



A Year of Milestones: Celebrating the College of Medicine in 2025

This year brings many opportunities to celebrate our venerable history and ongoing growth as a College of Medicine! These milestones show that we have much to be proud of as a community.

West Reading Class of 2025

In 2021, Drexel opened the College of Medicine at Tower Health, a new four-year regional medical campus in West Reading. The West Reading class of 2025 has shown its dedication to the local community through service and outreach projects, shaping the future for the classes that followed. This year, that inaugural cohort of students will graduate and take the next steps in their medical careers.

Bisan Salhi, MD, PhD, who serves as associate dean for student affairs, community health and inclusive excellence, reflects on this milestone: "The graduation of this class really marks a new era for Drexel. This group of students has not only shown immense resilience and commitment throughout their journey, they've embodied values of excellence, compassion and service to the community."

Cecilia Smith, DO, associate dean of the West Reading Campus, agrees, adding, "The students have set a very high standard for our campus and established a strong foundation upon which the campus's legacy will be built. We couldn't be more thrilled to celebrate them and everything they've accomplished!"

Members of the graduating class also express excitement and gratitude for their time at the campus. Danielle Mayblyum, president of the class of 2025, notes, "It has been really rewarding to make it to the end of our medical school journey, but the best part has been experiencing it with a small, tight-knit group from the College of Medicine at Tower Health campus. It is truly incredible to see how far we have come from a group of strangers at a new campus to establishing different clubs, community outreach programs, and collaborations with the Drexel campus in Philadelphia. Above all else, I have enjoyed seeing my classmates thrive in their chosen specialties and grow clinically, and I can't wait to see where their medical careers take them next!"

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The inaugural cohort of West Reading students during orientation week in 2021

SPRING 2025

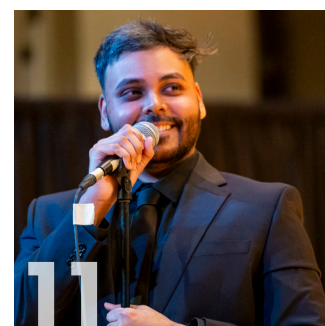
Vol. 12, No. 1



Reach Out and Read supports childhood literacy in Philly



MD class of 2025 sees bright futures at successful Match Day



Pediatric AIDS Benefit Concert: great talent for a great cause

Contents

A Year of Milestones	1
Destination Excellence.....	3
Reach Out and Read.....	6
Match Day	9
Pediatric AIDS Benefit Concert	11
Thesis Defenses	12

NEWS & EVENTS

WIMSC Leadership Summit, TriNetX8-13
symposium, honor society inductions

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Activities and accomplishments..... 14-18

Calendar15

Get to Know...19

pulse

Pulse, a publication for students, faculty, staff and alumni of Drexel University College of Medicine, is published four times a year by the Marketing & Communications Department
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Philadelphia, PA 19102

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A Year of Celebration

The College of Medicine is celebrating many key milestones in 2025, including the 175th anniversary of the founding of Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, the 150th anniversary of the founding of St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, and the 30th anniversary of our esteemed Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program. Our storied history and proud traditions are among the many things that make me honored to lead this institution.



Charles B. Cairns, MD

At the time of this writing, I am preparing to attend Match Day, which will be held for the first time at two campuses for our largest-ever MD class. Indeed, the College of Medicine at Tower Health in West Reading is excited to host its first Match Day at the campus. Everyone who has been involved in the education of the inaugural class there is enormously proud of all they have achieved as Drexel medical students. Of course, our impressive class of Philadelphia-based MD students will also celebrate their successful matches in a ceremony in University City.

As the landscape of academic medicine continues to evolve, the College of Medicine is preparing for our future success through the College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030 initiative. This imperative work in setting strategic priorities will include input and ideas from our faculty, professional staff and students. Together, we must build the future of our College in the key mission areas of medical and graduate education, research and innovation, clinical care and faculty professional development. I encourage you to visit the College Forward website, bit.ly/DUCOM2030, and submit your ideas via the online form.

Phase 1 included an analysis of the College's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the academic medicine landscape and was completed in February. Next, we will set forth implementation plans for working groups and evaluate Phase 2 strategies to be completed by July. Information will continue to be provided as phases develop and opportunities to participate in the work arise. We are excited to come together in this endeavor to ensure the long-term success of everyone at the College.

Speaking of success, Commencement is just around the corner! I look forward to connecting with members of our community at our wonderful event at the Kimmel Center. In addition to celebrating our graduating students, we will honor the recipients of the new Dean's Excellence Awards at the Commencement luncheon. We created these awards to recognize the outstanding contributions and achievements of our faculty and professional staff. I also look forward to welcoming this year's Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient, Carl June, MD, the Richard W. Vague Professor in Immunotherapy at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. June is an immunologist and oncologist who researches T cell therapies for the treatment of cancer; he received a 2024 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for the development of chimeric antigen receptor T cell immunotherapy.

We have many reasons to celebrate our achievements this year. Together, our community will find innovative ways to meet challenges, care for each other, and demonstrate the resilience that our predecessors instilled in our culture.

Charles B. Cairns, MD

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

New Clinical Partnerships Inspire MD Students, Aid Community Organizations

An innovative project from Drexel University College of Medicine has begun filling gaps left in community care and medical education in the wake of the 2019 closure of Hahnemann University Hospital. The initiative aims to build community-based partnerships and establish a health care consortium in the Philadelphia region.

When Hahnemann — a primary teaching site for the College of Medicine — closed, health professions students lost clinical education opportunities, and patients from underserved Philadelphia communities lost access to care. Those communities have also been greatly impacted by the health care worker shortage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help stabilize health care for underserved patients and medical education for Drexel students, and to build community coalition, Annette Gadegbeku, MD, senior associate dean of community health and inclusive excellence, began working to create a consortium of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs are community-based health care organizations that provide comprehensive primary care and support services to underserved populations, caring for patients regardless of their insurance coverage or ability to pay.

Her vision is to have FQHC partners in the area join a consortium with the College of Medicine, becoming preclinical and clinical rotation sites for MD program students while also benefiting from students' assistance in patient care. The initiative aims to help better serve these communities and retain medical students as professionals interested in providing care for underserved patients.

Gadegbeku points out the mutual benefits of these relationships. "Early exposure to working with an FQHC means students may find a deep connection to the community and interest in the services provided," she says. "We hope to develop providers who are willing to stay in underserved communities and provide care for those who are marginalized. I thought this FQHC consortium would be a great way to foster interest and a desire to build their careers in these or similar communities."

Gadegbeku is also an associate professor and chief of the Division of Community Health in the Department of Family, Community & Preventive Medicine. She brings expertise in underserved community medicine and in medical education

to the consortium project.

The initiative began by partnering with two local FQHCs, the Greater Philadelphia Health Alliance (GPHA) and Spectrum Health Services Inc. MD program students have gained valuable clinical experience while assisting these programs, with positive feedback from program leaders.

The work of the FQHC consortium aligns well with existing College of Medicine programs like Bridging the Gaps, which links students to educational opportunities working with underserved communities, and the Health Advocacy Practicum (HAP), a core course focused on health equity for all first- and second-year Drexel medical students. Both programs are part of the College's efforts to provide future physicians with experience working with underserved patients.

In summer 2024, students began third- and fourth-year clinical rotations at GPHA. In fall 2024, some first-year MD students began yearlong HAP placements at both FQHCs. Rising second-year MD students were placed at the consortium's two FQHCs for Bridging the Gaps community health internships over the summer, as well. Gadegbeku says the response was positive.

"The medical director we work with was very pleased with our students and was excited to have them, and they were very helpful to her," she says. "The students said they also had a really great experience and learned a lot from being there at the center."

Gadegbeku sees enormous value in placing future physicians in their patients' communities. "The biggest benefit for students is to learn from the communities that they're engaging with," she says. "There are a lot of unwritten lessons students learn: about themselves, about how to serve, about people, about differences, about how to communicate, about how to meet people where they are."

Partnerships like the FQHC consortium help build positive, respectful, mutually beneficial relationships between providers and patients, according to Gadegbeku. "It's important that community engagement opportunities are not just about going into communities and enforcing on them what we think they need," she says. "It's about partnering with them to not only assess what they need, but also to provide what they need and do it in a mutually beneficial way."



Annette Gadegbeku, MD

Milestones

• continued from the cover

Davin Evanson, class of 2025, adds, “Every moment in life, big or small, shapes us and directs our path — my time at Drexel and West Reading, amid its welcoming streets, has forged me into a doctor, a dad and a dedicated community member eager to serve, a tower steadied by this town’s foundation.”

“After growing up in the Reading area, I never would have imagined getting to learn and grow alongside my classmates in my hometown and now be graduating together!” says David Talarico, class of 2025. “I’m so grateful for all my classmates and our faculty and staff, especially here in West Reading, who helped us find our way to graduation day.”



The West Reading class of 2025 celebrating at Match Day

Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program Turns 30

As part of its legacy of advancing inclusion, the College of Medicine has been home to the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program for 30 years. The program,

which is a yearlong, part-time fellowship for women who want to develop the personal and professional skills required to become leaders in academic medicine, has graduated more than 1,500 fellows. Nancy Spector, MD, who serves as executive director of the program, says, “ELAM was created in 1995 to honor the legacy of our predecessor school, the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, which was established in 1850. We are thrilled to commemorate ELAM’s 30th anniversary in 2025! This year’s exceptional cohort of 147 fellows, and our more than 1,500 alumnae representing 300 institutions across the U.S. and Canada, truly inspire us in this milestone celebration.” In 2022, the program added the Executive Leadership in Health Care track, focused on fostering leadership skills in health care settings.

Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, MD, MEd, MPPM, who serves as professor and academic chair in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the College of Medicine, completed the ELAM program in 2024. “The journey from ELAM to ELUM was a milestone in both my personal and professional career,” she says. “Malcolm X noted, ‘When I is replaced with We, even Illness becomes Wellness.’ ELAM and its collective and emphasis on the ‘we’ is changing the world for women, and changing the world.”

Bridging the Gaps: 35 Years of Student Service

Bridging the Gaps, a collaboration among academic health centers and community organizations, turns 35 this year. Drexel students are among those in the Delaware Valley who have the opportunity to participate in Bridging the Gaps via a seminar series on public and community health topics, clinical rotations at community health centers where students work hands on with underserved populations, and the Community Health Internship Program, which was hosted at Drexel in 2024. Elissa Goldberg, MSS, LSW, who is program director of the Office of Community Engagement



The ELAM class of 2024

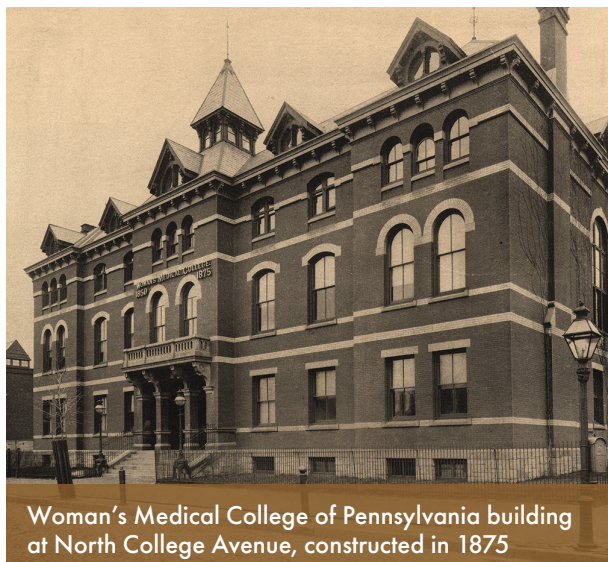


St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

and directs Drexel's Bridging the Gaps program, reflects on the program's impact on students and the community: "Bridging the Gaps is about bringing people together — across differences, across resources, across language and age and ability," she says. "It's about taking the time to ask questions and to listen to each other so that we can recognize the gaps that we fall into, understand the ways that our systems create and deepen those chasms and, all together, seek creative interventions."

Caring for Vulnerable Children for 150 Years: St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

Founded as a charitable pediatric ambulatory clinic in 1875, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children now provides state-of-the-art care for children in Northeast Philadelphia, and is home to a Level I pediatric trauma center and Level IV neonatal intensive care unit, as well as the only dedicated pediatric burn center in the region. The hospital was purchased by Drexel and Tower Health in 2019. "This milestone is a testament to St. Christopher's enduring legacy of care and its deep-rooted connection to the community," says Robert M. Brooks, FACHE, president and interim chief executive officer at St. Christopher's. "For 150 years, our incredible team of caregivers has gone above and beyond to make a lasting impact and ensure every child in our community has access to world-class care."



Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania building at North College Avenue, constructed in 1875



Aboli Kesbhat, a third-year medical student, at her pediatric clerkship at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children.

175 Years of Woman's Medical College

One of Drexel's predecessor institutions, Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, was founded 175 years ago as the world's first degree-granting medical school for women. Barbara Schindler, MD, graduated from Woman's Medical College in 1970 and has remained here since, serving in a number of leadership roles including vice dean of educational and academic affairs for 18 years. She says, "This has been a school, from the beginning in 1850 to now, of opportunity for those who could only dream about being doctors. The founders and early matriculants clearly demonstrated that important ideas need to be followed up on and obstacles can be overcome with perseverance and creativity."

Woman's Medical College educated women, including many women of color and international students, for decades, becoming coeducational under the new name of Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1970. The spirit of Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania lives on in numerous Drexel programs today that support women and people underrepresented in medicine on their paths to career success and growth. Schindler reflects on this legacy, noting, "It is important to celebrate what our founders created and inspired others to create."

Charles B. Cairns, MD, the Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean of the College of Medicine and senior vice president of medical affairs at Drexel, has also had the opportunity to reflect on all of these milestones and what they mean. "The College of Medicine's storied history is foundational to who we are as a school," he says. "I am proud to lead an institution with a legacy of innovation, community impact and care for the most vulnerable among us, and I look forward to what the future brings."

Books, Basketball and a Philly Health Hero: Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read, a national organization founded in 1991, focuses on increasing childhood literacy by delivering books to families at pediatric primary care appointments in order to improve outcomes throughout the lifespan. About 80% of brain development occurs in the first three years of life. Being read to by a caregiver is a critical way that children develop literacy and life skills ranging from sound- and letter-recognition to empathy. Numerous studies show that families who receive books and education through Reach Out and Read are more likely to read to their children on a regular basis.

"The strongest predictor of high school graduation is a child's fourth-grade reading level, but the strongest predictor of *that* is their vocabulary at 3 years of age," notes Hans Kersten, MD, professor of pediatrics at the College of Medicine. "Around 40% of children are not prepared for kindergarten and 75% do not make significant improvement by fourth grade. So, what I love about Reach Out and Read is that it is really focused on child development since birth."

Since its inception, Reach Out and Read has grown to more than 7,000 sites nationwide, including the one at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, which was founded in 2001 by Kersten and Daniel Taylor, DO, associate professor of pediatrics. At St. Chris, pediatricians enter every primary care appointment — and some specialty ones — with a developmentally and culturally appropriate book for the patient to take home. Physicians also take time to explain to caregivers why reading to children from birth is critical to their development and future success.

Kersten says, "Reach Out and Read is one of the most enjoyable things we get to do as pediatric providers.

Children's faces light up when they get a book, and it really serves as a conversation starter about literacy. Due to its simplicity and impact, it is one of the most evidence-based and cost-effective things we get to do."

Taylor agrees, adding, "As a pediatrician working in this population, walking into the exam room and not carrying a book, not talking about early brain development, it's like you're not bringing in a stethoscope or an otoscope. The books and the message are that important." Providers may also demonstrate how to read to a child, including ways that adults struggling with literacy can still use books to verbally engage with children in order to foster cognitive development.

When it was founded, the Philadelphia Reach Out and Read program received seed funding from the national organization, and since then Kersten and Taylor have been working to keep it afloat with the help of dedicated colleagues and community members. In the early days, they tried a number of fundraising avenues, including book drives, walkathons and dinners, and they sometimes struggled. However, 11 years ago, they hosted their first basketball tournament at Germantown Friends School, where Taylor is alum. The idea arose when the two were playing their regular morning pickup game at the school and Kersten mentioned the program to another player, who used to be a coach at Germantown Friends. He suggested a basketball tournament, and since then, the event has grown from raising \$7,000 in 2014 to around \$160,000 in 2024. To date the organization has raised more than \$1 million.

The program now has sufficient resources to deliver about 80,000 books per year. In addition to expanding



Support Reach Out and Read

The 2025 Reach Out and Read Basketball Tournament will be held on October 25. Anyone who is interested in playing, volunteering or donating to the tournament is encouraged to participate! Volunteers are also needed at the hospital to support the program. More information about how to get involved is available at www.rorstchris.org.





the book hand-out program to include specialty appointments, books are now made available to children from birth through 18 years old. The book selection includes works featuring characters who mirror the racially and ethnically diverse population served by the hospital, and features books in 20 different languages. Taylor recalls the feeling of being able to hand a book in Arabic to a young Palestinian refugee for her 2-month-old daughter. "It's a message of welcoming: 'We may not represent what you are, your identity. But we represent a welcoming environment, and we have love for your kid,'" he says.

St. Chris is now home to a Situational Book Corner that offers patients and their families access to stories relevant to particular life experiences. There are books covering a range of topics, including grief, parental incarceration, adoption and foster care, gender identity and sexuality, and nontraditional families.

The team also partnered with volunteer reading specialists at St. Chris to build a Reading Room in their clinic, where the volunteers give out books and read to children, and there is space for anyone to sit down and read. Their goal is to increase the number of volunteers in the Reading Room, and they are even exploring the idea of building a library in the main hospital where volunteers, community partners, parents and children can gather in a space to relax and learn. "We view this as an opportunity to spread our work across the whole enterprise," says Kersten.

In November, the Philadelphia Reach Out and Read program received \$15,000 from *Philadelphia* magazine when Taylor was named the 2024 BeWellPhilly Health Hero. He was nominated by a friend, an educator with



an understanding of the importance of childhood literacy. From an initial field of 171 entrants, Taylor made it to the top 10 candidates and then the top three finalists, thanks to daily votes online from people who share his passion for providing books to children from under-resourced areas like the Northeast Philadelphia neighborhoods served by St. Chris.

At an event on November 13, Taylor learned he had won. He and the other finalists made speeches about the causes they care about, and Taylor was presented with a check symbolizing his award, which has already been used to buy 5,000 additional books for Reach Out and Read. Taylor was honored by the recognition, but humble in the face of the sheer number of people involved in Reach Out and Read's ongoing success. "I just happen to be the one who was nominated. But it's not about what I do. It's about what everyone involved does, and that's what made this really special," he says.



Drexel Hosts TriNetX PA Symposium

On March 4, 2025, Drexel University College of Medicine hosted the TriNetX PA Symposium at the Study Hotel in University City. The event brought together 65 attendees from Pennsylvania organizations that use the TriNetX research platform, to network, share ideas and foster future collaboration. TriNetX is a worldwide repository of clinical data, offering access to insights from more than 250 million patients spanning hundreds of national and global health care organizations.

The event included presentations from a range of experts from Drexel and TriNetX, as well as the Penn State College of Medicine, Tower Health, Thomas Jefferson University Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and Allegheny Health Network. It was spearheaded by

the College of Medicine's Office of the Senior Vice Dean for Research, and co-organized and co-chaired by Janet Matthews, MSN, RN, senior director, research program development at Drexel, and Andreia McKenzie-Hatter, senior healthcare partnership manager at TriNetX.

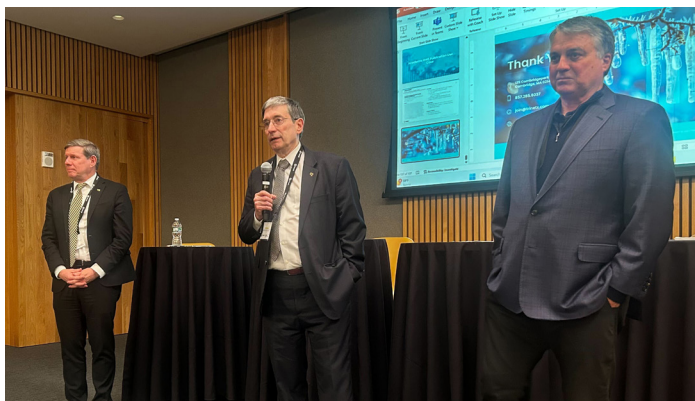
"I am incredibly proud of how Drexel medical students are leveraging TriNetX to expand research opportunities with real-world data," Matthews says. "The enthusiasm and insights from our attendees reaffirm the importance of data-driven research in advancing medicine."

The day's agenda and objectives were introduced by Kenny Simansky, PhD, senior vice dean for research at the College of Medicine, Matthews, and representatives from TriNetX including John Esposito, senior director, U.S. healthcare partnerships, and McKenzie-Hatter.

After opening remarks from Charles B. Cairns, MD, the Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and senior vice president of medical affairs, the program included presentations and panel discussions on topics including clinical data analysis, compliance and medical students' use of TriNetX.

Two medical students presented research they conducted using TriNetX, including Andrew Murdock, MD '27, who discussed his project "Isotretinoin and iPLEDGE Reform: A Gender-Inclusive Analysis Over Time" with the attendees.

Reflecting on the importance of the event in expanding student research, Simansky says, "TriNetX has offered unprecedented clinical research opportunities for Drexel medical students, and we are working to extend use of the platform to our graduate students, to give them a resource of real-world data to drive their translational research." He adds, "We were thrilled to bring together these institutions to learn from one another and build community around this powerful platform."



Dean Charles B. Cairns, MD, Senior Vice Dean for Research Kenny Simansky, PhD, and John Esposito, senior director of U.S. healthcare partnerships at TriNetX, kicked off the event.

College of Medicine Welcomes New Honor Society Members

During a ceremony and banquet on March 25, 2025, at the Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue, the College of Medicine inducted the newest members into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society and Gold

Humanism Honor Society.

During the ceremony, 21 students, five residents and fellows, and four faculty members were inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society, which champions humanism in health care through compassion, collaboration and scientific excellence. The society "empowers experts, learners and leaders to together create systems and cultures that support humanistic care for all."

Drexel's chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha, the Delta Zeta chapter, welcomed 61 students, seven faculty members, nine residents and two alumni. The society holds the belief that the medical profession can improve care for everyone by "recognizing high educational achievement, honoring gifted teaching, encouraging the development of leaders in academia and the community, supporting the ideals of humanism and promoting service to others."

The ceremony included a keynote address by Sara L. Wallach, MD, who serves as vice chair of education in the Department of Medicine and core faculty for the Internal Medicine Residency program at Capital Health.

A list of inductees and photos from the event are available at bit.ly/42gpj7j.





Class of 2025 Meets Their Match

Match Day, when fourth-year MD students find out where they will spend the next years of their training, was celebrated nationwide on March 21, 2025. This year Drexel celebrated its largest graduating MD class in history at events in Philadelphia and West Reading. More information about the Match is available at bit.ly/4h1kWqh.



Drexel Well Represented at Bridging the Gaps Symposium

On September 20, 2024, Drexel medical students — along with their colleagues in the Dornsife School of Public Health, College of Nursing and Health Professions, and the Thomas R. Kline School of Law — presented posters at the annual Bridging the Gaps symposium, which was held at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. (All presenters are from the MD class of 2027 unless otherwise noted.)

Jesse Devlin and **Caitlin Farnsworth**: Serving Radical Hospitality at Broad Street Love: Food, Mail and Service

Joshua Salas: Empowering Community Care: Providing Medical Education and Case Work Assistance at a Spanish-Speaking Center

Ashley Saravia: It's a STEM Summer!

Caroline Wang and **Sogand Karimian**: The Trinity of Hands-On Collaboration

Belinda Faakye (Dornsife) and **Felicia Yan**: Reducing Food Waste: Combating Waste for a Better Future

Sancia Noriega and **Hannah Ruby**: Empowering Children in Transition Through the Kindergarten Bridge

Story Bernstein: Increasing Engagement in the Consumer Advisory Board and Aiding in the Gathering of Patient Data for Analysis

Audrey Mills and **Jonathan van Arneman** (CNHP): A Musical Mindset: Fostering Creative Entrepreneurship Through Music Production, Branding, Marketing, and Finance Skills in Philly Youth

Teresa Moorhead: Frankie's World Summer Camp

Shrilakkshmi Babu and **Gail Hutchings** (Kline): An Uphill Battle: The Many Hurdles of Re-Entry

Suhani Patel and **Rayna Richardson** (CNHP): Taking the Lead at Girls Inc. That's Smarter, Stronger & Bolder

Mansi Patel and **Shifra Gorde**: Promoting Preventative Care in the Greater Philadelphia Area

Valentina de Quieroz: Greener Partners: Strengthening Community in West Philadelphia Through Urban Farming and Food Justice

Brian Nguyen: Addressing Food Insecurity in Berks and Schuylkill Counties, PA

Charlotte Bell (CNHP) and **Elizabeth Cheng**: Summer Adventures at the HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy

Julian Rupkey: Improving Health Education at Hope Rescue Mission

Andrea Jaffe (Dornsife) and **Zehua Lin** (CNHP): Summer Fun with the Therapeutic and Life Enrichment Services Team at Inglis House

Ryan Aturaliya and **Zach Li**: Legacy Youth Tennis & Education

Khushi Doshi: Empowering Minds and Nurturing Connections: Mental Health Transformations Through Language, Wellness and Culture

Ilana Mereminsky: Providing Support and Compassion for the Aging Population of Germantown

Abigail Faust, **Meseker Fentie** (Dornsife) and **Abby Narvaez** (Kline): Prescription Assistance Program Patient Advocates

Jinsy Johnson and **Anish Ponna**: St. Christopher's Hospital 14th Annual Back-to-School Carnival

Cameron Asay: Summer Meals and CAP4Kids: Connecting Families With Community Resources

Emily Cid and **Bhobbie Pagotan**: Pediatric Navigation — Bridging the Gaps in Primary Care and Patient Education

Jessica Lu and **Kelly Minard**: Just Being a Kid: Seven Weeks of Summer Camp for the Children of Philadelphia

Founders' Day Holds Special Significance in 2025

Alumni and guests gathered to celebrate Founders' Day at the Queen Lane Campus on March 11, 2025, kicking off the 175th anniversary celebration of the establishment of one of the College of Medicine's predecessor institutions, Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania (WMCP). It was the first medical school in the world for women authorized to award a medical degree.

As a legacy institution of Drexel University College of Medicine, WMCP is proudly recognized as a pioneering center for medicine and as a leader in women's higher education.

"It is important to celebrate what our founders created and inspired other to create, and the opportunities that did not previously exist," says Barbara Schindler, MD, WMC '70, professor of psychiatry and pediatrics, medical director of the Caring Together Program, and vice dean emerita of educational and academic affairs at the College of Medicine. "I'm proud to be part of an institution that values creating opportunities for individuals who otherwise could not get a medical education."

Charles B. Cairns, MD, the Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and senior vice president of medical affairs, described the day as "an historic milestone that honors the vision of those who came before us and the generations of physicians who have shaped the future of our College and indeed, all of medicine, through their dedication, resilience and innovation."





32nd Annual Pediatric AIDS Benefit Concert

Drexel University College of Medicine students, faculty, professional staff and guests filled Drexel's Main Building auditorium with music for a worthy cause on January 25, 2025. The 32nd annual Pediatric AIDS Benefit Concert is a tradition that has raised more than \$765,000 for children living with HIV and AIDS to date.

The student-run concert includes music and dance performances, with ticket sales, donations and an auction all benefiting the Dorothy Mann Center. The center, at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, provides comprehensive care for people with HIV, support to patients' families and prevention services.



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.



Karan Bamb

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics
MS Program

Title: Multidrug Tolerance and the Stringent Response in Diverse Clinical Isolates of *Haemophilus influenzae*

Co-advisors: Donald C. Hall, PhD, and Joshua Chang Mell, PhD



Dorothy Benton

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics
PhD Program

Title: Identifying New Targets and Drug Combinations in Neurofibromatosis Type 2

Advisor: Jonathan Chernoff, PhD



Britney Black

Cancer Biology MS Program

Title: Investigating the Role of lncRNA H19 in DNA Damage Response

Advisor: Christian Sell, PhD



Caroline Corcoran

Microbiology & Immunology MS Program

Title: HSV-1 Infection in Vaginal Epithelial Cells Is Inhibited by Application of Non-thermal Plasma-Conditioned Medium

Advisors: Vandana Miller, MD, and Fred C. Krebs, PhD



Camille Cunanan

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: BAP1 Loss Affords Lipotoxicity Resistance in Uveal Melanoma

Advisor: Edward Hartsough, PhD



Carly Deantoneo

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: Reovirus Z-RNAs Activate ZBP1 Dependent Cell Death

Advisor: Siddharth Balachandran, PhD



Julia K. Farnan

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: Investigating the Role of Astrocyte Reactivity in Melanoma Brain Metastasis

Advisor: Joshua Jackson, PhD



Demna Ghaban

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Role of IDO1 in the Vascular Remodeling During Pregnancy

Advisor: Alexander Muller, PhD



Shrobona Guha

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: The Role of Microtubule-Associated Motors and Crosslinkers in Neurodevelopment

Advisor: Peter W. Baas, PhD



Chun-Ta Ho

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: Effects of the Chemokine CXCL12 on Dendritic Spine Dynamics: Implication for Cognitive Improvement

Advisor: Olimpia Meucci, MD, PhD



Sri Havya Jana

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program

Title: The Role of DDX11 in Telomere Maintenance and Its Implications in Cancer Cells

Advisor: Eishi Noguchi, PhD



Jill M. Lawrence

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: Characterizing Pro-inflammatory A1-Like Astrocyte Polarization in Primary Human Cell Models of Chronic Inflammation and HIV-1 Tat Exposure

Advisor: Michael R. Nonnemacher, PhD



Priyashree Nagarajan

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program

Title: Regulation of BORG2 by Cdc42 Through Disruption of Internal Structure

Advisor: Shae Padrick, PhD



Abhishek Rao

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Toll-Like Receptor 2 (TLR2) and Cathelicidin-Related Anti-microbial Peptide (CRAMP) as Critical Regulators of Immune Responses in Neonatal IAV Infection

Advisor: Alison J. Carey, PhD

**Sarath Reghunathan**

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics
MS Program

Title: Towards *In Vitro* Reconstitution of Actin
Comet Tail Formation and Septin Caging
Competition of *Shigella*

Advisor: Shae Padrick, PhD

**Jeremy Weinberger**

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Multisite Electrode Arrays to Optimize
Epidural Stimulation for Spasticity Following
Spinal Cord Injury

Advisor: Marie-Pascale Côté, PhD

**Kayla Schardien**

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics
PhD Program

Title: Cholinergic V0c Spinal Interneurons
and Respiratory Plasticity After Cervical
Spinal Cord Injury

Advisor: John Houle, PhD

**Jason Wickman**

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: From Biomarkers to Bench: Identification
of a Therapeutically Targetable Resident
Memory T Cell Population in a Mouse
Model of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

Advisor: Seena Ajit, PhD

**Yih-Ping Su**

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Viral-Host Interactions: Characterizing
Cis and Trans Interactions of Integrated
HBV DNA With the Human Genome

Advisor: Garth D. Ehrlich, PhD

Co-advisor: Joshua P. Earl, PhD

**Qiaowei Xie**

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: The Impact of EcoHIV on Cocaine
Related Behaviors

Advisor: Jacqueline Barker, PhD

**Xiaohuan (Beanie) Sun**

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Tau-MAP6-Microtubule Axis as a
Driver for Biphasic Neurodegeneration
in Tauopathy-Patient-Derived Cortical
Organoids

Advisor: Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD

**Kyle Yeakle**

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics
PhD Program

Title: HIV1 Tat Activates ERK1/2 Signaling
in HBV-Infected Hepatocytes to Inhibit
HBV Replication and Promote Hepatocyte
Survival

Advisor: Michael Bouchard, PhD

**Rashmi Raveendra Tantri**

Pharmacology & Physiology MS Program

Title: *In Vivo* Characterization of Cocaine
Mediated Regulation of the Dopamine
Transporter

Advisor: Ole V. Mortensen, PhD

**Jieyi Zhang**

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: CX3CR1 Phenotypic Plasticity in
Prostate Cancer Metastasis

Advisor: Alessandro Fatatis, MD, PhD

WIMSC Leadership Summit: Changing Workplace Culture

The 2025 Women in Medicine and Science Committee Leadership Summit was held virtually on March 7, 2025. The event included panel discussions on "Leading and Thriving in a Workplace Designed for Others," "Leading With Adaptability and Inclusivity in a Multigenerational Workplace" and "Implementing Small, Strategic Actions to Lead Meaningful Change." Panelists included leaders from the College of Medicine and Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

As part of the event, the 2025 Phyllis Marciano, MD, Woman in Medicine Award was presented to Nancy D. Spector, MD. The award is given annually to a female physician, scientist or staff member in recognition of her leadership, teaching of students, care of patients and status as a role model for women in medicine. Spector is senior vice dean for faculty, and executive director of the ELAM and ELH programs, and the Lynn Yeakel Institute for Women's Health and Leadership. In nominating her for the honor, the committee noted that "Phyllis Marciano would have been honored to have Nancy accept this award."

More information about the summit, including recordings of previous presentations, is available at bit.ly/4aOgXXe.



WHAT WE'RE DOING



Sanya Ailani, a third-year medical student, won the award for best paper in the highly competitive Original Cataract Papers Session for her presentation at the American Academy of Ophthalmology's annual meeting. Her research explored the correlation between diabetic A1c levels and endophthalmitis.



Ajit



DaCunza

Seena Ajit, PhD, professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, was elected as the vice president of the Mid-Atlantic Pharmacology Society. **Jason DaCunza**, Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD student, **Jason Wickman, PhD pharmacology and physiology '24**, now a postdoctoral researcher, and Ajit authored "miRNA Packaging Into Small Extracellular Vesicles and Implications in Pain," which was published in the October 23, 2024, issue of *Pain Reports*.



Wickman

Pharmacology & Physiology program alumni **Zhucheng Lin, PhD '22**, **Xuan Luo, PhD '24**, and **Deepa Reddy, MS '23**; Wickman; DaCunza; **Richa Pande, PhD microbiology and immunology '23**; **Yuzhen Tian**, research associate; **Ezgi E. Kasimoglu**, research assistant; **Ahmet Sacan, PhD**, associate teaching professor, School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems; Ajit; and colleagues at Nanostics Inc. and Wake Forest University School of Medicine authored "Inflammatory Pain Resolution by Mouse Serum-Derived Small Extracellular Vesicles," which was published online in *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* on September 29, 2024.

Norrell Atkinson, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics, was named Pediatrician of the Year by the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in honor of her dedication, compassion and contributions to the field of pediatrics.



Coral Caceres, a third-year MD student, was selected as the recipient of the 2024 Buckfire & Buckfire, P.C. Medical School Diversity Scholarship. The \$2,000 annual award is offered to medical students from a group underrepresented in medicine or those who demonstrate a commitment to diversity in their community.



Carpenter



Samels

Brody Carpenter and **Shanna Samels**, Neuroscience PhD students; **Malcolm Jennings**, research technician; former Drexel STAR students **Krishna Shah, MD '28**,

and **Medha Gupta, BS biology/biological sciences '23**; Neuroscience program alumni **Breanne Pirino, PhD '23**, and **Joya Maser, MS '23**; and **Jessica R. Barson, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology &

Anatomy, published a paper, "Pituitary Adenylate Cyclase-Activating Polypeptide (PACAP) Overexpression in the Paraventricular Nucleus of the Thalamus Alters Motivated and Affective Behavior in Female Rats" in the journal *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* on January 2,



Shah

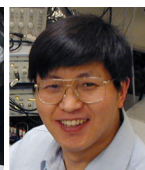


Barson

2025. **Genevieve Curtis, PhD neuroscience '22**, Carpenter, Pirino, **Annie Hawks**, research technician, STAR student **George Li, BS/MD student**, and Barson authored "Pituitary Adenylate Cyclase-Activating Polypeptide (PACAP)+ Cells in the Paraventricular Nucleus of the Thalamus: Relationship With Binge-Type Eating in Male and Female Mice" in the February 2025 issue of the journal *Psychopharmacology*.



Clarin



Gao

Jacob D. Clarin, Neuroscience PhD student, **Nadia N. Bouras, BS biological sciences '24**, research technician, and **Wen-Jun Gao, MD, PhD**, professor, Department of Neurobiology

& Anatomy, published a review paper, "Genetic Diversity in Schizophrenia: Developmental Implications of Ultra-Rare, Protein-Truncating Mutations," in "Advances in Neurogenetics," a special issue of the journal *Genes*, on September 17, 2024.



Mary Ann Comunale, EdD, MS, associate professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, was one of six recipients of a \$420,000 Phase 3 LymeX Diagnostics Prize for her project "A Small-Volume Serum Test Using Glycan Biomarkers to Detect Active Lyme Disease Infection and Track Treatment Response."

Linda Console-Bram, PhD, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, was elected as the next president of the Mid-Atlantic Pharmacology Society. Console-Bram previously served as vice president of the society.



Simon Danner, PhD, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered an invited talk, "Reorganization of Spinal Neural Connectivity Following Recovery After Thoracic Spinal Cord Injury: Insights From Computational Modeling," at the 2024 International Spinal Research Trust Network meeting in London, U.K., on September 13, 2024. (See also Rybak, page 17.)



Gabriel DePinho, MS Drexel Pathway to Medical School '23, now a second-year MD student, received the first-place prize in the Nth Dimensions Summer Internship Research Poster Session, which was held during the National Medical Association's 2024 Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly in New York City.

Ridhdi Desai, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, has been awarded a one-year American Cancer Society Institutional Research Grant for her work through the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center on the project "Using Human Stem-Cell Derived Ductal and Acini Organoids to Understand How Cell Identity Influences IPMN Development in Pancreatic Cancer."



Wei Du, MD, professor and academic chair of psychiatry, presented "Elevating Clinical Research" at the BioScience in Berks Conference, held January 17, 2025, in Reading, Pa.



Bridie D. Eckel, Neuroscience PhD candidate, presented a poster on "Axonal Microtubule Polarity Flaws and Neuronal Activity Alterations in SPG4 Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia" at the Tom Wahlg Stiftung Symposium and TreatHSP Meeting 2024, in Erlangen, Germany.



Bill Frank, DC, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, presented two research abstracts: "Synergizing Plastinated Specimens With 3D Scanning for Advanced Medical Education – Application in a Medical Curriculum" and "The Effect of

Impregnation Time on Brain Tissue and Appearance of the Orange Spots During P40 Technique" at the 21st International Conference on Plastination, which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from July 15-18, 2024. The abstracts were also published in Volume 36 of the *Journal of Plastination*. Frank was re-elected to the executive board of the International Society for Plastination for the 2024-2026 term.



Annette Gadegbeku, MD, senior associate dean of community health and inclusive excellence; associate professor, Department of Family, Community & Preventive Medicine; and medical director, Healing Hurt People, was chosen to be part of a national team, led by

vaccine researchers at La Jolla Institute for Immunology, that will endeavor to develop life-saving vaccines against herpesviruses, some of which can cause cancer, autoimmune disease and birth defects. Gadegbeku will be leading the community engagement section of the study, promoting vaccine education, acceptance and uptake in underserved communities in Philadelphia.



Edward Hartsough, PhD, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, was awarded a Gregory Fairhurst Uveal Melanoma Pilot Award from the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center. The funding will support his project "Leveraging Syngeneic Uveal Melanoma Models to Assay a Novel Immune Checkpoint Target."

Calendar

May

- 2 **Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania 175th Anniversary Celebration**
6:30-9:30 p.m.
Sofitel Philadelphia at Rittenhouse Square
120 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Information: bit.ly/WMC175th
- 2-3 **College of Medicine Alumni Weekend**
Philadelphia (multiple locations)
Information: bit.ly/41qQqel
Contact: Kate McGovern, kbm56@drexel.edu
- 9 **St. Christopher's Research Day**
8 a.m.-1 p.m.
160 East Erie Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19134
Contact: Cynthia McConnell, cynthia.mcconnell@towerhealth.org
- 14 **Batts Health Equity & Inclusive Excellence Dinner**
5:30-8:30 p.m.
The Study at University City
20 South 33rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Contact: Bernadette Campoli, bc858@drexel.edu
- 16 **College of Medicine Commencement**
8:45-11 a.m.
Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
300 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102
Contact: DUCOMMilestones@drexel.edu
- 21 **Faculty Professional Development Day and Awards Ceremony**
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Health Sciences Building
60 North 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Contact: COM.FAFD@drexel.edu
- 26 **Memorial Day**

June

- 10 **Doctoral Student Celebration**
5-7 p.m.
Drexel Main Building
3141 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Contact: graduatecollege@drexel.edu
- 19 **Juneteenth**

July

- 4 **Independence Day**

Save the Date

White Coat Ceremony: August 8, 2025
Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Discovery Day: November 6, 2025
Pennsylvania Convention Center

Full calendar: All College of Medicine events are available at drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/events.

Alumni: For information about alumni events, please call 215.895.ALUM (2586), email medical.alumni@drexel.edu or visit drexel.edu/medicine/alumni/events.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Bryce Hina, a Biomedical Engineering PhD candidate, and **Anthony Moreno-Sanchez**, a Neuroscience PhD candidate, both working in the laboratories of **Jessica Ausborn, PhD**, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, and **Catherine von Reyn, PhD**, associate professor, School of Biomedical Engineering, Science & Health Systems, were awarded Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Individual Predoctoral Fellowships. Hina's project is "Characterization of Visual Feature Encoding in *Drosophila* Visual Projection Neurons LPLC1 and LPLC2." Moreno-Sanchez's project is "Dendritic Integration of Spatial and Object Features in a *Drosophila* Sensorimotor Circuit."



Moreno-Sanchez Ausborn



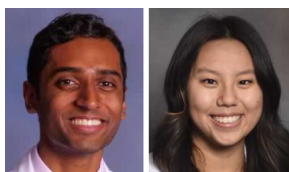
Chunta Ho, PhD, postdoctoral fellow in the Meucci Lab, was awarded first place in the 2024 Taiwan Microscopy Competition for his micrograph, "Lethal Beauty: The Dual Performance of a Cancer Cell."



Asif M. Ilyas, MD, MBA, associate dean of clinical research, and professor and vice chair of orthopaedic surgery, was awarded the Michael J. Gratch MD Distinguished Service Award from the Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society in recognition of his outstanding service and dedication to the specialty.



Joshua Jackson, PhD, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, received a W.W. Smith Charitable Trust grant for his project "Astrocyte CREB Signaling Promotes Metabolic Remodeling and Functional Recovery Post-stroke." (See also Xie, page 18.)



Karthikeyan Kuang

Gokul Karthikeyan and **Angie Kuang**, second-year MD students, participated in the 2024 National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases' Medical Student Research Program in Diabetes. They presented their research projects during the 2024 Medical Student Research Symposium in Nashville, Tenn.



Ke

Hangjun Ke, PhD, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, **Wei Xu, PhD**, research scientist, **Liying Wang, PhD**, visiting scientist, and Microbiology & Immunology program alumni **Neeta Shadija, MS '22**, and **Swati Dass, PhD '22**, published "Functionality of the V-type ATPase During Asexual Growth and Development of *Plasmodium falciparum*" in the September 2024 issue of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

Kimberly Leyzerzon, a master's student in the Biomedicine and Cell and Gene Therapy program, received a \$5,000 scholarship from the Delaware Valley chapter of the International Society of Pharmaceutical Engineering.



Jadlyn Lo, MD '27, served on the Secretariat for the first in-person Global Model World Health Organization. The Secretariat is the organizing board for the event, which brought together 350 high school, college and graduate students from 50 countries to participate in a simulation of the World Health Assembly. The event was held October 29-November 1, 2024, in Geneva, Switzerland.



Paul McGonigle, PhD, professor of pharmacology and physiology; director, Drug Discovery & Development program, and co-director, Division of Career-Oriented Programs, authored "How Biologics Have Changed the Drug Discovery Landscape" in the *Annual Review of Pharmacology and Toxicology* on October 10, 2024.



Joshua Chang Mell, PhD, associate professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, presented "Detecting & Disrupting Chronic Bacterial Biofilm Infections" at the BioScience in Berks Conference, held January 17, 2025, in Reading, Pa.



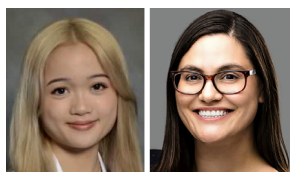
Vandana Miller, MD, professor of microbiology and immunology, was presented with the 2024 Plasma Medicine Award in recognition of her lifetime contribution and achievements in plasma medicine at the 11th International Conference on Plasma Medicine, held September 8-13, 2024, in Portoroz, Slovenia.



Alessia Niceforo, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, won the postdoctorate award for the poster "Engineering Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSCs)-Derived Astrocyte Progenitors for Spinal Cord Repair" at the Symposium for Postdoctoral Initiatives in Neuroscience Excellence (SPINE) 2024 in Philadelphia. Niceforo also received the Goldberger Murray Murphy Outstanding Trainee Award from the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy in December 2024.



Mitch Nothem, PhD pharmacology and physiology '20, a postdoctoral scholar in the Barker Lab, has received a renewal of his Drexel Medical Cannabis Research Center Pilot Award. This will provide a second year of funding for his project "Investigating Cannabinoid Combinations in the Treatment of Chronic Neuropathic Pain and Alcohol Use Disorder."



Phung

Giordano

Lillian Phung, a second-year MD student, gave an oral presentation, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Usage of Artificial Intelligence Among Medical Education Faculty" at the

2025 Innovations in Medical Education Conference. The research was co-authored by **Carolyn Giordano, PhD**, associate professor of family, community and preventive medicine, and the presentation earned them a Stephen Abrahamson Award for Innovations at the conference.

Skandha Ramakrishnan, MS, Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD student, **Neha Mohan, MS**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, **Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD**,



Qiang

and colleagues at Nantong University published a review paper, "Unraveling Isoform Complexity: The Roles of M1- and M87-Spastin in Spastic Paraplegia 4 (SPG4)," in the November 29, 2024, issue of *Movement Disorders*. Mohan was selected to give a data blitz talk on

"Isogenic Motor Cortical Organoids Reveal Genotype-Phenotype Distinctions and a Novel Therapeutic Target for Spastic Paraplegia Type 4" at the annual DNS Research Day at Temple University in November 2024. She was awarded first prize for her presentation.

No Guts, No Glory

Drexel medical students **Ryan Nader, MD '27**, **Julian Rupkey, MD '27**, and **Sachin Pranesh, MD '28**, all from the West Reading Campus, volunteered at the Guts and Glory Digestive and Wellness Expo, held at Penn State Berks University. The event brings vendors, exhibitors and other participants together to promote health and wellness across all ages. The students donned vegetable costumes loaned to the event by the local minor league baseball team, the Fightin' Phils. The students encouraged attendees to visit booths at the event, posed for pictures and held a race to entertain the crowd.



Drexel attendees at the Guts and Glory Digestive and Wellness Expo included Sachin Pranesh (left), Julian Rupkey (second from right, back), Ryan Nader (right) and Isabel Monterrosa (front), who serves as special projects and administrative program coordinator at the West Reading Campus.



Reeb

O. Mortensen

Katelyn Reeb, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, **Bhumiben Patel, MS** drug discovery and development '20, **Stacia Lewandowski, PhD** pharmacology and

physiology '21, **Ole Mortensen, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, **Andréia Mortensen, PhD**, assistant professor of pharmacology

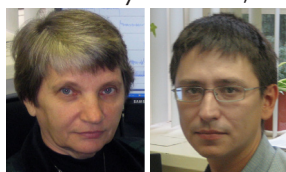


A. Mortensen

and physiology, and colleagues at the Wistar Institute and the Lewis Katz School of Medicine of Temple University authored "Positive Allosteric Modulation of Glutamate Transporter Reduces Cocaine-Induced Locomotion and Expression of Cocaine Conditioned Place Preference

in Rats," which was published in the *European Journal of Pharmacology* on December 5, 2024. Reeb, **Rhea Temmermand**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, and A. Mortensen were among the authors of "Enhancement of Glutamate Uptake as Novel Antiseizure Approach: Preclinical Proof of Concept," which appeared in the *Annals of Neurology* on November 8, 2024.

Ilya Rybak, PhD, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, and colleagues at Université de Sherbrooke and Georgia Institute of Technology were the authors of three papers: "Forelimb Movements Contribute to Hindlimb Cutaneous Reflexes During Locomotion in Cats," which appeared in the *Journal of Neurophysiology* on June 1, 2024; "Changes in Intra- and Interlimb Reflexes From Hindlimb Cutaneous Afferents After Staggered Thoracic Lateral Hemisections During Locomotion in Cats," which was published in the May 1, 2024, edition of the *Journal of Physiology*; and "Operation Regimes of Spinal Circuits Controlling Locomotion and Role of Supraspinal Drives and Sensory Feedback," which was also co-authored by

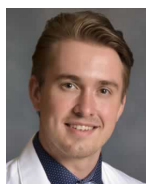


Shevtsova

Markin

Natalia Shevtsova, PhD, and **Sergey Markin, PhD**, both research assistant professors in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, and published in *eLife* on September 24, 2024.

Jessica Ausborn, PhD, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, **Simon M. Danner, PhD**, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, Rybak, and colleagues from Georgia State University and Université Paris-Saclay, authored "Sensory Feedback and Central Neuronal Interactions in Mouse Locomotion" in the journal *Royal Society Open Science* on August 21, 2024.



Ethan Schollaert, a third-year medical student, published a poem, "St. Christopher Superheroes," in the Summer 2024 issue of *The Pharos*, the publication of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Nikhil Seval, MD, assistant professor of medicine and program director of Drexel HOPE, is the principal investigator for a two-year, \$750,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. Drexel HOPE, an outreach program of the Partnership Comprehensive Care Practice, was one of two Philadelphia organizations to receive the funding, which will be used to expand the program's existing harm reduction and overdose prevention strategies.



Shamith

Simran Shamith, MD '26, won first place at the 2024 Medical College of Wisconsin Innovations in Healthcare Education Research annual conference for her poster "ChatGPT Validation of an Anti-Racism in Medical Education Questionnaire."

The poster's coauthors were **Carolyn**

Giordano, PhD, associate dean, assessment and evaluation and associate professor, Department of Family, Community & Preventive Medicine, and colleagues at Medical Education Development Global Consulting and the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.

Anirrudha Singh, MD, MBA, associate professor of medicine, was selected to participate in the American College of Cardiology's "ACC Educator: Advanced Concepts" master class in educational leadership.



Nancy Spector, MD, senior vice dean for faculty; executive director, ELAM and ELH programs; and executive director, Lynn Yeakel Institute for Women's Health and Leadership, and a colleague from Boston Children's Hospital co-authored "Designing a Legacy — Portraiture as a Tool for

Disrupting Structural Sexism and Racism" in the November 14, 2024, issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.



Sun



Yu

Xiaohuan "Beanie" Sun, MS, Neuroscience PhD candidate, and **Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD**, associate professor in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, published a

research article, "Antagonistic Roles of Tau and MAP6 in Regulating Microtubule Dynamics and Neuronal Development," in the *Journal of Cell Science* on September 11, 2024. The co-authors were **Wenqian Yu, MD**, research assistant professor, **Peter W. Baas, PhD**, professor, and **Kazuhito Toyooka, PhD**, associate professor, all in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy.



Baas



Toyooka

Sun also presented a seminar talk on "Bi-phasic Microtubule Defects in Tauopathy: Treatment Implications" at the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease Research in the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, and a poster on "Antagonistic Roles of Tau and MAP6

in Regulating Neuronal Development" at the Tau Global Conference 2024 in Washington, D.C.



Van Duyne



Matt

Rachel Van Duyne, PhD, and **Stephanie Matt, PhD**, both research assistant professors in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, received a W.W. Smith Charitable Trust grant for their project "Impact of Chronic Benzodiazepine Use on Epigenetic and Inflammatory Regulation in People Living With HIV."



Nielufar Varjavand, MD, professor of medicine and director, Drexel Physician Refresher/Re-entry program, presented "Deciphering Holistic Medicine" at Temple University Hospital's grand rounds in November 2024. She also spoke on the topic of "Credentialing Physicians

Who Have Been Clinically Inactive" at the Connecticut Association of Medical Staff Services in May 2024.



Xie



Barker

Qiaowei Xie, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student; **Rohan Dasari, BS biological sciences '24**; **Mark Namba, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Pharmacology &

Physiology; former Barker Lab staff members **Lauren A. Buck, MS**, and **Christine M. Side**; **Joshua Jackson, PhD**, and **Jacqueline Barker, PhD**, both associate professors in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology; and a colleague from the University of Pennsylvania co-authored "Astrocytic Regulation of Cocaine Locomotor Sensitization in EcoHIV Infected Mice." The paper was published in the journal *Neuropharmacology* on March 1, 2025.

Maxim Yankelevich, MD, a professor in the Department of Pediatrics, received a St. Baldrick's Foundation Infrastructure Grant. The one-year, \$50,000 award will support a clinical research associate role at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, to ensure that more pediatric patients can be enrolled in clinical trials, which are often their best hope for a cure.



Riley Young, a PhD candidate in the Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics program, was chosen to present a short talk, "ACSS2 Protects From Ferroptosis in Breast Cancer Brain Metastatic Cells," at the Mechanisms and Models of Cancer Conference, which was held August 13-17, 2024, in Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.



Tell your colleagues what you're doing.
Email CoM_Pulse@drexel.edu.

Get to Know...

What is your official title at Drexel?

My primary title is director of education innovation and strategic partnerships for the Department of Microbiology & Immunology. I also serve as the director for the Center for Business and Program Development at the Institute for Molecular Medicine and Infectious Disease, and as interim co-director of the interdisciplinary biomedical graduate programs, along with our department chair, Brian Wigdahl, PhD.

Explain what you do in around 50 words.

I specialize in creating and managing graduate programs, serve as an advisor to current and prospective students, work on enrollment management, forge interdisciplinary partnerships, both internally and externally, act as a career counselor, and create programs and initiatives such as the Cell and Gene Therapy Summer Academy, which is funded through a partnership grant with Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS).

Who do you interact with most on a daily basis?

I interact mostly with students, but a large part of my role includes interfacing with strategic partners such as BMS, CYTO | PHL, and B+Labs. I am always exploring ways to work with others on mutually beneficial projects like internships and guest lectures, so please reach out to me if you would like to connect.

What is your typical day like?

There really is no typical day, which I love. Most days include helping students with their questions, answering admissions questions, talking to alumni, giving career advice, emailing with corporate partners, corresponding with faculty and adjuncts, and working on new initiatives. Something I have started recently is introducing AI platforms to others at our departmental faculty meetings, such as Connected Papers, Scite and Litmaps.

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

I find value in helping to create the next generation of scientists and researchers. The work coming out of our department is life-changing and inspires me every day. I have a special interest in cell and gene therapy since my sister, Katie, has a rare genetic disorder. It was an honor to help create the MS in Biomedicine and Cell and Gene Therapy program and the Certificate in Regulatory Affairs for Cell and Gene Therapy program, and to pilot the new Cell and Gene Therapy Summer Academy last summer.

What are your favorite and least favorite tasks?

My absolute favorite task is when I get to network — whether it is recruiting at a conference for our graduate programs or co-hosting a monthly immune engineering/cell and gene therapy social hour with Kara Spiller, PhD, professor at the School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems. Talking to others in the field and letting them know about the exciting things going on at Drexel never ceases to inspire me. My least favorite task is creating budgets for grants or project proposals, because I find it tedious.

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

I have a very different background from other higher education professionals or scientists, but I think that it helps me leverage different skill sets. I have a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Villanova University, an MS in higher education from the Drexel School of Education, an MS in complementary and integrative health from the Drexel University

College of Nursing and Health Professions, and I am finishing a doctorate in health science from the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Science. I have worked at Drexel for 17 years, and look forward to teaching once I complete my doctorate.

When you are working on site, do you bring your own lunch or eat out?

If I am working on site, I like to eat out to get some fresh air and check out new restaurants in the city.

What's one unusual or unexpected item in your home or campus workspace?

In my office in New College Building I have a collection of plush microbes. They look very cute, but when you pick one up and read the label you will see it's a virus, pathogen or cell. Don't worry, they are not contagious.

What's one piece of Philly culture that you return to over and over again?

I love going to the museums in Philadelphia, especially the Mütter Museum at the College of Physicians. If you have never been there, I highly recommend it! I also love to run on the Schuylkill River Trail.



Mary Genevieve Carty, MS, MEd

Director of Education
Innovation and Strategic
Partnerships, Department of
Microbiology & Immunology;
Director, Center for
Business and Program
Development



DREXEL UNIVERSITY
College of
Medicine

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Join us for Faculty Professional Development Day and the Faculty Awards Ceremony

*The event will be held in person at the Health Sciences Building,
60 North 36th Street in Philadelphia, and livestreamed
via Zoom.*



MAY 21, 2025

Question? Contact COM.FAFD@drexel.edu