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College of Medicine Celebrates Historic Class at 2025 Commencement

On May 16, 2025, Drexel University College of Medicine celebrated its largest graduating class in history at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The ceremony recognized the achievements of future physicians, scientists and health professionals, including the first group of MD program students from the four-year regional medical campus at Tower Health in West Reading, Pa., as well as master's, PhD and dual degree recipients from the College's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies.

Drexel leadership, family, friends, faculty, alumni, professional staff and special guests gathered to mark the next step in the graduates' careers. The ceremony was streamed live for those who could not attend in person and is archived online.

Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs Charles B. Cairns, MD, addressed the graduates, stating, "You are graduating at a time when our nation, and indeed our world, face unprecedented challenges and obstacles, but also opportunities that I am confident you are equipped to face to make the world a better place."

Drexel University Provost Paul E. Jensen praised the class's achievements and wished them future success. "To our graduates — you were called to this path because you understand, in the deepest way, what it means to serve. Whether through direct patient care, pioneering research, medical technology or public health initiatives, your work will touch lives in ways that may not always be immediately visible, but will always be deeply meaningful," Jensen said.

Graduates and attendees heard an address from honorary degree recipient Carl H. June, MD, Richard W. Vague Professor in Immunotherapy, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. "Class of 2025, who knows how your careers and your life trajectories have been modified by recent events and the pandemic? You have to embrace change, risk and uncertainty," said June. "Your unplanned forks in the road here at Drexel will prove useful to you throughout your careers."

Student speaker Julianna Kinsolving, MD '25, said to her fellow graduates, "It is not our titles or degrees, nor education, that reveal the true nature of our character. It is our actions. Use your voice and the privilege of your education to uplift those around you. Protect what is right. And know that the future holds hope, so long as we choose it."



• continued on page 4

More information about the ceremony, including a recording of the event, is available at drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/commencement.



Batts Dinner celebrates student achievements, raises funds and honors a proud legacy



Student Life Exhibit displays a storied history at the Health Sciences Building



West Reading students enter clinical training, receive warm welcome at Reading Hospital

Contents

Commencement 1
Destination Excellence 3
College Forward and Strategic Plan 7
Batts Dinner 9
Student Life Exhibit Dedication 12
Transition to the Clinic 13

NEWS & EVENTS

Thesis defenses, awards 8-13
Faculty Professional Development Day

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Activities and accomplishments 14-18

Calendar 15
Get to Know 19



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drexel.edu/medicine



Looking Ahead With Gratitude

We ended another successful academic year at a wonderful, joyous Commencement celebration in May. We had a record number of graduates, including the first class graduating from our West Reading Campus! It was a pleasure to see so many members of our community in person as we celebrated the Class of 2025 and all of their achievements.

As we say farewell to those graduates and prepare to welcome new students in August, we remain hard at work on securing a successful future via our College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030 process.

I am grateful to the more than 60 faculty who engaged in our Phase 1 work, including a SWOT analysis and recommendations for areas to focus on within our four pillars:

- Medical and Graduate School Education
- Research and Innovation
- Drexel Medicine and Clinical
- Faculty Affairs and Development



Charles B. Cairns, MD

Phase 2 began in May with the formation of working groups and an implementation planning process. I also extend sincere thanks to those who volunteered to serve on these groups, as well as to everyone who submitted feedback via our online form. Phase 3 will include further implementation of the plan and continuous quality improvement over a five-year period.

I am also excited about the unprecedented opportunity for collaboration as our integration of Salus University is finalized in the coming

months. As we welcome a prestigious Physician Assistant Studies program, we are eager to work with all the global, interprofessional and specialized educational programs that are joining our College. I would like to extend the warmest welcome to everyone at Salus University who have become part of our Drexel community — faculty, professional staff, students and alumni. We are proud to have you.

Please join me in congratulating the esteemed faculty who have accepted emeritus status, including Drs. Itzhak Fischer, Timothy Cunningham, Richard Huneke, Donna Russo, Ilya Rybak, Francis Sessler, Kenny Simansky and Michael White. Please also join me in thanking them for decades of commitment to the College of Medicine and its missions. Indeed, we are saying goodbye to a number of longtime faculty members and professional staff who have chosen to retire. Their contributions to our community have touched all of us in so many critical areas, and I am very grateful for their years of service.

While times of transition can present serious challenges, they also serve as an opportunity for growth and innovation, energizing and preparing us for what comes next. I sincerely thank you all for being part of our vibrant Drexel University College of Medicine community.

Charles B. Cairns, MD
Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean
Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs

Meet Drs. Dionne Williams and Bridget Kajs

Dionne Williams, PhD, and Bridget Kajs, PhD, are collaborating on research at Drexel's Medical Cannabis Research Center. They also both completed the Janssen-Drexel Fellowship in Psychiatric Drug Development. Below they describe their career journeys, talk about their current work, and share advice about forging a career in STEM and creating successful mentor/mentee relationships.

Tell us a bit about your backgrounds and the work you did before coming to Drexel.

Dionne Williams: I attended a small private college in Delaware, which has since become part of Delaware State University. My academic background is in neuroscience and biochemistry. During graduate school, I focused on neurodegenerative disorders, particularly Parkinson's disease.

This sparked my interest in understanding the complexities of the brain. We conducted numerous research studies exploring potential therapeutic agents to alleviate Parkinsonism symptoms in animal models. That experience was my first real introduction to research, and it inspired me to want to make a greater impact on patients by transitioning into clinical research. However, I wasn't initially sure how to pursue that path.

Eventually, I was introduced to the pharmaceutical industry and the role of clinical scientists in that environment. That exposure led me to apply for opportunities, and I landed my first internship during my PhD studies at Bristol Myers Squibb.

I continued to build on that foundation with another internship at Johnson & Johnson in their oncology unit, again as a clinical scientist intern. That led me to join the Janssen-Drexel Fellowship in Psychiatric Drug Development.

Bridget Kajs: I completed my undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in biology with a concentration in neuroscience. I've always had a passion for neuroscience, especially the study of behavior.

My first research experience came during my undergraduate years, working at Johns Hopkins University on research involving immune factors during pregnancy and the resulting behavioral manifestations in offspring. That experience solidified my interest in research.

Back at UT Austin, I continued working in a social neuroscience lab, where I was involved in functional

neuroimaging and EEG studies. After graduating, I took a gap year to continue research at UT.

Having completed several research experiences, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in research. I went on to earn my PhD in neuroscience from the University of California, San Francisco. My dissertation focused on the neural circuits underlying fear and avoidance behaviors.

While I loved the field of psychiatry and wanted to stay in it, I realized I wanted to move closer to the clinical research side, but wasn't sure whether I

wanted to pursue this in an academic or industry setting. I joined the Janssen-Drexel Fellowship in 2022. During the fellowship, I worked at Janssen as a clinical scientist, contributing to protocol development, amendments and informed consent documents. I also worked on projects at Drexel's Medical Cannabis Research Center.

That experience confirmed for me that I wanted to stay in academia. After the fellowship, I accepted a position as an instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at Drexel. I continue to be involved in the Medical Cannabis Research Center, including a project with Dionne, and several others.

Why did you end up pursuing the fellowship at Drexel?

BK: As I mentioned earlier, after spending time on the basic science side during my PhD, I really wanted to see the impact of research on patient populations. The limitations of animal models in psychiatric research made me want to move into a more clinical setting. Since I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go into pharma or academia, it was ideal that this fellowship sits right at that intersection.

The experience helped me gain clarity about my career path. Seeing both settings and understanding the different roles helped solidify my decision to stay in academia. I was drawn to the intellectual freedom that academia offers — being able to choose the direction of your work and be more involved in study design.

DW: What drew me to the Janssen-Drexel Fellowship was the opportunity to pivot from my background in neuroscience and neurodegenerative diseases into neuropsychiatry trials. This fellowship gave me valuable experience in patient-reported outcome assessments in clinical trials, which is crucial for assessing treatment efficacy. It helped me understand

• continued on page 6



Dionne Williams, PhD



Bridget Kajs, PhD





More Commencement content is available on our social media channels.

Facebook album:

Instagram video:



Destination Excellence

• continued from page 3

how treatments affect different subtypes of patients and how to incorporate patient voices into the research process.

Like Bridget mentioned, the fellowship also provided exposure to various roles within the pharmaceutical industry. I supported the clinical development functional group as a clinical scientist, but I also learned about other functional areas like medical affairs, clinical operations and regulatory affairs. Understanding how these areas collaborate and contribute to the success of a drug pipeline was incredibly valuable.

On the academic side at Drexel, I enjoyed working on clinical trial design and applying critical thinking to develop protocols. I also appreciated the opportunity for patient interaction — meeting with patients and conducting assessments gave me a deeper appreciation for the impact of our work. I wish there had been more opportunities for direct interaction, but I did get to shadow Bridget during one of her visits, which was a meaningful experience.

Overall, the fellowship solidified my decision to pursue a career in the pharmaceutical industry. The exposure to different roles helped me recognize where my strengths lie and how I can contribute.

What is the research project you are working on together now?

DW: The research study we're conducting at the Medical Cannabis Research Center is a six-month observational study assessing the impact of medical cannabis on the quality of life in people living with HIV who also experience PTSD and/or pain. We use a variety of quality-of-life assessments to track changes from baseline to six months. We're also conducting neurocognitive testing to see whether medical cannabis has any effect on cognitive function over time.

BK: Our primary endpoint is quality of life, but we're also examining several other factors. Since our participants may have comorbid PTSD or chronic pain, we're tracking pain ratings and PTSD symptomatology over time using validated questionnaires.

In addition to behavioral assessments, we're collecting blood samples to measure circulating concentrations of THC, as well as CD4 counts and viral loads. We're also analyzing the concentrations of various HIV medications in the blood. This allows us to explore whether there's any interaction between THC levels and HIV medication concentrations, and how that might affect treatment outcomes.

What advice do you have for young people interested in STEM fields, particularly those who are currently underrepresented in those industries?

DW: My advice to aspiring scientists — especially women in STEM — is to find mentors. Early in my PhD

journey, I knew I wanted to transition from academia into industry, so I reached out to people in my community. I leaned on their expertise and advice to understand how they navigated their career paths.

I've maintained those relationships, and they've been incredibly valuable — not just for career insights, but also for sharing opportunities and making connections within the industry.

So, my biggest piece of advice is to build your community and network around the career you want to pursue.

BK: I agree with Dionne — community is so important. My advice is more general, not necessarily specific to women, but I think one of the most important things is getting hands-on experience in the field that interests you. Find mentors and look for opportunities to shadow other professionals, especially during transition points in your career.

For example, before starting a PhD, it's important to get experience in research labs that align with your interests. If someone was considering a move into clinical work, they should seek out clinical research opportunities, even as a volunteer. That kind of exposure helps you figure out whether you actually enjoy the work, and it also gives you a leg up when applying for positions. It helps differentiate you as a candidate.

DW: I'd just like to echo what Bridget said about gaining experience. I think it's so important for aspiring scientists to be proactive and take initiative. These opportunities are incredibly valuable and rewarding. Reach out to people, ask for shadowing opportunities, apply for internships — just put yourself out there.

What are your thoughts on building and maintaining successful mentor/mentee relationships?

BK: It's important to recognize that mentoring isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Being a mentor really requires understanding the mentee as an individual. When you're first establishing that relationship, take the time to understand the person's strengths, areas for growth, what motivates them and what would be meaningful for them. That way, you can guide them toward opportunities that align with their goals and help them grow.

DW: When I look for mentors, I try to find people with similar backgrounds — maybe they have a PhD in neuroscience or have made the transition into industry. But in the mentor-mentee relationship, I believe the mentee has to put in the work. A mentor can't read your mind, so you need to clearly express your goals and what you hope to gain from the relationship.

It's also important to be vulnerable and open in those conversations, while maintaining professionalism. Be clear about your needs and how you plan to achieve your goals. Then, leverage your mentor's expertise to help you get there. Ultimately, the relationship is mentee-driven.

College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030

As Drexel University College of Medicine celebrates historic milestones — 175 years since the founding of the Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania, 150 years of St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children, and the 30th anniversary of the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program — it is also looking boldly toward the future. Central to this is the College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030, a comprehensive, community-driven initiative designed to shape the College’s trajectory.

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 University, notes the importance of this initiative, saying, “College Forward is an opportunity for us to be responsive and agile to changes nationally and at the University, and to positively shape our future.”

From Vision to Action: The Strategic Planning Framework and Timeline

The College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030 initiative is structured around four mission-critical pillars, each supported by a dedicated task force:

- Medical and Graduate School Education
- Research and Innovation
- Drexel Medicine and Clinical
- Faculty Affairs and Development

The process is being conducted in three phases, with clear timelines and deliverables:

- Phase 1 (January–February 2025): strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis and strategic priority identification.
- Phase 2 (March–June 2025): Implementation planning, working group formation and pilot initiatives.
- Phase 3 (July 2025–June 2030): Implementation, continuous quality improvement and outcome assessment.

Phase 1: Assessment and Planning

More than 60 faculty members served on the Phase 1 Task Forces for each pillar, completing a SWOT analysis for their mission area. Their recommendations have provided a roadmap to collaboratively move forward with the implementation of key priorities to address the changing academic medicine landscape.

Phase 2: Implementation in Motion

As of June 2025, the College has entered Phase 2 of the strategic plan. This phase focuses on translating strategic priorities into tangible outcomes through implementation teams, working groups and faculty focus sessions. The goal is to ensure that, by July, the College is aligned and ready to execute on key imperatives.

At the start of Phase 2, faculty and professional staff were invited to self-nominate for working groups aligned with each mission area. These groups play a pivotal role in shaping and executing the roadmap, with additional opportunities for students and professional staff to engage throughout the years-long process.

“The work and discussions that have occurred through the task forces, implementation planning teams and faculty focus groups have helped shape a path for the College’s future growth. I appreciate everyone who has participated

so far and look forward to continued engagement from our community at a high level,” says Seema Baranwal, MD, the William Maul Measey Chair in Medical Education and vice dean of institutional effectiveness, who is leading the planning effort.

Outcomes and Impact

The College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030 initiative is designed to deliver measurable outcomes across all mission areas:

- **Modernized, student-centered education:** Innovative curricula that enhance learner engagement and success.
- **Streamlined academic programs:** Reduction of redundant offerings and reinvestment in high-impact pathways.
- **Integrated research enterprise:** Consolidated resources to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Strengthened clinical partnerships:** Aligned clinical missions with measurable improvements in care quality.
- **Empowered faculty:** Transparent policies and development pathways that support innovation and retention.
- **Operational readiness:** A phased implementation plan that ensures accountability while demonstrating measurable improvement.

Community Engagement and Leadership

A cornerstone of the strategic plan is inclusive community participation. As the College of Medicine prepares for an LCME report in August, the value of the community’s input is paramount. Faculty, professional staff and students are encouraged to:

- Participate in listening sessions and town halls.
- Share feedback via the online form.
- Stay informed through regular updates and newsletters.

A Shared Journey Toward Excellence

The College Forward and Strategic Plan 2030 is more than a roadmap — it reflects the College of Medicine’s values, aspirations and commitment to excellence. With a clear vision, structured implementation and a deeply engaged community, the College is poised to continue to lead nationally in education, research and clinical care.

“It’s an exciting time at the College, and we’ve proven time and again throughout our history that our community rises to challenges and succeeds,” says Baranwal.

Visit bit.ly/DUCOM2030 to learn more and access the feedback form.

Salus at Drexel University

The merger of Drexel and Salus Universities brings together the complementary strengths of both institutions in graduate health sciences education, research and clinical practice. Salus at Drexel University expands our physician assistant program, increases graduate enrollment and promotes interdisciplinary research opportunities in new areas.

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.


Breana Channer-Ellis

Pharmacology & Physiology MD/PhD Program

Title: Evaluating TLR4 and Dopamine Mediated Inflammatory Responses in Human Macrophages Across Distinct Culture and Serum Conditions

Advisor: Peter J. Gaskill, PhD


Nima Sarfaraz

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: Decoding Liver Cancer Biology: Optimizing Disease Models and Uncovering FAM99A as a Liver-Specific Translation Regulator

Advisor: Michael J. Bouchard, PhD


Marissa Cusimano

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Cell Transplantation Combined With Exercise Improves Cardio-Electric Conduction After Spinal Cord Injury

Advisor: Shaoping Hou, PhD
Co-advisor: Veronica Tom, PhD


Shih-Chun Shen

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: Exploiting and Exploring the Role of IDVCs in Supporting Inflammatory Neovascularization

Advisor: Alexander Muller, PhD


Adam Glass

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Dissecting Macrophage Responses to Betacoronavirus Infection: Role of Toll-Like Receptor Adaptors TRIF and MyD88

Advisor: Sonia Navas-Martin, PhD


Manasvi Sheta

Cancer Biology MS Program

Title: The Role of DDX11 in Telomere Maintenance in Cancer Cells

Advisor: Eishi Noguchi, PhD


Ashley Opalka

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Retrosplenial Neuronal Subpopulations and Their Inputs: Dynamics During Slow-Wave Sleep and Memory Processing

Advisor: Dong Wang, PhD


Shayna Singh

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Rhythmogenic and Supraspinal Recruitment Mechanisms of Lumbar Spinal Shox2 Interneurons

Advisor: Kimberly Dougherty, PhD


Kareen Pestana

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program

Title: Copy Number Variations in *Plasmodium vivax*: Implications for Erythrocyte Invasion, Malaria Transmission and Host-Pathogen Interactions in Ethiopia and Sudan

Advisor: Eugenia Lo, PhD


Julia Sutter

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Multifaceted Developmental Studies of Non-thermal Plasma as a Therapy for Oral Infection by Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1

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


Katelyn Reeb

Pharmacology & Physiology PhD Program

Title: Determination of Preclinical Potential and Molecular Mechanisms for Allosteric Modulators of Glutamate Transporters

Advisor: Andréia Mortensen (Fontana), PhD


Samuel Paura Wechsler

Neuroscience PhD Program

Title: Characterizing the Sensorimotor Transformation in the Fly Olfactory System

Advisor: Vikas Bhandawat, PhD


Victoria Ruszin

Microbiology & Immunology MS Program

Title: The Impact of *Plasmodium vivax* DBP1 Copy Number Variation and Duplication Type on Reticulocyte Invasion and Host Immune Evasion Through Antibody Binding to PvDBP-RII in Sub-Saharan Africa

Advisor: Eugenia Lo, PhD


Kyra Woloszczuk

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program

Title: Characterization of Immune Memory Responses to COVID-19 Infection and Vaccination

Advisor: Elias El Haddad, PhD



2025 Batts Dinner

The College of Medicine held the 2025 Batts Health Equity & Inclusive Excellence Dinner on May 14 at The Study at University City. This annual event is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of graduating students who have been personally impacted by health care disparities, and socioeconomic or educational barriers. About 90 attendees were on hand to honor the graduating students and hear a keynote address from Patti Jo Jaiyeola, MD, an alumna of the Drexel Pathway to Medical School program who earned her medical degree from Drexel in 2012.

The celebration also acts as a fundraiser for the Dr. James A. Batts Student Fund, which assists students with their education expenses, conference fees, test

preparation materials and tuition support. This year's event raised \$11,000.

James A. Batts Jr., MD, joined the staff at the Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1979 and retired as senior attending physician and professor emeritus in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He had an interest in increasing the number of medical students from communities impacted by health care disparities, and regularly recruited and mentored aspiring doctors who had faced socioeconomic or educational barriers. Each year, Batts hosted a party at his own expense for students and faculty at MCP.

To contribute to the Dr. James A. Batts Student Fund, visit bit.ly/BattsFund. More photos of the event are available at bit.ly/Batts2025.



Humanity Gifts Registry Celebration of Remembrance

On May 12, 2025, the College of Medicine participated in the Humanity Gifts Registry Celebration of Remembrance, which annually honors those who selflessly donated their bodies to medical education and research. The event was attended by students, faculty and professional staff from all Philadelphia medical schools; the families of the donors were also in attendance.

First-year medical students from both the Philadelphia and West Reading Campuses were instrumental in the event. Philadelphia students Supriya Behl, Vivian Bui, Eimile Cusenza, Paulina Daugis, Mohammed Kahn, Katherine Landry and Priscilla Mejia, and West Reading students Laura Brigandi, Corinne Packel, Dylan Persaud, Sachin Pranesh and Maggie Vacchiano served as name readers. Natalia Kelley and Jane Taylor from the Philadelphia Campus were greeters.



The event also included musical performances by Akshara Kannan and Doctor's Note, the College of Medicine's a cappella group, whose members include David Shin, Katie MacNary, Gopika Pillai, Taylor Forry, Celena Fei, Rudra Amin, Akshara Kannan and Shreya Ranadive.

Zoe Boston gave a eulogy, during which she shared her personal experience with a loved one's decision to donate his body to a medical school. "When my grandpa died in January, we did our best to honor his wishes by donating his body to medicine. Many of you are mourning your family members. I am living through this experience right now as well. I want to emphasize that you are not alone, and that your loved ones are not alone," Boston said in her address. "The gift of donating their body is one of the most selfless acts, and it is one that is not made lightly. While we might not have known your loved ones personally, we understand the importance of the choice they made."

First-year medical student Zoe Boston delivered a eulogy at the 2025 Celebration of Remembrance.

Thriving Through Change: Faculty Day Champions Leadership, Community and Innovation

The College of Medicine's 2025 Faculty Professional Development Day, themed "Thriving Through Change: Leading With Confidence and Vision," was held on May 21 at the Health Sciences Building and livestreamed via Zoom. The event brought together faculty for a full day of professional development, community building and recognition.

The day began with the dedication of the new Student Life Exhibit (see page 12), followed by a welcome from 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 University, Nancy D. Spector, MD, senior vice dean for faculty and executive director, ELAM and ELH programs, and Michele A. Kutzler, associate dean for faculty. The morning sessions included "Confident Leadership: Building Community Amid Challenge and Uncertainty in Academic Medicine" by Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, dean and senior vice president of medical affairs at the Chicago Medical School, and "Strength Through Community: Navigating Academic Medicine Through Turbulent Times" by Annette B. Gadegbeku, MD, senior associate dean of community health and inclusive excellence at the College of Medicine. The attendees then moved

to breakout rooms to participate in community circles, which encouraged dialogue and connection.

The afternoon featured two panels: "Empowering Leaders: Strategies for Leading for Success," was moderated by Chatterjee and included panelists Gina Lovasi, PhD, MPH, the Dana and David Dornsife Dean of the Dornsife School of Public Health, Nathalie S. May, MD, medical director of Drexel Internal Medicine and chief quality officer at the College of Medicine, and Mauricio Reginato, PhD, professor and chair of biochemistry and molecular biology at the College of Medicine. "Proactive Leadership in a VUCA [Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous] Environment" was presented by Gadegbeku and Spector.

The day concluded with the presentation of Faculty and Professional Staff Awards (see page 11).

Attendees spoke warmly of their experiences at Faculty Professional Development Day, with specific praise for the community circles. One attendee described them as "unexpectedly wonderful," while another noted that people felt free to express their emotions and provide comfort to one another. A third attendee called the community circles "a venue to talk about common issues ... and recognize these challenges are not unique." The day's presentations were lauded for their "poignant, real-world, practical insights." One participant described the event as "one of the best Faculty Days," adding that "it was all positive."



Awards Season at the College of Medicine

This spring brought numerous opportunities for the College of Medicine to recognize excellence and impact among its faculty, professional staff and students.



Golden Apple Awards

Faculty and professional staff are honored annually with Golden Apple Awards for excellence in clinical teaching, mentoring and service to the student body. The honorees are nominated by each class of medical students, who vote to determine the recipients. In a message to the awardees, 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 University, noted, “Your unwavering commitment to fostering an enriching educational experience has had a profound impact on our students’ growth and success. By inspiring curiosity, humanity and excellence, you have helped to shape the next generation of compassionate healers.”

A full list of Golden Apple winners is available at bit.ly/42sDKnF.

Pre-Commencement Celebration

On May 15, 2025, faculty and students from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies were recognized for their achievements at a pre-Commencement awards ceremony. Students from the Division of Biomedical Sciences Programs were recognized for excellence in their research and dissertation work. Students from the Divisions of Interdisciplinary and Career-Oriented Programs and Pre-medical and Pre-health Programs received honors for excellence in academics and teaching assistance.

Faculty were recognized for outstanding teaching, advising and mentorship, and student advocacy. A full list of award recipients is available at bit.ly/4kliYxu.



Faculty Awards

The Faculty Awards were presented at the annual Faculty Professional Development Day (see page 10), held this year on May 21, 2025, at the Health Sciences Building. The awards recognize faculty for excellence in research and scholarship, education, patient care, community outreach, mentoring and leadership, and inclusive impact.

A list of this year’s Faculty Award recipients is available at bit.ly/40aDUjb.



New Exhibit Illuminates Over 175 Years of History

On May 21, 2025, faculty, alumni, students and guests gathered on the 9th floor of the Health Sciences Building to celebrate a new exhibit. The installation, titled “Medical Student Life & Culture: W/MCP, Hahnemann, Drexel,” offers a vivid window into the lived experiences of medical students from the 1850s to the 2000s, featuring photos, artifacts and personal items displayed on a timeline.

The exhibit was developed by the Legacy Center Archives and Special Collections, the Drexel Founding Collection, and the Health Sciences Building advisory group for art and historical exhibits. It was created with input from students, faculty and professional staff of the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing and Health Professions, and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies.

A central feature of the new installation is a statue of June F. Klinghoffer, MD, a 1945 graduate of Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania and faculty member who spent more than 60 years teaching and mentoring students. The College of Medicine annually presents the June Klinghoffer Clinical Educator Award to a faculty member who demonstrates excellence in clinical skills education and innovative mentorship.

Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs Charles B. Cairns, MD,



emphasized Klinghoffer’s impact. “As a faculty member and advisor, she truly had an unmatched and far-reaching influence on the education and lives of countless students, residents, colleagues, professional staff and patients. Her office door was always open to provide support to everyone.”

Robert K. Wenger, MD, MCP ’83 — Klinghoffer’s son — and his family generously funded the new exhibit. He spoke at the event in honor of his mother and reflected on her devotion to students. “What better place for my mother’s statue than here? She was guided by her love of medicine, her love for her school and her love of teaching her students,” he said. “My mother, I’m sure, would be thrilled to know that she now stands here, a permanent part of Drexel University College of Medicine, as a guardian to the history of women in medicine.”

The event also featured perspectives from students. Tanaisha Italia, MD ’27, noted, “I think [the exhibit] captures the whirlwind of experiences that are possible throughout training, with time in the classroom, clinics, hospitals, recreational activities and out in the community. Medicine doesn’t exist in a vacuum, and this exhibit reflects that.” This sentiment is echoed in the exhibit’s design, which blends photos, personal items and artifacts to tell the story of medical student life across generations.

The exhibit serves as a reminder of the College of Medicine’s robust history and the people who have shaped it. Visitors to the Health Sciences Building are reminded that the legacy of medical education is not just about institutions and accolades — it’s about the importance of student life and mentorship. A digital version of this exhibit is available online at bit.ly/3HVWhCb.





West Reading Students Celebrate a Successful Transition to the Clinic

On Wednesday, April 30, 2025, MD program students, faculty and professional staff from Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health in West Reading, Pa., celebrated the class of 2027 Transition to the Clinic event. This annual campus tradition highlights MD student accomplishments and marks their entry into the clinical phase of their education at Tower Health – Reading Hospital.

The event included an awards ceremony that recognized residents, faculty members and departments for excellence in teaching, professionalism and student advocacy, while also honoring the campus's Golden Apple Award recipients. Students were recognized for their dedication to community service, population

health, small-group participation and professionalism, in addition to excellence in basic science knowledge and case-based learning. A full list of award recipients is available at bit.ly/43jMFJC. The event also featured a keynote address by Brian Kane, MD, division chief of family medicine and the regional medical director for the primary care service line at Tower Health Medical Group.

After the awards, medical students embarked on a walk from campus to Reading Hospital, where they were welcomed with cheers and applause from hospital leaders, instructors and staff. Students also received a guided tour of the facility and learned more about their upcoming clerkships.





Ajit



Barker

Seena Ajit, PhD, professor, and **Jacqueline Barker, PhD**, associate professor, both in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology; Pharmacology & Physiology program

alumni **Deepa Reddy, MS '23**, **Zhucheng Lin, PhD '22**, and **Xuan Luo, PhD '24**; **Richa Pande, PhD microbiology and immunology '23**; **Yuzhen Tian**, research associate; **Sujay Ramanathan, PhD**, former postdoctoral fellow; **Christine M. Side**, former Barker Lab member; **Ahmet Sacan, PhD**, associate teaching professor, Drexel School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems; and a colleague at the Perelman School of Medicine co-authored "Morphine-Induced Hyperalgesia Impacts Small Extracellular Vesicle microRNA Composition and Function." The paper appeared in the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* in April 2025.



Baas



Kiritmay

Peter Baas, PhD, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, published "Tau and MAP6 Establish Labile and Stable Domains on Microtubules" in the January 29, 2025, issue of the

journal *iScience*. The paper's first author is **Koray Kiritmay, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, and other co-authors included **Wenqiang Huang, MS**, Neuroscience PhD student, **Xiaohuan Sun, PhD neuroscience '25**, **Liang**



Sun



Qiang

Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, **Dong Wang, PhD**, assistant professor of neurobiology and anatomy, and colleagues from Central Washington University.



Wang



Guha

Baas; Neuroscience alumni **Ankita Patil, PhD '21**, **Shrobona Guha, PhD '25**, and **Hemalatha Muralidharan, PhD '20**; Microbiology & Immunology

alumnus **Kirankumar Madugula, PhD '21**; and former graduate researcher **Ilgin Isiltan, MS**, published "Regulation of Axonal Microtubule Polarity Orientation in Different Kinds of Neurons" in *FASEB Journal* on June 15, 2025.



Barger



El Nagggar

Lindsay N. Barger, PhD candidate in microbiology and immunology, **Olivia S. El Nagggar, PhD** candidate in molecular and cell biology and genetics, **Binh Ha, PhD** candidate in

pharmacology and physiology, and **Gabriele Romano, PhD**, assistant professor of pharmacology and physiology,



Romano

published "Melanoma in People Living With HIV: Immune Landscape Dynamics and the Role of Immuno- and Antiviral Therapies" in *Cancer Metastasis Reviews* on November 29, 2024.

Margot Bellon, MD '27, has been awarded a 2025 Alpha Omega Alpha Carolyn L. Kuckein Student Research Fellowship for the research project "Clinician Perspectives on Reproductive Health Counseling for Patients With Multiple Sclerosis: A Multi-Center Survey Study."



held May 13-16, 2025, in Philadelphia.

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 University, delivered the Dr. Peter Rosen Memorial Keynote at the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine's annual meeting,



Dave Chen, MD '27, was recently appointed to serve on the American College of Radiology's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Medical Student Subcommittee.



Wesley Corey, a Pharmacology & Physiology program PhD student in the Sanz-Clemente Lab, earned second place in the graduate student poster competition at the 2025 Philadelphia Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience annual meeting on May 30.



Marie-Pascale Côté, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, was invited to present "Mechanistic Insights Into Activity-Based Therapies and Transcutaneous Stimulation" during the Translational Research to Inform Clinical Practice Session of the American Spinal Injury Association meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz., on June 4, 2025. She also delivered a talk, "Mechanistic Insights Into Transcutaneous Stimulation for SCI Rehabilitation" at the University of Mississippi Medical Center on April 8, 2025.

PathA Program Earns High Marks From NAACLS

The College of Medicine's Master of Science in Pathologists' Assistant program recently completed their accreditation process and received the maximum award of 10 years from the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences. This process grants public recognition to educational programs that meet established educational standards in clinical laboratory science disciplines, including pathologists' assistant programs.

Marzieh Daniali, a Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, earned a 2025 Faculty for the Future Fellowship from the Schlumberger Foundation. These fellowships support women from developing countries and emerging economies pursuing advanced graduate study in STEM fields.

Jaden Drumm, BS biology '27, a research technician in the Fatatis Lab, was selected for an Undergraduate Research Mini Grant by Drexel's Pennoni Honors College.



Wei Du, MD, professor and academic chair, Department of Psychiatry, presented "Impact of Medical Cannabis on Quality of Life" at the Philadelphia chapter of the Pennsylvania Psychiatry Society's Colloquium of Scholars on March 29, 2025.



Aura Enache, MD '26, has been selected by the American Society of Hematology (ASH) to receive the 2025 ASH HONORS (Hematology Opportunities for the Next Generation of Research Scientists) Award, part of ASH's investment in hematology research and the next generation of hematology physicians and scientists.



Linwood R. Haith Jr., MD, professor and academic chair of surgery, and associate dean of external affairs, was awarded the American Burn Association's President's Leadership Award, which recognizes distinguished and exceptional service to the association and the burn care profession.



Jennifer Hope, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, will serve as co-principal investigator with a colleague from Thomas Jefferson University on a new pilot award from the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Edward Hartsough, PhD, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, will serve as a collaborator on the research. The award will fund their project "Establishing Pancreatic Tumor Slice Cultures for Translational Immune Research."



Caitlin A. Howe, PhD, and **Bill Frank, DC**, both associate professors in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, and **Shannon M. O'Hara, MD '26**, published a series of

virtual 3D scans of the whole brain and of whole-brain dissections on the Global Neuroanatomy Network website on March 2, 2025.

Calendar

August

8 White Coat Ceremony
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
300 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102
Contact: DUCOMmilestones@drexel.edu

September

1 Labor Day

4-5 Urban Health Symposium
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Nesbitt Hall
3215 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Please attend a pre-symposium event on September 3
Information: drexel.edu/uhc/events-workshops/symposium/

October

13 Indigenous Peoples Day

November

6 Discovery Day
Pennsylvania Convention Center
North Broad Street, Between Race & Arch Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19102
Information: drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/discoveryday
Contact: discoveryday@drexel.edu

27-28 Thanksgiving Break

Ongoing

\$10 Thursdays at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University
July 10-August 28, 2025
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Information: ansp.org

Save the Date

22nd Biennial International Conference on HTLV
June 3-6, 2026
Thomas Jefferson University
1001 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Information: htlv2026.org

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/alumni/stay-connected/events/.



Richard Huneke, DVM, professor of microbiology and immunology, and executive director of University Laboratory Animal Resources, was honored with an award at the Brazilian Association of Laboratory Animal Science meeting for his dedication and generosity in promoting

the advancement of laboratory animal science in Brazil. He presented a lecture, "Success With Rodent Surgery – Lessons Learned Over 30 Years of Practice," and participated in a panel discussion representing AAALAC International. He also recently wrote a chapter for the first textbook on rodent diseases in Portuguese.



Jackson



Klase

Joshua Jackson, PhD, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, is leading a team that has been awarded a Department of Defense grant for the research project "Human Organotypic Brain Slice Cultures to Study Brain-Metastatic Melanoma and Immune Infiltration."

Additional contributors to the project include Department of Pharmacology



VanDuyne



Fatatis

& Physiology faculty members **Edward Hartough, PhD**, associate professor, **Zachary Klase, PhD**, associate professor, **Rachel VanDuyne, PhD**, research assistant professor, **Alessandro Fatatis, MD, PhD**, professor, and **Olimpia Meucci, MD, PhD**, professor and chair, as well as **Atom Sarkar, MD, PhD**, professor of neurosurgery.



Meucci

Pooja Jain, PhD, professor of microbiology and immunology, organized and chaired a special session on behalf of the International Retrovirology Association during the American Association of Immunologists' annual meeting, Immunology 2025, which was held in Honolulu, Hawaii,

May 3-7. Jain presented "Risk Factors Associated With People Living With HIV/AIDS That Play Crucial Roles in EBV Reactivation and Affiliated Lymphoma" at the event. She also presented "Defining Risk Factors Associated With PLWH Responsible for EBV Reactivation and Lymphoma" during the HIV and Cancer Working Group meeting of the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Consortium on March 26, 2025, and she published a special issue on the topic of "Cancer in People Living With HIV/AIDS" for the March 2025 issue of the journal *Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology*.

Jain and colleagues from the University of Kansas Medical Center co-authored "Characterization of HTLV-1 Infectious Molecular Clone Isolated From Patient With HAM/TSP and Immortalization of Human Primary T-Cell Lines," which appeared in the November 9, 2024, issue of the journal *Viruses*. **Julie Joseph, PhD microbiology and immunology '24**, and Jain were among the authors

of "Dendritic Cells Pulsed With HAM/TSP Exosomes Sensitize CD4 T Cells to Enhance HTLV-1 Infection, Induce Helper T-Cell Polarization, and Decrease Cytotoxic T-Cell Response," which was published in *Viruses* on September 10, 2024.



Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, MD, MEd, MPPM, professor and academic chair, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, is the 2025 recipient of the American Heart Association's Louis B. Russell Jr. Memorial Award, which honors outstanding service in advancing health and hope for everyone.

Yetunde Oyende, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student in the Fatatis Lab, was selected to present her research at two external meetings. She attended the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center's Annual Retreat for the Program in Translational and Cellular Oncology, where she presented "Mechanistic Insights for the Transcriptional Regulation of IL-1b by the AR in Prostate Cancer." She was also invited to present her work at the Innovators of Tomorrow Symposium held at the Moffitt Comprehensive Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., April 3-4, 2025.



Phung

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 associate dean for assessment and evaluation, and the presentation earned them a Stephen Abrahamson Award for Innovations at the conference.



Giordano



Mauricio Reginato, PhD, professor and chair, Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, received the 2025 Edith Mitchell Mentoring Award from the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center Consortium. The award recognizes exceptional mentoring of junior faculty

and trainees across the consortium. (See also Young, page 18.)



Simran Shamith, MD '26, received the College of Medicine's Orthopaedic Surgery Interest Group travel scholarship, funded by the Norman Johanson, MD Orthopedic Fund, to attend the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons annual meeting, held March 10-24,

2025, in San Diego.



Dougherty

Shayna Singh, Neuroscience PhD student, and Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy faculty members **Natalia Shevtsova, PhD**, research assistant professor, **Ilya Rybak, PhD**, professor, and **Kimberly Dougherty, PhD**, professor, published "Properties of

Rhythmogenic Currents in Spinal Shox2 Interneurons Across Postnatal Development" in the May 2025 issue of the *Journal of Physiology*.

Nicholas Stachowski, PhD neuroscience '23; **Jaimena Wheel, MS interdisciplinary health sciences '24**, research technician; Singh; **Sebastian Atoche, MS**, former research technician; **Lihua Yao**, research technician; and Neurobiology & Anatomy faculty members **Leonardo Garcia Ramirez, PhD**, instructor, **Simon Giszter, PhD**, professor, and Dougherty published "Activity of Spinal ROR Neurons Is Related to Functional Improvements Following Combination Treatment After Complete SCI" in the April 2025 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

ASPET 2025 in Portland

The Pharmacology & Physiology program was well-represented at the 2025 annual meeting of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET), which was held in Portland, Ore., April 3-6.

Tofunmi Oteju and **Yibin (Clara) Xu, PhD** students, received Daniel T. O'Connor Young Investigator Travel Awards from the Catecholamine Society to attend the event.

Breanna Channer, an MD/PhD student, and PhD students **Marzieh Daniali**, **Simran Gill** and **Katelyn Reeb** received 2025 ASPET Travel Awards, and Reeb won the best graduate student poster presentation award in the Neuropharmacology Division.



Nancy D. Spector, MD, professor of pediatrics, senior vice dean for faculty, Betty A. Cohen Chair in Women's Health, and executive director of the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program, the Executive Leadership in Health Care program, and the Lynn Yeakel Institute for Women's Health and Leadership, is the recipient of the 2025 Alumni Distinguished Service Award from the UMass Chan Medical School. The award honors those who have demonstrated outstanding career achievements and impact that embody UMass Chan's mission of advancing the health and wellness of diverse communities by leading and innovating in education, research, health care delivery and public service.

Two of Spector's 2024 papers were named Best in Class by the AAMC Group on Faculty Affairs' repository of faculty affairs and faculty development research and scholarship: "Analysis of Pediatric Clinical Practice Guideline Authors by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity," which was selected for the "Advocacy" category, was published in the *Journal of Women's Health (Larchmont)* on June 6, 2024. "Gender Differences in the Path to Medical School Deanship," which was selected for the category "Developing the Next Generation of Leaders," appeared in *JAMA Network Open* on July 1, 2024.



Tom

Veronica Tom, PhD, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, was invited to present "Stopping the Downhill Slide: Targeting Dysautonomia After Spinal Cord Injury" at the Winter Conference on Brain Research in Olympic Valley, Calif., in January 2025. She also gave a seminar, "Autopilot Gone Awry: The Silent Killer Dysautonomia After Spinal Cord Injury," at Thomas Jefferson University in February 2025. Tom gave invited seminars at the Annual National Neurotrauma Society Symposium and the 10th annual Shriners-Temple University Symposium on Neuro Repair, both in Philadelphia in June 2025.

Valerie Bracchi-Ricard, PhD, research assistant professor in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy,



McGrath

Jenna McGrath, Neuroscience PhD student, **Kimberly Dougherty, PhD**, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, Tom and colleagues at Drexel's College of Arts and Sciences are co-authors of the manuscript "Mitigating sTNF/TNFR1 Activation on VGLUT2+

Spinal Cord Interneurons Improves Immune Function After Mid-thoracic Spinal Cord Injury," which was published in *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* in January 2025. **Marissa Cusimano**, a Neuroscience PhD student, Tom, **John Houlé, PhD**, professor emeritus, Department of Neurobiology



Houlé

& Anatomy, and a colleague at the School of Medicine of the University of Missouri co-authored "Passive Hindlimb Cycling Enhances Tolerance of Cardiac Electrical Conduction in Rats With Spinal Cord Injuries," which appeared in the *Journal of Neurotrauma* in April 2025.

Neuroscience alumna **Micaela O'Reilly, PhD '23**; Neuroscience PhD student **Mariah Wulf**; Neurobiology & Anatomy faculty and staff members **Theresa Connors**, instructor, **Ying Jin, PhD**, research assistant professor, and **Julien Bouyer**, research assistant; **Sandhya**



Wulf **Kortagere**

Kortagere, PhD, professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology; and Tom published "Microglial IkkB Alters Central and Peripheral Immune Activity at Distinct Time Points After Spinal Cord Injury" in the May 10, 2025, issue of the journal *Glia*. The same authors, with **Yinghui Zhong, PhD**, associate professor, Drexel School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems, published "NF-κB Inhibition Attenuates Sympathetic Hyperreflexia and Concomitant Development of Autonomic Dysreflexia and Immune Dysfunction After Spinal Cord Injury" in *Communications Biology* on May 22, 2025.



Woodland

Mark Woodland, MS, MD, associate dean of advocacy and policy, and professor of obstetrics and gynecology, **Gabi Ramos, MD '27**, **Valentina S. de Queiroz, MD '27**, and colleagues at the Pennsylvania State Medical Board and the Federation of State Medical Boards



Ramos **de Queiroz**

presented a poster, "Cultural Competency: State Medical Board Mandatory CME," at the annual meeting of the Federation of State Medical Boards, which was held April 24-26, 2025, in Seattle. Woodland and a colleague from Downstate Health Sciences University also presented "Eliminating Clinical Bias Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Sex Characteristics" at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Annual Clinical & Scientific Meeting in Minneapolis on May 17, 2025.



Ke

Wei Xu, research scientist, **Neeta Shadija**, former research technician, **Hangjun Ke, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, and colleagues at Harvard Medical School co-authored "The Dynamin-Related Protein Pfdyn2 Is Essential for Both Apicoplast and Mitochondrial Fission in *Plasmodium falciparum*" in the November 29, 2024, issue of *mBio*.



Young

Riley Young, a PhD candidate in the Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics program, received the 2025 Outstanding Mentorship Award from Drexel's Graduate College and Graduate Student Association. She also presented her Community Outreach Program project at the 2025 Translational & Cellular Oncology Program Retreat at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center. Young was part of the first cohort of trainees to participate in the Community Engaged Research Training for Emerging Scientists (CERTES) program. She created a TikTok channel, @labgirlnextdoor, and interviewed cancer researchers and students to increase student awareness of STEM fields.



Ahmed

Young, **Nussaiba Ahmed**, PhD student in the Biochemistry of Health and Disease program, and **Mauricio Reginato, PhD**, professor and chair of biochemistry and molecular biology, published a spotlight review in the April 2025 issue of *Trends in Cell Biology*, "New Job for an Old Tool: PI3K Phosphorylates OGT to Regulate Acetyl-CoA in Glioblastoma."

Biochemistry of Health and Disease students and alumni **Giang Le Minh, PhD '23**, Ahmed and **Ryan Sharp, MS '22**; Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics students and alumni **Jessica Merzy**, PhD student, **Emily Esquea, PhD '24**, **Tejsi Dhameliya, MS '21**, and Young; Reginato; and colleagues at the Medical University of South Carolina, are the co-authors of "GATAD2B O-GlcNAcylation Regulates Breast Cancer Stem-Like Potential and Drug Resistance" which was published in the journal *Cells* online March 8, 2025.



Merzy

Recent Fulbright Recipients



Bhuyan



Mitchell

Congratulations to the seven Drexel students who were recently awarded Fulbright grants, including College of Medicine students **Anjalee Bhuyan, MD '26**, who will explore the health impacts of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon exposure among brick kiln workers in Nepal, and **Mathew Mitchell, MD '27**, who will study human microbiome remodeling for the treatment of non-infectious disease in Hungary.



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

Get to Know...

What is your official title at Drexel?

Director, clinical systems support for Drexel University Information Technology

Explain what you do in under 50 words.

I lead the Clinical Applications Support Team, who oversee clinical software systems across academic, medical and research missions in the clinics at Drexel. By bridging clinical insight with tech strategy, I partner with clinical leaders and vendors to launch solutions that improve patient care, streamline workflows and keep innovation moving forward.

Who do you interact with most on a daily basis?

Most of my time is spent interacting with Drexel clinical leaders for the various groups we support — planning future enhancements, troubleshooting issues or implementing new tools. The rest of my time is occupied by collaborative meetings with vendors.

What is your typical day like?

What I love most about my job is that no two days are alike. I am always working on solving new problems or directing project teams to implement new solutions, which usually involve attending a lot of virtual meetings.

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

I am proud that our team's endeavors support all of the missions of the College. Through the management of electronic protected health information (ePHI) systems, the Clinical Applications Team delivers tools and technology to meet strategic goals identified by clinical educators, health care providers and researchers on behalf of the patients they serve. Our ePHI systems are critical instruments used by medical students during their on-campus rotations and education. We will also be a key support component in the upcoming Drexel Health model, which aims to align clinical care and clinical research across the University.

What are your favorite and least favorite tasks?

I enjoy diving into our clinical electronic health record systems and building solutions that improve the work experience for our providers and staff. My least favorite task is sifting through the hundreds of daily emails we get, but it is a very important task to make sure I am prioritizing resolutions, needs and goals for all the members we support.

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

My academic and work history were an unplanned journey toward IT clinical applications but greatly influenced how I aid people today. To help pay for college, where I studied brain and cognitive sciences, I worked in a 24-hour computing lab, where I learned how to support and train students on information technology platforms. I also worked in an auditory research lab performing mouse and human model studies, publishing research and presenting at many conferences. As a graduate student in audiology, I worked at several health care organizations and as a vision therapist, giving me an understanding of patient care models in academic and private institutions. I then worked for a premier otolaryngology private practice in Philadelphia with a large research and academic footprint, before starting with Drexel University College of Medicine as an IT clinical trainer in 2011. Later in my career, I earned a post-baccalaureate certificate in neuroscience, learning and online instruction from Drexel's College of Nursing and Health Professions, and completed my project management professional certification. My experiences in the areas of information technology, education, project management, research and clinical care help me see the big picture and needs of a complex academic and medical facility when presented with a problem or new project, and gave me the ability to manage technical details to successfully deliver on Drexel's clinical and research goals.



Tracy McSweeney
Director, Clinical Systems
Support for Drexel University
Information Technology

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

In the last few years, my team has moved to a fully remote model, so you will most often find me eating lunch in my kitchen or enjoying the weather outside on my deck.

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

I grew up outside of Chicago and learned to love the arts and music on our many visits downtown. When I moved to Philadelphia as an adult, I fell in love with how this city blends history, art and culture together. From impromptu concerts in parks to amazing shows at the Academy of Music or smaller venues like the Met or the Fillmore, you can always find my family heading out to enjoy concerts and performances all over the city and the surrounding suburbs.



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SAVE THE DATE FOR DISCOVERY DAY



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6

The College of Medicine's annual day of research will be held on Thursday, November 6, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.