

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

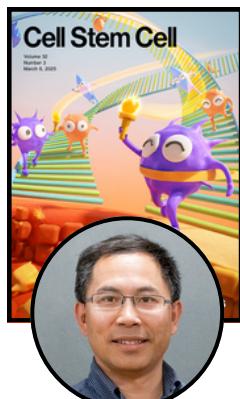
Pushing Science Forward



HONG-YU LI, PHD
Pharmacology



PATRICK SUNG, DPHIL
GCCRI/BSB



MING JIANG XU, PHD
Molecular Medicine



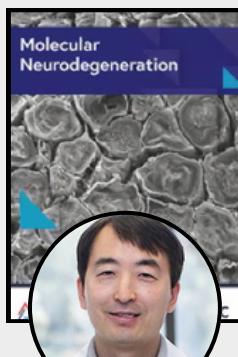
ANN V. GRIFFITH, PHD
MMG



DAOHONG ZHOU, MD
BSB



ALEXANDER J. R. BISHOP, DPHIL ANDREW J. BRENNER, MD, PHD
CSA Medicine



LIZHEN CHEN, PHD
Barshop/CSA



DMITRI IVANOV, PHD
BSB



MANJEET K. RAO, PHD
CSA



LUKE NORTON, PHD
CSA/Medicine



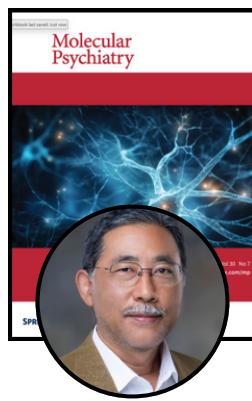
LIANG MA, PHD
Biggs/Pharmacology



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



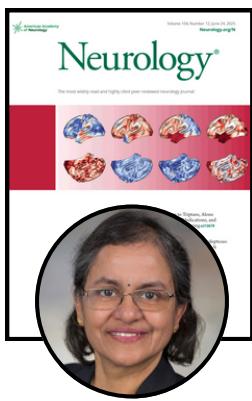
MOHAMAD HABES, PHD
Biggs/Radiology



NOBORU HIROI, PHD
Pharmacology



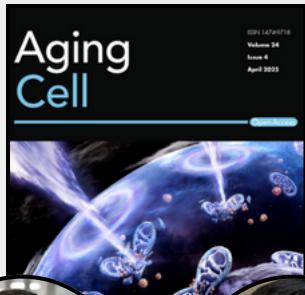
DAVID LIBICH, PHD
GCCRI/BSB



SUDHA SESHA DRI, 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



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



MADELINE CONLON, MD
Medicine



KATIE MCBEE, MPH
Medical Student, MS3

CASE REPORTS



MONICA VEDUZO-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



VALENTINA R. GARBARINO, PhD

Assistant Professor

Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and
Neurodegenerative Diseases
Cell Systems and Anatomy

“

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

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.

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!

Long School of Medicine
OFFICE FOR RESEARCH

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.



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



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



IMMUNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN TUMOR MICROENVIRONMENT

Register Now

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

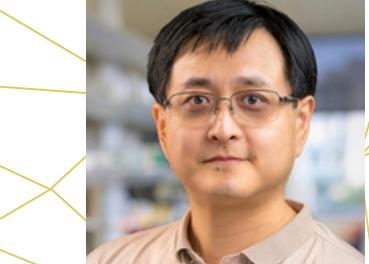
[View the Agenda](#)

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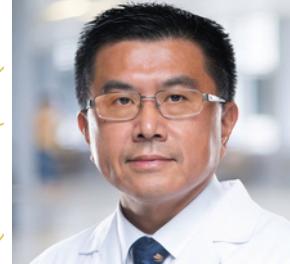
LAURENCE MOREL, PhD

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

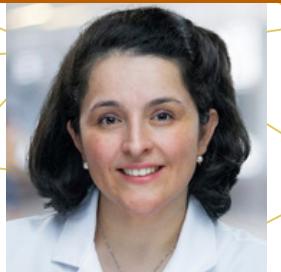
Professor and Chair
Molecular Medicine

DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



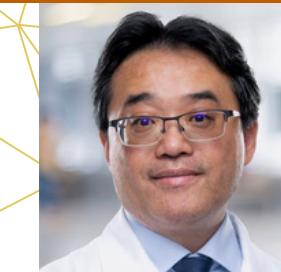
DREW PARDOLL, MD, PhD

Professor
Johns Hopkins Medicine



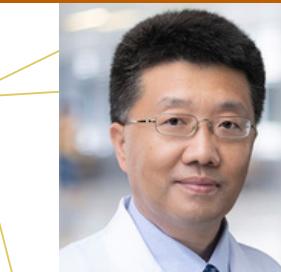
JOSEPHINE TAVERNA, MD

Associate Professor
Medicine



CHIA-NUNG HUNG, PhD

Assistant Professor
Molecular Medicine



GANG HUANG, PhD

Professor
Cell Systems and Anatomy

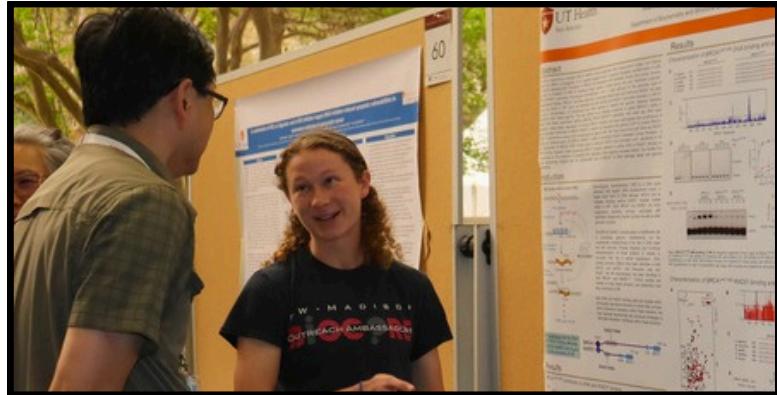


MANJEET RAO, PhD

Professor
Cell Systems and Anatomy

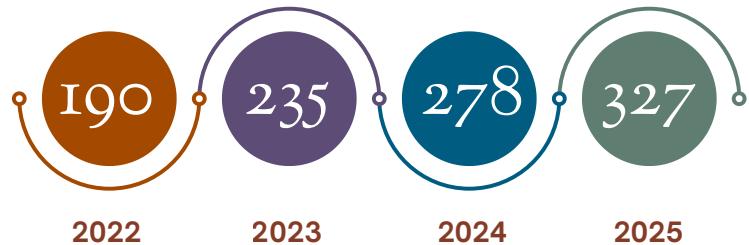
Long School of Medicine RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

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.

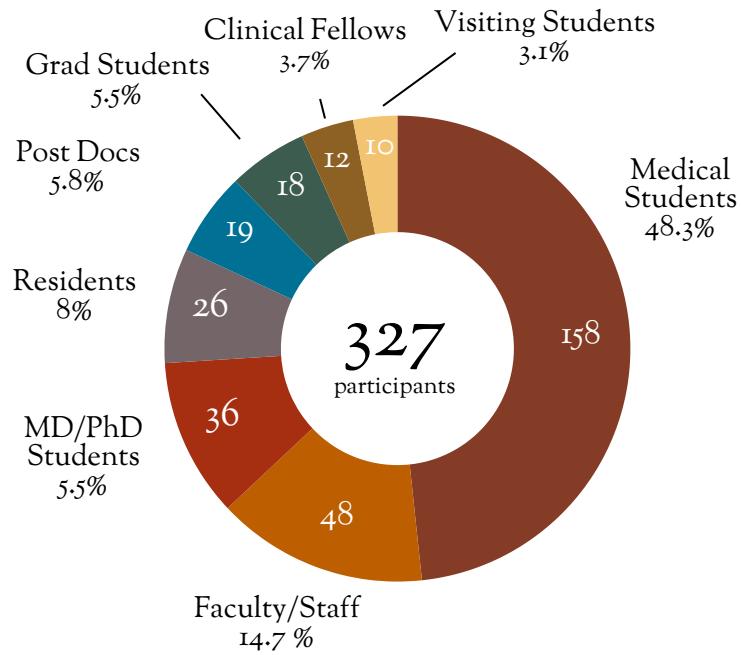
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESEARCH POSTERS PRESENTED



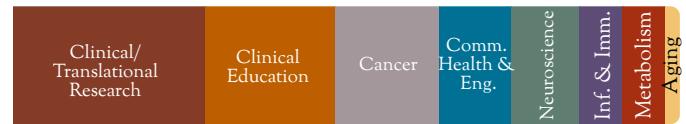
PERCENT INCREASE BY YEAR

average 20% year- over- year growth

PRESENTER CATEGORIES



POSTER CATEGORIES

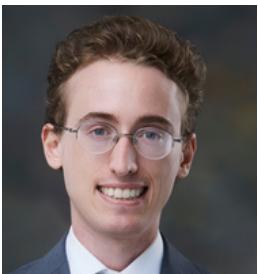


2025 RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

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

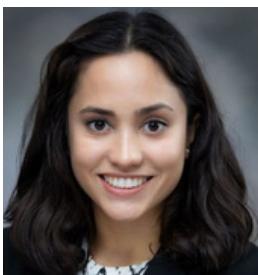
CONGRATS!

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.

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.

Office Hours:

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



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 Recipients MD with Distinction



“Clinical Effectiveness of Medical Marijuana in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis”

John Austin

Mentored by
Carlyne 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 of Distinction in Research



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

Rafael Heinz-Montoya

Mentored by
Ahmad Kheirkhah, 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

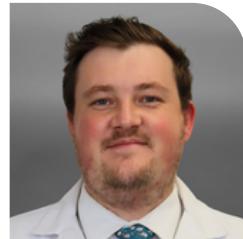
The LSOM Office for Research is pleased to welcome our new Medical Student Research Liaisons for the 2025-2026 academic year. These students will serve as key links between the student body and our office, helping to share opportunities, support peers, and strengthen our research community. We look forward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



Donese (Cole) Henneke



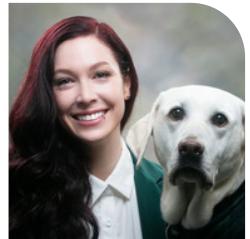
Tieker Duncan



Austin Flitton



Angela Ge



Freedom Green



Yousuf Hassen



Tausiful Hoque



Elaine Hwang



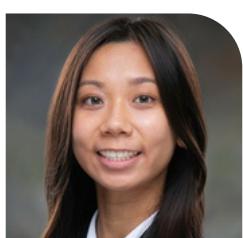
Andrew Jung



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. Cavares at cavazosj@uthscsa.edu.

Course Registration: <https://ocreco.od.nih.gov/courses/ippcr.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



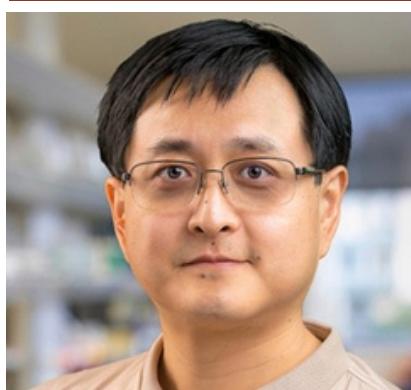
David Gius, MD, PhD
Asst. Dean for Research



José Cavazos, MD, PhD
Assoc. Dean- Resident Research



Kate Lathrop, MD
Asst. Dean- Medical Student Research



Nu Zhang, PhD
Director of Internal Review



Chris Valdez, PhD
Assoc. Dir., Research Operations



Jennifer Maldonado
Senior Program Coordinator