

# NEWSLETTER

LONG SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## Office for Research



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### A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE DEAN FOR RESEARCH

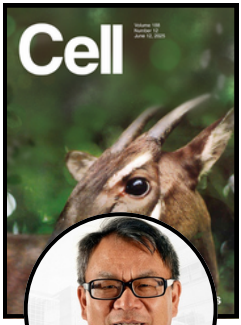
We are midway through 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect with deep appreciation on the many noteworthy accomplishments by our research community. Our research mission is rooted in discovery, innovation, and improving the lives of those who are affected by health crises. Our faculty, staff and trainees continue to make ground-breaking discoveries uncovering novel disease mechanisms that will shape the future of medicine with more precise and targeted therapies. These discoveries occur through interdisciplinary collaborations, and mentoring and training of the next generation of scientists who continue to move our research mission forward. The interest and involvement of our medical students and residents in our research programs is a stepping-stone for them to become future physician/scientists and uncover treatments for incurable diseases. The many high-profile research publications showcased in this newsletter are a reflection of the quality and depth of the work that is being carried out here at UT Health San Antonio.

On September 1, 2025, the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and the University of Texas at San Antonio will formally integrate to create a world-class, research-intensive, and clinically integrated university. We expect this new university will have supercharged research capabilities bridging biological investigations and health sciences-related research with artificial intelligence (AI) and biomedical engineering and will also create interdisciplinary learning opportunities for current and future trainees. The path forward for our research mission is to bring together the best and the brightest to forge new connections and collaborations, and to make use of the state-of-the art capabilities within our university. It is our hope that we will create new infrastructure that will guarantee our future success and place us competitively among the top tier universities in the nation. As you peruse this newsletter, you will appreciate the many achievements and discoveries by our investigators and trainees. Thank you for your continued dedication to excellence and for everything that you do to move our research mission forward and make lives better. Please reach out to our office if we can help you in any way in your research endeavors.

*-Manzoor Bhat, MS, PhD*

# MAJOR SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS

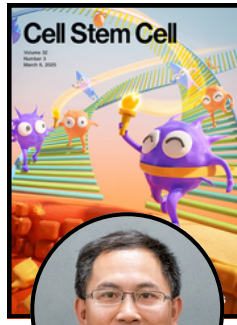
## *Pushing Science Forward*



**HONG-YU LI, PHD**  
Pharmacology



**PATRICK SUNG, DPHIL**  
GCCRI/BSB



**MINGJIANG XU, PHD**  
Molecular Medicine



**ANN V. GRIFFITH, PHD**  
MIMG



**DAOHONG ZHOU, MD**  
BSB



**ALEXANDER J. R. BISHOP, DPHIL**  
CSA



**ANDREW J. BRENNER, MD, PHD**  
Medicine



**LIZHEN CHEN, PHD**  
Barshop/CSA



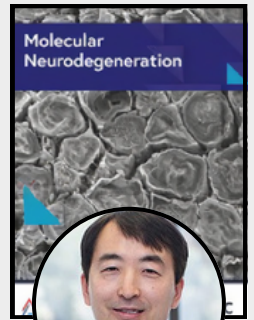
**DMITRI IVANOV, PHD**  
BSB



**MANJEET K. RAO, PHD**  
CSA



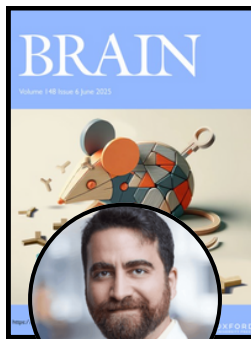
**LUKE NORTON, PHD**  
CSA/Medicine



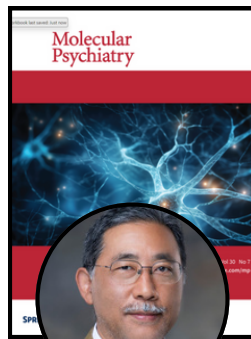
**LIANG MA, PHD**  
Biggs/Pharmacology



**GANG HUANG, PHD**  
CSA/Path. & Lab.  
Medicine



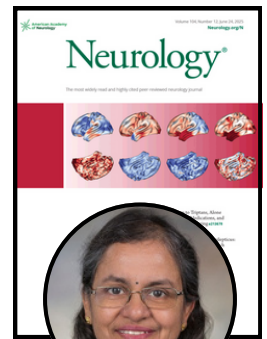
**MOHAMAD HABES, PHD**  
Biggs/Radiology



**NOBORU HIROI, PHD**  
Pharmacology



**DAVID LIBICH, PHD**  
GCCRI/BSB



**SUDHA SESHADRI, MD, DM**  
Biggs/Neurology



# MAJOR SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS

*Pushing Science Forward*



**SUNIL K. AHUJA, MD**  
Medicine



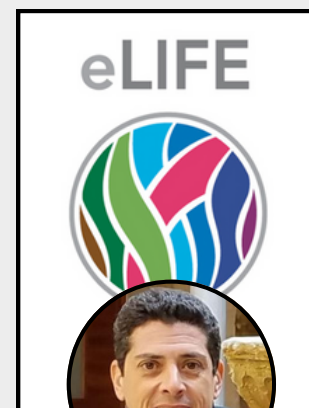
**NU ZHANG, PHD**  
MIMG



**DAVID GIUS, MD, PHD**  
Radiation Oncology



**PATRICK SUNG, DPHIL**  
GCCRI/BSB



**LUIZ PENALVA, PHD**  
CSA



THE NEW ENGLAND  
JOURNAL of MEDICINE

## CASE REPORTS



**NILAM J. SONI, MD,  
MS, FHM, FACP**  
Medicine



**MADELINE CONLON, MD**  
Medicine



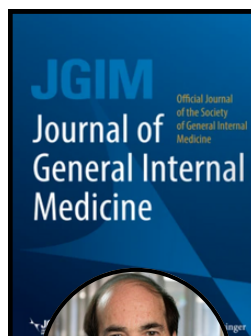
**KATIE MCBEE, MPH**  
Medical Student, MS3



**MONICA VEDUZCO-  
GUTIERREZ, MD**  
Rehabilitation Medicine



**IAN WHITNEY, MD**  
Orthopaedics



**JOEL TSEVAT, MD**  
Medicine/  
ReACH Center



**CHANCE C. MOORE, MD**  
Orthopaedics

Scan here to view  
select publications



Our LSOM faculty  
have published  
significant scientific  
breakthroughs in  
high-impact journals.  
Huge congratulations  
to their departments  
and research teams!

Long School of Medicine  
OFFICE FOR RESEARCH

# SCOPE INITIATIVE

## Strategic Collaborations for Programmatic Excellence

The LSOM Office for Research has established the SCOPE Initiative to promote and support collaborative, multidisciplinary team-based approaches in basic, translational and clinical research. We are in the process of developing broader high impact research programs to foster meaningful partnerships across UT Health San Antonio and UTSA. The Programs are led by distinguished investigators with junior and senior faculty as program members. Our ultimate goal for the Program teams is to formulate large collaborative multi-PI and program project grants to increase extramural funding. SCOPE Initiative Programs on Infection and Immunity, and Metabolic Health and Precision Medicine have already been established. Additional Programs will be developed over the next few months.

### Infection and Immunity Program Leadership



**Laurence Morel, PhD**

Professor and Chair  
Microbiology, Immunology and  
Molecular Genetics



**Barbara Taylor, MD**

Professor  
Department of Medicine  
Asst. Dean, MD/MPH Program  
Dir., Center for Chronic Infectious Diseases



**Astrid Cardona, PhD**

Chair and Professor  
Molecular Microbiology  
and Immunology, UTSA

### Metabolic Health and Precision Medicine Program Leadership



**Blake Rasmussen, PhD**

Professor and Chair  
Cellular and Integrative  
Physiology



**Kumar Sharma, MD, FAHA,  
FASN**

Professor  
Department of Medicine  
Dir., Center for Renal Precision  
Medicine



**Luke Norton, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Department of Medicine  
Dir., Center for Molecular Metabolism



FRANCISCO CIGARROA, MD

# GRANT WRITING ACADEMY

## Classes Starting Soon!

**Research Idea Development**  
September 9 - September 23

**Specific Aims Development**  
September 30 - November 4

**NIH R01 Grant Writing**  
November 11 - December 9

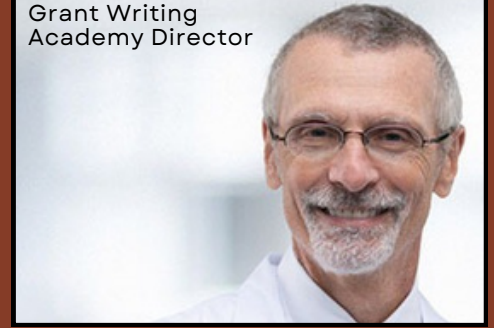
**One-on-One Review**  
December 9 - December 19

VIEW  
AGENDA

ENROLL

**DAVID GIUS, MD,PHD**

LSOM Assistant Dean for Research  
Grant Writing  
Academy Director



The LSOM Office for Research will host its annual Grant Writing Academy (GWA) from September 9-December 19. Designed as a hybrid program, it aims to foster collaboration between clinical and basic science faculty while providing targeted support for mid- and early-career investigators. The program is intended to help participants develop competitive grant proposals, strengthen research skills, and advance their academic careers through structured mentorship and peer engagement.



**VALENTINA R. GARBARINO, PHD**  
Assistant Professor  
Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and  
Neurodegenerative Diseases  
Cell Systems and Anatomy

## Spotlight on Dr. Valentina Garbarino: 2025 NACC New Investigator Award Recipient

We are thrilled to spotlight Dr. Valentina Garbarino of the South Texas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC), who has been awarded a prestigious 2025 New Investigator Award from the National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center (NACC) and the Alzheimer's Association®. This competitive award, which drew 138 proposals from early-career scientists nationwide, provides \$135,000 in direct funding to support innovative Alzheimer's research.

Dr. Garbarino's funded project investigates how chronic stress contributes to the risk of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. She is testing the potential of a blood-based biomarker—known as the Conserved Transcriptional Response to Adversity—to detect gene activity changes linked to long-term stress. This promising approach could offer clinicians a practical tool to identify at-risk individuals early, opening the door for preventive interventions.

Her success reflects the strength of the Grant Writing Academy's mentorship model and its role in advancing the careers of emerging leaders. Dr. Garbarino was also concurrently mentored by the NIH-supported South Texas ADRC-Research Education Components Mentorship program. Congratulations to Dr. Garbarino—and to the GWA team—for this milestone achievement!

*“Dr. Gius and the Grant Writing Academy provided valuable insight into the grant writing process with attention to how each aspect of our grants would be perceived by reviewers. His insight felt like insider information, that when applied, made my application stronger, and gave me greater confidence as an early career applicant.”*

Click to view  
the NACC  
announcement

# Research Mentorship Spotlight

The LSOM Office for Research celebrates the powerful role of faculty mentorship in supporting our learners. In this issue, we recognize Dr. Shweta Bansal for her outstanding mentorship of residents and Dr. Susannah Nicholson for her exemplary mentorship of medical students. While both faculty members mentor learners across all levels—from students to residents to doctoral trainees—their recognition highlights the unique ways they are helping LSOM learners excel in translational research and shaping the future of academic medicine.



Resident Mentor

**Shweta Bansal, MD, FASN**

Professor

Department of Medicine/Nephrology  
Director, CTSA-Hub Liaison Team  
Medical Director, Home Dialysis Program

“

*Dr. Bansal has been a great mentor in that not only has she provided guidance to gaining experience and exposure to the field of nephrology, but she has encouraged me to infuse my interests in health equity into renal medicine which has led me to work on a research project that represents the kind of skills and change I want to incorporate as a future nephrologist.*

—”  
- Melina Ortiz, PGY3  
Internal Medicine Resident



25+ mentees since 2011  
with cross-disciplinary  
mentorship experience



Mentored work resulted in  
poster presentations, journal  
publications, and successful  
grant applications



Medical Student Mentor

**Susannah Nicholson, MD**

Associate Professor

Department of Surgery  
Director of Trauma Research  
Associate Program Director for Research,  
General Surgery Residency

“

*Dr. Nicholson devotes a significant amount of time and energy towards training her students and promoting their career development. For example, she once organized a meeting with trauma faculty for me to practice a presentation with less than 24 hours notice. With her mentorship, I was able to merge my research skills with my passion for surgery.*

—”  
- Brent Janda, Class of 2026



Trained 20+ medical  
students, 10+ residents  
and a doctoral student  
since 2014



Mentored medical students  
contributed to ~1,000 hours  
of research



# Long School of Medicine OFFICE FOR RESEARCH



Register Now

## IMMUNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN TUMOR MICROENVIRONMENT

### LA FRONTERA

EXPLORING THE CUTTING EDGE OF SCIENCE

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**

**1:30 PM - 5:00 PM | LECTURE HALL, 3.102 B**

*Reception to follow*



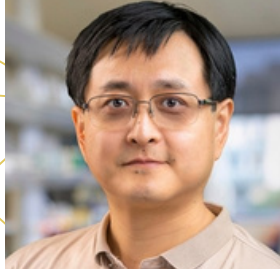
View the Agenda

#### MODERATED BY



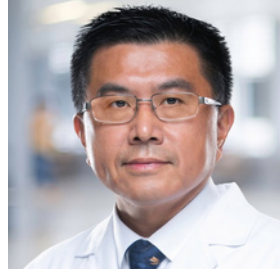
**LAURENCE MOREL, PHD**

Professor and Chair  
Microbiology, Immunology  
and Molecular Genetics



**NU ZHANG, PHD**

Associate Professor  
Microbiology, Immunology  
and Molecular Genetics



**LEI ZHENG, MD, PHD**

Executive Director  
Mays Cancer Center



**TIM HUANG, PHD**

Professor and Chair  
Molecular Medicine

#### DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



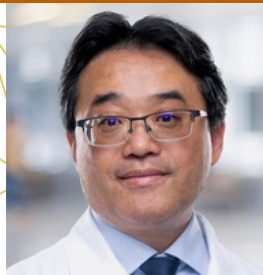
**DREW PARDOLL, MD, PHD**

Professor  
Johns Hopkins Medicine



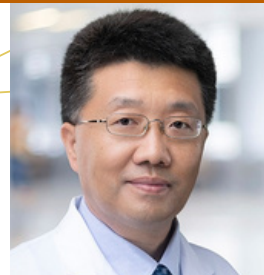
**JOSEPHINE TAVERNA, MD**

Associate Professor  
Medicine



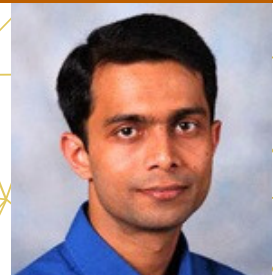
**CHIA-NUNG HUNG, PHD**

Assistant Professor  
Molecular Medicine



**GANG HUANG, PHD**

Professor  
Cell Systems and Anatomy



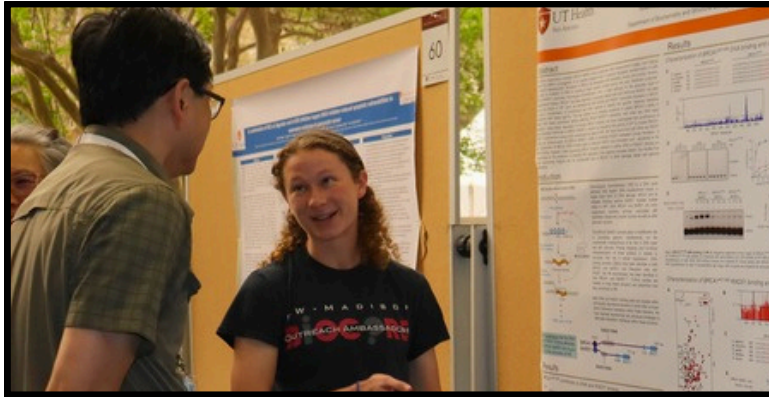
**MANJEET RAO, PHD**

Professor  
Cell Systems and Anatomy



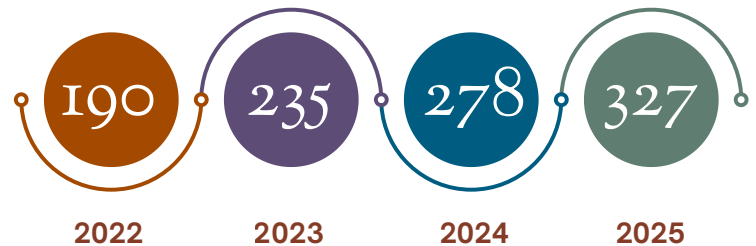
# Long School of Medicine RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

## 2025 Highlights



The LSOM Office for Research proudly hosted the 2025 Annual Research Symposium, marking a milestone year with a record-breaking 327 poster submissions from students, trainees, faculty, and staff across the LSOM community. The event showcased the breadth and depth of research excellence within our institution and fostered vibrant interdisciplinary collaboration and discussion.

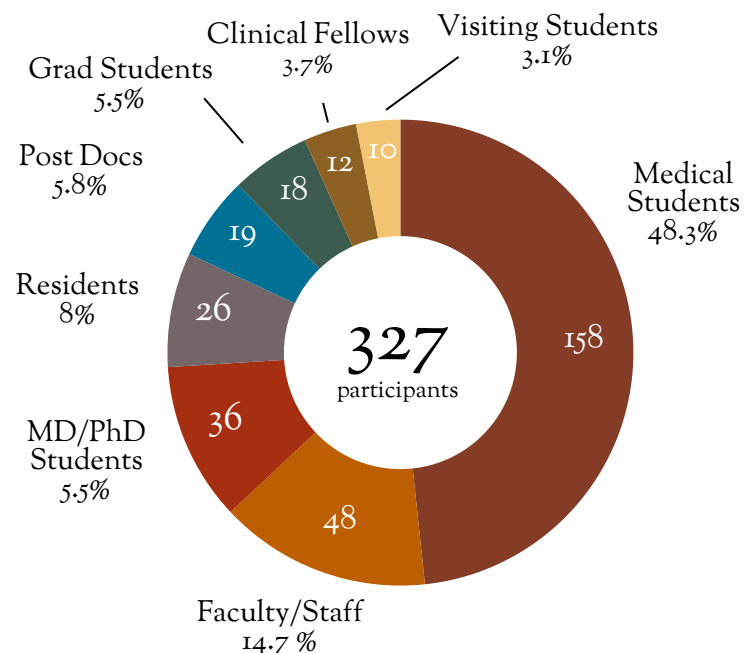
### TOTAL NUMBER OF RESEARCH POSTERS PRESENTED



### PERCENT INCREASE BY YEAR

average 20% year- over- year growth

### PRESENTER CATEGORIES



### POSTER CATEGORIES



# 2025 RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

## TRAINEE PODIUM WINNERS



**BRENT JANDA, BS, MS**  
MD Student



**JACK PROCHNAU, BS**  
MD/PhD Student



**URMI THAKER, MS**  
Graduate Student



**SONAL CHAUDHARI, MD**  
Clinical Fellow



**CANDICE VIEIRA, MD**  
Resident



**KRISTI DIETERT, PHD**  
Postdoctoral Fellow

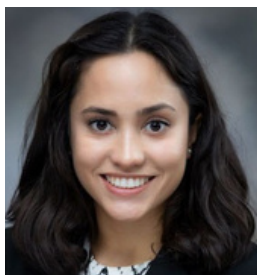
# CONGRATS!

The LSOM Office for Research proudly hosted the 2025 Annual Research Symposium, which saw a record-breaking 327 posters submissions from across the LSOM Community. From these, six exceptional posters were selected to be elevated to podium presentations, recognizing them as best overall poster winners. In addition, six trainees were recognized for outstanding presentations during the poster session and were awarded Best Poster Presentation honors.

## TRAINEE POSTER WINNERS



**VICTORIA VARGAS**  
MD Student



**DENE BETZ**  
MD/PhD Student



**CHRISTOPHER LITWIN**  
Graduate Student



**ASHLEY MONTGOMERY, DO**  
Clinical Fellow



**MAHWISH KHAN, DO**  
Resident



**SHIVA OSTADRAHIMI, MD, PHD**  
Postdoctoral Fellow



# Undergraduate Medical Education



**KATE LATHROP, MD**  
Assistant Dean for Medical  
Student Research

Welcome to a new academic year at the Long School of Medicine! As Assistant Dean for Medical Student Research, I'm honored to support your journey as future physicians. Our office is here to guide you at every stage of your research—from your first project to presenting your work—through seminars, workshops, and mentorship opportunities.

I encourage you to engage in our upcoming events, connect with mentors, and continue building the skills that will shape your professional growth and future success.

I look forward to celebrating your achievements and the impact you will make in advancing human health.

## Office Hours:

Wednesdays 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM  
Virtual or in-person., 342 F  
*Appointment Required.*



## CV WORKSHOP AND HEADSHOT SESSION

February 24, 2025



Medical students joined the LSOM Office for Research for a CV workshop and free professional headshots. The session shared practical tips for crafting a strong, research-focused CV to join a clinical or basic science group. Thanks to all who attended—we hope you left ready to present your best self with confidence.

## MD WITH DISTINCTION IN RESEARCH: CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS

January 22 and January 29

The LSOM Office for Research hosted Capstone Presentations honoring 15 medical students who earned the MD with Distinction in Research. Over two days, they showcased impactful projects spanning basic science and clinical topics—demonstrating the dedication and rigor behind this achievement. Congratulations to our distinguished graduates, and thank you to the faculty mentors and attendees who supported their journey.

## IRB PROTOCOLS

March 5, 2025

Thank you to all who joined our recent IRB process session! Students gained practical guidance on ethical research approval, compliance best practices, and available support—strengthening our community's commitment to integrity and excellence in research.



# NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

## MD with Distinction in Research

The MD with Distinction in Research acknowledges medical students who demonstrated a dedicated commitment to enriching their medical education with independent research while maintaining high academic standards during medical school.

Deadline to submit the  
*Intent to Apply* is **SEPTEMBER 1**

**Apply Now**

**Requirements**



The LSOM Office for Research regularly hosts student-focused research events designed to spark new opportunities, foster connections and build skills that will shape your growth as a scholar and future physician. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming sessions and supporting your growth.

Scan the code to explore our page for the latest information on upcoming events, past highlights, and helpful resources.

### Upcoming Events

# 2025

**3**  
SEPT

#### RESEARCH INTEREST GROUPS

Students will explore different research interest groups, learn about ongoing projects, upcoming meetings, research opportunities and get to meet other students with like-minded interests.

12:00 PM - 1:30 PM



**1**  
OCT

#### RESEARCH SEMINAR & SOCIAL

Join us to learn from leaders of UTHSCSA institutes, centers and department leaders about their work, available research opportunities, and tips on becoming an ideal mentee.

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM



**5**  
NOV

#### GETTING STARTED IN RESEARCH

Participants will learn how to identify research interests, explore available opportunities within LSOM and beyond, connect with potential mentors, and understand the basic steps to launching a successful research project.

12:00 PM - 1:00PM



# 2025 Residency MD with Distinction



“Clinical Effectiveness of Medical Marijuana in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis”

**John Austin**

**Mentored by**

Carlayne Jackson, MD, FAAN  
Department of Neurology



“Discharge Before Noon: Deployment at an Urban Safety Net Hospital”

**Ryan Bailey**

**Mentored by**

Gregory Bowling, MD and  
Ankur Segon, MD, MPH, MEd, FACP, SFHM  
Department of Medicine



“Assessing Health Literacy at the RBG Family Health Center”

**Abigail Davis**

**Mentored by**

Tharani Ravi, MD  
Department of Family Medicine  
and Community Medicine

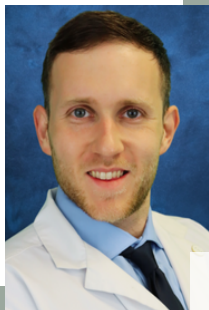


“Targeting APOBEC3A for Degradation to Reduce Liver Tumorigenesis by Degron Strategy”

**Nikita Jhangiani**

**Mentored by**

Harshita Gupta, PhD  
Department of Biochemistry and  
Structural Biology



“Evaluation of a Large Language Model’s Ability to Assist in an Orthopaedic Hand Clinic”

**Travis Kotzur**

**Mentored by**

Christina Brady, MD  
Department of Orthopaedics



“Meta-analysis of RCTs Evaluating EBRT vs TACE for HCC”

**Ryan Kuehnle**

**Mentored by**

Neil Newman, MD, MS  
Department of Radiation Oncology

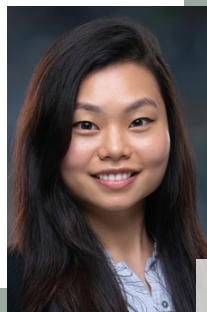


“Assessing Reproductive Health Literacy in Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities”

**Alison Stallings**

**Mentored by**

Angela Boyd, MD, PhD  
Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynecology

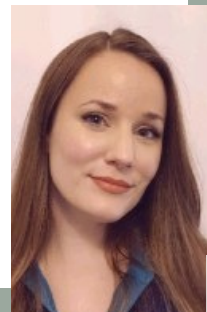


“Factors Associated with Inpatient Orthopedic Surgery Medicare Price Variation”

**Nasa Xu**

**Mentored by**

Christina Brady, MD  
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery



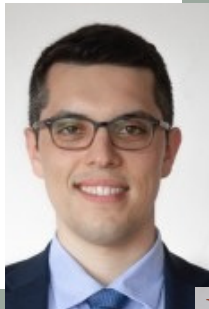
“Non-Trauma Whole Blood Resuscitation”

**Jessica Zapien**

**Mentored by**

Susannah Nicholson, MD  
Department of Surgery

# Recipients Distinction in Research



“Patients’  
Perceptions of  
Their Dry Eye  
Disease in  
Spanish-versus  
English  
Speaking  
Individuals”

**Rafael Heinz-  
Montoya**

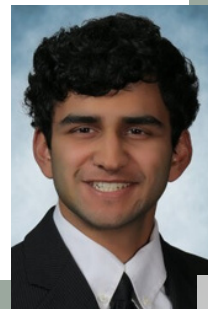
Mentored by  
Ahmad Kheirhah, MD  
Department of Ophthalmology



“Perioperative  
Factors  
Associated  
with Acute  
Kidney Injury  
Following  
Lung  
Transplant”

**Svaksha  
Iyengar**

Mentored by  
Edward Sako, MD, PhD  
Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery



“Socio-  
economic  
Disparities in  
Testis Cancer”

**Anand Iyer**

Mentored by  
Deepak Pruthi, MD  
Department of Urology



“Predicting  
Respiratory  
Hospitalizations  
in Extremely  
Premature  
Neonates with  
Transcriptomic  
Data and Machine  
Learning”

**Bryan  
McOmber**

Mentored by  
Alvaro Moreira, MD  
Department of Pediatrics



“The Impact of  
State-level Price  
Transparency  
Laws on  
Orthopaedic  
Charges”

**Andrew Ni**

Mentored by  
Christina Brady, MD  
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery



“Firearm Injury  
Prevention  
Education for  
Residents”

**Rithika  
Proddutoor**

Mentored by  
Katie Wiggins-Dohlvik, MD  
Department of Surgery

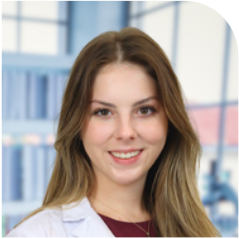
## Congratulations to our 2025 MD with Distinction in Research Recipients!

We are proud to recognize the exceptional achievements from the Class of 2025 graduates who earned the prestigious MD with Distinction in Research. Their dedication to independent inquiry, scholarly rigor, and research excellence embodies the highest standards of our academic mission. Please join us in applauding their tireless commitment to advancing medical knowledge.



# WELCOME 2025-2026 LIAISONS

The LSOM Office for Research is pleased to welcome our new Medical Student Research Liaisons for the 2025–2026 academic year. These students will serve as key links between the student body and our office, helping to share opportunities, support peers, and strengthen our research community. We look forward to the energy and perspectives they bring to this role.



Donese (Cole) Henneke



Tieker Duncan



Austin Flitton



Angela Ge



Freedom Green



Yousuf Hassen



Tausiful Hoque



Elaine Hwang



Andrew Jung



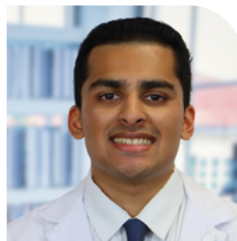
Carson Leavitt



Dara Love



Nicole Nguyen



Prem Patel



Yu Qin



Anchita Raybarman



Jacob Stallman



Aparna Tampi



Burak Torlak



Raymnd Wang



Alexander Weinstein

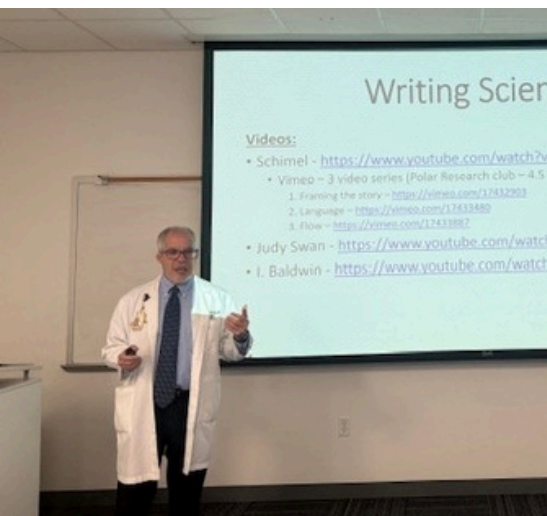
# Graduate Medical Education



JOSÉ E. CAVAZOS, MD, PHD  
Associate Dean for  
Resident Research Training

Thank you to all who joined our recent sessions on Writing and Presenting Your Science and Funding Opportunities for Residents and Fellows! Your engagement shows the growing momentum in our research community.

**Next up:** don't miss the NIH Clinical Trial Course info sessions—a great way to build your skills, strengthen your CV, and connect with a national network of clinician-researchers.



## Writing and Presenting your Science

May 8, 2025

This session equipped trainees with practical tools to effectively communicate their research in both written and oral formats. Participants gained strategies to present their science with clarity and confidence—whether preparing for a conference presentation or working toward publication.

## Funding Opportunities for Residents and Fellows

February 20, 2025

The session provided residents and fellows with valuable insights into the range of funding opportunities available to support their research projects. Attendees walked away with a clearer understanding of resources and strategies to help advance their scholarly work.

LONG SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
OFFICE FOR RESEARCH

## GME RESEARCH TRAINING

### INFORMATION SESSION

### NIH CLINICAL TRIAL COURSE:

### Introduction to the Principles and Practice of Clinical Research

your gateway to mastering clinical  
research- on your own time!

### What to Expect:

- 50 hours of expert-led lectures
- fully asynchronous format
- exam opens up in May
- Certificate of Completion awarded by NIH upon passing
- Covers foundation topics in:
  - clinical trial design
  - regulatory considerations
  - data management
  - biostatistics
  - ethical and practical aspects of human subjects research

### Upcoming info Sessions

Thursday, August 28

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

ALTC, 2.215

Friday, September 5

4:00 PM–5:00 PM

ALTC, 2.215

### Why take this course?

- Build critical research skills
- strengthen your CV for future academic or professional roles
- Learn from NIH experts at your convenience
- Join a national network of clinician-researchers

### Course Link and Registration

For questions or support during the course, contact Dr. José E. Cavazos at [cavazosj@uthscsa.edu](mailto:cavazosj@uthscsa.edu).

**Course Registration:** <https://ocrecod.nih.gov/courses/lppcr.html>

### Info Session Registration:

August 28 Info Session

September 5 Info Session

# Long School of Medicine OFFICE FOR RESEARCH

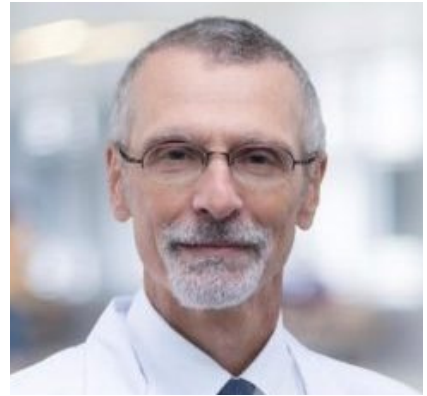
## MEET THE TEAM



Manzoor Bhat, MS, PhD  
Vice Dean for Research



Patrick Sung, DPhil  
Assoc. Dean for Research



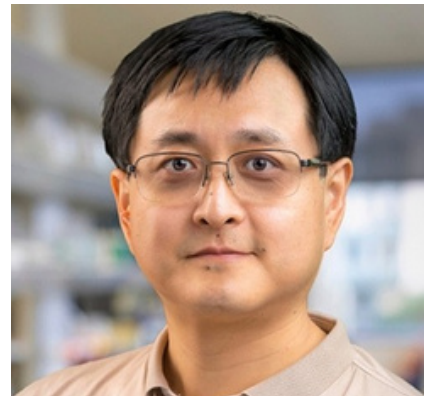
David Gius, MD, PhD  
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Kate Lathrop, MD  
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