

UCR SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Thriving Through Change

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 - 2021





Thriving Through Change

The 2020-2021 academic year was one of remarkable growth for the UC Riverside School of Medicine. Our students, faculty, and staff demonstrated continued excellence throughout the year, innovating and rethinking our processes and operations in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving milestones that many of us would have never considered before March 2020.

The pandemic has brought challenges, but the persistence of the people within the School of Medicine and UCR Health have ensured that new heights of success come out of these challenges. With a newly-opened simulation center and the new SOM Education II Building under construction, our school is well-positioned to continue its mission to improve the health of the people of Inland Southern California.

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Message from the Vice Chancellor and Dean



Once again, the School of Medicine aligned its values with the mission, resulting in a remarkably successful 2020-2021 year.

Faced with uncertainty and adversity as most of our community learned and worked remotely, we demonstrated our ability to thrive despite those challenges and reached new heights. I'm so proud of our fifth graduating class for persisting through an arduous final year and boasting impressive match day successes with an overall match rate of 97%, including 78% remaining in Southern California, and 38% remaining in Inland Southern California. As we entered the new academic year, our school blazed the trail for UCR's return to campus by being the first to open our doors and resume in-person instruction with 86 medical students, as well as 35 biomedical Ph.D. students and 17 M.S. students.

As a growing institution, we've made great strides and invested in our future by opening the Center for Simulated Patient Care and securing final approval for the construction of SOM Education Building II, scheduled to open in 2023. With the State Budget Act of 2021 providing one-time funding of \$35 million, we've accelerated expansion plans for SOM/UCR Health and are poised to explore the future model of UCR's academic health system. These developments are critical to our strategic growth plans to increase enrollment in our school's M.D. program from 80 to 125 students per year.

In keeping with our mission and core values, we've continued to focus on building a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This year our efforts garnered national attention with UCR SOM earning a ranking as the sixth most diverse medical school in the nation by U.S. News and World Report. Additionally, we earned recognition by Insight into Diversity Magazine as the Future Physician Leaders Program, which you can read more about on page 36, was bestowed an Inspiring Programs in STEM Award.

Having completed my fifth year with UCR, I'm truly overjoyed to review how far we've progressed in such a short time. As I reflect on our achievements over the last year, I'm excited to share this year's report and I trust that you will experience a similar sense of excitement!

Deborah Deas, M.D., M.P.H.
Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences
Mark and Pam Rubin Dean

UC Riverside School of Medicine

Strategic Plan Update

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan for Sustainability outlines the path for our School of Medicine and for UCR Health to transition to the next phase of growth and development. It articulates the strategic framework by which we will continue to build on initial achievements in training a diverse physician workforce, expanding clinical care, and developing community-engaged research and community service in the region.

Since the launch of this plan in 2019, our school has made substantial progress in securing financial and capital needs and achieving some of the major goals set. A few of these milestones are highlighted below.

Successful advocacy for increased operating funding from the State of California.

In the State Budget Act of 2020, the School received an increment of \$25M in annual operating funds, bringing total state funding to \$40M per year. This funding addresses the shortfalls in support for our education and research programs and sets us on a path for future growth in class size. Additionally, the State Budget Act of 2021 provided \$35 million in one-time funding for both SOM/UCR Health expansion and to explore the future model of UCR's academic health system.

Completed planning for Education Building II.

This new state of the art learning facility, which is now under construction, is supported by \$100M in state funds secured in the State Budget Act of 2019 — read more about the building on page 6.

Educational partnerships expansion.

Undergraduate and graduate medical education (UME and GME) partnerships with Dignity St. Bernardine's Medical Center will allow growth in clerkship opportunities and new GME programs over the coming years.

National recognition for the diversity of our student body.

Our school was ranked #6 for Medical School Diversity in the 2022 US News and World Report.

A new partnership for UCR Health.

A partnership with the City of Riverside was secured to open Hulen Place clinic for the unhoused in 2022. This is a first step toward our strategy of pursuing Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status for UCR Health.

We are well-positioned for continued success thanks to the tireless support and advocacy of legislative representatives, Governor Newsom, community members, the UCR campus, the Office of the President (UCOP), and the Board of Regents.

In the coming years, we will continue to focus on excellence, innovation and we look forward to working closely with campus partners, external stakeholders, and UCR SOM faculty and staff as we continue executing the initiatives outlined in this plan.

See the full strategic plan at medschool.ucr.edu/strategic-plan

By the numbers

Biomedical Sciences **33** Ph.D. Students/Candidates **9** M.S. Students **48** Affiliated faculty from across UCR

Medical Students **299** M.D. Students **38%** Underrepresented in Medicine **57%** Disadvantaged
31% First in family to complete college **67%** Ties to the Inland Empire

Faculty **334** Clinical Faculty **1263** Community-Based Faculty **21** Biomedical Sciences Faculty

SOM Staff **247** Employees

Training Sites **108** LACE Sites **96** Clerkship Sites
These are community partners who support us in both LACE and clerkship training; many are represented in both numbers displayed.

Pipeline Programs **2120** Pre-Med students reached by pipelines

Graduate Medical Education **109** Residents & Fellows (UCR School of Medicine sponsored programs)

UCR Health Clinical Care **14,624** Patients treated (Excluding hospital patients) **42,718** Clinic visits

Extramural Funding **\$18.4M** Research grants awarded **\$3.97M** In philanthropic gifts

All numbers presented are as of the end of the 2020-2021 academic year

ADVANCEMENT

Remembering Mark Rubin



On February 13, 2021, the School of Medicine and UC Riverside lost one of its most ardent supporters with the passing of Riverside-area property developer, Holocaust survivor, and UCR Board of Trustees member Mark Rubin, who passed from natural causes at the age of 84.

Despite never living in Riverside, Rubin and his wife, Pam, had a huge impact on the growth and expansion of UC Riverside, believing that if you were developing property in a city, you needed to give back to that city.

In 1994, the Rubins gave the university \$3 million dollars for an endowed fellowship that evolved into the endowed professorship that Dean Deborah Deas holds today. That endowment is reflected in her title of “Mark and Pam Rubin Dean.”

“Mark and Pam both believed in the School of Medicine’s mission to train physicians who would stay and work in Inland Southern California,” Deas said. “They were fully committed to the medical school and UCR as a whole.”

The Rubins served concurrently as chairs of Riverside university support organizations, with Mark serving as chair of La Sierra University Foundation Board and Pam serving as chair of the UC Riverside Foundation’s Board of Trustees. Pam also served as the chair of the School of Medicine’s Advisory Board.

The Rubins were recipients of the 2014 UCR Medallion, presented in recognition of “extraordinary service, dedication and generosity to education at all levels and for enduring support of UC Riverside and the community.”

“I hope that Pam and I lead by example, and you can’t teach giving, you can only encourage it,” Rubin said in an interview conducted for the ceremony.

WATCH OUR TRIBUTE VIDEO TO MARK RUBIN AT youtu.be/T3ZnH-dy8SY

READ MORE ABOUT MARK RUBIN’S LEGACY AT atu.cr/markrubinarticle

New School of Medicine Education Building

On March 17, 2021, the UC Regents gave final approval for construction of the new Education Building II and approved the selection of Hensel Phelps Construction/CO Architects as the design-build partner for the project. The approval included the final design, full budget, and environmental findings.

“I would like to thank the UC Regents for their approval of this project, which will give us the space we need to grow our class size to 125 students per year and continue to fulfill the mission of increasing the number of physicians in the underserved inland Southern California,” said Dr. Deborah Deas, vice chancellor of health sciences and the Mark and Pam Rubin Dean of the UCR School of Medicine.

The five-story, LEED platinum-certified facility will feature approximately 57,000 assignable square feet within 90,000 gross square feet. Located immediately south of the current SOM Education Building, its urban downtown design theme, which includes outdoor seating, terraces, and landscaping, will complement the neighboring buildings, including Boyce Hall and the Orbach Library.

The California Legislature had previously approved funding for the project as part of the State Budget Act of 2019. Work on the facility began during the summer of 2021, with an anticipated completion date in mid-2023.

The SOM Ed II Working Group, made up of Senior Associate Dean of Student Affairs Emma Simmons, Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education Brigham C. Willis, Chief of Staff Linda Reimann, Professor Christian Lytle, and Facilities Manager Cynthia Carolina; and the staff of the UCR Office of Planning, Design and Construction, spent hundreds of hours working with the developers from three teams vying for the contract before selecting Hensel Phelps Construction/CO Architects, which had recently completed work on the \$129 million, 180,000 square-foot Multidisciplinary Research Building.

“The design-build team paid very close attention to the requests that we put forth in order to make this building our home, but also they

listened to our ‘dream requests,’” said Simmons. “They even went as far as including extra options we hadn’t yet thought of to make this building the perfect choice.”

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the working group and the developers to quickly shift from in-person to virtual meetings in order to ensure the project stayed on schedule.

“Selecting a design team is not an easy task in the best of times, and COVID-19 forced us to quickly shift our process to virtual platforms in order to avoid delays,” Carolina said. “The design-build teams had to quickly learn how to bring imagination and storytelling to Zoom, which made it more of a challenge. But everyone was committed to the process of finding the right team.”



SPRING
2019

State legislators approved \$108M in funding in the state budget for construction of a new, 65,000 square foot medical education building.

DECEMBER
2019

Consultants from AECOM and UCR PDC begin holding programming and basis of design meetings with faculty, students and staff to help design a facility that will fulfill the unique educational needs of the UCR School of Medicine.

FEBRUARY
2020

The building development document is unveiled at a Dean’s Town Hall and the project location is announced.

JULY
2020

Design-build competition begins with the university pre-qualifying interested teams.

SEPTEMBER
2020

The formal request for proposals for the project is announced.

FEBRUARY
2021

Hensel Phelps Construction/CO Architects are selected after an extensive design-build competition. The proposal included all value alternates and enhancements within the project’s maximum acceptance cost.

MARCH
2021

The UC Regents give final approval for the construction of the School of Medicine Education Building II. The vote approved the final design, the full budget, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) findings.

JULY
2021

Phase 1 of the Design Development Process concludes; phase 2 begins with development of construction documents. Construction begins with site preparation, demolition, and shoring of the construction site.

OCTOBER
2021

The School of Medicine hosts a Groundbreaking Ceremony for Education Building II.

SUMMER/FALL
2023

Projected completion of the medical school’s new education building.

New center dedicated to simulation-based training

A core component of the education that medical students, residents, and even practicing physicians receive at the UCR School of Medicine involves the use of simulation-based training. Immersive simulation provides the learners with a safe environment that mirrors the clinical spaces in which they will be practicing.

That's why the new, state-of-the-art Clinical Skills and Simulation Center is such a game-changer for the UCR School of Medicine. The 11,000 sq. foot facility features training spaces that look exactly like an emergency room, an ICU suite, an operating room, and a maternity/obstetric exam space, as well as 16 clinical exam rooms. All of these specialized

areas can be used for both training and testing. The facility also includes administrative, classroom and team training areas. Video cameras in each space allow proctors to watch and record the students, providing the opportunity for valuable feedback.

"Simulation training, whether on human beings serving as standardized patients or mannequin-based learning tools, allows us to create a space where learning can happen and skills can be practiced repeatedly until they become innate," explained Christopher Miller, the director of operations at the Center of Simulated Patient Care at the UCR SOM. "It's a risk-free environment to learn. You aren't going to hurt anyone here."

The UCR SOM has used simulation in innovative ways, including a Health Care Simulation Selective that allows students to create their own scenarios and present them to their fellow students.

"We are doing things here at UC Riverside that no one else in the country is doing. It's very exciting."

"We are doing things here at UC Riverside that no one else in the country is doing. It's very exciting," Miller said.

The only real challenge that the simulation team faced was a lack of space. The original simulation space in the Medical Education Building was about 1,000 sq. feet, which meant scheduling challenges and long days for both educators and students as class sizes grew larger.

"We learned to work within the space we had, but we really had outgrown things after the first two or three years," Miller said.

The need for a larger simulation space was clear, but the question was where it could be built with on-campus space at a premium. Finally, in 2019, a suitably sized space was identified on the ground floor of the nearby Orbach Science Library. The next step was the planning and funding.

Miller threw himself into the project, first conceptualizing the simulation center space, then working with campus architects, planners, and other administrators to move that vision into a reality. Funding for construction was approved by the UC Regents in 2019 and the project got underway in early 2020 with a goal of opening in mid-2021.

And then came the pandemic. But where the pandemic slowed and hindered many similar projects, the closure of the UCR actually aided the construction.



"The original plan was to do a lot of the demo work and noisy construction work during off-hours so that we wouldn't disturb the students using the library," Miller said. "But when the campus closed due to COVID-19, it freed up the schedule significantly."

The ability to work more frequently offset some other pandemic-related delays and, ultimately, the facility was completed in May. Almost immediately the facility was being used on a near daily basis, with both UCR medical students and others from the community seeking to use the space.

"We now have one of the best, if not the best, simulation facilities in the country here at the UC Riverside School of Medicine," Miller said. "We look forward to welcoming learners from all over Inland Southern California."

THE CLINICAL SKILLS AND SIMULATION SUITE HAS SEVERAL NAMING OPPORTUNITIES.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT development@medsch.ucr.edu

Funding will help UCR diversify physician workforce in Inland Southern California

The California Wellness Foundation awarded a four-year grant of \$450,000 to our medical school to “help build a new generation of diverse health care workers by enabling underrepresented minority students to pursue careers in health professions.”

According to Dean Deas, the funds will significantly support some of the educational core operating expenses and help enhance the educational experience, leadership training, and mentorship that we provide to our medical students.

Underrepresented students make up about half of each medical student cohort at UCR

SOM, and they will make a significant impact on diversifying the physician workforce in Inland Southern California.

“We want to improve health care delivery for communities of color, says Judy Belk, CEO and president of The California Wellness Foundation. “When doctors look like, value and share lived experiences with the communities they serve, we see health care that’s culturally competent and of higher quality. Research affirms that when communities know their identities and experiences are respected, they’re more likely to seek out care and trust the treatments they receive.”

Celebration of Medical Education

On November 19, 2020, the School of Medicine celebrated its third annual Celebration of Medical Education, but in a format unlike either of its previous instances.

Supporters of our school gathered around computers in their homes in support of the Mission Award fund. This fund contributes to the Mission Awards, which offsets the cost of medical school for those of our medical students who agree to serve in the Inland Empire after they complete their post-M.D. training.

During this event, supporters had the opportunity to interact with Mission Award recipients in small virtual breakout rooms and hear first-hand how the award has positively impacted their time in medical school. The program also featured a keynote from Marlene Alfaro, M.D., and a video featuring reflections from Julius Daniels, M.D. and medical student Lauren Lopez.

 VIEW THE MISSION AWARD VIDEO AT youtu.be/koPzoshTFyU

TO LEARN ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS AND SUPPORT OUR MISSION AWARDS, VISIT simgala.ucr.edu

IEHP Gift supports Mission Awards

In 2020 and 2021, the Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP) donated a gift of about \$2.6 million per year to provide Mission Awards for the students of the UCR School of Medicine.

These gifts to the school’s Mission Award program supported 23 medical students in 2020 and recently disbursed to an additional 23 students in 2021 to pay for tuition and fees. Awardees will go on to practice in inland Southern California upon their graduation.

To show appreciation for their generosity, IEHP was awarded the Distinguished Celebration of Medical Education Award by the School of Medicine at our 2020 Celebration of Medical Education, which took place in November.

The scholarship helps local students have greater access to medical school education and aims to address the ongoing physician shortage in the region. IEHP has partnered with UC Riverside to support, develop and provide needed physicians to the Inland Empire, increasing the current ratio of 35 primary care and specialty physicians per 100,000 people in California to the recommended ratio of 60-80.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT iehp.org



School of Medicine Board Members

The School of Medicine is supported by the oversight and contributions of its Board of Advisors and Community Advisory Board. Below are the members of these boards who generously donate their time to our school.

Board of Advisors

- Anita Alamshaw
- Dr. Cynthia Davis
- Dr. Harki Dhillon
- Dr. Deborah Freund
- Dr. Mark Glassy
- Dr. Ray Glendrange
- Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Salma Haider
- Dr. Leita Harris
- S. Sue Johnson
- Dr. David Rapaport
- Dr. Carl Rowe
- Pam Rubin
- Dr. Walter (Buzz) Stewart
- Dr. Efrain Talamantes

Community Advisory Board

- Dan Anderson
- Kathy Barton
- Dr. Conrado Bárzaga
- Terry Boykins
- David Brinkman
- Paulette Brown-Hinds
- Lesley Davidson-Boyd
- Ninfa Delgado
- Alison Elsner
- Dr. Ramon Ferra
- Mary Figueroa
- Tammi Graham
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- Delores Green
- Ruth-Ellen Grimes
- Wolde-Ab Isaac
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- Jenna LeComte-Hinely
- Dr. Ernest Levister
- Mayor Patricia Lock-Dawson
- Rose Mayes
- Dr. Annette Moultrie
- Geneva Oaks
- Mary Parks
- Dr. Desiree Reedus
- Dr. Ancel J. Rogers
- Cynthia Roth
- Brenda Scott
- Ms. Manuela and Dr. Randy Sosa
- Yvonne Suarez
- Patricia Summers
- Matt Webb
- Jodie Wingo

COVID-19

The past two years have demonstrated how the presence of a medical school in the Riverside community has been beneficial, not only in developing the next generation of physicians, but also in being able to share expertise wherever needed in the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has especially highlighted this, and the greater UCR campus, as well as the Riverside community, has looked to both the School of Medicine and UCR Health to take part in multiple initiatives.



Vaccine Clinics

When the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines were rolled out to the public in mid-January 2021, UCR Health opened a weekly vaccine clinic at the SOM Education Building. This helped fast-track access for the university community to vaccines.

UCR Health started small, with 100 doses for frontline healthcare workers in early January. But as more vaccines became available, School of Medicine began hosting weekly shot clinics for UCR faculty and staff.

The clinics were staffed by a variety of School of Medicine staff members and the shots were given by first- and second-year medical students and members of the Highlander EMS club.

Over the last five weeks of the vaccine program, the clinics were opened to the public, allowing community members to get their first and second shots.

By the time the clinics ended in early June, a total of 4,372 shots were delivered.



Voices of the Vaccinated

In early 2021, we asked members of the UCR School of Medicine to share their thoughts, concerns, and experiences after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine as a way to help address vaccine hesitancy. Similarly, UCR Health distributed FAQs about the vaccine on their website containing information about the vaccine's development and distribution.

TO READ UCR HEALTH'S VACCINE FAQ, VISIT ucrhealth.org

TO READ "VOICES OF THE VACCINATED," VISIT medschool.ucr.edu/news/2021/01/19/voices-vaccinated

UCR Health's involvement in COVID-19 response

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, UCR Health began providing administrative support to the UCR campus. This included staffing a COVID hotline for employees, case investigation support as well as the development and maintenance of the Daily Wellness Survey. As the pandemic progressed, UCR Health was involved with the planning and operation of sampling for on-campus testing services for employees and students.

Subsequently, the CEO and COO of UCR Health created and co-chaired the Employee Health Assistance Committee which met weekly, included UCR campus leaders and led COVID planning as it pertained to UCR employees. The UCR Health

CEO served as UCR liaison to UC Health MCE during planning and execution of COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the UCR campus. Concurrently, UCR Health staff and leadership stood up several on-campus vaccine clinics which resulted in over 4000 COVID-19 vaccines administered.

In the summer of 2020, it was anticipated that there would be a flu vaccine mandate. UCR Health was able to procure additional flu vaccines and stood up an on-campus flu vaccine clinic for UCR employees.



School of Medicine researchers weigh in on COVID-19

While developments continued in treating and studying COVID-19, many of our faculty members were called on to share their insights on how the COVID-19 pandemic would impact the future of medicine and our everyday lives.



Brandon Brown
Associate Professor,
Center for Healthy Communities

“I do believe different aspects of our lives which have been changed due to COVID-19 will be forever changed. [...] We have the prevention tools to end the pandemic, but until everyone is able to access and use these tools, variants will continue to plague us, and it takes all of us to end the pandemic. If we use the tools available to us, we will be better protected against the virus that causes COVID-19 and future pandemics which we must prepare for.”



Brigham C. Willis
Senior Associate Dean,
Medical Education

“There is obviously a clear source of hope that maybe it won’t be around to stay, with the very effective vaccines we have now. But with the proliferation of more resistant variants, my guess is that we will be updating and changing the vaccine and will need yearly boosters, like flu shots, for the foreseeable future.”

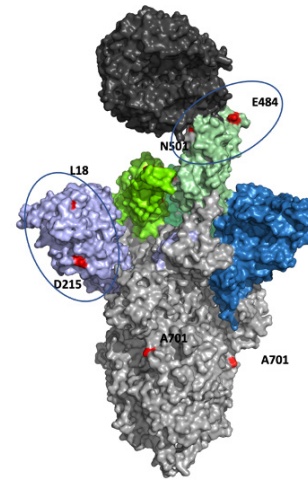


David Lo
Senior Associate Dean, Research
Distinguished Professor,
Biomedical Sciences

“Often this is about the properties of the virus or vaccine, and we do have incredible scientists on the job. The real question is whether human behavior will be up to the task, and recent history has already provided the answer. We eradicated smallpox, and nearly eliminated polio from the planet, with coordinated community-level effort. [...] We’ve had at least three worldwide pandemics in my lifetime, but none of those lessons were applied toward preparation for the next one. So, is COVID-19 here to stay? The answer is yes, and another one is coming.”

In January 2021, when the COVID-19 vaccines slowly started becoming available to the public, Dr. David Lo answered questions on the vaccine to help our communities better understand how it works at a time when many of the public’s questions still felt unanswered. After a few weeks, Brandon Brown followed up with more insights on what safety practices we still should and should not do even after getting vaccinated.

Both individuals’ insights can be seen at atu.cr/heretostay and atu.cr/doublemask



BMSC researchers help find COVID-19 variant

Variants of the coronavirus are appearing in different parts of the world, many of them spreading with alarming speed. One contagious variant is the South African, or SA, variant, identified by an international team of researchers, including biomedical scientists from UC Riverside.

“The new COVID-19 variants are the next new frontier,” said Adam Godzik, a professor in our Division of Biomedical Sciences and a member of the research team that made the discovery. “Of these, the SA and Brazil strains are most worrying. They have mutations that make them resistant to antibodies we generate with existing vaccines. It is commonly believed we are in a tight race: Unless we vaccinate people quickly and squash the pandemic, new variants would dominate to the point that all our COVID-19 vaccines would be ineffective.”

Godzik and Arghavan Alisoltani-Dehkordi, a postdoctoral researcher who joined his lab two years ago, helped characterize the new SA variant by providing its spike protein structure using computer simulations.

Alisoltani-Dehkordi, who was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cape Town in South Africa before she joined UCR, mentioned that research teams at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and the University of Cape Town discovered the new lineage — or variant — of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19,

from samples collected between in the fall of 2020, in three South African provinces. By early November, this variant rapidly became the dominant variant in samples from two provinces.

“Each SARS-CoV-2 variant has specific mutations defining it,” Alisoltani-Dehkordi said. “Our analysis, confirmed also by several other research groups, shows that some of the mutations potentially result in a higher transmissibility of the virus and a weaker immune response.”

Godzik says the variant is likely spreading in areas where it hasn’t been sequenced and is therefore not identifiable. The SA variant has been detected in at least 40 countries, including the United States, where sequencing is still a slow process. Initial research suggested it could be resistant to antibodies, which could reduce the efficacy of vaccines.

All the newly emerged SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern in the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, and California show common mutational signatures, but each of these variants also has a unique set of mutations.

Godzik predicts COVID-19 will be a constant presence in our lives, much like the flu.

“It takes six months to develop a flu vaccine,” he said. “Models predict the evolution of the flu virus and vaccines are produced before the variants show up. If the predictions are good, the vaccines work. If they miss, a heavy flu season follows. This is how COVID-19 will likely behave. A lot of effort will be invested in predicting what will happen the following year, vaccines would then be updated, and people will need to get a booster shot.”



READ MORE ABOUT THIS DISCOVERY AT
atu.cr/savariant

EDUCATION

School of Medicine prepares for 2022 LCME review

Preparation for the Liaison Committee on Medical Education's (LCME) accreditation visit to UC Riverside began around April 2020, more than 21 months before their scheduled visit in January 2022.

The LCME is the nationally recognized accrediting authority for medical education programs, who visits schools every eight years to determine if they meet the established standards for structure and performance.

"LCME accreditation is about more than just a certification. It is bringing the school to a higher level of quality across the board," explained Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education Brigham Willis, who is the chair of the Self-Study Task Force.

The UCR SOM Office of Medical Education Quality (OMEQ), overseen by Associate Dean for Medical Education Quality and Integration Elizabeth Morrison-Banks, M.D., M.S.Ed., has been responsible for preparing for and coordinating the accreditation visit, including the self-study process.

"We are fortunate to have the support of a wonderful team. Shawn Sampson, our medical education quality coordinator, contributes his great organizational skills and dedication to everything we do, special assistant Kathy Barton is doing a phenomenal job helping me prepare the LCME accreditation survey package, and Pamela Hunter is another invaluable team member who keeps us on track in her role as survey visit coordinator," Morrison-Banks said.

The self-study process involves the committee reviewing the School of Medicine against the 12 standards of the LCME. Committee members

work to prepare reports on their specific areas, which are then combined into the LCME's data collection instrument (DCI).

As part of the theme of continuous quality improvement, the feedback received throughout the process can identify areas where improvements can be made immediately.

"We were pleased to see the self-study confirm our medical education program's strengths, including our mission, outstanding dean and administrative staff, innovative curricular design and faculty development programs, and strong diversity and pathway programs that led U.S. News & World Report to rank our school for sixth among all medical schools in diversity for '2022 Best Grad School Rankings,'" Morrison-Banks said.

As work on the DCI was completed in anticipation of its submission in October, work also began to prepare for the mock site visit.

The mock visit, also scheduled for October, is a full rehearsal for the full visit in January 2022, in which students, faculty, and staff meet with a group of accreditors who ask questions similar to what is likely to be asked by the team during the full visit.

Due to COVID-19, both the mock visit and the full visit will be held virtually, adding to the challenge for the OMEQ team.

"We were pleased to see the self-study confirm our medical education program's strengths."

School of Medicine joins nationwide center to diversify academic medicine

Center for Pre-Faculty Development will work to bring underrepresented groups into medical education

In the fall of 2020, the UCR School of Medicine was named a founding member of the Building the Next Generation of Academic Physicians (BNGAP) National Center for Pre-Faculty Development. The center's mission is to help diverse medical students and residents become aware of academic medicine as a career option and to provide them with the resources to further explore and potentially embark on an academic medicine career.

"UCR BNGAP has the potential to be the promise of our school's mission incarnate"

"Traditionally, under-represented minorities have low participation and commitment to academic medicine," said Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education Brigham C. Willis, M.D. "They don't see people who look like them in these roles, or they might not get the encouragement from family or colleagues to get into it, so they never consider it. This center is intended to change that by giving students access to mentors and support that will help them get excited about academic medicine."

The School of Medicine is one of 17 schools and five organizations that make up the inaugural membership of the center, which will hold regular meetings, webinars, and conferences intended to foster exchange of ideas, curricula, and materials between all member schools.

Students at the School of Medicine are also organizing a student chapter of BNGAP and also can elect to participate in courses on leadership in academic medicine.

"UCR BNGAP has the potential to be the promise of our school's mission incarnate," explained fourth-year medical student Niya Larios. "Through BNGAP, our medical students have the opportunity to build the future for academia that includes equity, transparency, diversity, inclusion, and the thoughtful engagement and support of minorities from pre-med to pre-faculty or clinician."

The center hosted the Pre-Faculty Development Conference and White Paper De-Briefing via webinar on September 25-26, 2020. The conference brought together individuals to share and discuss activities and best practices to better prepare trainees to succeed in academic medicine.

81 Students welcomed in 2020

The 2020 orientation week for both biomedical sciences students and medical students looked different than the traditional format.

Instead of the White Coat Ceremony that usually takes place at the end of incoming medical students' orientation week, they had a series of activities joined with the 2020 biomedical sciences cohort.

It started with a class photo session, taken on Pierce Lawn with a socially distanced arrangement different from the typical class photo. A few days later, the class tuned in from their homes for an online event recognizing individuals of the 2020 cohorts of medical and biomedical sciences students.

The cohorts then celebrated an in-person White Coat Ceremony on August 13, 2021.

Class of 2021 medical students

Our M.D. Class of 2021 also saw an online format of their Match Day and commencement ceremonies.

On Friday, March 29, our newest class of doctors gathered around computers with their friends and families to celebrate Match Day, an annual event that involves all medical students across the country simultaneously discovering if and where they have been accepted into a residency program.

For commencement, UCR planned to host a variation of the traditional stage crossing at the Student Recreation Center in mid-June, but the timing wouldn't work for our graduating class who, by that point, would already be starting their residencies.

The School of Medicine then held its own photo day for the graduating class. Just a few days before the Hippocratic Oath and Commencement Ceremony, nearly 50 students donned their regalia for a class photo in the Orbach Courtyard, then walked to one of the university's theaters to meet their families, cross the stage, and take photos with Dean Deborah Deas.

Then on the first Friday of June, they tuned in once more to celebrate the end of their time as medical students in the Hippocratic Oath and Commencement Ceremony. During the online event, the graduates were hooded by loved ones, making for a unique and special commencement experience.

The pathways of the 59 students in the Class of 2021 are consistent with past years, and they continue to represent and fulfill the mission of our school to bring a diverse physician workforce into the communities that need them most.

See the graphic on the opposite page to see the results of the Class of 2021 Match Day

2020 COHORTS

4 BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES PH.D. STUDENTS

50% UNDERREPRESENTED
25% TIES TO INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

77 MEDICAL STUDENTS

50% UNDERREPRESENTED IN MEDICINE
64% TIES TO INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
61% DISADVANTAGED
22% POST-BACCALAUREATE STUDENTS

Innovation in event planning

As the 2020-21 academic year wound down, the Strategic Initiatives and Student Affairs teams began shifting their focus to creating a memorable graduation experience for the Class of 2021 that would also meet the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. At the center of all the planning was Kate Dorff, the manager of external relations and protocol in the Office of Strategic Initiatives.

"In 2020, we were very limited in what we could do because of COVID-19, so we had to be fully online," said Dorff. "For 2021, while the ceremony had to be online again, we wanted to provide our students with some great, but safe, in-person experiences."



Dorff began coordinating efforts between her School of Medicine colleagues and the campus Office of Events Management and Protocol

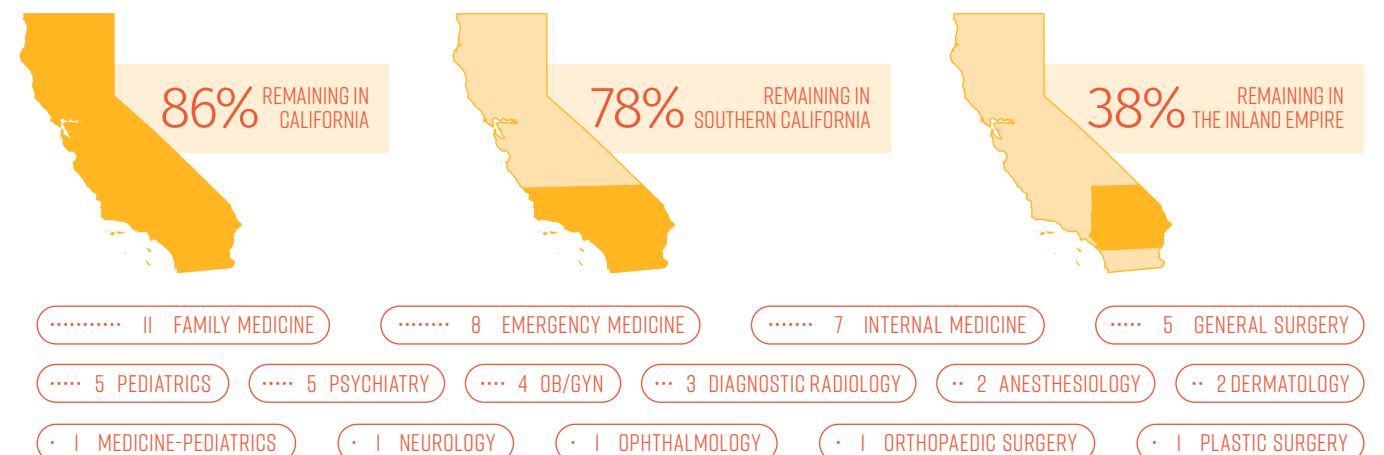
(EMP), which oversees the multiple graduation ceremonies held on campus in early June.

"Even before the pandemic, our students had expressed a desire to be hooded by their families, and we were happy to be able to give them that experience in our online ceremony," Dorff said. "But we also wanted to be able to provide them with some longer-lasting memories in the form of class photos. So we had to figure out a way to make that work."

Dorff then coordinated the stage-crossing photo session that was part of the commencement activities for our M.D. Class of 2021, an idea similar to the photo sessions that EMP planned for the other schools at UCR.

Despite having been shuttered for more than a year due to the pandemic, the staff of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences' University Theatre along with painters and custodians from UCR Facilities were able provide the School of Medicine with a venue that permitted a safe, and memorable, process for everyone.

"The entire experience was a great example of cross-campus collaboration," Dorff said. "We are so grateful to the CHASS and Facilities teams who went above and beyond to make graduation a special event for our students and their families."



Graduate and Residency Classes of 2021

In a series of small gatherings in early June, the School of Medicine celebrated the graduation of a total of 23 residents in the fields of family medicine, internal medicine, and psychiatry and nine fellows in the fields of addiction medicine, child and adolescent psychiatry, gastroenterology, cardiovascular disease, and interventional cardiology.

The Division of Biomedical Sciences celebrated the graduation of seven doctorate and four masters, one of whom is staying with UCR to continue the research they conducted with our faculty.

23 RESIDENTS

9 FELLOWS

10 BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES GRADUATES

The biomedical sciences graduates participated in the stage-crossing held by UCR campus, while each the residencies had various arrangements.

The graduated residents of child and adolescent psychiatry, for example, held a small private gathering to celebrate.



Navigating research as a graduate student during COVID-19

When biomedical sciences graduate student Jessica Noll saw a 2016 flash talk presentation by Dr. Byron Ford, she was inspired to come to UCR from Manchester University in Indiana.

“I just loved his demeanor, his passion about the project was so translational; it was something I had never really encountered before,” she recalled about Ford’s talk, which discussed his lab’s work on the mechanisms of stroke and acute brain injuries in addition to the role that Neuregulin-1 may provide in treating these disorders.

When she came to UCR, Noll got an early rotation in Ford’s lab, knew it was exactly where she wanted to be, and asked to stay.

In time, Noll got involved with UCR Graduate Student Association (GSA), eventually serving as the vice president of academic affairs. While in that role in March 2020, she received word that the UCR campus would be closing and that all research would be placed on hold due to the COVID-19 virus.

“It was, for lack of a better term, mass chaos,” Noll said. “Every sector of graduate studies came to a halt. Graduate students across the campus were getting texts and emails about what we could and should do with our experiments and research, about what buildings we could enter, when we could be in the labs.”

While some graduate students were able to work remotely, many could not. After a few weeks, graduate students were allowed to

return to their labs, although they faced a variety of new challenges, including safety and security policies that limited when they could be in their labs, limited supplies, and even how to deal with research projects that had not just halted, but in some cases, had regressed.

For Noll, one of the challenges was replacing her supply of specialized mice models that were critical to her research. She adapted by learning to breed new generations of mice in specific transgenic lines, an adjustment that turned a project that would normally last a week into one that could last for two months.

Slowly, Noll was able to get her research into Neuregulin-1 and its impact on ischemic stroke back up to speed and completed the work with only minor delays. She finished and defended her dissertation via Zoom in the summer of 2021.

Perhaps most importantly, Noll’s work on Neuregulin-1 as a potential treatment for ischemic stroke presented eye-opening results.

“Luckily, we had some really novel findings, things that we didn’t expect that we would find,” she said, adding that she has one paper in review, one ready for submission, and two more in development. “It’s very exciting.”

Beyond the research, Noll learned some things about herself, like that she thrived in a semi-remote environment and functioned well when she could set her own schedule. And in hindsight, for Noll, the pandemic didn’t cause the problems that it could have.

“Getting a Ph.D. is hard. You come in knowing that your experiments may not work out and that you will need to change your project,” she said. “The pandemic provided a new stage of adversity. I am so glad that I was at this stage of my life and my career, because I can’t imagine how much more difficult it would have been at another time.”



A few biomedical sciences Class of 2021 members pictured at their name-reading, left to right: Kelley Atkinson, Kelly Radecki, Parima Udompholkul, and Mark Wiley.



Adapting the UME admissions process to the online scene

During the first few months of the pandemic, Dr. Takesha Cooper asked: how could the School of Medicine recruit a new class of medical students and psychiatry residents in an environment where people could not visit the campus, the clinical sites, or even meet in person?

Cooper serves as the chair of undergraduate medical admissions as well as the director of the psychiatry residency program. She quickly realized that to be successful, her team would require a transformational change to how they managed the process.

“I was very anxious about that,” Cooper said. “In admissions, we had this system — this rhythm — that was working great.

“The interview season went off beautifully without really a hitch at all.”

team on how they were able to say, ‘this is what we have to do, we’re going to figure it out, we’ll work together, and we’ll keep everyone safe.’”

Suddenly, we had to forgo all of that and create something new. There was a lot of uncertainty, but I was so impressed with the admissions

Ordinarily, medical school applicants who made it past the first review would be invited to campus for the multiple mini-interview, or MMI, which takes place between the months of September and March. The MMI is used for most medical schools in North America and features a series of interview stations where prospective students meet multiple interviewers in rapid succession and are evaluated on their non-scientific knowledge such as ethics, collegiality, teamwork, cultural awareness, and communications skills.

Fortunately, the MMI format translated well to an online format, with medical students moving between virtual rooms, and as the application process continued, current medical student ambassadors reached out to the students to give them a chance to ask questions.

“It wasn’t the same as having an in-person experience, but it was something that was necessary,” Cooper said. “We all just jumped on board and made it work. The interview season went off beautifully without really a hitch at all.”

The residency application process was a slightly greater challenge. In addition to talking about the program, Cooper and her

team needed to find a way to connect with the prospective residents, to show them the multiple locations where they would work, and to introduce them to the faculty and residents they would be working with. Ultimately, they used a combination of videos and outreach to mimic the in-person process.

“We started with video calls where the residents talked about their experiences, why they chose UCR psychiatry, and what they liked about it,” she said. “Then we did a video where our faculty talked about their love for psychiatry and for teaching residents. Applicants could go to the website, click the video, and at least get a feel for what it was like to be here.”

The residents wrote a series of “A Day in the Life” articles, summarizing the experiences of first-, second-, third- and fourth-year residents.

Interview day was completely different as well. Normally, applicants would go to a dinner with the current residents, but those meetings shifted to virtual as well.

“It is so important for the applicants to have time to sit down with the current residents and find out what it is really like to be part of the program and get that critical one-on-one time.

While she was recruiting the next classes, Cooper was also managing the needs of the current residents. This meant helping them get online for virtual patient care as well as ensuring they had the proper

personal protective equipment (PPE) that they needed for when they had to do in-person care.

“Our residents are amazing. They are close and they are incredibly resilient.”

“A lot of my residents were worried about getting sick and getting their families, children, parents and grandparents sick, and I shared that concern. I felt it was a big responsibility to help keep them safe,” she said. “When the vaccine came out, I was very excited and texted all the residents and said ‘go right now and get it.’ That provided some reassurance.”

“That’s probably been the most stressful for me, making sure that they have what they need to stay safe,” she added. “We’ve been checking in with them regularly to see if they’re doing okay, how they are coping, and if they need extra support.”

“Our residents are amazing,” she added. “They are close and they are incredibly resilient. They make these connections, they lean on each other, and they know that we were available as well if they are having struggles. I couldn’t be prouder of them.”

By the end of March, the class of 2025 was set, consisting of 88 students, the largest class in the school’s history. This class, which would begin in August 2021, has a diverse background that reflects the school’s ranking as the sixth most diverse medical school in the nation according to US News and World Report.

Office of Faculty Development leads our pedagogy forward

In mid-March 2020, when California went into lockdown and it became clear that virtually all instruction was going to move online, UCR School of Medicine faculty members found themselves asking how they could shift their classes from in-person to online virtually overnight.

Fortunately for them, the Director of the Office of Faculty Development, Rosemary Tyrrell, Ed.D., had the answers. With more than 20 years of educational experience, including curriculum design, online education, and immersive learning teaching methods, she was more than ready to respond.

“When COVID hit, we became very popular. We had faculty members who had never taken an online course, let alone taught one, who were being thrust into a whole new world of online education,” she recalled. “We looked at what services we could provide and reached out to the associate deans and block directors to identify where we could provide the most help. There were no weekends for a long time.”

The role of the Office of Faculty Development is to teach faculty members the skills they need to become better educators, which it does through classes, seminars, and programs such as the Teaching Excellence Academy. The first step was to teach them that online education meant doing more than just showing up on a Zoom call with a PowerPoint and lecturing.

“It’s not just the technology. There’s an entirely different pedagogy to teaching online. You can’t just take an old recording of your lecture and throw it online and call it online education,” Tyrrell said. “There are different strategies, different methods, and one may not necessarily be better than another. It’s a question of which is more effective with a particular group of students or particular content.”

Tyrrell said that successful online pedagogy depends on interaction and engagement by the student.

“You don’t want them sitting passively watching a video or flipping through slides on an online module. You want them to stop and think, to reflect, to comment. As you are teaching, you have to do a check for understanding because it is so easy for students to get distracted when they are online. You have to work that much harder to get their attention and keep it.” she said.

Once the initial shock of the pandemic stay-at-home order subsided, Tyrrell and her team were able to shift their focus from reactive to proactive, planning not only what the 2020-21 academic year would look like, but also how the School of Medicine could permanently shift to a more hybrid-style pedagogy in a post-pandemic world.

“The vision and strategic plan for the school is to move from a more traditional lecture-based curriculum

to a curriculum in which some content would be online and some would be delivered in person,” she said. “COVID forced us into crisis teaching. Once we had gotten past the first initial horrific crush, we could mop up, reassess, and start moving towards online teaching. We were able to bring in faculty and students so that they can share what is working for them, what they like, what they don’t like, and what can make their lives easier.”

One example of something that can make life easier for a faculty member is the instructional design services that the OFD offers. Instructional designer Kay Monteith works with faculty to determine the desired learning outcomes, what they want students to gain, and helps organize the information into a course. The faculty member remains the content expert, but the designer helps them present the

“We were able to bring in faculty and students so that they can share what is working for them, what they like, what they don’t like, and what can make their lives easier.”

information in an effective way, creating a cohesive experience.

Tyrrell also oversaw the matriculation of the third cohort of the Teaching Excellence

Academy, the office’s flagship program. The nine-month program uses a “community of practice” approach to faculty development that capitalizes upon the expertise of the participants, covering foundations of curriculum, teaching and learning theory, and instructional strategies and teaching practices. Like the students that they taught, the academy members were also



The OFD team includes Carl Littlejohn (not pictured) and Courtney Ferris, Kay Monteith, Marleen Mendoza, and Rosemary Tyrrell (left to right).

learning remotely, which allowed them to appreciate the challenges.

“The cohort was fantastic and they did a great job, but we couldn’t fully duplicate the community experience online. You can’t sit down and break bread together, and it’s a very different environment,” she said.

But it wasn’t all negative. As they shifted their faculty development courses from in-person to online, they saw a bump in the number of participants in some classes, attributable in part to the convenience of being able to meet online.

In addition to the ever-growing pedagogical responsibilities, the Office of Faculty Development was also responsible for hosting the Women in Medicine and Science celebration in September and the annual Conference on Teaching and Learning in October, so it was no surprise that she was excited to add three new members to her team. Joining Tyrrell and Monteith were Program Coordinator Marleen Mendoza, Instructional Technologist Carl Littlejohn, and Administrative Assistant Courtney Ferris.

“We’ve got a great team made up of great people,” she said. “It’s just terrific.”

RESEARCH

A year of shifts in MS studies and treatment



Maria Sekyi (left), first author of the research paper, with Dr. Tiwari-Woodruff

In December 2020, Dr. Seema Tiwari-Woodruff and her team published a study showing that an estrogen receptor ligand called indazole chloride (IndCl) has the potential to improve vision in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS).

MS is a disease which impairs vision in almost all patients at some point during disease progression.

This happens because of demyelination, where the immune system eats away at protective covering of nerves, often damaging the optic nerve and visual system.

“IndCl has been previously shown in mice to increase myelination,” said Seema Tiwari-Woodruff, a professor of biomedical sciences. “Its effects in the visual system, however, were not evaluated until now.”

The studies were done on mice, whose visual pathways are similar to those of humans, making them an excellent model for this experiment. The mice that received IndCl showed a 50% improvement in visual function.

For Tiwari-Woodruff, the next question is how IndCl treatment induces functional remyelination in the visual pathway. Her lab, in collaboration with that of co-author John A. Katzenellenbogen at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is investigating new drugs that are analogues of IndCl.

Meanwhile, Dr. Elizabeth Morrison-Banks, director of the MS Program at UCR Health and a health

sciences clinical professor of neurology in the School of Medicine, led a nationwide survey that revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has created major changes in how MS specialist clinicians deliver care.

The survey, which was reported in the journal *Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders*, showed that more than 95% of respondents reported using telehealth platforms to provide care for their patients since the pandemic began.

“Their collective shift, on average, in prescribing fewer of the highest-efficacy immunosuppressive therapies could potentially translate into patients experiencing more MS disease activity,” Morrison-Banks said. “We suspect many respondents were decreasing use of certain MS disease-modifying therapies that suppress the immune system — for example, B-cell modulating agents — because they were concerned these agents could trigger severe complications from COVID-19.”

Nearly 10% of survey respondents also indicated they had been redeployed — most commonly to the front lines of COVID-19 care — which challenged the capacity of the MS health care work force.

Next, the team plans to study how clinical practice patterns in MS care will change as more research data are published over the upcoming months, including from ongoing studies exploring how various MS disease-modifying therapies affect outcomes from SARS CoV-2 infection.



Dr. Morrison-Banks

READ MORE ABOUT THESE MS DISCOVERIES AT atu.cr/msvision and atu.cr/msdrug

SOM's fifth QIC Conference

The UCR School of Medicine's Quality Improvement Conference is a highlight of the academic year. The conference, which is overseen by the Office of Assessment and Evaluation under the leadership of Dr. Kendrick Davis, brings together medical students from across the four-year program to present the data from their practice improvement projects (PIP) that they have worked on as part of the Longitudinal Ambulatory Care Experience (LACE) Curriculum. For some students, it is their first time presenting their research.

In previous years, Manager of Assessment and Evaluation Ariel DeGuzman provided technical support at the conference, helping to make the event go as smoothly as possible. But as the team planned for the 2020-21 conference, it became clear



Ariel DeGuzman played a major role in coordinating the unique format of the QIC.

that his role would grow.

“As we entered into summertime, we realized that COVID was not going to go away like the flu and that we had to act fast,” DeGuzman said. “At first, we postponed it, then we started looking at virtual options.”

“We didn't want to turn the conference into an extended Zoom call with people just logging in and sitting there,” he added. “We wanted to have an active environment where students could present their work and attendees could move in and out at will throughout the day.”

The team selected the Event Pilot software and app. DeGuzman spent dozens of hours learning about the software, time well-spent considering the ease and user flow for the attendees.

“Attendees could just download the app onto their phone and just click to whatever poster or presentation they were interested in, and it would take them to the proper room,” he said, reflecting on the January 31 event, which had a turnout of about 300 students, faculty, staff, and guests.

Guzman then worked with LACE Coordinator Patty Walker to organize a detailed itinerary for the day-long

event. Michelle Mwazae helped coordinate the Zoom breakout rooms that allowed the students to present their research.

DeGuzman said the experience impressed upon him the importance of all the preparation work.

“With an in-person conference, I took for granted that I would see people and that we could respond spontaneously and make adjustments based on what was needed. With the remote conference there much more pre-planning — not just ensuring that staff knew their roles and how to operate the software, but also planning for a lot of eventualities. I was writing scripts anticipating things that might happen and processing things in great detail.”

In the end, that attention to detail resulted in a fantastic online conference and provided some insight for future conferences, even when they return to in person.

“We are in the digital age, so it makes sense to use a program where everyone can use their cell phones to direct them to the next panel or presentation they want to attend,” he said. “Whether we are in person or virtual in the future, I think you will see us continuing to use software like this because it works so well.”

SMPPH studies look to bridge gaps in our communities

Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow Andrea Polonijo, as well as Assistant Professors Andrew Subica and Ann Cheney of the Department of Social Medicine, Population, and Public Health (SMPPH) received support to pursue studies affecting various local underrepresented communities.

Andrea Polonijo on HPV vaccination mandates



Polonijo discovered that human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination mandates fall short of ensuring both higher levels of uptake and equal uptake of the vaccine across socioeconomic and racial-ethnic groups.

When looking through past years' data from the National Immunization

Survey-Teen, a nationally representative cross-sectional survey that identifies adolescent vaccination coverage, Polonijo found that mandates did not improve rates of HPV vaccine series completion or lead to more equal vaccine series completion across racial-ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Policies that merely aim to increase knowledge or standardize the age of uptake are not enough to facilitate equal or widespread uptake, she explained.

Published in *SSM – Population Health*, the study found HPV vaccination mandates help reduce some differences in provider recommendations and initiation of the vaccine series. Polonijo found receiving a recommendation from a health provider greatly increased the odds that teens got their first HPV shot.

“Non-Hispanic whites and higher socioeconomic status girls tend to receive physician recommendations more often than their racial-ethnic minority and lower socioeconomic status peers,” she said. “My findings suggest school-entry HPV vaccination mandates helped equalize recommendations — likely by providing the motivation for providers to consistently recommend HPV vaccines as part of routine care.”

Polonijo also explained that mandates did not make it any easier for teens to access HPV vaccines, as there was no widely used surveillance or reminder system in place to recall teens who were due for shots.

The same idea of needing to foster trust and incentives also apply to other vaccination programs.

“Earning public trust and ensuring universal provider recommendations and easy access are crucial for the success of flu or COVID-19 vaccination programs, which need to target all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status, race-ethnicity, gender, or life stage.”

Polonijo was supported by a University of British Columbia Four-Year Doctoral Fellowship and a UCR Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Now that HPV vaccine eligibility has expanded to include adults aged 27-45, Polonijo's next study, funded by the Center for Healthy Communities, aims to identify barriers and facilitators to HPV vaccination among socioeconomically and racial-ethnically diverse adult groups in the Inland Empire.

Andrew Subica on opioid abuse

Subica was awarded a three-year, \$727,000 grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse for a project titled “Engaging Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in opioid use disorder treatment.”

“Next to COVID-19, the opioid overdose epidemic is the biggest public health crisis affecting the U.S. since HIV/AIDS, with 48,000 people dying per year from opioid overdose,” Subica said. “No research has sought to understand or address opioid use disorders in Pacific Islander populations — a research and clinical gap this three-year intervention development grant will seek to address.”

According to Subica, the study will explore the scope of the opioid issue among Native Hawaiians in Hawaii and Tongans in Utah to design a culturally tailored intervention to engage Pacific Islanders with opioid use disorders in treatment.

Subica and his team will also seek to gain new data on methamphetamine use in Pacific Islander communities.

“Methamphetamine abuse, which is extremely high among Pacific Islanders, is the leading cause of drug overdose deaths in nearly all states where substantial Pacific Islander populations reside,” Subica said. “This study will ideally gain information about the drugs most closely linked to the risk of overdose and death in Pacific Islanders.”

Subica's research partners include Dr. Li-Tzy Wu at Duke University School of Medicine; Dr. Scott Okamoto at Hawaii Pacific University; Dr. Nia Aitaoto at University of Utah; and Drs. Howard Moss and Esra Kurum at UCR.

Ann Cheney on COVID-19 testing



Cheney received a \$150,000 award from the Desert Healthcare District for COVID-19 testing and public health education for farmworking communities in California's eastern Coachella Valley. The five-month grant involved a partnership with Riverside County Public Health (RCPH).

Cheney explained that rates of new COVID-19 infection are high in the eastern Coachella Valley, especially in the communities bordering the Salton Sea, such as Mecca, Thermal, North Shore, and Oasis. Her work was conducted in farmworking communities in these towns, where her team heard there was insufficient access to testing.

“We have also heard some are hesitant to get tested because of the implications it could have for their employment; they may not be able to take time off or could lose their jobs as they wait for the results,” she said. “We hope to reduce the spread of the virus in these vulnerable communities.”

Cheney was joined in the research by Dr. Marc Debay, director of the UCR family medicine residency program, who led UCR medical residents in the testing.

Cheney and Debay worked with RCPH to get tests and were involved with contact tracing, while medical students assessed changes over time in cases and infections and a team of pre-med students coordinated public health campaigns.



CLINICAL

UCR Health's clinic expansions

The growth of UCR Health over the past few years has called for a few adjustments to their physical spaces, a need that was addressed over the past year and shows promise for even more advancements for the years to come. Here are a few highlights of the growth addressed during the year.

In October 2020, UCR Health hosted a virtual Open House celebrating the expansion of the Silver Oaks Women's Health Center. The event showcased the new spaces that allow a more specialized focus on gynecology, reproductive endocrinology and infertility, family planning, and urogynecology.

The expansion includes two large procedure rooms designed to support urogynecology and gyn-oncology, a new office, eight new exam rooms, and an additional on-site lab and nurses station.



The Women's Health Center now provides comprehensive women's health services including obstetrics, gynecology, minimally invasive surgery, gyn-oncology and reproductive endocrinology/infertility. This expansion, which meets the increased demand of services in 2020, has roots dating back to 2019, when UCR Health established the Silver Oaks location as part of its initiative of overall clinic expansions to meet patients' specific needs.



LEARN MORE ABOUT UCR HEALTH CLINICS AT ucrhealth.org/clinics

Most recently, plans have been developed to establish a clinic in partnership with the City of Riverside focused on those without homes who need healthcare services in the inner city. As a component of a suite of adjacent shelter services for this vulnerable population, the Hulen Place clinic will also serve as an additional teaching platform for our clinical training programs. Long-range plans will include transitioning the clinic to become or affiliated with a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). Anticipated opening of this location is expected for May 2022.

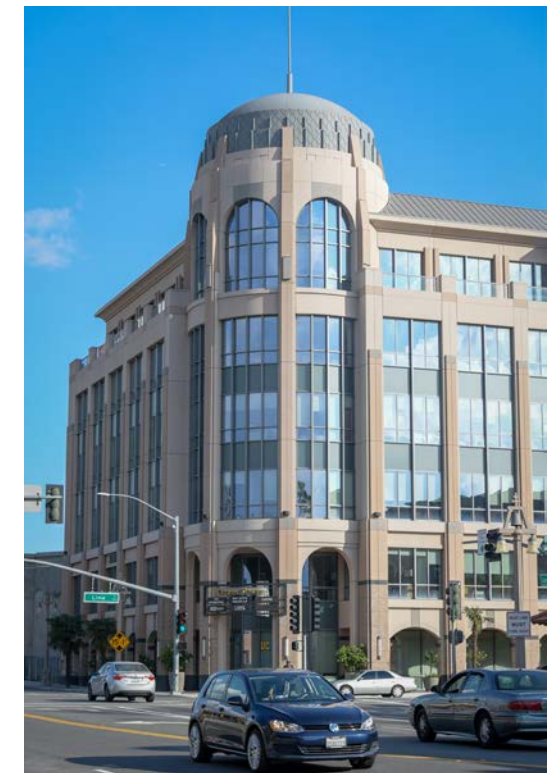
In addition to existing UCR Health clinic sites, plans for two hypothetical multispecialty ambulatory hubs have been developed for San Bernardino County and Coachella Valley. These plans will be further detailed pending the confirmation of secure startup funding.

Over the past three years, UCR Health has seen consistent year over year growth in clinic volume among its existing UCR Health ambulatory clinic sites despite the challenges of the pandemic.

While yearly completed appointments rose by about 5400 between FY2019 and FY2020, appointments rose in

FY2021 by more than 17,000. Much of this growth can be attributed to the shift to more telehealth appointments during the pandemic.

In 2020, the Citrus Tower location also added a cardiology specialty service including cardiac imaging. Although this service began to be offered only a few times each week, it is anticipated that additional days of service will be added as demand dictates. Plans are underway to include pulmonology and gastroenterology services in the near future.



Dr. Jami Woods



One of UCR Health's newest physicians, Dr. Jami Woods, says the 2020-2021 year was the best year of her life, on both a personal and professional level.

"I can tell you wholeheartedly that everything that I have gotten from this university has been 100% truly affirming and supportive," Woods said. "That's what makes it a great year for me."

Fully understanding the significance of Woods' statement requires some

background. She is a transgender female who struggled with gender dysphoria before transitioning in 2018. Despite more than 30 years of experience in pharmacological psychiatry, Woods found herself subject to discrimination in the workplace, including write-ups for questionable offenses that seemed to be more related to her gender than to her performance.

When the opportunity to join the UCR School of Medicine arose, she was excited by the prospect of a new start in a new place and because she knew that she could make a difference with the underserved transgender community in Southern California.

"One out of every six trans people in the

country live in California, and the majority of them live in Southern California, so it's very much an unmet need," she said. "It's one of the most marginalized areas that we have, certainly in psychiatry as well as general medicine."

Woods explained that most non-trans people formulate their opinions on transgender women through the television and movies and their religion.

"For decades, trans women were portrayed as the butt of jokes, to be pitied or laughed at or worse, in TV and movies, and that has stuck for a lot of people," she said. But Woods sees hope as transgender women and men are now being portrayed in a more positive light.

"That's why Transgender Day of Visibility is so important for us because it's the opportunity for us to get out there and say look, we are out there, we are pastors in churches, we're soldiers, we're pilots, and we're psychiatrists. We are more than whatever your preconceived notions about us are."

Being the only transgender psychiatrist on staff means that Woods's presence is in high demand.

"I get every single trans patient at UCR. It's delightful to have so many non-binary, gender non-conforming, or trans patients coming to me because I can go in and talk to these patients on a one-to-one level.

"That's why Transgender Day of Visibility is so important for us [...] We are more than whatever your preconceived notions about us are."

For example, there are specific terms and phrases in the trans and gay communities, and knowing those can help me enter into these relationships at a much higher level," she said.

She also sees the importance of her role as a faculty member at our medical school, as she provides her insights to the next generation of clinicians, many of whom come from non-traditional and unique educational and familial backgrounds.

"When I give lectures around the country on gender dysphoria," Woods says, "I always tell my patients and audiences that if you have to educate your prescriber about what you've got, you probably need to look for a different prescriber."

Most importantly for Woods is what she gets back from the students she is teaching.

"I get so much from the students. I sleep very, very soundly at night knowing that our future as a university, and as a country, is in really good hands," she said, adding that she also asks her students for their Spotify music playlists so she can stay abreast of the latest trends in music.

Despite her unique niche, Woods is clear that she doesn't want to be known as a the "transgender psychiatrist" or a psychiatrist who works with trans patients only. And one thing she's noticed among many of her patients over the past year

is pandemic anxiety, and the need to get pandemic-weary patients ready to reacclimate to the world.

"As a country, we did an excellent job of scaring the people half to death. Now, we need to do just as good a job with the process of trying to unscare our patients, getting people out of their homes and back into the workplace, getting them vaccinated," she said. "One of the things that I can offer them — in addition to really, really good psychopharmacology — is to meet them where they're at and show them a path toward what happiness looks like."

That path is one that she has walked herself over the last several months. She acknowledges her personal challenges from moving to California from Tennessee, not knowing anyone in her new home that had been shutdown due to a pandemic.

"The first couple of months were very, very hard for me," she said. "I'm a social, extroverted person, I enjoy being around other people. It charges me up, it makes me feel alive. I really didn't feel super secure during that particular point in time."

But she followed her own advice, met some new friends, and became a self-described "crazy cat lady" by adopting a feline friend from the shelter. All these steps and more helped her get the "lay of the land."

"I'm healthy, my attitude has gotten healthy and I'm looking forward to the next 50 or 60 years," she said with a smile.

"I can tell you wholeheartedly that everything that I have gotten from this university has been 100% truly affirming and supportive. That's what makes it a great year for me."

SEE DR. WOODS' UCR HEALTH PROFILE AT ucrhealth.org/doctor/jami-woods-md

COMMUNITY

Pipeline programs continue growth and gain recognition



Annual community Open House shifts to online format

One of the most popular events on the School of Medicine’s calendar is the annual Open House that has been held each spring. On a Saturday morning in early April, hundreds of guests would tour the Education Building, see training and medical education demonstrations, and learn about the educational programs.

Restrictions placed on gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the 2020 Open House, and for a while it appeared the same fate might befall the 2021 event. But the 2021 Open House did take place, albeit in a slightly different format, thanks to some creative thinking by the SOM’s Strategic Initiatives unit.

Rather than hosting the open house on a single day in person, the event was shifted to a three-evening event that took

place over Zoom. Presentations that been popular at the in-person event proved to be equally popular online, as more than a hundred guests attended the online events over the three days, including many who attended all five events. Sessions included an Introduction to the school and curriculum, panels with medical students and biomedical sciences graduate students, and an overview of our Pipeline Programs, including presentations by the students from the Mini Medical School and Future Physician Leaders programs.

Perhaps most exciting was the Simulation and Clinical Skills panel which not only talked about the hands-on training that our medical students and residents participate in, but also included a virtual tour of the brand-new, 11,000-foot Clinical Simulation Suite in the basement of the Orbach Library. Through photos and video, guests were treated to a trip through the facility, narrated by Director of Simulated Patient Care Christopher Miller, Faculty Director of the Standardized Patient Program Dr. Rebeca Gavan, and second-year medical student Abigail Burr.

The success of the online event has raised the possibility of hosting similar online events even after the pandemic is over.

WATCH THE SIMULATION CENTER VIDEO AT
youtu.be/PT4U_uYzdAk

SEE THE OPEN HOUSE SESSION PLAYBACKS AT
medschool.ucr.edu/openhouse

While many other academic programs had to slow down or limit participants due to the pandemic, our ten pipeline programs, which provide opportunities for high school and college students to start careers early in health and medicine, saw an increase in participants due to the online nature making it more convenient to bring students from local communities together.

This year, our programs reached 2,120 pre-med students in Inland Southern California — a record high since the School of Medicine was established. That includes 400 high schoolers mentored by UCR premed students from the Health Sciences Partnership and Medical Leaders of Tomorrow programs.

Working behind the scenes to make the pipeline programs a success are Director Teresa Cofield and Assistant Director Esmeralda Trejo.

“My hope is to provide more than academic support and summer internship programs — it is to prepare students for careers as leaders who reduce disparities in health, education, and the workforce,” Cofield said.

This hope comes to life in each of the School of Medicine’s pipeline programs. This year, Mini Medical School (MMS), for example, held Happy and Healthy Holiday webinars for faculty and staff professional development workshops at Mt. San Jacinto College. Project Coordinator and Health Educator Jacklyn Loya also worked with MMS students to develop health education videos and designed a new component for JumpStart introducing 49 new UCR students to wellness resources that were then developed and presented as videos at the program symposium.

This year, the Future Physician Leaders (FPL) program was nationally recognized in the *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine for the 2021 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award. FPL also partnered with the San Bernardino City Unified School District Engagement Center to present free community workshops on topics ranging from mental health to cervical cancer. In addition, they built on their 2020 success on digital platforms and formed member groups who created more than 14 different Instagram accounts mentioned below focused on educating the community on different health topics. See their work by clicking on the Instagram accounts listed below.

- [@PCOS.YOUMATTER](#)
- [@HIVPREP_](#)
- [@AUTISMINTHEWORKPLACE](#)
- [@UCR.ADHDWARENESS](#)
- [@UCR.FPL.HEALTHYHEART](#)
- [@CODERED_CV](#)
- [@FPL_LUNGHEALTH](#)
- [@DONTMINDTHEAGE](#)
- [@CERVICALCANCER.FPL](#)
- [@ECV.PESTICIDE.SAFETY](#)
- [@MENTALHEALTHMATTERS.UCRFPL](#)
- [@CVNUTRITIONPROJECT](#)
- [@FPL.LIVERHEALTH](#)
- [@HIVANDMENTALHEALTH](#)

School of Medicine brightens the holiday season for local communities

Several individuals of the School of Medicine came together to ensure that community members still felt the holiday spirit in late 2020. To the right are a few of the ways our students, faculty, and staff made an impact on the community.

READ MORE ABOUT ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES AT
atu.cr/difference

MEDICAL STUDENTS SANA HADYAH AND MORCEL HAMIDY GATHERED 18 FELLOW STUDENTS TO WORK SEVEN- TO TEN-HOUR SHIFTS FOR LOCAL HOSPITALS FACING PERSONNEL SHORTAGES IN DECEMBER.

CLINICAL AFFILIATE RELATIONSHIP MANAGER KA AGUILAR AND DR. REBECA GAVAN COORDINATED THE DONATION OF MORE THAN 280 PAIRS OF SOCKS TO THE RECHE CANYON REHABILITATION & HEALTH CARE CENTER AND OPERATION SAFE HOUSE.

STUDENTS FROM THE CENTER FOR HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH DONATED GIFTS 35 FAMILIES WITH 115 CHILDREN IN LATINX FARM WORKING COMMUNITIES IN THE EASTERN COACHELLA VALLEY.

Students leaders host campus blood drive

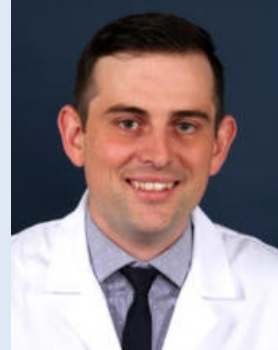
On February 25, 2021, a group of our Ph.D. and M.D. students organized and hosted a successful blood drive at the School of Medicine. In all, 32 units of blood were donated, which could save up to 96 lives.

Pictured are the student leaders of the event: Biomedical Sciences Mini-GSA President Rebecca Ruggiero, Vice President Jeffrey Koury, Ph.D. student Allison Peterson, and Medical Student Council Mini-GSA President Niresh Perera and Vice President Skylar Rains.



Staying in the Inland Empire

The UCR School of Medicine's specific mission to improve the health of the medically underserved in the region means that having our graduates practice locally is a fairly big deal. Being a community-based school is helpful in having students remain in the area as physicians, but even more important is where they practice after receiving their medical degrees.



Upon graduating from medical school, the newly-minted doctors enter a residency program in the specialty of their choice. Upon completion, the doctor becomes a board-certified clinical specialist.

Following that may be the choice to delve into an even more specific specialty with one or multiple fellowships.

Dr. Joshua Winn, who graduated from the School of Medicine in 2018, is one of our many graduates who either stayed in or returned to the Inland Empire to practice. For him, staying in the region was an easy decision.

"This is where I grew up and where my family is. I know the area well, including its shortcomings with healthcare," said Winn, who completed his family medicine residency at Riverside University Health System and will be starting his career in Indio. "It is vastly underserved and we know, in general, that opportunities are worse for the people here. I hope to improve that. I am very interested in, and curious about, the kind of impact I can have on the people of Indio."



Our Mission

The mission of the UCR School of Medicine is to improve the health of the people of California and, especially, to serve Inland Southern California by training a diverse workforce of physicians and by developing innovative research and health care delivery programs that will improve the health of the medically underserved in the region and become models to be emulated throughout the state and nation.

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