



School of Medicine

Office of Research 2025 Annual Report

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Message from the Vice Dean for Research

Blossom Damania, PhD

In 2025, the UNC School of Medicine (SOM) continued to advance our mission in research, clinical care, and education, supported by new leadership and a growing commitment to translational impact across UNC Health (UNCH). We marked several important leadership transitions, expressing deep gratitude to Dr. Wesley Burks for his visionary leadership of both the SOM and UNCH. We were also thrilled to welcome Dr. Cristen Page as Dean and CEO and Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody as Executive Dean of the SOM.

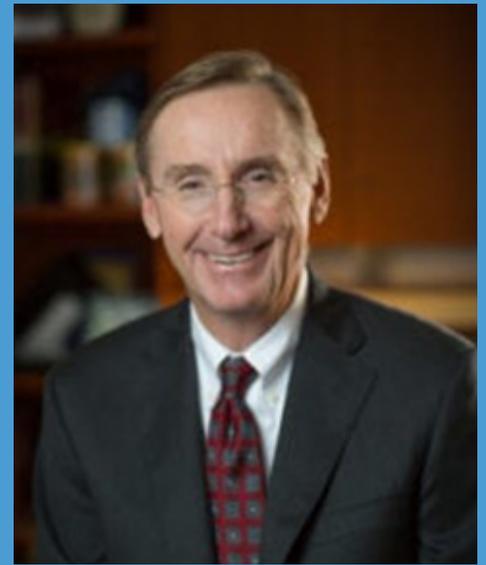
We welcomed new leadership to our research offices in SOM and UNCH, including Jen Jen Yeh as our Assistant Dean for Translational Research and Dedric A. Carter as Vice President for Commercialization and Translational Advancement, alongside new SOM department chairs and center directors whose vision strengthens our academic and research mission. From July 2024 through June 2025, research funding exceeded \$641 million, including \$345 million from the NIH, reflecting the tremendous dedication and resilience of our faculty, who submitted 15 percent more proposals despite a challenging funding environment.

This year also saw continued investment in research infrastructure, translational initiatives, and training for the next generation of physician scientists and biomedical researchers, aligned with the School of Medicine *Accelerate Forward Together* strategic plan and the UNC Health *Forward Together 2020* strategic plan. A transformative \$20 million investment from philanthropist Ross W. Lampe Jr. led to the renaming of the Lampe Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering, strengthening its mission to unite engineering and medicine to improve lives.

Our faculty continued to lead nationally, including representing UNC at the Rally for Medical Research in Washington, DC. The Office of Research enhanced support for investigators through vital Bridge Funding (including Sunset and Parachute awards), workshops, webinars, and our *AI in Research* series. We strengthened partnerships across the state through initiatives like the UNC SOM–Novant Health research pilots and continued to cultivate future leaders through programs such as Rising Stars, the Physician Scientist Training Program, and pilot grant mechanisms.

We concluded the year with significant national recognition, highlighted by the election of two faculty members, Drs. Meltzer-Brody and Ferris, to the National Academy of Medicine. As I look ahead, I am inspired by all we accomplished together in 2025 and remain committed to fostering innovation, collaboration, and impact across the School of Medicine and throughout the state of North Carolina.

Thank You to Dr. Wesley Burks



The UNC School of Medicine extends sincere appreciation to Dr. Wesley Burks, MD, as he concluded his tenure as CEO of UNC Health and Dean of the School of Medicine on September 1, 2025. Since assuming these roles in December 2018, Dr. Burks guided the institution through a period of significant growth and meaningful change.

During his six years of service, UNC Health expanded its reach significantly, adding hospitals, building new clinical and educational partnerships across North Carolina, and strengthening its statewide mission to improve health and well being. His leadership was instrumental in advancing the creation of North Carolina Children's, a landmark initiative that will include the state's first freestanding children's hospital, developed in partnership with Duke Health. This project reflects a long standing vision to elevate pediatric care and expand access for families across the state.

As Dean, Dr. Burks oversaw major gains in research, with School of Medicine funding approaching \$650 million in FY 24, and he championed the expansion of regional medical education through collaborations such as the UNC–Novant partnership in Wilmington. He also advanced behavioral health services by supporting the development of a dedicated youth behavioral health hospital.

Dr. Burks' tenure included the unprecedented challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, during which he led with clarity, compassion, and steadiness, helping UNC Health navigate the crisis without the workforce reductions experienced by many health systems. His commitment to teamwork, patient centered decision making, and mentorship has had a profound impact on the culture of both the health system and the School of Medicine.

A nationally recognized expert in food allergy research, Dr. Burks has also continued to shape the scientific landscape through studies that inform current treatment approaches. His contributions as a clinician, researcher, educator, and leader will leave a lasting imprint on UNC and on health care throughout North Carolina.

We thank Dr. Burks for his vision, service, and dedication and wish him well as he focuses on advancing North Carolina Children's and spending meaningful time with his family. His legacy will be felt for generations.



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New Leadership in the School of Medicine

Dean's Office and UNC Health System

Cristy Page – Chief Executive Officer, UNC Health; Dean, UNC School of Medicine

Cristy Page, MD, MPH, a long serving physician leader within UNC Health, was appointed Chief Executive Officer of UNC Health in November 2025. She also serves as Dean of the UNC School of Medicine and Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Page had held these roles on an interim basis since July 2025. Building on her deep leadership experience across UNC Health, she strengthens collaboration among clinicians, researchers, educators, and community partners to enhance care delivery statewide.

Samantha Meltzer-Brody – Executive Dean, UNC School of Medicine

Samantha Meltzer-Brody, MD, MPH, was appointed Executive Dean of the UNC School of Medicine in January 2025. In this role, she will provide strategic vision, leadership, and support to advance the school's mission across education, research, and clinical care. Dr. Meltzer-Brody will report to Cristy Page, MD, MPH, Chief Academic Officer of the School of Medicine and President of UNC Health Enterprises.

Jen Jen Yeh – Assistant Dean for Translational Research

Jen Jen Yeh, MD, was appointed Assistant Dean for Translational Research in the UNC School of Medicine Office of Research effective March 1, 2025. In this role, Dr. Yeh brings her extensive experience in clinical and translational research to advance UNC's mission of bridging scientific discovery with patient care. A Professor of Surgery and Pharmacology, Dr. Yeh serves as Co-Leader of the UNC Lineberger Clinical Research Program, and Director of the UNC Lineberger Pancreatic Cancer Center of Excellence.



Dedric Carter – Vice President for Commercialization and Translational Advancement, UNC Health

Dedric A. Carter, PhD, MBA, was appointed Vice President for Commercialization and Translational Advancement for UNC Health in December 2025. In this role, Dr. Carter leads systemwide efforts to translate research discoveries into clinical and commercial solutions that improve patient care across North Carolina and beyond. Building on his leadership as UNC's Vice Chancellor for Innovation and Chief Innovation Officer, he advances partnerships among researchers, clinicians, and industry and strengthens commercialization pathways for the UNC SOM and Health system.

New Leadership in the School of Medicine

Department Chairs and Center Directors

Neil Alexis – Director, Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma and Lung Biology

Neil Alexis, PhD, was appointed Director of the Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma and Lung Biology (CEMALB) in January 2025. A Professor of Pediatrics, Dr. Alexis has been a member of CEMALB since 1997 and most recently served as Associate Director of the Center. As Center Director, Dr. Alexis oversees CEMALB's extensive clinical research infrastructure and works to strengthen collaboration among researchers and clinicians across the UNC School of Medicine and the broader UNC campus.

Mara Buchbinder – Chair, Department of Social Medicine

Mara Buchbinder, PhD, was appointed Chair of the Department of Social Medicine in February 2025. A Professor of Social Medicine and adjunct Professor of Anthropology at UNC, Dr. Buchbinder previously served as Vice Chair of the department and is a core faculty member of the UNC Center for Bioethics. As Chair, Dr. Buchbinder leads the department's academic, research, and educational mission, building on its strong interdisciplinary foundation.

Lisa A. Carey – Executive Director, UNC Clinical Research Partners



Lisa A. Carey, MD, ScM, FASCO, was appointed Executive Director of UNC Clinical Research Partners (CRP) in July 2025 and Chief Clinical Research Officer of UNCH. An internationally recognized breast cancer physician researcher, Dr. Carey has led groundbreaking work on the molecular subtypes of breast cancer and their implications for treatment. As the leader of UNC CRP, a joint initiative of UNC Health and UNC Chapel Hill, she oversees efforts to expand clinical trials across the UNC Health system, strengthen partnerships with industry and non-federal sponsors, and increase access to innovative therapies for patients statewide.

Darren DeWalt – Chair, Department of Medicine



Darren DeWalt, MD, MPH, was appointed Chair of the UNC Department of Medicine in July 2025 following a national search. A Professor of Medicine, Dr. DeWalt previously served as Executive Director of the UNC Institute for Healthcare Quality Improvement and Chief of the Division of General Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology. An expert in primary care and innovative care delivery models, his research focuses on health communication, health literacy, quality improvement, patient reported outcomes, and alternative payment models. As Chair, Dr. DeWalt leads one of the School of Medicine's largest departments, advancing excellence in research, education, and patient care.

David Fleischman – Interim Chair, Department of Ophthalmology



David Fleischman, MD, was appointed Interim Chair of the UNC Department of Ophthalmology effective November 2025. A Sterling A. Barrett Distinguished Associate Professor, Dr. Fleischman previously served as Vice Chair of the department and as Director of the Glaucoma Fellowship and Ocular Trauma programs. He also holds the role of perioperative medical director at UNC Hillsborough. Dr. Fleischman's clinical and research expertise focuses on medical, surgical, and laser treatments for glaucoma and cataracts. As Interim Chair, he provides leadership for the department while a national search for a permanent chair is underway.

Kenan Penaskovic – Interim Chair, Department of Psychiatry



Kenan Penaskovic, MD, was appointed Interim Chair of the UNC Department of Psychiatry in March 2025. Prior to assuming this role, Dr. Penaskovic served as Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs in the Department of Psychiatry and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for the UNC School of Medicine. As Interim Chair, Dr. Penaskovic provides leadership for the department's clinical, educational, and academic missions while continuing to expand access to psychiatric services and support learner and faculty development across the School of Medicine.

Meghan Rebuli – Director, Curriculum in Toxicology and Environmental Medicine



Meghan Rebuli, PhD, ATSF, was appointed Director of the Curriculum in Toxicology and Environmental Medicine (CiTEM) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in January 2025. An Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Dr. Rebuli joined UNC in 2015, completing her postdoctoral training in inhalation toxicology at the Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma, and Lung Biology before joining the faculty. As Director, Dr. Rebuli leads CiTEM's academic and training mission, with a strong emphasis on mentorship, inclusive education, and preparing the next generation of environmental health scientists.

Crystal Schiller – Director, UNC Center for Women's Mood Disorders



Crystal Schiller, PhD, was appointed Director of the UNC Center for Women's Mood Disorders in April 2025. A clinical psychologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, Dr. Schiller has built a nationally recognized program of research and clinical care focused on perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. As Director, Dr. Schiller leads the Center's clinical, research, and educational missions, with a strong emphasis on improving access to specialized mental health care, advancing translational research, and training the next generation of clinician scientists in women's mental health.





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2025 University Distinguished Professorships

The Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost announced the recipients of the 2025 University Distinguished Professorships, recognizing faculty whose scholarly achievements, teaching excellence, and service exemplify the University's highest standards. This year's honorees included five outstanding faculty members from the School of Medicine:

- **Mohanish Deshmukh, PhD** – William R. Kenan, Jr. Distinguished Professor, Cell Biology & Physiology, School of Medicine
- **Dirk Dittmer, PhD** – William R. Kenan, Jr. Distinguished Professor, Microbiology & Immunology, School of Medicine
- **Bob Duronio, PhD** – Cary C. Boshamer Distinguished Professor, Biology (College of Arts and Sciences) & Genetics (School of Medicine)
- **Caterina Gallippi, PhD** – Kenan Distinguished Professor, Biomedical Engineering, School of Medicine
- **Jonathan Juliano, MD** – Cary C. Boshamer Distinguished Professor, Medicine, School of Medicine

These prestigious appointments celebrated the transformative impact and leadership of Carolina's distinguished faculty.



Mohanish Deshmukh, Dirk Dittmer, Caterina Gallippi, Bob Duronio
at the SOM Faculty Awards celebration in December.



Jonathan Juliano

SOM Accelerate FORWARD TOGETHER

Strategic Plan (2024-2029)

Research Pillar: Develop Tomorrow's Breakthroughs Today

Over the past year, we continued to implement strategic initiatives for the [Research Pillar](#) across several priority areas.

On the training front, the SOM Office of Graduate Education was rebranded as the **Office of Biomedical Science Training and Research (BioSTAR)**, to reflect the expanded reach of the office and its initiatives. With support from the SOM Strategic Plan, BioSTAR has developed new infrastructure for postbac students and postdocs. Launched in January 2025, the **Postbaccalaureate Research Initiative in Science and Medicine (PRISM)** was established to prepare postbac students in the sciences for entry and success into top biomedical PhD programs or medical schools. [PRISM](#) navigated its first year with 22 scholars across two cohorts. The Summer 2025 cohort included 5 PhD-track scholars, 3 MD-track scholars, and 2 MD/PhD-track scholars, while the Fall 2025 Cohort included 9 PhD-track scholars, 1 MD-track scholar, and 2 MD/PhD-track scholars. During their time in the program, scholars have worked as postbac trainees in several research labs and clinical spaces across the School of Medicine. Additionally, they have participated in various professional development workshops geared toward graduate school and medicine school admissions, in addition to enrolling in a graduate-level course. Several scholars have applied to PhD, MD, and MD/PhD programs in the current admissions cycle. PRISM is led by **Ms. Kaitlin Blakemore** (Program Coordinator), **Dr. Jonathan Schisler** (Faculty Director), **Dr. Donita Robinson** (Associate Dean for Graduate Education), and **Dr. Brian Strahl** (Associate Dean for Basic Research). Labs and research units interested in hosting PRISM students can contact Kaitlin Blakemore at blakek@email.unc.edu for more information.

As a new initiative within BioSTAR, **Promoting Postdoctoral Success (ProPS)** collaborates broadly with the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) (OPA) and external partners to amplify reach and to support postdocs and their mentors. The ProPS team has worked hard over the past year to strengthen postdoctoral training and faculty engagement across the School of Medicine by meeting with multiple departments to promote best practices in mentoring and reinforce faculty buy-in for professional development. Programming included a well-attended Fall Industry Skills series with 300 unique registrants, Tenure-Track Career workshops with faculty-led follow-up discussions, and a new chalk talk preparation initiative that integrates department chairs, junior faculty, and peer working cohorts. ProPS also advances community-building through postdoc socials, including events specifically for international postdocs and is co-sponsoring the high-profile 10th [Oliver Smithies Nobel Symposium](#) and associated postdoc-specific luncheon. Another new initiative recently launched is [PULSE](#) (Postdoc Upskilling in Laboratory & Specialized Expertise), which gives postdocs the opportunity to partner with Core Facilities to explore and build additional skills in month-long “internships.” ProPS is led by **Dr. Ashalla Freeman** (Senior Director for Trainee & Faculty Success), **Dr. Jason Franz** (Faculty Director for Postdoctoral Success) and **Dr. Patrick Brandt** (Senior Director of Career Development & Training). Stay tuned for more programming and resources to continue to make UNC a top choice for postdocs!

(Continued on page 11)

SOM Accelerate FORWARD TOGETHER

Strategic Plan (2024-2029)

(Continued from page 10)

SOM core facilities and access to state-of-the-art technologies and expertise are key to our continued research success. Over the past year, more than \$1.8M has been dedicated to supporting new equipment, method development, and core vouchers in support of our more than 80 cores. Strategic cost share support in collaboration with campus stakeholders also played a role in the award of a \$2M NIH grant to **Drs. Josh Strauss** and **Saskia Neher** to bring a second high-resolution Krios CryoEM microscope to the CryoEM core. An annual report describing the many core-related successes can be [found here](#).

The strategic plan continues to recognize the importance of improving and maintaining our shared equipment infrastructure within departments and centers. In FY26, more than \$500k in funding from the annual strategic equipment allocation supported equipment purchases for 17 SOM units.

The [SOM Physician Scientist Training Program](#) led by **Dr. Alex Duncan** continues to provide support for the critical pipeline of Physician Scientists who elevate translational research in the school. The FY26 cohort included 3 faculty and 1 fellow in Urology, ObGyn, and Medicine.

The Clinical Data Infrastructure has been significantly modernized and enhanced by the development of the new innovative [SHIRE](#) platform for the analysis of sensitive clinical data. This work was led by **Dr. Emily Pfaff** and **David McSwain**. SHIRE is a sophisticated, secure analytical platform for identified data, big data, ML/AI applications. The platform was built in collaboration with UNC Health, extensively piloted in the spring, and officially launched on November 3. OoR hosted a webinar for SHIRE in December as part of a series on *AI in Research* ([materials can be accessed here](#)). The new suite of clinical informatics tools also includes two additional platforms for analyzing deidentified data, [TriNetX](#) and [ORDR\(D\)](#).

In 2025, the SOM announced the UNC Clinical Research Partners (CRP), a joint effort between UNC Health and UNC-Chapel Hill to improve our clinical research environment. The UNC CRP is a component of the [Amplified Academics work under the UNC Health Forward Together 2030](#), the [School of Medicine: Accelerate Forward Together](#) strategic plan, and UNC-Chapel Hill's Strategic [Research Roadmap](#). Led by **Dr. Lisa Carey**, the UNC CRP is focused on maximizing clinical research in all fields of medicine sponsored by industry and other non-federal partners to coordinate clinical trials offered to UNC patients across the healthcare system, including patients from rural hospitals. It will leverage existing relationships and resources to advance our shared clinical and research missions. The CRP will officially launch in late March 2026.

Read more about the [Accelerate Forward Together Strategic Plan](#)



Research



Education



Patient/Clinical Care



People



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Office of Research and SOM Highlights

Rally for Medical Research

A delegation from UNC joined more than 400 advocates from across the country in Washington, D.C. to urge Congress to prioritize funding for medical research and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Participants met with Congressional staff and members to call for sustained investment to advance treatments, inspire hope, and improve public health. UNC School of Medicine faculty members **Jean Cook, PhD** (Biochemistry and Biophysics) and **Jen Jen Yeh, MD** (Surgical Oncology) were invited by the UNC Office of Research to join a delegation at an event on Capitol Hill. The itinerary was guided by Lanier Swann Hodgson, Vice President of State & Federal Relations for UNC Health and the UNC School of Medicine.



Jean Cook and Jen Jen Yeh in Washington, D.C.



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Office of Research and SOM Highlights

Office of Research Events

Over the past year, the Office of Research (OOR) hosted a series of programs designed to strengthen the SOM's research community and support investigators at every stage of their work. These events brought faculty, trainees, and campus partners together to explore emerging funding opportunities, learn from leaders in biotech innovation, and engage with new tools and approaches shaping the future of biomedical and clinical research. Through workshops, webinars, and multi session series, the OOR provided researchers with practical guidance, expert insights, and hands on perspectives that helped advance scientific discovery across the SOM.

Large Grant Workshop

The OOR hosted the [Resource Roundtable for Large Programmatic Grants](#) in July 2025. The session featured a panel of experienced faculty, including **Kathleen Caron, PhD** (Cell Biology and Physiology), **Kristina De Paris, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology), **Jonathan Berg, PhD** (Genetics), **Jen Jen Yeh, MD** (Surgery and Pharmacology), and **Robert Sandler, MD** (Medicine). Participants learned how to match project ideas with appropriate funding mechanisms, build effective research teams, and navigate the challenges of complex programmatic grants, gaining actionable insights that strengthened proposals for center level, programmatic, and ARPA H-style funding opportunities.

Curie.Bio Webinar

The OOR hosted a [Curie.Bio webinar](#) in September 2025, featuring speaker **George Voren, PhD**. The session introduced faculty and trainees to Curie.Bio, a next generation venture fund that supports biotech founders from early concept to clinic ready innovation. Participants learned about opportunities for partnering with Curie.Bio to accelerate therapeutic ideas, drug discovery platforms, and emerging biotech ventures.

AI in Research Webinar Series Highlights

Fall 2025, the OOR hosted a four part [AI in Research](#) webinar series showcasing how artificial intelligence is reshaping biomedical and clinical research at UNC. The series opened with **Dr. Melissa Haendel**, who discussed how AI and computational modeling are accelerating the validation of New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) and reducing reliance on animal models. The second session, led by **Peter Leese** and **Dr. Josh Fuchs**, introduced practical AI tools for researchers at all technical levels, demonstrating how large language models can assist with tasks ranging from simple text generation to full programming workflows. In session three, **Beth Moreton** and **Luke Barron** explored the use of AI in literature reviews, sharing insights from the Health Sciences Library's evaluation of tools like Elicit and Consensus. They highlighted both the promise and the ethical considerations of using AI in academic research, along with tools for data analysis and visualization. The series concluded with session four, where **Dr. Emily Pfaff**, **Paul Kovach**, and **Dr. JP Powers** introduced **SHIRE**, UNC's new Secure Health Informatics Research Environment. Attendees received a guided overview of accessing, analyzing, and budgeting for research using UNC Health EHR data, along with a preview of how SHIRE will support AI and LLM deployment in clinical research workflows.



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Office of Research and SOM Highlights

Office of Research Events

UNC School of Medicine Hosts Lab Tours for UNC Health Board Members

In May 2025, the UNC School of Medicine welcomed the UNC Health Board members for a series of laboratory tours highlighting the scope, impact, and translational strength of SOM research. Board members toured the [Biomedical Research Imaging Center \(BRIC\)](#), led by **Weili Lin, PhD**, (Radiology, Director of BRIC). Within BRIC, the group also visited the [Krishna Lab](#), led by **Vibhor Krishna, MD** (Neurosurgery). The tours also highlighted research within the [UNC Neuroscience Center](#), directed by **Mark Zylka, PhD** (Cell Biology and Physiology, Director UNC Neuroscience Center), an interdisciplinary hub linking basic and clinical neuroscience. Board members visited the [Scherrer Lab](#), led by **Greg Scherrer, PharmD, PhD** (Cell Biology and Physiology and Pharmacology), and the [Frohlich Lab](#), led by **Flavio Frohlich, PhD** (Psychiatry, Director of the Carolina Center for Neurostimulation). These visits underscored the School of Medicine's robust research enterprise and its commitment to translating discovery into improved health outcomes for North Carolinians.

Carolina Mentorship Network Launched to Support SOM Early-Career Scholars

Last summer, the UNC School of Medicine launched the [Carolina Mentorship Network \(CMN\)](#), an informal mentoring program designed to connect early-career scholars with experienced faculty. This volunteer-based network offers a supportive space for open conversation, career guidance, and personal encouragement as junior faculty, trainees, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students navigate the challenges of academic medicine. It is not a formal advising or evaluative program, but a collegial effort focused on building confidence, resilience, and community.

Annual Research Retreat

Department chairs and center directors gathered last August at the NC Botanical Garden for the Annual SOM Research Retreat to align strategic research priorities across the School of Medicine. The program featured leadership updates on the SOM research enterprise, clinical and translational initiatives, and efforts to modernize health data infrastructure.



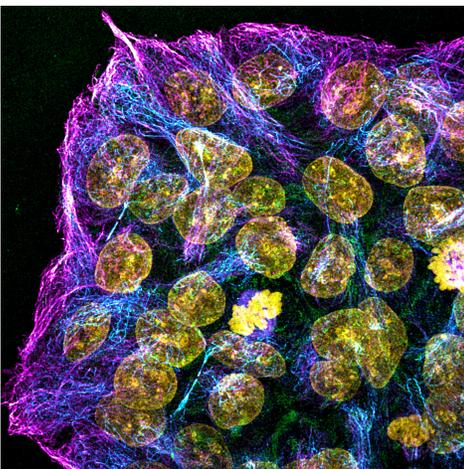


SOM Representation at UNC Research Week

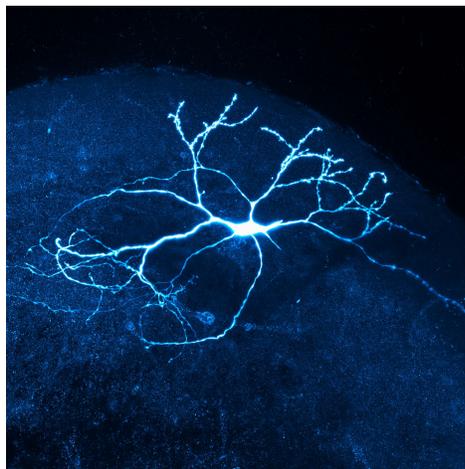
University Research Week returned from October 20–24, 2025, celebrating research across all disciplines at Carolina under the theme “UNC Research is North Carolina.” Throughout the week, School of Medicine faculty, staff, and trainees were featured across a range of programs and presentations, underscoring the School’s central role in advancing impactful, community driven research across the state.

- **Art in Science Competition Winners Display:** All week, Bondurant Hall showcased the winning images from the School of Medicine’s [Art in Science Competition](#). *Winning images below.*
- **2025 Hettleman Talks:** SOM [Hettleman Prize recipient, Sarah Cohen, PhD](#) (Cell Biology and Physiology), delivered an engaging presentation highlighting her innovative research.
- **Core Facility Technology Talks:** SOM core directors and experts led an afternoon of technology talks. Participants learned about new tools and techniques available through SOM’s [core facilities](#) and how these resources supported cutting edge research across campus.
- **Jefferson Pilot Fellowships & James Woods Award Seminar:** Faculty awardees gathered to present overviews of their research. This year’s [Jefferson Pilot Fellowship](#) recipients were **Bianca Allison, MD, MPH** (Pediatrics) and **J. Justin Milner, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology). The [James W. Woods Junior Faculty Award](#) was presented to **Matthew Vogt, MD, PhD** (Pediatrics and Microbiology & Immunology) and **Leon Coleman, MD, PhD** (Pharmacology).
- **Introducing BioSTAR:** The SOM introduced [BioSTAR](#), the Office of Biomedical Science Training and Research (formerly Office of Graduate Education). Attendees met the BioSTAR team, learned about new programs and training initiatives, and previewed the new branding, while exploring the office’s role in supporting SOM graduate and postdoctoral researchers.
- **Research & Discovery Fair:** The Research and Discovery Fair featured more than 25 labs and projects, including the SOM-affiliated [BME Applied Biomechanics Lab](#), the [CLEAR Core](#), and the [Carolina Center for Neurostimulation](#).

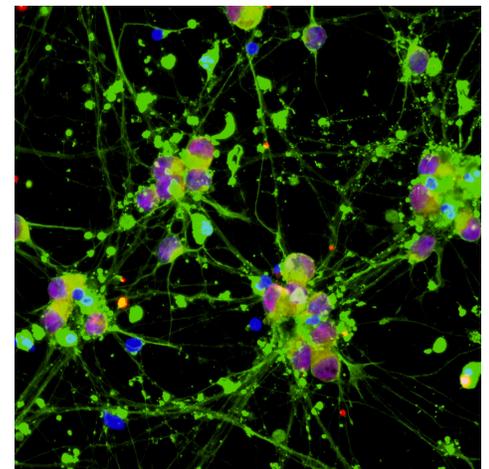
Art
in
Science



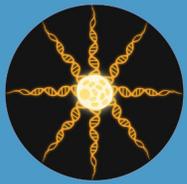
“Cracking the Secret Stem Cell Highways Behind Alzheimer’s Disease”
Chih-Hsuan Hsu and Sarah Cohen
Cell Biology and Physiology



“When the Stars of Sound Slowly Fade: Fusiform Cell Changes with Age-Related Hearing Loss”
Reginald Edwards and Paul Manis
Cell Biology and Physiology



“Neuronal Constellations: Imaging Human Neurons Derived from Stem Cells”
Alejandro Gomez, Ariana La Rosa, and Hyejung Won
Genetics



Office of Biomedical Science Training and Research (BioSTAR)

It has been an exciting and eventful year for the Office of **Biomedical Science Training and Research (BioSTAR)**, marked by the launch of new initiatives following our rebranding from the Office of Graduate Education. BioSTAR officially launched on October 22nd with a community Town Hall in Roper Hall, attended by approximately 100 students, postdocs, and faculty. The event featured an interactive poster session, raffle, and remarks from Associate Dean for Basic Research **Dr. Brian Strahl** and Associate Dean for Graduate Education **Dr. Donita Robinson**, reinforcing BioSTAR's mission and expanded scope.

In 2025, several long-standing grant-funded programs, including Postbaccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) and Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD), concluded. While the PREP "16" cohort marked the program's final year, it was among the strongest: 8 students matriculated into PhD programs, including two into UNC's BBSP, and three earned NSF GRFP awards or honorable mentions. With these programs sunsetting, BioSTAR launched new initiatives such as **PRISM**, **ProPS** (see strategic plan highlights) and **NOVA**, reaffirming our commitment to innovative recruitment, inclusive training, career development, and the removal of barriers to student success.

BioSTAR's expanded mission was matched by growth in staffing. We welcomed **Dr. Laetitia Meyrueix** (Assistant Director of TIBBS and Postdoctoral Scholar), **Dr. Amber Altriet** (TIBBS Postdoctoral Scholar), **Dr. Alexis Branch** (BBSP & Admissions Postdoctoral Scholar), and **Ms. Jaimee Zeyzus** (Business Officer). Together, they bring expertise spanning nutrition, biomedical research, admissions, and administration, strengthening BioSTAR's capacity to support trainees and programs.

Biological and Biomedical Sciences Program (BBSP). The near record 110 BBSP students who entered in Fall 2024 successfully completed their first year, with 109 joining thesis labs despite significant federal funding uncertainty. BBSP students earned numerous national honors, including an HHMI Gilliam Fellowship (**Celeste Robles**) and multiple NSF GRFP awards and honorable mentions. BBSP is led by **Dr. Dave McDonald** (Senior Director), **Ms. Kaitlin Blakemore** (Student Services Manager), and **Dr. Michelle Itano** (Faculty Director), with support from faculty teaching in BBSP First Year Groups.

The 2025 admissions cycle was particularly challenging, with a record 2,431 applications, a 10% increase over 2024. The process relied on the dedication of eight committee chairs, 124 admissions committee members, and 274 faculty interviewers who evaluated 451 finalists. Unexpected changes to federal funding required a reduction in the target class size; nevertheless, BBSP successfully recruited a highly competitive cohort of 64 students (including two deferrals from 2024), resulting in a 5% acceptance rate. This small but exceptional class includes a [Royster Society fellow](#) (**Sophie Kiehl**). Strategic changes to the admissions process reduced faculty workload while maintaining excellence.



Office of Biomedical Science Training and Research (BioSTAR)

(Continued from page 16)

BBSP admissions and recruitment were led by **Mr. Jeff Steinbach** (Director of Admissions), **Ms. Melissa Graves** (Assistant Director), **Dr. Terry Furey** (Faculty Director), **Dr. Alexis Branch**, and **Dr. Scott Williams** (Assistant Dean of Graduate Education).

Guiding Emerging New Experts in STEM Interdisciplinary Sciences ([GENESIS](#)). GENESIS is a biomedical PhD-focused initiative that supports undergraduate summer research programs through professional development workshops in research ethics, scientific communication, graduate school preparation, and wellness, while fostering community through socials and interactive activities. BioSTAR now provides GENESIS programming for 18 programs. The 2025 GENESIS Summer Research Symposium featured 103 presenters and more than 300 attendees. GENESIS also successfully worked with the Graduate School to secure BBSP application fee waivers for program participants. The program is led by **Dr. Christiann Gaines** (Director of Doctoral Success and Scientific Outreach).

Navigating Obstacles with Vision and Aspiration (NOVA). Launched in 2025, NOVA supports incoming BBSP students as they transition academically, socially, and culturally into graduate school. Inspired by the former IMSD program and distinct from BBSP First Year Groups, NOVA is open to all first-year BBSP students. The program begins with a week-long pre-orientation bootcamp that introduces graduate school expectations, connects students with peer mentors, and engages them in journal clubs, graduate-level coursework, exam preparation, and community-building activities. NOVA continues throughout the year with advising pods, check-ins, and monthly socials that support thesis lab selection and help students navigate the hidden curriculum of graduate training. Popular offerings include “focus and flow” work sessions that provide structured, communal time to complete coursework and milestones. More than one-third of the incoming class participated in the inaugural cohort, with engagement increasing over the year. A long-term goal of NOVA is to partner with graduate programs to support adoption of similar transition and mentoring practices. NOVA is led by **Dr. Christiann Gaines**.

Student support initiatives.

Dr. Laura Hawkins, Director of the Learning and Work Environment, continued to provide confidential consultation, mediation, and professional development to foster respectful and supportive lab and learning environments. She also administers the BioSTAR Short-Term Emergency Fund, supported by the [UNC Health Foundation](#), which provided emergency assistance to six basic sciences PhD students this year.

BioSTAR also offers [Laser Coaching](#), a free, goal-oriented coaching service for trainees addressing topics such as research progress, career development, leadership, and work-life harmony. Coaching is provided by **Drs. Ashalla Freeman, Laura Hawkins, Donita Robinson, and Wendy Sarratt** (Associate Director, Planning and Administration, Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center).





School of
Medicine

Upcoming Events and Office of Research Funding Deadlines

10th Annual Oliver Smithies Nobel Symposium Featuring Dr. Jennifer Doudna

Join us for the [10th Annual Oliver Smithies Nobel Symposium](#) featuring **Dr. Jennifer Doudna**, 2020 Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry and a pioneer of CRISPR gene editing technology. Dr. Doudna, a Distinguished HHMI Investigator at UC Berkeley, director of the Innovative Genomics Institute, and co founder of Mammoth Biosciences, will deliver a keynote titled “**CRISPR-powered gene editing for human and planet health.**” Don’t miss this chance to hear one of the world’s most influential scientists reflect on the breakthroughs that transformed modern biology and medicine.

 **Date: Thursday, March 26, 2026**

 **Time: 3:00 – 4:30 PM**

 **Location: MBRB, Room 2204**



For more about the Oliver Smithies Symposium, visit: <https://go.unc.edu/Oliver-Smithies>

Next Bridge and Boost Funding Deadlines: May 1, 2026

The School of Medicine Office of Research invites faculty to apply for Bridge and Boost Funding to support research projects in need of additional resources to secure external funding.

- **Bridge Funding:** Provides interim support for ongoing research projects awaiting grant renewal. Applications are due **May 1, 2026**.
- **Boost Funding:** Aims to enhance the competitiveness of new grant proposals by funding additional revisions or preliminary data collection. Applications are also due **May 1, 2026**.

Eligibility criteria and application requirements for both [Bridge](#) and [Boost](#) programs are detailed on our website.



School of
Medicine

Dean's Office Research Award Recipients

Jefferson-Pilot Fellowships in Academic Medicine

The 2025-26 recipients of the [Jefferson-Pilot Fellowships in Academic Medicine](#) were **Bianca Allison, MD, MPH**, and **J. Justin Milner, PhD**. They both provided seminars on their work and future research directions on October 21, 2025, during UNC Research Week.

Bianca Allison, MD, MPH - Associate Professor of Pediatrics

Dr. Allison has rapidly developed a nationally recognized research program focused on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, emphasizing equity, autonomy, and patient-centered care. Dr. Allison's work is transforming how clinicians support adolescents in making informed, autonomous decisions about their reproductive health. Dr. Allison's Jefferson-Pilot talk was entitled, "Increasing Adolescents' Access to Equitable Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare."

J. Justin Milner, PhD - Assistant Professor, Microbiology & Immunology

Dr. Milner has established a dynamic, multidisciplinary lab that integrates genomics, molecular biology, and immunology to develop new strategies for reprogramming T cell activity in cancer and infection. He has published more than 40 papers, secured over \$5 million in research funding, and is recognized internationally for his innovative approaches to cancer immunotherapy. His talk was entitled, "Reprogramming T cell activity to enhance cancer immunotherapies".





School of
Medicine

Dean's Office Research Award Recipients

James W. Woods Junior Faculty Award

The winners of the [James W. Woods Junior Faculty Award](#) were **Matthew Vogt, MD, PhD**, and **Leon Coleman, MD, PhD**. The recipients also presented during UNC Research Week on October 21, 2025.

Matthew Vogt, MD - Assistant Professor, Pediatrics and Microbiology & Immunology

Dr. Vogt leads research focused on understanding and preventing severe viral infections in children, particularly enteroviruses and parechoviruses. At UNC, he directs a multidisciplinary lab advancing the study of severe pediatric viral diseases. His talk was entitled, "Protecting the most vulnerable: a multifaceted approach to studying picornaviruses that cause severe disease in children."

Leon Coleman, MD, PhD - Assistant Professor, Pharmacology

Dr. Coleman is a physician scientist whose work spans neuropharmacology, immunology, and translational medicine. His research has led to the discovery of novel diagnostic and therapeutic targets for Alzheimer's disease, alcohol use disorder, and trauma, including patented gene therapies and innovative approaches to cancer immunotherapy. His talk was entitled, "Leveraging risk factors to define novel therapeutic targets."

Hyman L. Battle Distinguished Cancer Research Award

Dale Ramsden, PhD - Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics

Dale Ramsden, PhD, received the 2024-25 [Hyman L. Battle Distinguished Cancer Research Award](#) in recognition of his pioneering work on how cells repair DNA double strand breaks. His research has significantly advanced understanding of the mechanisms that maintain genome stability and prevent cancer causing mutations, including defining key end joining pathways, identifying a polymerase theta backup system with important implications for hereditary breast cancer, and demonstrating that RNA can participate in repairing chromosomal damage.





School of
Medicine

Dean's Office Programs

UNC SOM Rising Stars Program

The UNC SOM [Rising Stars Program](#) broadens participation among basic science faculty by preparing postdoctoral scholars for success in the faculty interview process. Traditionally a two day, in person campus visit, the program transitioned to a virtual format in 2025. Participants engaged in mock faculty interviews that included screening interviews, job talks, one on one meetings with department faculty, and informal conversations with department chairs, administrators, and trainees, along with structured guidance on developing effective chalk talks.

Three awardees were selected for the 2025 cohort: **Juan Carvajal Garcia, PhD** (Vanderbilt University), **Kendall Lough, PhD** (UNC SOM), and **William “Jake” Wright, PhD** (University of California–San Diego). Since its launch in 2022, the program has selected 18 Rising Stars awardees. Of these, 2 have pursued careers outside academia, while 16 remain on academic pathways, including 6 postdoctoral fellows, 7 assistant professors (two at UNC SOM), and 3 research associates or instructors.

Physician Scientist Training Program (PSTP)

The SOM is committed to advancing research across the translational spectrum and recognizes the essential role Physician Scientists play in bridging basic science and clinical research to improve patient care. In alignment with the SOM Strategic Plan the [Physician Scientist Training Program \(PSTP\)](#) continues to support the career development of Physician Scientist trainees as they transition toward faculty roles. PSTP serves as a pipeline to recruit, train, and retain highly promising individuals within our clinical programs, providing targeted mentorship and resources to foster long term research careers.

PSTP supports Physician Scientists at two key stages: during residency or fellowship and at the early stage faculty level. In partnership with trainees’ home departments, the program provides funding to support protected research time and offers a structured career development community that connects participants with peer Physician Scientists across clinical disciplines.

[2025 PSTP Cohort](#)



Jeffrey Jensen, MD, PhD
Medicine
Resident / Fellowship Level



Kathryn Gessner, MD, PhD
Urology
Faculty Level



Simon Gray, MD, PhD
Medicine
Faculty Level



Lauren Kucirka, MD, PhD
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Faculty Level



School of
Medicine

SOM and Office of Research Funding Award Recipients

2025 Translational Team Science Awards

The [Translational Team Science Awards \(TTSA\)](#) program supports new interdisciplinary teams of basic scientists and clinicians in launching translational pilot projects that lay the foundation for external funding and sustained collaboration. In 2025, three teams received Phase 1 awards and one received a Phase 2 award.

Phase 1 Recipients:

- **Matthew Vogt, MD, PhD** (Pediatrics) & **Jason Whitmire, PhD** (Genetics), “Immunologic determinants of enterovirus D68 neuropathogenesis”.
- **Sylvia Becker-Dreps, MD, MPH** (Family Medicine) & **Premkumar Lakshmanane, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology), “Defining the immune response to rotavirus vaccines to guide next-generation vaccine development”.
- **Tessa Andermann, MD, MPH** (Medicine) & **Brian Conlon, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology), “Beyond antimicrobial resistance: Bacterial strategies for persistence in the gut microbiome during antibiotic treatment”.

Phase 2 Recipients:

- **Leon Coleman, MD, PhD** (Pharmacology) & **Zibo Li, PhD** (Radiology), “A New Translational Team for Early Diagnosis and Prevention of Alzheimer’s Disease”.

2025 Emerging Challenges in Biomedical Research Pilot Grants

The SOM Office of Research sponsors the annual [Emerging Challenges in Biomedical Research \(ECBR\)](#) pilot program that supports innovative, early-stage research aligned with external strategic priorities. The Fall 2025 round focused on advancing translational biomedical research through New Approach Methodologies/Non-Animal Models (NAMs) and New Approach Technologies (NATs). Five teams received ECBR funding:

- **Sarah Shelton, PhD** (Biomedical Engineering), with **Brian Miller, MD, PhD** (Oncology), and **Gianpietro Dotti, MD** (Microbiology & Immunology), “A New Approach Method for the Discovery of Targets to Improve CAR T Cell Therapy”.
- **Douglas M. Cyr, PhD** (Cell Biology and Physiology), “The Mechanism for ProSP-C173T Proteotoxicity in Idiopathic Lung Fibrosis”.
- **Cyrus Vaziri, PhD** (Pathology & Laboratory Medicine), with **Jessica Bowser, PhD** (Pathology), and **Victoria Bae-Jump, MD, PhD** (OBGYN/Oncology), “Defining Molecular Vulnerabilities of Metastatic Cancer Spheroids Using Non-Animal Models”.
- **Sarah Rowe-Conlon, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology), **Tessa Andermann, MD, MPH**, (Medicine/Infectious Diseases), and **Adriana Beltran, PhD** (Genetics/HPCC), “Human Liver Organoid Model to Phenotype Hypervirulent *Klebsiella pneumoniae* Clinical Isolates”.
- **Timothy P. Moran, MD, PhD** (Pediatrics), “Development of a Human Lymphoid Organoid Model to Study Food Allergy Immunotherapy”.



School of
Medicine

SOM and Office of Research Funding Award Recipients

2025 Faculty Collaborative Research Chat (FCRC) Award

The [Faculty Collaborative Research Chat Awards](#) provide small grants to help UNC faculty spark new interdisciplinary collaborations through focused, idea driven meetings held over several months. The program encourages basic and clinical scientists, as well as early career and senior faculty, to explore emerging research directions beyond their current work. Recipients of 2025 FCRC Awards:

- **Puneet Jolly, MD, PhD** (Lead, Dermatology), **Lynn Damitz, MD** (Plastic Surgery), and Jillian Perry, PhD (Pharmacy), “Potential use of 3D printed microneedles for drug delivery to cutaneous disease”.
- **Yuri Fedoriw, MD & Amy Brownlee, MD** (Leads, Path & Lab Med), with researchers from: Medicine, Pediatrics, Genetics, LCCC, Health Policy and Management, IGHD, Data Science and Society, Pharmacy, “Developing impactful program projects on lymphomagenesis, interventional trials, and diagnostic testing”.
- **Rohan Patel, MD** (Pediatrics), with researchers from: Pediatrics, OBGYN, Medicine, Allied Health Sciences, “Building Research Collaborations: Identifying Pilot Projects and Grant Opportunities”.
- **Matt Mauck, MD, PhD** (Anesthesiology), with researchers from: Anesthesiology, Psychiatry, OBGYN, Path & Lab Med, Cell Biology & Physiology, Pharmacology, and Eshelman School of Pharmacy, “Creating an interdisciplinary network for pain research at UNC”.
- **Martin Moya, MD** (Pediatrics, Wilmington) & **Misty Good** (Pediatrics, UNC-CH), with researchers from: Marsico Lung Institute, UNC Cystic Fibrosis Center, NCSU Veterinary Medicine, “Therapeutic and Toxic Implications of Nitric Oxide in Pulmonary Homeostasis and Ethyl Nitrite as a Novel Therapeutic Agent”.

OOR Bridge and Boost Funding Support

The Office of Research’s regular Bridge and Boost pilot programs provide ongoing, strategic support to help School of Medicine faculty sustain momentum and remain competitive for external funding. Together, these programs awarded nearly **\$700,000** in grant support to SOM faculty in 2025. [Bridge funding](#) is a critical resource for SOM faculty, with a high proportion of awardees successfully renewing their NIH support following resubmission. [Boost funding](#) supports projects that require additional data or refinement following a favorable peer review, particularly for new investigators or complex, multi PI proposals. Collectively, these mechanisms reflect the School of Medicine’s long standing commitment to stabilizing research programs and accelerating competitive resubmissions.

In response to the federal funding uncertainties of 2025, the Office of Research also made targeted investments through the Parachute and Sunset funding programs, providing a total of **\$1.5 million** to help investigators manage unexpected funding disruptions. The [Parachute Fund](#) offered short term support for laboratories awaiting highly fundable NIH renewals, while the [Sunset Fund](#) assisted teams whose active grants were unexpectedly terminated. Together, these targeted interventions helped laboratories retain personnel, preserve research continuity, and navigate an unusually challenging funding landscape.



School of
Medicine

SOM and Office of Research Funding Award Recipients

UNC SOM-Novant Health Research Pilots

UNC School of Medicine and Novant Health continue to expand their collaborative research infrastructure in coastal North Carolina through a series of jointly led clinical research awards. Over the past two years, the partnership has invested \$3 million to launch six major clinical studies. Each project pairs UNC-Chapel Hill investigators with Novant Health physicians in Wilmington, strengthening regional research capacity and advancing care for patients across southeastern North Carolina.

May 2025 Pilot Awards

- **Ben Chi, MD, MSC** (OBGYN) and **Katelyn Rittenhouse, MD** (OBGYN), alongside Drs. Lindsey Buckingham, MD, and Ashwin Patel, MD, from Novant Health, “Democratizing obstetric ultrasound on the North Carolina Coast: an innovation research platform”.
- **Jared Gallaher, MD** (Surgery), **Clara Lee, MD, MPP, FACS** (Surgery) and **Jessica Schumacher, PhD** (Surgical Oncology), along with Novant Health’s Dr. William Hope, MD, “Building an Implementation Science Network to Reduce Post Operative Opioid Prescribing in Coastal NC”.

November 2025 Pilot Awards

- **Sidney Barritt, MD** (Medicine), **Donna Evon, PhD** (Medicine), and Minzhi Xing, MD, MPH (Public Health), with Novant Health collaborators Drs. Charin Hanlon and Meredith Holt, “Patient-Centered Research Capacity Building for Chronic Liver Disease in Coastal NC: A Multidisciplinary Collaboration”.
- **Joe Hart, PhD** (Orthopaedic Surgery), and Dr. William Hope from Novant Health, “Carolina Musculoskeletal Research Consortium”.

UNC SOM Center for Health Innovation Pilot Awards

Several SOM investigators received [2025 Innovation Pilot Awards](#) from the UNC Center for Health Innovation. Four projects were selected from a competitive pool across UNC Health and the School of Medicine. This year’s SOM-affiliated awardees included:

- **Faisal Syed, MBChB, MRCP** (Medicine), “Artificial Intelligence Enhanced Electrocardiography for Identifying and Addressing Premature Cardiac Aging”.
- **Ming Ding, MBBS** (Emergency Medicine) and **Michelle Meyer, PhD** (Emergency Medicine), “Cardiac proteins released into the blood as novel biomarkers of NSTEMI in the Emergency Department”.
- **Nina Browner, MD** (Neurology), “Improving hospitalization experience for patient with Parkinson’s disease at UNC Health”.
- **Janet Prvu Bettger, ScD, MSc** (Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) as co investigator on “Piloting the Use of Advanced AI for Physical Therapy Treatment”.





School of
Medicine

Faculty Recipients of Prestigious Awards

National Academy of Medicine

UNC Health and SOM celebrated the election of two of its distinguished physician-leaders, **Dr. Robert Ferris** and **Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody**, to the **National Academy of Medicine (NAM)**, one of the highest honors in health and medicine. Their election recognizes exceptional professional achievement, impactful scientific contributions, and a deep commitment to advancing patient care. As the only physicians in North Carolina elected to NAM this year, Drs. Ferris and Meltzer Brody exemplify UNC Health's commitment to excellence in research, clinical innovation, and service to communities across the state and beyond.



Dr. Robert Ferris, MD, PhD, Lineberger Distinguished Professor and Executive Director of the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, was honored for groundbreaking work that has transformed the treatment of head and neck cancer. His leadership in the first positive Phase III trial leading to FDA approval of PD-1 immunotherapy, and his success in changing national treatment guidelines underscore his lasting impact on oncology care.



Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody, MD, MPH, Executive Dean of the UNC School of Medicine, was recognized for her internationally acclaimed work in women's mental health. She led landmark global studies on the genetics of perinatal mood disorders and spearheaded clinical trials that validated the first, and only, FDA-approved therapy for postpartum depression, reshaping treatment options for patients worldwide.

2025 O. Max Gardner Award

Dr. Jeffrey S.A. Stringer, MD, Clarke Pearson Distinguished Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, received the **2025 O. Max Gardner Award**, the highest faculty honor of the UNC System. The award recognizes his pioneering work to improve maternal health in low-resource settings worldwide. As director of UNC's Division of Global Women's Health, Dr. Stringer has led transformative research in maternal HIV care, preterm birth, and obstetrical outcomes, including the development of an AI-enabled handheld ultrasound to improve access to pregnancy care. He also co-founded the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia, which now supports maternal and child health across more than 350 sites.





School of
Medicine

Faculty Recipients of Prestigious Awards

UNC School of Medicine Awards Celebration Highlights Excellence

On December 12, 2025, the UNC School of Medicine community gathered to celebrate outstanding achievement at the annual Awards Celebration. The evening began with a reception, followed by an awards presentation honoring excellence in education, research, clinical care, and distinguished alumni service. Many of the awards received by SOM faculty highlighted in this newsletter were formally recognized during the celebration. Faculty, staff, learners, and alumni came together to recognize colleagues whose work continues to advance our shared mission across the SOM and UNCH.



[Learn more about the event and view photos from celebration.](#)



School of
Medicine

Faculty Recipients of Prestigious Awards

SOM Faculty Awards

Below is a comprehensive list of the awards received by the SOM faculty and featured in Vital Signs in 2025. For a complete list of grants received by our faculty, please look for our monthly “Latest Awards from SOM Faculty” article in Vital Signs.

2024-25 Hedwig van Ameringen ELAM fellow	Misty Good, MD
2024-25 Yang Family Biomedical Scholars	Gaorav Gupta, MD, PhD, Misty Good, MD, MS, Jason Stein, PhD
2025 AIMBE College of Fellows	Yen-Yu I. Shih, PhD
2025 APA George Armstrong Lecture Award Winner	Kenya McNeal-Trice, MD
2025 Distinguished Faculty Award	Kim L. Isaacs, MD PhD, Jane H. Brice, MD
2025 Distinguished Medical Alumni Award	Brian Mullis, MD
2025 Early Career Achievement Award	Joshua Berkowitz, MD, Avik Chatterjee, MD
2025 North Carolina Psychological Association President’s Award	Terra Rose, PsyD, LP, LCMHC-QS
2025 O. Max Gardner Award	Jeffrey S.A. Stringer, MD
2025 PARE Award Recipients	Marta Overchuk, PhD, Juhyun Ahn, PhD, Eric Hurwitz, PhD
2025 Phillip and Ruth Hettleman Prizes for Artistic and Scholarly Achievement	Sarah Cohen, PhD
2025 SHEA Board of Trustees President	David J. Weber, MD, MPH
2025 Student Undergraduate Teaching and Staff Awards	Brett Phillips, MA, PMP
2025 UNC Clinical Preceptor (Regional Campus Faculty)	Robert Young, DO, Nicholas Latchana, MD, MSc
2025 UNC Clinical Preceptor Excellence in Teaching Award	Kyle Melvin, MD, Christian Lawrence, MD, MP
2025 UNC Craver Medical Student Teaching Award	Hannah Coletti, MD, MPH
2025 UNC Educational Mentor/ Advisor Award	Lisa Cannada, MD, Priyanka Rao, MD
2025 UNC Educational Research Mentor Award	Bianca Allison, MD, MPH
2025 UNC Faculty Teaching Resident/Fellow Award	Nicole Chandler, MD, Anne Lachiewicz, MD, MPH
2025 UNC Foundation Phase Teaching Excellence Award	Arshiya Ahuja, MD, Tamara Godfrey, MD
2025 UNC High-Value Care Award Faculty	Laura Murphy, MD, MBA
2025 UNC High-Value Care Award Resident	Andres Lopez, MD
2025 UNC Innovation in Teaching Award	William Mills, MD, MPH,
2025 UNC Junior Faculty Award	Dana Doctor, MD
2025 UNC Kathleen Rao Grant Winners	Koyal Jain, MD, Tara McKinley, MD, Fei Chen, PhD
2025 UNC Kathleen Rao Grant Winners	Rebekah L. Layton, PhD, Patrick D. Brandt, PhD, Pat Brennwald, PhD, Michelle Itano, PhD
2025 UNC Kathleen Rao Grant Winners	Catalin Mateas, Reilly Bealer, MD, Shilpa Darivemula, MD, MS, Alexandria Kraus, MD, Marcella Willis-Gray, MD, Grace Trompeter, MD, MSPH
2025 UNC Lifetime Achievement Award in Medical Education	Eugenia Quackenbush, MD, Marianna Henry, MD, MPH
2025 UNC Medical Alumni Distinguished Professorship	Jessica Fuller, MD, Daniel Migliaccio, MD
2025 UNC Poster Winners	Catalin Mateas, Reilly Bealer, MD, Shilpa Darivemula, MD, MS, Alexandria Kraus, MD, Marcella Willis-Gray, MD, Grace Trompeter, MD, MSPH



School of
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Faculty Recipients of Prestigious Awards

SOM Faculty Awards *(Continued from page 27)*

2025 UNC Poster Winners	Julia N. Riddle, MD
2025 UNC Resident Educator Award	Safiyya Adam, MD, Ellen Green, MD, PhD
2025 UNC Scholarship Award	Collyn Murray, MD, MACM
2025 UNC Senior Faculty Award	Joey Grover, MD, Jacquelyn Baskin-Miller, MD, MS
2025 Wolf Prize in Agriculture	Jeffery L. Dangl, PhD
2025 Women in IR (WIR) Champion Award	Maureen P. Kohi, MD, FSIR
2025-26 James W. Woods Junior Faculty Award	Matthew Vogt, MD, PhD, Leon Coleman, MD, PhD
2025-26 Jefferson-Pilot Fellowships in Academic Medicine	Bianca Allison, MD, MPH, J. Justin Milner, PhD
2026 Mark Brothers Award Recipient	Jenny Ting, PhD
AAAAI Foundation Faculty Development Award	Stephen Schworer, MD, PhD
AACR Populations Sciences Working Group elected chair	Melissa Troester, PhD, MPH
AAMS 40 Under 40 - Rising Leaders in Medical Transport Award	Ben Smith, MD
AAUW American Fellowship	Maria White, PhD
ACGME Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award	Nikki Binz, MD
ACR 2025 Distinguished Basic/Translational Investigator Award	Richard F. Loeser, Jr., MD
African Stroke Organization Conference Osuntokun Award	Deanna Saylor, MD, MHS
AINA Prestigious Kapil Sethi Teaching Award	Vinay Chaudhry, MD
Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society Inductees	Collette Shen, MD, PhD, Yueh Lee, MD, PhD, Lavinia Kolarczyk, MD, Kunal Patel, MD, PhD, Nicholars Latchana, MD
American Academy of Audiology Outstanding Educator Award	Stephanie Sjoblad, AuD
American Heart Association elected fellow	David Y. Hwang, MD
American Medical Women's Association 2025 AMWA Inspire Award	Diana Cejas MD, MPH
American Pediatric Society elected member	Melissa Bauserman, MD, MPH
American Society for Clinical Investigation elected member	Misty Good, MD, MS
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology Gold Medal	Lawrence B. Marks, MD, FASTRO
ASCO Career Development Award	Chemtai Mungo, MD, MPH
Association of Rheumatology Professionals Master Award	Leigh F. Callahan, PhD
Children's Brain Tumor Network (CBTN) leadership	David Kram, MD
Choroideremia Research Foundation's 6th Annual Randy Wheelock Research Award	Alice Zhang, MD
Cleveland Clinic Alumni Association Early Career Alumnus Award	Tamara Strohm, MD



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Faculty Recipients of Prestigious Awards

SOM Faculty Awards *(Continued from page 28)*

Community Health Impact Awards	Nina Browner, MD, Clío Rubinos, MD, MS, Thiri Lin, MD, PhD, Joel Callahan, MD
Dr. Susan Wilson Award	Anita Frohlich
International Society for Autism Research Lifetime Achievement Award	Joseph Piven, MD
Leading Transformation in Academic Medicine FY25 Cohort Completes Program	Meena Bhatia, MD, Mara Buchbinder, PhD, Brian Conlon, PhD, Moe Lim, MD, Millie Long, MD, Nancie MacIver, MD, PhD, Lukasz Mazur, PhD, Casey Olm-Shipman, MD
Mridha Spirit of Neurology Humanitarian Award	Monica Diaz, MD, MS
Named Academy of Medicine ELHM Scholar	Jonathan Parr, MD, MPH
National Academy of Medicine elected member	Robert Ferris, MD, PhD and Samantha Meltzer-Brody, MD, MPH
National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council	Kavita Arora, MD
NCTraCS K12 Career Development Award	Olivia Lara, MD
NIH Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health Award	Lisa Rahangdale, MD, MPH, Michelle Meyer, PhD, MPH, Gaurav Dave, MBBS, DrPH, MPH
Norma Berryhill Distinguished Lecture	John Buse, MD, PhD
Office of the Provost Engaged Scholarship Awards	Caroline Roberts, MD
Order of the Golden Fleece	James F. Howard Jr, MD, Lisa Long, Stephen Lostetter III, Cristy Page, MD, MPH, Angela Smith, MD, MS, Jonathan Smith
Order of the Longleaf Pine	Tony Lindsey, MD
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society 2025 Stanley A. Plotkin Lectureship Award	Marielys Collazo-Roman, MD
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society 2025 Young Investigator Award	Matthew Vogt, MD, PhD
Pope Clinical Trainee Awards	Jeffrey Lee Jensen, MD, PhD, Ethan Steele, MD, MS, Jaewon Lee, MD, Joseph Kearney, MD, Zach Feuer, MD
Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE)	Kavita Arora, MD
Robert A. Winn Career Development Award Scholar	Chemtai Mungo, MD, MPH
Ronald J. Falk Vanguard Award	Laura Hanson, MD, MPH
Society of Interventional Radiology Fellowship	David Mauro, MD
Society of Interventional Radiology Leaders in Innovation Award	Matt Mauro, MD
SPAQI 2025 Perioperative Medicine Fellowship Program	Lindsey Gouker, MD, MHA
UNC Health Anesthesia Legacy of Care Award	Monica Belgado, CRNA
UNC Health Visionary Leadership Honor	Ronald J. Falk, MD
UNC Hospitals Melainie Bolick Program Coordinator Award	Elizabeth Agüero
Urology Care Foundation Research Scholar Awardee	Apoorv Dhir, MD



School of
Medicine

School of Medicine Research Rankings

Blue Ridge Medical Institute Rankings for NIH Funding

The FY2025 NIH research rankings from the [Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research](#), released in February 2026, place the UNC School of Medicine **#18 nationally** in NIH funding and **#5 among public schools of medicine**. Total NIH funding reached **\$353 million**, a **\$4 million increase** over FY24. Five basic science departments ranked in the top 10, including two ranked #1, and ten clinical departments ranked in the top 30, with seven improving their rankings from last year. In addition, 23 SOM faculty rank in the top 5% of NIH funded principal investigators nationwide (out of 43,977 PIs). *Numbers in parentheses reflect rankings among public schools of medicine.*

Basic Science Departments

- **Biochemistry & Biophysics #3 (2)**
- **Biomedical Engineering #8 (5)**
- **Cell Biology & Physiology #1 (1)**
- **Genetics #1 (1)**
- **Microbiology & Immunology #6 (2)**

Clinical Departments

- **ENT #5 (1)**
- **Family Medicine #21 (19)**
- **Medicine #23 (8)**
- **Obstetrics & Gynecology #6 (2)**
- **Pediatrics #26 (11)**
- **Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation #17 (7)**
- **Psychiatry #17 (8)**
- **Radiology (includes Radiation Oncology) #22 (8)**
- **Surgery #26 (13)**



Highly Cited Researchers

In 2025, 31 UNC-Chapel Hill faculty were named to [Clarivate's list of Highly Cited Researchers](#), which recognizes scholars whose publications rank in the top 1% by citations in their fields over the past decade, based on Web of Science data and expert review. UNC School of Medicine honorees include: **Xi-Ping Huang, PhD** (Pharmacology), **John B. Buse, MD, PhD** (Medicine), **Lisa A. Carey, MD** (Medicine, LCCC), **Sidney C. Smith Jr. MD** (Medicine), **Gianpietro Dotti, MD** (Microbiology & Immunology, LCCC), **Robert Ferris, MD, PhD** (Otolaryngology, LCCC), **Nigel Mackman, PhD** (Medicine, Pharmacology, LCCC), **Jeremy Rich, MD** (Neurology, LCCC), **Jenny P.Y. Ting, PhD** (Genetics, LCCC), **David van Duin, MD, PhD** (Medicine, LCCC), **Bryan L. Roth, MD, PhD** (Pharmacology, LCCC, Eshelman School of Pharmacy), **Ralph Baric, PhD** (Microbiology & Immunology, Gillings School of Global Public Health). In addition, researchers formerly affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill were recognized for work conducted during their tenure, including **John McCorvy**, **Dinggang Shen**, and **Elena V. Batrakova**.



School of
Medicine

Innovation and Commercialization

Researchers in the School of Medicine continued to pursue entrepreneurial efforts in technology commercialization. FY25 marked notable growth in innovation activity, including a **56 percent increase in invention disclosures**, a **76 percent increase in provisional patent applications**, and a **34 percent increase in U.S. patents issued compared to FY24**. Although there are too many stories to capture all the outstanding innovation emerging from School of Medicine investigators, here are brief highlights from 2025.

NCInnovation Awards

In 2025, [NCInnovation](#) invested \$10 million in 13 research projects across 11 UNC System campuses. UNC Chapel Hill was selected for multiple awards, including:

- **Jeffrey Stringer, MD** (Obstetrics and Gynecology), “*Portable, Low Cost Ultrasound for Prenatal Care*”.
- **Jason Franz, PhD** (Biomedical Engineering), “*Wearable Sensor for Early Arthritis Detection*”.

[Revolutionizing Women’s Health Through 3D Printed Drug Delivery](#)

Rahima Benhabbour, PhD (Biomedical Engineering), advanced AnelleO PRO, a first of its kind 3D printed intravaginal ring designed for sustained hormone delivery, with her startup moving toward clinical translation and regulatory review.

[FDA Breakthrough Designation for Non Invasive Brain Stimulation Device](#)

Flavio Frohlich, PhD (Psychiatry), developed a personalized brain stimulation device for major depressive disorder that earned FDA Breakthrough Device designation based on strong early clinical results.

[AI Enabled Ultrasound Technology to Improve Birth Outcomes](#)

Jeffrey Stringer, MD (Obstetrics and Gynecology), helped create a portable, AI powered ultrasound tool that expands access to accurate pregnancy assessment, particularly benefiting rural and resource limited settings.

[Immersive VR Training to Improve Surgical Safety](#)

MaiaZura, founded by **Lukasz Mazur, PhD** (Radiation Oncology), advanced VR based clinical training that strengthens communication and safety in operating environments and has demonstrated measurable improvements in team performance.



Innovate Carolina

<https://innovate.unc.edu/>



School of Medicine

Looking back on 2025, we are grateful for the leadership, collaboration, and dedication that strengthened our research, education, and clinical missions. Together, we are translating discovery into impact and building momentum for the year ahead. Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

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