. Socioeconomic barriers, lack of ongoing support and social determinants of health challenges are only a few of the variables that pose dangerous obstacles to a smooth transition to a healthy family. Psychological, emotional and behavioral health issues also increase the risk of poor outcomes.

### **What are some of the historical and systemic factors contributing to this crisis?**

Our society has been shaped by systemic racism. It is all around us, in us and about us — all of us. The impact shows up in health care providers and in biased treatment algorithms leading to decisions that result in poor outcomes. Lack of trust from our patients and the communities we have vowed to serve complicates care, even if patients have access.

### **How did you feel about participating in the documentary “The Ebony Canal”? What did the process entail?**

This film is a powerful addition to the transparent, honest and real-life experiences that people of minoritized populations face when presenting for equitable health care. It is a true testament to the

• *continued on page 5*



Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, MD, MEd, MPPM



# Summer Vacation

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Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant, and Educators for Education (E4E), an organization that serves and builds resilience within young adolescents who are part of vulnerable communities. The program followed the 7Cs model of personal development, encompassing competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control. Research demonstrates that when these attributes are cultivated in youths, they are more likely to engage in positive pursuits.

The attendees participated in activities such as CPR certification, visits to a Simulation Center and Gross Anatomy Lab, and “Dress for Success,” which provided them with dress shirts and ties. They also participated in a Career Day, where they interacted with professionals from orthopedics, vascular surgery, emergency medicine, family medicine, psychology and biomedical graduate programs. The goal was to use Norceide and Rueda-Juarez’s network of professional colleagues from similar backgrounds to better relate to the participants.

*“We aimed to provide the participants with tools to make a positive impact and empower them to inquire into the impact of health disparities present in their communities.” – Doger Norceide, MD ‘27*

*“Having faced similar adversities growing up, Doger and I believe investing in mentorship programs for these children in Philadelphia is crucial for fostering their emotional well-being, academic achievement and overall success in life.” – Vikki Rueda-Juarez, MD ‘27*



Vikki Rueda-Juarez (right) receives an eye exam from program participants.

Doger Norceide (right) signs the cast of a program attendee.

## West Reading HOP Leaders Secure the Future of MD Student Outreach

Second-year MD students Ashley Deng and Julian Rupkey, who serve as co-chairs of the West Reading Health Outreach Project (HOP) Executive Board, spent their summer ensuring that the campus’s HOP clinics can continue to thrive and grow for years to come. The funding for these clinics, which allow first- and second-year MD students to provide medical care and support to underserved populations in the Berks County community, comes primarily from public grants, private donors and allocations from the school. The programs had previously been

supported by a 2022 grant from the Berks County Community Foundation (BCCF). Deng and Rupkey took over leadership of the West Reading clinics at a time when the previous grant funds had nearly run out.

The pair worked tirelessly throughout the summer to write a new grant proposal, thinking through what new equipment would most benefit the populations they serve so it could be included in their budget. They also had to summarize the HOP clinics’ impact and reach within the local community. In addition to writing the grant, Deng and Rupkey were charged with deciding how to spend down the remainder of their existing funds — a requirement before a new BCCF grant application would be considered — purchasing supplies they anticipate needing for the next few months to support multiple HOP-sponsored community free health fairs, new specialty sub-clinics and medical education workshops. They hope that new funds will be received near the end of the calendar year.

*“My role as co-chair of HOP has given me an appreciation of how much is required to run a free clinic, from student volunteers to supplies. It’s a big responsibility that has taught me a lot about leadership.” – Julian Rupkey, MD ‘27*

*“HOP has been a valuable opportunity to step away from book learning and get out into the community. That connection with the place we will call home for the next four years is very meaningful.” – Ashley Deng, MD ‘27*

## Bridging the Gaps Interns Conduct Outreach, Explore Health Equity

In July, Drexel hosted Bridging the Gaps Community Health Internship Program participants at the Health Sciences Building in University City as part of their seven-week, paid summer internship experience. Bridging the Gaps helps health and social service professions students gain a broader understanding of the factors that affect health in underserved communities.

Bridging the Gaps is a collaboration among academic health institutions in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and approximately 100 community organizations. Interns spend most of the week volunteering with the program’s nonprofit community partners.

In addition to their clinical experiences, Bridging the Gaps interns participate in interactive presentations and weekly discussions on topics related to health equity. This summer, the health professions students engaged in a conversation with filmmaker André Robert Lee. Lee screened his documentary “The Road to Justice,” which highlights the history of racial injustice in America and asks how communities can move forward.

*“Bridging the Gaps allowed me to authentically get to know the people, culture and infrastructure of northwest Philadelphia. I had the honor of forming bonds with residents at DePaul USA and getting to know their needs, allowing us to create programs to help them thrive. I am grateful I did this program, and now I have a new community in Philadelphia to call friends for life.” – Sogand Karimian, RN, MD ‘27*

## Neuroscience Summer Camp

Each year, the College of Medicine recruits highly motivated high school sophomores and juniors to participate in Neuroscience Summer Camp, where they learn the fundamental concepts of neuroscience and basic lab

techniques in molecular neurobiology, neurophysiology and neuroanatomy. Campers also complete a summer project that allows them to broaden their exposure to neuroscience methodology.

The program is run by Jed Shumsky, PhD, professor, and Michael Lane, PhD, associate professor, both in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy. Graduate students in the department play a pivotal role in the camp, leading demonstrations of lab techniques and helping to guide the campers through their final projects. This offers them the opportunity to practice their own mentoring and teaching skills while providing an enriching experience for local students.

*“Being a Neuroscience Camp mentor was one of the highlights of my summer. Interacting with the high school*

*students was incredibly rewarding. Their curiosity and knowledge were unmatched, and I have no doubt that they will become amazing scientists.” – Nishell T. Savory, PhD candidate, Neuroscience program*

### Interprofessional Student Panel

Students from the College of Medicine and other Drexel schools participated in an interprofessional student panel at the Monell Center, a local institution dedicated to the scientific understanding of taste and smell. The event was part of programming for fellows enrolled in the center’s summer apprenticeship program, which aims to stimulate an interest in medicine and the biomedical sciences in groups typically underrepresented in the sciences who are pre-college or recently enrolled in college.

## Destination Excellence

• *continued from page 3*

power of partnership, listening and voices heard.

The opportunity to have a much-needed platform to advance the advocacy for Black women and unborn neonates was the highlight of this experience. Working with a passionate producer, Emmai Alaquiva, who is from my hometown of Pittsburgh, made it a more memorable experience. Over a two-year period, Emmai spent numerous hours interviewing several pregnant women, experts, clinicians and researchers across the United States.

### What are some other ways people can educate themselves about the problem of preterm birth and infant mortality in the Black community?

“Born too soon” is a common statement used as maternal and fetal experts ponder why Black women have an increased risk of preterm labor, pre-eclampsia and other co-morbidities that result in both maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. Understanding the concepts of bondage, slavery and weathering — the effects of systemic oppression on the body — is a start to the foundation that will offer communities and learners a historical, psychosocial and pathophysiological window to various root causes of this dilemma.

Some resources include:

- *Weathering* by Dr. Arline T. Geronimus, from Hachette Book Group: [hachettebookgroup.com](https://hachettebookgroup.com).
- “How Poverty and Racism ‘Weather’ the Body, Accelerating Aging and Disease” on Fresh Air (NPR): [npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/03/28/1166404485/weathering-arline-geronimus-poverty-racism-stress-health](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/03/28/1166404485/weathering-arline-geronimus-poverty-racism-stress-health).
- “How Can We Solve the Black Maternal Health Crisis?” from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: [publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/solving-the-black-maternal-health-crisis](https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/solving-the-black-maternal-health-crisis).
- “Closing the Black-White Gap in Birth Outcomes: A Life-Course Approach” in *Ethnicity and Disease*,

Winter 2010: [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4443479/](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4443479/).

- “U.S.-Born Black Women at Higher Risk of Preeclampsia than Foreign-Born Counterparts; Race Alone Does Not Explain Disparity” from Johns Hopkins Medicine, December 29, 2021: [hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/us-born-black-women-at-higher-risk-of-preeclampsia-than-foreign-born-counterparts-race-alone-does-not-explain-disparity](https://hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/us-born-black-women-at-higher-risk-of-preeclampsia-than-foreign-born-counterparts-race-alone-does-not-explain-disparity).
- The Office of Minority Health and the National Institutes of Health offer evidenced-based findings that support this crisis and offer many solutions to this challenge.

### How can medical schools better prepare future physicians to provide more equitable care for Black parents and infants, during pregnancy and afterward?

Educating our future physician leaders to utilize historical and current data, implement best practices and understand their role in changing the trajectory for Black maternal and infant health must be integrated in our curriculum. This includes having uncomfortable conversations. Faculty members and other medical school educators must intentionally educate themselves to be prepared to lead these conversations. In the clinical years, we must continue to challenge our learners to think critically about sustainable solutions.

Data justice is the key to helping learners and healers practice at the top of their professions. Utilizing data from unbiased collection, analysis, creation and implementation programs will ultimately lead to better outcomes for all populations but specifically for minoritized populations. Research that is inclusive, recognizing the rapid changes in demographics, is starting to uncover the differences in risks, drug interactions and treatment regimens that will highlight racial inequities across socioeconomic domains. These findings will be key to interventions that affect the lives of Black women and Black birthing people who experience a three- to four-fold increase in fetal loss.

The panelists included:

- Talmadge Gaither, MS, medical student
- Kenneth Kim, MS, PhD candidate, Microbiology & Immunology
- Madeline Plummer, undergraduate student, Dornsife School of Public Health
- Martha Zitlali Victoria, BS nutrition and foods '24, College of Nursing and Health Professions

The panel, which was held on August 1, was organized and moderated by Roshell Muir, PhD, director of the Office of Health Equity Research and Innovation in the Office of Community Health and Inclusive Excellence, and research assistant professor, Departments of Family, Community and Preventive Medicine and Microbiology & Immunology.

*"Sharing my journey and mentoring students through the challenges of early career development was a deeply rewarding experience. I was fortunate to have had many great mentors who shaped my own path, and I believe that strong mentorship is essential for guiding a student's career."* – Kenneth M. Kim, MS, PhD candidate, Microbiology & Immunology program

*"Opportunities like speaking with the 2024 Monell Scholars allowed me to reflect on my journey and recognize the beauty of the lessons I've learned on my winding path to becoming a medical student. Being able to give back and share this with a budding generation of STEM leaders was an extraordinarily gratifying experience."* – Talmadge E. Gaither, MS '22, MD '27

**Anatomy Institute and Dissection Experience Program Bring Undergrads to West Reading**  
Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health invited undergraduate students enrolled in science-related fields throughout the U.S. to participate in an exclusive summer anatomy program: Anatomy Institute and Dissection Experience (AIDE).

Participants learned the fundamental concepts of gross anatomy and basic dissection techniques in a state-of-the-art cadaveric laboratory. They explored the gross



Participants in the Drexel-Monell interprofessional panel (seated L-R) Madeline Plummer, Kenneth Kim, MS, Talmadge Gaither, MS, and Martha Zitlali Victoria, and (at podium) moderator Roshell Muir, PhD.

anatomy, microanatomy and neuroanatomy of the various systems and regions of the human body; practiced hands-on skills such as human dissection, suturing, auscultation and measuring vital signs; and developed clinical reasoning skills using case-based learning and simulation experiences.

The teaching team included the West Reading anatomical sciences faculty, and four second-year medical students, Kristen Scopino, Sharon Shania, Devina Persaud and Dylan Persaud, serving as instructional assistants.

*"Teaching has always been a passion of mine, and being part of the AIDE team was an incredibly fulfilling experience. It allowed me to share my enthusiasm for anatomy and the medical field with pre-health students, which was truly rewarding. Working alongside the exceptional faculty this summer, after completing*

*my first year, felt like a full-circle moment!"*  
– Sharon Shania, MD '27

### Research!America Grant Funds Biomedical Graduate Student Outreach

Neuroscience graduate students Bridie Eckel and Laura Schoenhals earned a \$2,000 Summer Civic Engagement Microgrant from Research!America for their project "Science Is for All!" The grant was used to fund the outreach efforts of the student group Biomedical Graduate Students for Diversity.

The group ran free hands-on science activities for four weekends this summer at the local East Falls Farmers' Market. The presentations focused on cells and DNA, chemistry, immunology and neuroscience. The group also hosted a science coffee hour at Thunder Mug, a local coffee shop. The event gave community members, scientists and public health officials



a chance to interact in a friendly atmosphere, with the goal of allowing community members' science questions to be answered. *"I have most enjoyed watching children and adults at the farmers market learn and be excited about science. They sometimes even suggest further ways of experimenting with the activities we bring. Their creativity is inspiring and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved!"* – Laura Schoenhals, Neuroscience PhD student



AIDE participants (center, holding certificates) with the teaching team: (back row, left side) Jen Lees, Sharon Shania and Dana Peterson, PhD; (front row, left side) Kristen Scopino and Devina Persaud; (back row, right side) Dylan Persaud and Bill Frank, DC; and (front row, right side) Kathryn Veazey, PhD.



# TriNetX Platform Transforms Clinical Research at College of Medicine

In 2022, Drexel University College of Medicine introduced TriNetX, a powerful platform that connects researchers to a worldwide repository of clinical data. TriNetX offers access to insights from more than 250 million patients spanning hundreds of health care organizations in 19 countries.

As part of the introduction process, the implementation team organized numerous sessions for researchers and medical students. This training program was organized to support users, providing guidance to ensure a smooth, efficient experience while also complying with data privacy regulations. Additional support was provided by the Drexel IT team and TriNetX staff to address technical issues and optimize platform usage. A robust IT infrastructure was crucial to successful implementation, allowing for seamless integration and enhanced performance.

Implementing TriNetX at the College of Medicine has been transformative. "This platform has elevated Drexel's research capabilities. It has provided our students and faculty with the opportunity to access massive global clinical data, driving innovative research and fostering collaborations," says Janet Matthews, MSN, RN, senior director, research program development, who was instrumental in the implementation process. "It's fundamentally reshaping how we conduct research by leveraging global, real-world data."

Karen Berkowitz, MD, associate dean for medical student research, emphasizes how TriNetX has been particularly effective in connecting more medical students to clinical research opportunities. "Finding mentors in their chosen specialty can be challenging for MD students, especially given our distributed educational model," she explains. "However, a student in Philadelphia can now more easily collaborate with a mentor in Pittsburgh or Harrisburg." In the past, this would have required traveling to the mentor's clinical site or attempting to access that facility's medical records remotely. Now, students and mentors can collaborate remotely on projects through TriNetX. "Engaging in research during medical school is a key way for students to distinguish themselves in the residency match process, so the importance of these opportunities cannot be overstated," says Berkowitz.

Meghan Berkenstock, MD '11, president of the College of Medicine Alumni Association and a dedicated mentor of medical students interested in the field of ophthalmology, says that TriNetX has been a huge asset for her mentees. "I currently have 17 students using TriNetX," she says. "It is really helping medical students do clinical research, and the work they are putting out is truly exemplary."

One of her mentees, Rayna Marshall, MD '25, is interested in pursuing residency training in ophthalmology. She used TriNetX for her research presentation, "Prevalence and Incidence of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis-Associated Uveitis and Medication Trends in the TriNetX Database," which she presented at the American Uveitis

Society spring meeting in Seattle, Wash. The study examined the cumulative and annual prevalence and incidence of juvenile idiopathic arthritis-associated uveitis from 2013 to 2023.

Marshall says, "Trying to match into ophthalmology initially seemed like a daunting task. With the amazing mentorship of Dr. Berkenstock and access to the TriNetX database, I have been able to efficiently analyze large datasets to synthesize research project ideas that eventually culminated in a podium talk at a national conference and a submitted first-author manuscript!"

Berkenstock notes that Marshall has "really embraced TriNetX. We are working on our fifth paper using the database, and she is now a mentor to other medical students."

***This platform has elevated Drexel's research capabilities. It has provided our students and faculty with the opportunity to access massive global clinical data, driving innovative research and fostering collaborations. It's fundamentally reshaping how we conduct research by leveraging global, real-world data.***

Nila Kirupaharan, MD '26, another of Berkenstock's mentees, presented "Incidence and Prevalence of Uveitis and Associated Ocular Complications in the U.S. TriNetX Database" at the 2024 American Academy of Ophthalmology Meeting in Chicago, Ill. The study analyzed the cumulative and annual incidence and prevalence of uveitis from 2013 to 2023. "Under Dr. Berkenstock's guidance, working with TriNetX's extensive database has been invaluable. The vast data offers countless research opportunities, enabling me to conduct epidemiological studies that led to podium presentations and deepened my understanding of areas of interest like uveitis, all building toward a future in ophthalmology."

Kenny Simansky, PhD, senior vice dean for research at the College of Medicine, shares the enthusiasm for what TriNetX has to offer. He says, "We are excited about the opportunities for research and learning from clinical epidemiology that TriNetX brings to students and faculty. This platform will be a tool to link our regional medical campuses, supporting research training for medical and graduate students and developing collaborations among our faculty across these important academic sites."

More information about TriNetX is available on the College of Medicine's website at [bit.ly/DrexelTriNetX](https://bit.ly/DrexelTriNetX), which includes a link to the Office of Research's SharePoint site. These resources include recordings of recent trainings and presentations about TriNetX, useful links and important contact information. All researchers are also welcome to attend TriNetX office hours, the second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 2 to 3 p.m., with a TriNetX analyst who can answer questions and assist with projects.

## Amy Althoff Appointed Academic Chief of Infectious Diseases/HIV Medicine

Amy Althoff, MD, associate professor of medicine and medical director of the Partnership Comprehensive Care Practice, has been named academic chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and HIV Medicine. In this role, Althoff will be responsible for the division's development and oversight, including its clinical, educational and research program activities.

Trained and board certified in internal medicine and infectious disease, Althoff joined Drexel in 2013 as an assistant professor, rising to associate professor and medical director of the Partnership clinic in 2020. Althoff is charged with promoting the Partnership clinic and the Division of Infectious Diseases and HIV Medicine with community providers and leaders, donors, industry, academic faculty and leadership.

As academic chief, she will mentor junior faculty and fellows, support quality improvement initiatives, integrate interdisciplinary clinical services at the Partnership, foster growth, and continue the development of infectious disease research within Drexel and in collaboration with regional partners. She will promote the departmental priorities of interdisciplinary program development, physician-scientist career development, workforce diversity and integrated



program development with affiliates.

Althoff will continue to serve as medical director of the Partnership, which celebrated its 30th anniversary of caring for people with HIV in 2023, and as principal investigator for several Ryan White grants totaling over \$2 million per year. She will also provide high-level oversight of the Partnership's 340B program. Importantly, Althoff will continue to prioritize inclusion efforts among patients, faculty and staff with the goal of optimizing health outcomes and promoting a culture of safety and belonging.

Althoff has served in many leadership and administrative service capacities, including as co-director of the

Partnership's Outreach Team and director of its Committee for Quality Improvement. As medical director, she oversaw the stabilization and rebuilding of the Partnership in the wake of the closure of Hahnemann University Hospital and during the COVID-19 pandemic. She recruited a diverse group of providers from a range of backgrounds, and she collaborated with the growing Partnership team to expand services. Althoff led the development of a new partnership with the Division of Infectious Diseases at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital (TJUH) in January 2022 to strengthen the clinical care, education and research missions.

A dedicated educator, Althoff is a preceptor for the infectious disease fellows in collaboration with TJUH, the regional director of the MidAtlantic AIDS Education and Training Center, and preceptor for the Partnership's medical student third- and fourth-year rotations. Althoff completed the Faculty Launch leadership program in December 2023 and was inducted into College's Alpha Omega Alpha Society Chapter in March 2024.

## Recognition for MD Program Antiracism Module

The College of Medicine's antiracism module, part of the MD program's Professional Formation curriculum, is now featured as a resource on the website [thecolorofcare.org](http://thecolorofcare.org). "The Color of Care" is a documentary executive produced by Oprah Winfrey, about how people of color receive systemically substandard

health care in the U.S. The documentary's website includes ways that anyone can get involved in work to address these inequities, and the College of Medicine's antiracism module is listed as a resource for medical or nursing students and health professionals.

## Haven Behavioral Hospital to Serve as New Affiliate Training Site

Haven Behavioral Hospital in West Chester, Pa., has been named an academic medical campus for Drexel University College of Medicine. Drexel medical students have the option to select Haven Behavioral Hospital for their required third-year

psychiatry clerkship and fourth-year psychiatry electives. Two physicians with extensive clinical and academic experience in psychiatry, Joseph Garbely, DO, and Charles Stanfa, DO, have been appointed to the faculty of Drexel University College of Medicine.

Haven Behavioral Hospital offers specialized behavioral health services for high-acuity and complex-need patient populations within Pennsylvania. Haven is a 72-bed inpatient facility

that specializes in assistance for adults who are struggling with mental health crises. The hospital's services include both inpatient psychiatric care and an outpatient wellness center. The College of Medicine's collaboration with Haven Behavioral Hospital will provide medical students with the opportunity to train with experienced physicians in an outstanding clinical facility for the care of mental health and substance use disorders.



## New Educational Affairs Leadership Roles

Seema Baranwal, MD, has been named vice dean of institutional effectiveness and appointed to the William Maul Measey Chair in Medical Education. She will lead the efforts necessary to ensure the College's compliance with LCME requirements and oversee continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes across all divisions, and continue to provide oversight of the Office of Student Affairs and Career Advising.

Baranwal will spearhead collaborative work to ensure compliance with all LCME requirements with several administrative offices, including the Offices of Faculty, Research, Educational Affairs, and Community Health and Inclusive Excellence. She will develop the annual CQI plan and lead its committee, as well as report CQI processes and outcomes to stakeholders. She will also head up the curriculum program review and coordinate the College's overarching strategic planning process.

Baranwal joined the Office of Student Affairs in 2013 as an assistant dean, rising to associate dean in 2016 and senior associate dean in 2021. She has innovated the DUCOMpass mobile app, which improves MD students' ability to access key resources including mental health and reporting of microaggressions. Her record of mentoring and advising hundreds of medical students is unparalleled, as is her championing of inclusion and belonging at the College. She is known nationally for her expertise in medical student professional formation and mistreatment reporting.

Baranwal is an associate professor of medicine and a general internist at Drexel Internal Medicine in Center City Philadelphia. She is the elected executive secretary-treasurer of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Northeast Group on Student Affairs Executive Board, and a longstanding member of the AAMC's Group

on Student Affairs, Northeast Group on Student Affairs, and Group on Women in Medicine and Science. She is a 2023 Faculty Launch fellow and a 2024-2025 ELAM program fellow. Among her accolades for both education and clinical care, Baranwal was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society in 1999, elected to fellowship in the American College of Physicians in 2009, and named a Top Doctor by *Castle Connely* and *Philadelphia* magazine in 2023 and 2024.



Seema Baranwal, MD



Bisan A. Salhi, MD, PhD

Bisan A. Salhi, MD, PhD, has been promoted to associate dean for student affairs, community health and inclusive excellence at the West Reading Campus. Salhi joined Drexel in 2023 as assistant dean in this capacity and will expand her role to oversight of all aspects of student services leading to the successful completion of their medical degree. As associate dean, Salhi will also oversee career advising and mentoring of students as they progress through the residency application and selection process. She is responsible for developing and promoting programmatic activities that foster an inclusive environment and facilitate a community of belonging.

Salhi is an associate professor of emergency medicine. She is a nationally renowned speaker, educator and scholar. Her work has been published in leading scientific journals, including the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, *Social Science and Medicine* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Salhi has been widely honored for her work, receiving the Catalyst Award and Outstanding Research Publication Award from the Academy for Women in Academic Emergency Medicine. At the College, she was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and received a Golden Apple Award in 2024. Her work in equity and inclusion extends to service beyond the College as a member of the Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM), and the Education Committee of SAEM's Academy for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Medicine.



## 2024 Marion Spencer Fay Award

The 2024 Marion Spencer Fay Award will be presented to Reshma Jagsi, MD, DPhil, by the Lynn Yeakel Institute for Women's Health and Leadership on November 7, 2024, during Discovery Day. Jagsi is the Lawrence W. Davis Professor and Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Emory University School of Medicine, as well as a senior faculty fellow in Emory University's Center for Ethics.

She is being honored for her transformative and uniquely impactful research, clinical care and leadership, and her work identifying and eliminating gender and racial disparities in both patient outcomes and career advancement in the medical profession, as well as her demonstrated commitment to mentorship.

## Cell and Gene Therapy Summer Academy: Fostering the Next Generation of Biotech Innovators

The College of Medicine hosted its inaugural Cell and Gene Therapy Summer Academy from July 29 to August 2, 2024. The event, geared toward undergraduate students with an interest in the field of cell and gene therapy, was organized by Mary Genevieve Carty, MS, MEd, director of education innovation and strategic partnerships in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology. The program featured a range of experts from academia and industry who presented on the topics of cell therapy, gene therapy, clinical trials, patient advocacy, manufacturing, and regulatory affairs and policy, as well as a field trip to the Jefferson Institute of Bioprocessing. Student attendees also completed final projects and enjoyed a CRISPR in a

Box experiment run by Dolores Conover, laboratory manager, Drexel University School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems.

Presenters included:

- Xiao Huang, PhD, assistant professor, Drexel University School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems
- George Buchlis, PhD, operating partner at Persephoni BioPartners and former director, immunology discovery research, Gene Therapy program at the University of Pennsylvania
- Deepika Cattri, MS, MBA, associate director, U.S. HCP immunology marketing, Bristol Myers Squibb
- Bryan Kennedy, development and strategy, Emily Whitehead Foundation
- Laura Adams, MS, manager, process science engineers MS&T, Spark Therapeutics, Inc.
- Katie Proudford, PhD, principal scientist, Merck

The start-up funding for the summer academy came from the CGT-TEAMS grant Drexel received from Bristol Myers Squibb last year. It was also supported by the Department of Microbiology & Immunology and Brian Wigdahl, PhD, professor and chair of microbiology and immunology.



## Faculty Award Nominations Open Soon

Each year, the College of Medicine’s Faculty Awards honor excellence in research and scholarship, education, patient care, community outreach, mentoring and leadership, and diversity and inclusion impact. The nomination period for the 2025 awards will open in mid-November.

Those interested in nominating a deserving colleague will be asked to submit the nominee’s current CV and a letter from the nominator, highlighting the nominee’s accomplishments that align best with the attributes of the award.

The Office of Faculty encourages all faculty to save the date for Faculty Professional Development Day, which will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2025. The Faculty

Awards are presented during a ceremony as part of Faculty Professional Development Day.

More information about the Faculty Awards is available at [bit.ly/3NHDQzg](https://bit.ly/3NHDQzg). When the nomination period opens, details about the nomination process will also be available on that page. If you have questions about the Faculty Awards, please contact Janine Barber at [jk48@drexel.edu](mailto:jk48@drexel.edu).





## New Historical Marker Celebrating Women in Medicine Has a Drexel Connection

In September the Lower Merion Historical Society in Bala Cynwyd, Pa., celebrated early advocates for women in medicine, dedicating a Pennsylvania Historical Marker to three trailblazing activists.

Two of the three women were affiliated with Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, a Drexel University College of Medicine legacy institution.

The September 15 ceremony took place at 18 N. Highland Avenue, the former home of the women leaders who were honored: Hannah E. Myers Longshore, MD, Jane V. Myers, MD, and Lucretia Mott Longshore Blankenburg.

Myers Longshore was a graduate in the inaugural class of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania (later named Woman's Medical College). She was also the first woman to open a medical practice in Pennsylvania, according to the College of Medicine's Legacy Center

Archives and Special Collections.

Myers, sister to Myers Longshore, also practiced medicine in Philadelphia. Myers Longshore's daughter, Lucretia Mott Longshore Blankenburg, was a well-known advocate for women's rights. The three women were honored by the Lower Merion Historical Society for contributions to medicine, suffrage, abolition of slavery, and civic and municipal reform in Philadelphia.

The women lived in Bala Cynwyd on an estate they called "Idenlea." Visitors can now read about the trio called the "Women of Idenlea Estate" on the new historical marker.

The founding of Female Medical College of Pennsylvania marked one of the world's first medical education avenues for women. The school trained thousands of women physicians who practiced all over the globe, taught, performed research and helped change the world. The College of Medicine is the successor institution of several innovative schools that aimed to provide opportunities in medical education to those who had previously been shut out — including women.



Jane V. Myers, MD



Hannah E. Myers Longshore, MD

## New Leadership at the Graduate School

Niki Kelley has been appointed associate dean of graduate administration, operations and finance at the College of Medicine's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies. As associate dean, Kelley will collaborate with senior leadership to drive forward the Graduate School's mission, vision and goals. She is charged with oversight of all financial and academic administration activities, including recruitment; academic support; budget development and management; personnel management; financial policies, procedures and controls; financial aid; strategic initiative; and facilities and technology management.

Kelley brings 19 years of experience in higher education to her new role. Her expertise spans graduate enrollment management, student affairs, operations, systems implementation and optimization, policy development, and career and employer development. In her most recent role as the assistant dean of graduate student services at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business, she successfully oversaw graduate enrollment and recruitment, academic advising, student success and retention, and career services.

Kelley's experience and expertise in program evaluation, her specialization in developing strategies focused on systems and change, and her insights for aligning policies, practices, programs and people across different system levels will be assets to the Graduate School's leadership team.

## Caring Together to Serve as Pilot Site to Address Opioid Crisis

The College of Medicine's Caring Together program was one of 16 organizations across the U.S. selected to participate in the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) Action Collaborative on Combatting Substance Use and Opioid Crises national pilot project, which aims to advance substance use care, workforce competency, and interprofessional education and practice using a 3Cs framework: core knowledge, collaboration and clinical practice.

With this project, the NAM Action Collaborative seeks to gain understanding about pilot sites' varied applications of the 3Cs framework and their respective implementation processes. The aim is to ensure that all health care professionals possess basic core competencies in pain management and substance use treatment, thereby strengthening the delivery of coordinated, interprofessional, high-quality and person-centered care.

Through participation in the implementation pilot, Caring Together will help to inform and shape the future of health professions education policy and practice. As part of the program, the project team will engage in a dynamic learning community where they will share insights and best practices while fostering relationships and connections with other sites and Action Collaborative members.



## Recent Thesis Defenses

We congratulate the following master's and PhD students from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies on the successful defense of their theses.



**Amanda Abavana-Mensah**  
Microbiology & Immunology MS Program  
**Title:** Cobamide Biosynthesis: Examination of Aminopropanol Production and Incorporation  
**Advisor:** Amy Ma, PhD



**Maria R. Cavallo**  
Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program  
**Title:** Unveiling Resistance Mechanisms and Improving Therapeutic Outcomes in Mutant BRAF<sup>V600E</sup> Cancers  
**Advisor:** Edward Hartsough, PhD



**Alexandria Criswell**  
Cancer Biology MS Program  
**Title:** Characterizing Escape Pathways Associated With HIV-Specific CAR T Cell Therapy  
**Advisor:** Daniel Claiborne, PhD  
**Co-advisor:** Luis Montaner, DVM, PhD



**Jason DaCunza**  
Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
**Title:** miRNA Cargo in Small Extracellular Vesicles From Mouse Primary Macrophages and RAW 264.7 Cells  
**Advisor:** Seena Ajit, PhD



**Tisha Kalpesh Desai**  
Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
**Title:** Investigating the Role of SND1 in Glioblastoma Using RNA-Seq  
**Advisor:** Srinivas Somarowthu, PhD



**Emily Esquea, MS**  
Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program  
**Title:** Targeting Metabolic Vulnerabilities in Breast Cancer Brain Metastatic Cells  
**Advisor:** Mauricio Reginato, PhD



**Hieu Jeromy**  
Pharmacology & Physiology MS Program  
**Title:** Characterization of Shared Immunogenic Poly-Epitope Frameshift Mutations in Microsatellite-Instability-High (MSI-H) Colorectal Cancer  
**Research Advisors:** Patrick Wilkinson, PhD, and Katelyn Miller, PhD  
**Academic Co-advisor:** Alessandro Fatatis, MD, PhD



**Roshni Kadam**  
Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
**Title:** Investigating the Functional Role of Highly Structured Regions in lncRNA SCHLAP1 Using CRISPR/Cas-Based Deletion Analysis  
**Advisor:** Srinivas Somarowthu, PhD



**Ranjit Kaur**  
Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
**Title:** Interplay of Hepatitis B Virus and lncRNA FAM99A Expression and Interacting Proteins in Liver Cancer Cell Lines  
**Advisor:** Michael Bouchard, PhD



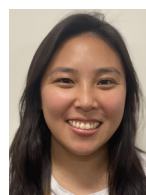
**Christopher Markgraf**  
Cancer Biology MS Program  
**Title:** Identifying Protein Partners and Binding Sites on the lncRNA SCHLAP1  
**Advisor:** Srinivas Somarowthu, PhD



**Aaron Slifer**  
Cancer Biology MS Program  
**Title:** Transcriptome Analysis of Publicly Available Hepatocellular Carcinoma Datasets to Identify Hepatitis B Virus-Specific Long Non-coding RNAs  
**Advisor:** Srinivas Somarowthu, PhD



**Alexis Tang**  
Microbiology & Immunology MS Program  
**Title:** Innate Immune RNA Sensors in the Central Nervous System: Beyond the Antiviral Response  
**Advisor:** Sonia Navas-Martin, PhD



**Felicity Tso**  
Microbiology & Immunology MS Program  
**Title:** The Stringent Response and Its Sneaky Role in Bacterial Virulence (Literature Review)  
**Advisors:** Garth Ehrlich, PhD, and Donald Hall Jr., PhD

## WHAT WE'RE DOING



Arza

Sejdiu

**Alexis Arza, MD '25, Zane Sejdiu, MD '25, Michael Weingarten, MD, MBA,** assistant dean of the Medical Scholars Track and professor of surgery, and **Carolyn Giordano, PhD,** associate dean of assessment and evaluation, and associate professor of family, community and preventive medicine, authored "Beyond the Surface: Unveiling Gaps in

Medical Education Through the Eyes of Diverse Learners," which was published in the *Archives of Dermatological Research* on May 22, 2024.



Weingarten

Giordano



**Peter Baas, PhD,** professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered a seminar, "SPG4 Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia: From Mechanisms to Therapy," at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Ky., on April 23, 2024. Baas also delivered a platform presentation,

"Development of an M1-Spasticin Antibody for Diagnosis, Study and Treatment for SPG4 Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia," at the Meeting of the Spastic Paraplegia Foundation in Tampa, Fla., on June 27, 2024. Baas was awarded a grant from the Lilly and Blair Foundation for \$49,125 for the creation of a new mouse model for hereditary spastic paraplegia, and a grant from the CURE SPG4 Foundation for \$18,518 for the creation of new antibody to study and potentially treat hereditary spastic paraplegia. In addition, with a faculty team from the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, he was awarded a National Institutes of Health S10 instrumentation program grant for \$729,878 for the purchase of a Leica Stellaris confocal imaging system.



Baranwal

Salhi

**Seema Baranwal, MD,** vice dean of institutional effectiveness, William Maul Measey Chair in Medical Education and associate professor of medicine, **Stacy Ellen, DO,** assistant

dean of medical student affairs and associate professor of pediatrics, **Carolyn Giordano, PhD,** associate dean of assessment and evaluation, and associate professor of family, community and preventive medicine, **Igor Los, MS,** senior software developer, **Arnold Smolen, PhD,** associate dean for information technology, and **Bisan A. Salhi, MD, PhD,** associate dean for student affairs, community health and inclusive excellence, and associate professor of emergency medicine, published "Raising Awareness of Mistreatment Policies and Reporting Procedures Using a Novel Medical Student Mobile Application" in the July 22, 2024, issue of the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

**Steven Rosenzweig, MD,** director of the Office of Community Engagement and professor of emergency medicine, Baranwal, Ellen, Salhi and **Leon McCrea II, MD, MPH,** the Deborah J. Tuttle, MD and John P. Piper, MD Vice Dean for Educational Affairs and associate professor of



Rosenzweig

McCrea

family, community and preventive medicine, presented a workshop, "Pretzels, Crackers or Wonder Bread: Professionalism Policies for Social Media Use and Political Speech," at the Academy for Professionalism Annual Conference, which was held at Drexel June 3-5, 2024. McCrea also served as a panelist for the American Medical Association's "Prioritizing Equity" series. The topic for the panel discussion was "Culturally Responsive Communication Strategies for Equity."



**Jessica Barson, PhD,** associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered a platform presentation, "The Pituitary Adenylate Cyclase-Activating Polypeptide (PACAP) System in the Thalamic Paraventricular Nucleus: Changes With the Development of

Ethanol Dependence," at the Research Society on Alcohol Meeting held June 22-26, 2024, in Minneapolis, Minn. (See also Martin, page 16-17.)



Burns



Ott

**James M. Burns Jr., PhD,** professor, and **Amy C. Ott, PhD,** instructor, both in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology; **Patrick J. Loll, PhD,** professor,



Loll

Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology; and **Ali Affy, PhD,** assistant professor, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences, are collaborating investigators on a five-year, \$3,612,225 R01 grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for their project "Multivalent mRNA-Based Malaria Vaccines."



**Brody Carpenter, MS,** doctoral candidate, Neuroscience program, presented a poster, "Changes in PACAP System Function in the Transition to Ethanol Dependence," at the Research Society on Alcohol Meeting held June 22-26, 2024, in Minneapolis, Minn. Carpenter won a Student Merit Award for the poster.

**Maria Cavallo, Amirali Amirfallah and Marzieh Daniali,** Pharmacology & Physiology PhD students; **Jacob Yo, MS molecular and cell biology and genetics '20;**



Hartsough

**Kayla Gallant,** research assistant; **Camille Cunanan and Alyssa Sanders,** Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD students; **Edward Hartsough, PhD,** associate professor of pharmacology and physiology; and colleagues at Thomas Jefferson University authored "Mcl-1



Mediates Intrinsic Resistance to RAF Inhibitors in Mutant BRAF Papillary Thyroid Carcinoma," published in *Cell Death Discovery* on April 15, 2024.

**Christina Curran-Alfaro**, a Neuroscience PhD student, gave the invited keynote at the Rutgers-Camden Biology Day. Her talk, "Adding Value Through Diversity: Expanding Boundaries and Innovating Science," emphasized her nontraditional path to a PhD and how her experience strengthens the Barker Lab's research program and informs her ongoing PhD work.



**Eckel** **Schoenhals**

**Bridie Eckel** and **Laura Schoenhals**, PhD students in the Neuroscience program, were awarded \$2,000 in funding from Research! America's Summer Civic Engagement Microgrant

Program for their project, "Science Is for All!" to support the outreach efforts of Biomedical Graduate Students for Diversity.



**Stacy Ellen, DO**, assistant dean of medical student affairs and associate professor of pediatrics, and colleagues at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and the University of Virginia School of Medicine authored "Managing Career Decisions: Climbing the Ladder or Falling Off a Cliff?" The paper was published in *Academic Pediatrics* on April 3, 2024. (See also Baranwal, page 13.)



**Young** **Beld**

**Emily M. Esquea, PhD** molecular and cell biology and genetics '24, **Lorela Ciraku, PhD** molecular and cell biology and genetics '22, **Riley G. Young**, a PhD student in the Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics program, **Jessica Merzy, BS** biology '24, now a PhD student in the Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics program, **Nusaiba N. Ahmed**, Biochemistry of Health & Disease PhD student, **Mangalam Karuppiah**, PhD student in the School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems, **Joris Beld, PhD**, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, **Mauricio J. Reginato, PhD**, professor and chair of biochemistry and molecular biology, **Alexej Dick, PhD**, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, and colleagues at Drexel's College of Arts and Sciences, the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and Temple University Lewis Katz School of Medicine published "Selective and Brain-Penetrant ACSS2 Inhibitors Target Breast Cancer Brain Metastatic Cells" in the May 15, 2024, issue of *Frontiers in Pharmacology*. More information about this groundbreaking research is available at [bit.ly/3Xp3iAQ](https://bit.ly/3Xp3iAQ).



**Reginato**

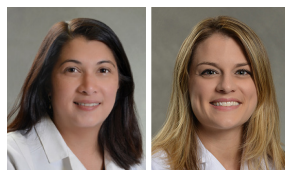
in the School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems, **Joris Beld, PhD**, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, **Mauricio J. Reginato, PhD**, professor and chair of biochemistry and molecular biology, **Alexej Dick, PhD**, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, and colleagues at Drexel's College of Arts and Sciences, the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and Temple University Lewis Katz School of Medicine published "Selective and Brain-Penetrant ACSS2 Inhibitors Target Breast Cancer Brain Metastatic Cells" in the May 15, 2024, issue of *Frontiers in Pharmacology*. More information about this groundbreaking research is available at [bit.ly/3Xp3iAQ](https://bit.ly/3Xp3iAQ).



**Fischer** **Jin**

**Itzhak Fischer, PhD**, professor, **Theresa Connors**, instructor, **Julien Bouyer**, research assistant, and **Ying Jin, PhD**, research assistant professor, all in the Department of Neurobiology

& Anatomy, published "The Unique Properties of Big Tau in the Visual System" in *Cytoskeleton (Hoboken)* on May 18, 2024.



**Fitzpatrick** **Willard**

**Janet H. Fitzpatrick, MD**, clinical associate professor of medicine, **Adrienne Willard, MD**, associate professor of medicine, **Janelle R. Edwards, MPH '19**, Urban Health Collaborative research fellow, Dornsife School of Public Health, **Meera Nair Harhay, MD, MSCE**, professor of medicine, **Leah H. Schinasi, PhD**, Dornsife School of Public Health,



**Harhay** **May**

**Janet Matthews, MSN, RN**, senior director, research program development, and **Nathalie May, MD**, professor of medicine, authored "Time Series Analysis: Associations Between Temperature and Primary Care Utilization in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," which was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* on June 20, 2024.



**Bill Frank, DC**, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, was a guest lecturer and laboratory instructor for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Plastination Workshop held June 24-27, 2024, at the University of Toledo College of Medicine & Life Sciences in Toledo, Ohio. Frank's lecture was on "The Use of Molecular Sieves for Recycling Acetone."

## Research Excellence Honored

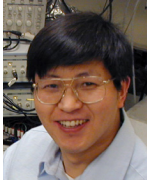
The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies announced the recipients of the 2024 Dean's Fellowship for Excellence in Collaborative or Themed Research, which is designed to support PhD-track students with innovative research projects to further develop their research experience. The students receive financial support for 12 months in the form of a scholarship in addition to funds for supplies or conference attendance.

- **Taylor Flynn**, MD/PhD candidate, Neuroscience  
Mentored by *Wen-Jun Gao, MD, PhD*
- **Ijeoma Okoye**, PhD candidate, Microbiology & Immunology  
Mentored by *Akhil Vaidya, PhD*
- **Deepa Reddy**, PhD candidate, Pharmacology & Physiology  
Mentored by *Seena Ajit, PhD*





**Annette B. Gadegbeku, MD**, senior associate dean, Office of Community Health and Inclusive Excellence, was the recipient of the Lindy Center's Dr. Donna M. Murasko Distinguished Faculty Award for Innovation in Civic Engagement. The award recognizes a faculty member who has incorporated the value of civic engagement into their teaching, research, clinical practice, or other academic pursuit or activity in new and innovative ways.



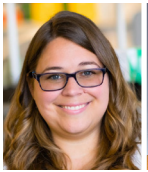
**Wen-Jun Gao, MD, PhD**, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, published "Thalamic Cells and Pathway for Social Memory Processing and Storage," in the July 17, 2024, issue of *Neuron*.



**Peter J. Gaskill, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, and colleagues at the University of San Diego, University of Utah and University of Pennsylvania published "Gene Expression and Chromatin Conformation of Microglia in Virally Suppressed People With HIV,"

which appeared in *Life Science Alliance* on July 26, 2024. Gaskill will also serve as a co-investigator on a Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Research Consortium pilot funding grant with Principal Investigator **Irwin Chaiken, PhD**, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, for the project "Redox Enzyme Antagonism for Simultaneous Treatment of Co-presenting Cancer and Viral Infections." (See also Romano, page 18.)

**Annie Hawks**, research assistant, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, presented a poster, "Dopamine and Kappa-Opioid Receptor Mediated Activity in the Nucleus Accumbens Shell and Effects on Ethanol Drinking," at the Research Society on Alcohol Meeting, which was held June 22-26, 2024, in Minneapolis, Minn.



Hope



Barker

**Jennifer Hope, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, is the principal investigator for a Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Research Consortium pilot funding grant, with Department of Pharmacology & Physiology faculty members **Jacqueline Barker, PhD**, associate professor, **Joshua Jackson, PhD**, associate professor, and **Gabriele Romano, PhD**, assistant professor. Their project is "Development of a Novel Preclinical Model to Address Mechanisms of HIV-Mediated Enhancement of Pancreatic Cancer Incidence and Severity."



Jackson



Romano

# Calendar

## November

- 7 **Discovery Day**  
8 a.m.-7 p.m.  
Pennsylvania Convention Center, Terrace Ballrooms  
North Broad Street between Race and Arch Streets  
Information: [drexel.edu/medicine/discoveryday](http://drexel.edu/medicine/discoveryday)  
Contact: [discoveryday@drexel.edu](mailto:discoveryday@drexel.edu)
- 7 **Marion Spencer Fay Award and Lecture**  
12-1:15 p.m.  
Pennsylvania Convention Center, Terrace Ballroom II  
North Broad Street between Race and Arch Streets  
Contact: Janine Barber, [jkb48@drexel.edu](mailto:jkb48@drexel.edu)
- 13-15 **Immune Modulation & Engineering Symposium**  
The Study Hotel, 20 South 33rd Street  
Information: [bit.ly/IMES-2024](http://bit.ly/IMES-2024)
- 28 **Thanksgiving**

## December

- 6 **DUCoM Classical Winter Recital**  
7-9 p.m.  
Philadelphia Ethical Society  
1906 Rittenhouse Square  
Register at [bit.ly/DUCoMClassical](http://bit.ly/DUCoMClassical)
- 25 **Christmas**

## January

- 1 **New Year's Day**
- 20 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
- 25 **Pediatric AIDS Benefit Concert**  
Drexel University Main Building  
3141 Chestnut Street  
Information: [ducompabc.wixsite.com/pabc](http://ducompabc.wixsite.com/pabc)

## Save the Date

**Match Day**  
March 21, 2025  
University City and West Reading Campuses

**ELAM 30th Anniversary Celebration**  
May 1-2, 2025  
Four Seasons Hotel, One North 19th Street

**Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania 175th Anniversary Celebration**  
May 2, 2025  
Philadelphia, location TBA

**Commencement**  
May 16, 2025  
Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts  
300 South Broad Street

**Full calendar: All College of Medicine events are available at [drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/events](http://drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/events).**

**Alumni: For information about alumni events, please call toll-free 888.DUGRADS (888.384.7237), email [medical.alumni@drexel.edu](mailto:medical.alumni@drexel.edu) or visit [drexel.edu/medicine/alumni/events](http://drexel.edu/medicine/alumni/events).**



**Pooja Jain, PhD**, professor of microbiology and immunology, received pilot funding from the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Research Consortium for a project aimed at defining risk factors associated with people living with HIV responsible for Epstein-Barr virus reactivation and lymphoma. She also delivered a number of recent seminars, including: "Host-Pathogen Interaction and Novel Therapeutic Concepts Against Retrovirus-Associated Diseases Caused by HIV-1 and HTLV-1," a visiting faculty talk for the Infectious Disease Division at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey on February 21, 2024; "Novel Therapeutic Strategies for HIV Cure and Neuroinflammation," an invited seminar at Rush Medical Center in Chicago, Ill., on May 6, 2024; "Long Distance Control of Immunity by HBZ via Exosomes," an invited talk during the 21st Biennial International Conference on Human Retrovirology: HTLV and Related Viruses, which was held in London on June 2-5, 2024; and "The Long-Distance Control of Immunity by the Retroviral Antisense Protein via Exosomes," a webinar for the American Society for InterCellular Communications on June 21, 2024.

**Sopiko Darchiashvili, MS drug discovery and development '24**, **Peter Deak, PhD**, assistant professor, College of Engineering, and Jain were among the authors of "X-Chromosome Linked Genes Associated With Myeloid Cell CNS Trafficking Contributes to Female-Male Differences in the Disease Outcome for Neuroinflammatory Diseases," which was published in the July 2024 issue of *NeuroImmune Pharmacology and Therapeutics*.

**Geena John**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD candidate, and **Courtney Wallace**, Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD candidate, presented posters at the annual meeting of the Philadelphia chapter of the Society for Neuroscience. They earned first and second place, respectively, in the event's graduate student poster session.



**Hangjun Ke, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, received a one-year, \$532,022 R01 grant for the project "Proton Pumping and Energy Metabolism of the Ring Stage Malaria Parasites" from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.



**Andrew Lockhart**, a PhD student in the Neuroscience program, was chosen for the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies conference's Early Career Training program to conduct

a short research project under Lora Sweeney, PhD, at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria. Lockhart and **Christopher West**, also a Neuroscience PhD student, were awarded the T32 Fellowship from the Training Program on Innovative Approaches to Spinal Cord Injury.



**Cydney Martin**, a PhD candidate in the Neuroscience program, presented a poster, "Sex Differences in Depression-Like Behavior and Limbic Neuropeptide Expression: a Comparison

## Graduate Student Excellence Awards

A number of College of Medicine students were honored with Graduate Student Excellence Awards and nominations. The students were recognized during the Graduate Student Day awards ceremony and reception.

*Outstanding Mentorship Award Winner:*

**Nima Sarfaraz**, Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD student

*Outstanding Mentorship Award Nominees:*

**Emily Esquea, PhD molecular and cell biology and genetics '24**

**Davin Evanson, MD '25**

**Jyothii Kulasingam, MS interdisciplinary health sciences '24**

*Social Change Award for Equity Award Nominees:*

**Biomedical Graduate Students for Diversity**

*Research Excellence Award Winner –*

*Expanding the Impact of Research:*

**Emily Esquea, PhD molecular and cell biology and genetics '24**

*Research Excellence Award Nominees – Post-candidacy:*

**Xuan Luo**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student

**Xiaohuan Sun**, Neuroscience PhD student

*Research Excellence Award Nominees – Most Original & Creative Work:*

**Gina Cusimano, PhD microbiology and immunology '24**

**Xuan Luo**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student

**Xiaohuan Sun**, Neuroscience PhD student

*Expanding the Impact of Research Award Nominees:*

**Gina Cusimano, PhD microbiology and immunology '24**

**Xuan Luo**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student

**Xiaohuan Sun**, Neuroscience PhD student

*Outstanding Dissertation Award Nominee:*

**Xuan Luo**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student

*Continuing Excellence in Teaching Assistance Award Nominees:*

**Jasper Perry Anderson**, Microbiology & Immunology PhD student

**Osmaan Shahid, MD '25**

of Single and Repetitive Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in Adolescent Rats," at the annual meeting of the National Neurotrauma Society held in San Francisco, Calif., June 8-12, 2024. Co-authors included **Laura Giacometti, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, and **Jessica Barson, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy.



**Stephanie Matt, PhD**, research assistant professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, and colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Tennessee published "The Emergence of Inflammatory Microglia During Gut Inflammation Is Not Affected by FFAR2 Expression in Intestinal Epithelial Cells or Peripheral Myeloid Cells" in the May 2024 issue of *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*.



**Jenna McGrath**, Neuroscience PhD student, was awarded an F31 predoctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health for her project "Medial Deep Dorsal Glycinergic Interneurons as a Target for Improving Locomotion Following Spinal Cord Injury."



**James W. Moore, MHS, PA(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>**, was interviewed by [healthcaredegree.com](http://healthcaredegree.com) about the role of the pathologists' assistant for a Meet the Expert feature, which appeared online June 12, 2024.



**Andréia Mortensen, PhD**, assistant professor of pharmacology and physiology, **Apeksha Khatiwada, MS drug discovery and development '18**, **Katelyn L. Reeb,**

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, and colleagues at the Wistar Institute, Stony Brook University and the Lewis Katz School of Medicine authored "Synthesis and Structure-Activity Relationships for Glutamate Transporter Allosteric Modulators" in the April 16, 2024, issue of the *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry*. Mortensen and colleagues at University of São Paulo were the authors of "Neuroprotective Effects of Chlorogenic Acid Against Oxidative Stress in Rats Subjected to Lithium-Pilocarpine-Induced Status Epilepticus," which was published in *Naunyn-Schmiedeberg's Archives of Pharmacology* on April 16, 2024.



**Mortensen**

**Ole V. Mortensen, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, **Shaili Aggarwal, PhD**, former postdoctoral researcher, and colleagues at Stony Brook University and the Laufer Center for Physical and Quantitative Biology authored "Allosteric Modulation of Serotonin and Dopamine Transporters: New Insights

From Computations and Experiments," which was published in *Current Research in Physiology* online March 15, 2024. **David L. Bernstein, PhD neuroscience '17**, and **Stacia I. Lewandowski, PhD pharmacology and physiology '21**; current Pharmacology & Physiology PhD students **Christina Besada** and **Delaney Place**; **Rodrigo**



**España**

the *Journal of Neuroscience* on January 31, 2024.

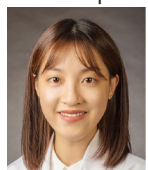
**Fuyu Yang, MS pharmacology and physiology '24,**



**Xu**

to the Orthosteric Site," which was published in the *Journal of Neurochemistry* on July 15, 2024.

**Mark Namba, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, earned a new F32 fellowship from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The fellowship will support Namba's project "Corticolimbic



**Xie**



**Buck**

**Joshua Jackson, PhD**, and **Jacqueline Barker, PhD**, both associate professors of pharmacology and physiology, authored "Effects of Antiretroviral Treatment on Central and Peripheral Immune Response in Mice With EcoHIV Infection" in the May 2024 issue of *Cells*.

**Emanuela Piermarini, PhD**, research instructor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered a platform presentation, "Beyond Gene Therapy, Can We Promote Functional Recovery of SPG4 Patients?" at the annual conference of the Spastic Paraplegia Foundation in Tampa, Fla., on June 22, 2024.



Fla., on June 22, 2024.

**Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered a presentation, "Advancing Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia Research: Insights From Human Stem Cell Models," at the annual conference of the Spastic Paraplegia Foundation in Tampa,





Raghupathi



Briscoe



Pillai

**Ramesh Raghupathi, PhD**, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, co-chaired a workshop, "The Importance of Mentoring and Developing Professional and Personal Networks as Essential Tools for Successful Science Careers," at the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies biannual meeting held in Vienna, Austria, June 25-29, 2024. In addition, his laboratory was well-represented at the annual meeting of the National Neurotrauma Society held in San Francisco, Calif., June 8-12, 2024. At the event, Raghupathi delivered a talk, "Translational Models of Pediatric TB: Insights Into Mechanisms Underlying Long Term Deficits," and presented a poster, "Delayed Administration of Progesterone Reduces Psychosocial Behaviors in Adolescence Following Closed Head Injury in Neonate Rats," coauthored

by **Tiffany Briscoe**, research assistant, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, **Dana Lengel, PhD neuroscience '21**, and **Dayani Pillai**, Neuroscience PhD student. In addition, **Nishell Savory**, PhD candidate in the Neuroscience program, presented a poster, "Characterization of a Mouse Model of Infant Traumatic Brain Injury," coauthored by **Ryan L. DeSanti, DO**, assistant professor of pediatrics, Briscoe and Raghupathi.

**Gabriele Romano, PhD**, assistant professor of pharmacology and physiology, and colleagues at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and Baylor College of Medicine authored "A Structured Curriculum Supporting Biomedical Trainees' Transition Into Independent Academic Positions and Early Career Success," which was published in the April 8, 2024, issue of *BMC Medical Education*. Romano and **Peter Gaskill, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, were awarded a Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Research Consortium pilot funding grant for "Targeting Myeloid-Derived Suppressor Cells as an Adjuvant Strategy to Treat Melanoma in PLWH." (See also Hope, page 15.)



**Antonio Sanz-Clemente, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Society for Neuroscience. He previously served as vice president of the society.



**Shrvan Tata Ramalingasetty, PhD**, research associate in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered an oral presentation, "Closed-Loop Control of Quadrupedal Mouse Locomotion Over Uneven Terrain: A Neuromechanical Modeling Study," at the 2nd FENS

Satellite Symposium for Early Career Researchers on Neuronal Motor Circuits on June 24, 2024, in Klosterneuburg, Austria.



Van Duyne



Nash

**Rachel Van Duyne, PhD**, assistant professor, **Elena Irollo, PhD**, former research assistant professor, **Angel Lin**, lab manager, **A. Marc Guillem Del Angel, PhD**, lab manager/staff scientist,



Klase



Meucci

**Brad Nash, PhD pharmacology and physiology '17**, director of scientific communications, **Joshua Jackson, PhD**, associate professor, **Zachary Klase, PhD**,



Sarkar

associate professor, and **Olimpia Meucci, MD, PhD**, professor and chair, all in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology; **James A. Johnson, MS microbiology and immunology '23**; **Erick V. O'Brien, MS pharmacology and physiology '24**; **Laura Merja, MS drug**

**discovery and development '22**; and **Atom Sarkar, MD, PhD**, professor of neurosurgery, published "Adult Human Brain Tissue Cultures to Study NeuroHIV" in the June 2024 issue of *Cells*.

## In Memoriam

**Ashok D. B. Vaidya, MD, PhD**, an affiliate faculty member in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology at the College of Medicine, died on July 7, 2024, after a long illness. He was a preeminent clinical pharmacologist who pioneered the field of reverse pharmacology, a discipline that aims to integrate Ayurveda with biomedical sciences. He was a professor and former director of the Medical Research Center-Kasturba Health Society, a unique institution devoted to carrying out reverse pharmacology research. Previously, he held the position of regional medical director for South Asia at Ciba-Geigy, where he directed many clinical trials for new drugs. He also held an adjunct faculty appointment at Saurashtra University in Rajkot. After attaining his MD at Seth G. S. Medical College in Mumbai, Vaidya spent three years as a Merck fellow in clinical pharmacology at Yale University. Following his return to India, he earned a PhD from University of Bombay. He was also awarded an honorary doctor of letters degree by the University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology, in recognition of his lifelong contributions to the field. Vaidya's broad interests and deep knowledge were an inspiration to generations of young students and colleagues. He is survived by his wife, Rama; his daughter, Vidita; his granddaughter, Alina Vaidya Mahadevan; and his brother, Akhil, who is a professor in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology.



Tell your colleagues what you're doing.  
Email [CoM\\_Pulse@drexel.edu](mailto:CoM_Pulse@drexel.edu).

# Get to Know...

## What is your official title at Drexel?

Associate Director, Communications & Coalitions, supporting the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® (ELAM) and Executive Leadership in Health Care (ELH) programs, Physician Refresher/ Reentry Program, and Behavioral Healthcare Education.

## Explain what you do in under 50 words.

I create content and manage social media, newsletters, marketing materials, website updates, special interest group listservs and other documents that help to platform programs, courses and other initiatives with a visual identity that aligns with Drexel's mission.

## Who do you interact with most on a daily basis?

I mostly interact with faculty, staff, and the ELAM fellow and alumnae community.

## What is your typical day like?

A glance at my Canva feed and Constant Contact calendar really helps to visualize my typical day. Between emails and meetings, I'm drafting graphics and posting ELUM accomplishments to social media, and creating directories, newsletters and other materials for upcoming initiatives.

## How do you see your work fitting into the big picture of the missions of the College?

The programs I support are impressive, and I want to make sure that my materials reflect the high-quality initiatives that we offer. I think visual identities are one of the most impactful ways to get newcomers to "buy in" to your initiative from the very beginning. I like being a part of that mission.

## What are your favorite and least favorite tasks?

I enjoy designing materials that have a very specific theme. For example, ELAM is celebrating its 30th anniversary next year and our designer created a beautiful logo that inspires a more whimsical vibe to our materials this year. Creating eye-catching materials to honor this major milestone is something I've had a lot of fun with over the summer, and I look forward to seeing the theme incorporated into everything over the next year.

Least favorite task? Scheduling meetings with large groups of people!

## What is your educational and previous work background? How did those prepare you for what you do now?

I have my MA in student affairs in higher education, and I used to work in student life and equity and inclusion in New York City. Specifically, my experience at Barnard College gave me an amazing toolkit on many levels. From developing organizational and administrative skills to getting involved in social justice advocacy work, that time was pivotal in my professional and personal growth. My career in student affairs also taught me what a real crisis is, so I try not to sweat the small stuff that comes up. Ultimately, my journey led me to my first position at Drexel in the Lynn Yeakel Institute for Women's Health and Leadership, where I was the program director for Vision 2020, a national gender equity coalition. My pivot from student affairs to coalition and communications work at Drexel has been a welcomed professional change for me because I've been able to tap into my more creative side while still supporting program development.



**Joyce Collins, MA**  
(she/her)  
Associate Director,  
Communications & Coalitions

## What's one unusual or unexpected item in your home or campus work space?

I have this bundle of colorful giant Sharpies that have traveled with me to every office over the years. Those Sharpies represent brave spaces with students who used them to write hopes, fears, experiences and other sentiments on giant posters during retreats and facilitated discussions.

Even when the ink runs dry, I'll probably never get rid of them because of their journey and impact.

## What's one piece of Philly culture – whether that's food, museums, historical landmarks or anything else – that you return to over and over again, and why?

Vault + Vine in East Falls is my favorite Philadelphia spot for a latte and fresh flowers. It's a women-owned coffee shop, florist and greenery that feels like a little retreat on the always busy Midvale Ave. The first gift I ever bought for my wife was a hanging ceramic pot from there, so this shop also holds some sentimental value to me.



Members of the Vision 2020 team on Beyond the Bell Tours' "Badass Women's History" tour.



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