

# NORTON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

**UPSTATE**  
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
NORTON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>FROM THE DEAN</b>	4
<b>SERVING THE COMMUNITY</b>	
Community Engaged Learning	6
Students and the Community	12
Phi Delta Epsilon Chapter Revived	14
Driving Systemic Change	15
Social Skills through D&D	16
Checkup from the Neckup	18
Students Launch Podcast	19
Pediatric and Adolescent Center	20
Students Reach out to Those with Disabilities	22
America's First Say Yes Medical School Scholarship	24
<b>OUTSTANDING EDUCATION</b>	
Binghamton Clinical Campus	26
Rural Medical Education	28
Lectureship Promotes Ideas	29
Legend Donates Body to Science	29
Medical Students Help High Schoolers	30
Exceptional Educators Honored	32
<b>EXPANDING CARE</b>	
New Cancer Center Opens	34
Upstate's Footprints	36
<b>UPSTATE OVERVIEW</b>	
Growing in Size and Impact	38
Dalai Lama Recovers from Surgery	39
Prostate Surgeons Recognized	40
Health Educator Honored	41
Professor Named APA Division Head	41
<b>FACILITIES</b>	
More Facilities for Greater Care	42
<b>DEPARTMENTS</b>	
Basic Science	44
Clinical	46
Other Academic	53
By the Numbers	54

**Upstate treats the Dalai Lama**  
*See page 39*



# A medical school that serves the community

BY DEAN LAWRENCE CHIN, MD, FAANS, FACS

When people think of Upstate, they often remember that we are the largest employer in our region. And they're right, nearly 12,000 people work here. Or they remember our leading role during the COVID pandemic where we developed the world's best saliva test, led the first COVID vaccine trials, and kept SUNY schools safe and open. All true. But what I focus on at the Norton College of Medicine is our commitment to providing the best education to the future doctors and healthcare professionals of Central New York and the surrounding areas. In this year's Annual Report, I wanted to present the many different ways the NCOM interacts with our community ranging from less than a mile away in downtown Syracuse to hundreds of miles in the North Country, Southern Tier, and Capital Region.

Our community engagement begins with the first days of medical school. Our continuously evolving curriculum prioritizes early clinical contact, and many of our students start working with community-based doctors as part of their longitudinal preceptorships. Students who choose the rural medicine track (RMED) spend the next several years exploring a variety of specialties in rural, medically underserved areas of New York State. I am always excited to learn of students who are able to return to the communities they grew up in and work in the doctor's offices where they themselves were once patients. And we now have students who have gone on to train in primary care specialties and then come back to the area to practice and serve as preceptors for the next generation of doctors committed to rural healthcare.

We are particularly proud of our faculty, who not only excel in their research and clinical roles but also serve as mentors and educators to our students. Beyond their clinical work, our faculty are actively involved in community outreach, education, and volunteer efforts throughout the regions we serve. Their dedication helps improve patient care and strengthens our connection to the communities around us. This clinical outreach brings Upstate expertise to a wider area of New York State and directly addresses many health disparities that confront our patients daily.

I hope you enjoy this snapshot of the Norton College of Medicine. Our school is growing stronger every day and as a result so is our community!



## Students find **community engaged learning** very engaging

When the Norton College of Medicine revised its curriculum in 2023 there were major and minor changes. One of them converted the college's long-standing practice of encouraging students to volunteer in the community to a requirement that all students engage with community organizations.

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) has become an integral part of student education. Students are required to be engaged with the community for no fewer than 40 hours during the time they are at the Norton College. The time commitment is 30 hours for students in the Norton College's three-year program.

The goal of that engagement goes far beyond the contributions students can make in those hours. "It is an important element in addressing health inequities," said Simone Seward, DrPH, MPH, faculty director, Community Engaged Learning Program and assistant professor, Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

"CEL requires continuous, bi-directional experiences that allow students to develop structural competency and understanding of the lived experiences of individuals and communities and how they live, work, and their support structures and resources," she explained.

For students, it is a high-impact learning experience where they and faculty work with and learn from community members to understand and address real-world challenges. This leads to learning that, Seward said, "can transform students' perceptions of themselves and their ability to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world community and future patient interactions.

"It is learning that actively promotes critical consciousness, ethical considerations, and deepens community connections and partnerships," she said.

# Students on their community engaged learning experience

**Zuri Williams**  
Second-year medical student  
Cincinnati, OH  
Hampton University  
Walnut Hills High School

## What do you think you gained from these CEL experiences?

Being new to the Syracuse area, I had no connection to the community or the patients that I would later be treating. When you don't have a deeper understanding of the community you serve it is easier to mistreat, misunderstand and disconnect. CEL has allowed me to hear the stories of patients who may not otherwise have the opportunity to be heard and better learn the type of physician that I want to be. By participating in experiences like the Assumption Food Pantry and The Rural and Underserved Service Track (TRUST), I now know how I want to practice medicine as a physician by considering not only the medical education I have learned, but the lived experiences I have learned from interactions with those who live in Syracuse.

I have gained so much fulfillment from utilizing the time I have outside of classes and clinics to build meaningful connections and uplift those around me. I've learned

to understand that one can never be competent in anyone's culture, even your own. So, my classmates and I need to learn cultural humility, empathy, and compassion from the time we have with community members.

## What do you think the people in these organizations gained from your involvement?

By participating in Medical Education for Diverse Students (MEDS) and The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) community-engaged learning experiences I have had the honor of giving back to programs and providing experiences for students who have similar backgrounds to me and need the same support I was given to be part of the underrepresented population of medical doctors. If it wasn't for people being willing to take extra time to teach me the path to becoming a doctor, exposing me to possible medical specialties, and taking the time to review my applications and essays, I would not be here.

It is only right to continue to reach back as you climb and that is exactly what I have been able to do with these CEL experiences. Students can see a minority woman in a space that many have probably never



thought they could also be in. Participating in these experiences helped me reconnect with my passion for mentorship that became out of focus when my medical education load became heavy. They led me to assist in the facilitation of even more programming to serve as a resource for minority and underserved students at an event with the Office of Admissions where we brought in eighth-graders to the New Academic Building for a half-day summit to learn more about the healthcare field and the journey to getting there. Also starting the Inaugural SNMA Family Groups, where we have matched underrepresented medical students at Upstate with underrepresented doctors and residents to serve as a resource and support on their journey throughout their four years of medical school. CEL ignites passions and turns into a cycle of further engagement, resources, advocacy and support for so many communities.

## How would you compare the two programs with which you worked, in mission or operation or any other aspect you found of interest?

MEDS is targeted toward high school students and serves to expose a diverse group of students to the possibility of furthering their knowledge and education past high school and college. We intend to spark interest in healthcare and then uplift and support the students in knowing that this is attainable for them to achieve. The high school students who participate in MEDS are selected by their schools through an application process and are then placed in the program.

SNMA is a chapter at Upstate that operates under the mission of our national organization to be committed to supporting current and future underrepresented minority medical students, addressing the





needs of underserved communities, and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent, and socially conscious physicians. Our programs are designed to serve the health needs of underserved communities and communities of color. In addition, SNMA is dedicated both to ensuring that medical education and services are culturally sensitive to the needs of diverse populations and to increasing the number of African-American, Latino, and other students of color entering and completing medical school. The beauty of the chapter at Upstate is that our members can learn from their involvement in CEL experiences to better assess the needs of the community and create programming with the support of Upstate Medical University, The National SNMA organization, and our classmates to continue to do good for our future patients and other physicians to be.

**How is CEL different from volunteering?**

CEL is different from volunteering because we must have face time with the people we are serving. When volunteering at places like a food bank or neighborhood clean-up, you do not actually get to speak and interact with the community you are helping, therefore you are not learning from them.

In CEL we also have a reflection aspect after we have finished participating in the activity and what is unique is that we must write a reflection each time. This forces you to think deeper about what you did for that community you engaged with, and what that community left you with. "How have you rethought your biases and preconceived notions, what did I take away from learning about that person's experiences, how do I want to move forward in my healthcare journey and further interactions to take steps

for the betterment of others?" These are all questions that are hard to ask yourself when you do not engage with those whom you serve and that is the beauty of CEL.

**What should future Norton students know about CEL?**

Future students should know that CEL is what you put into it. It can be a beautiful learning and growing opportunity, blossoming personal growth and compassion for others. Serving others does not have to be a commensalistic relationship and should be mutualistic where both parties are able to leave better than how we arrived. CEL serves as the perfect opportunity for medical students to continuously reach back as we climb.



**Verónica Rivé**  
**Second-year medical student**  
**Phoenixville, PA**  
**University of Miami**  
**Pope John Paul II High School**

**What do you think you gained from these CEL experiences?**

I've gained so much through my Community Engaged Learning experiences that I don't believe I could have gotten anywhere else. One of the most significant has been the opportunity to engage with the people and parts of Syracuse that stretch beyond our campus lines. I've learned so much about the city through its diverse communities, particularly through my work with the RISE After School Tutoring program, which works with children of New American families.

We meet twice a week to assist students of all ages with homework, tutoring, and mentorship. Over the past year, I have formed genuine connections with these students, teaching them while also learning from them. They have offered me insight into educational challenges many face in the area, systemic barriers within their school district, and their rich cultural backgrounds and experiences. I bonded with them over their emphasis on family and community ties, values that resonate deeply with me as a Latina. I love being able to experience their kinship and love for one another — it serves as a reminder to me that a strong sense of community can go a long way in promoting wellness. The students at RISE have also provided me with a deeper understanding of the traditions, challenges and needs of refugee families in Syracuse. The more I learn from them, the more I am reminded of the importance of listening more and judging less.

My CEL experiences have also motivated me to work alongside these groups to implement sustainable changes they want to see done in their communities. One example is an initiative I've started with the RISE program to create a reading corner for the students. Reading and writing skills are essential for academic success, but they also help

build confidence, spark creativity, and guide individuals in discovering their passions. At RISE, we are all determined to help each other achieve these goals.

**What do you think the people in these organization gained from your involvement?**

I believe that my efforts in the RISE After School Tutoring Program have enabled me to build meaningful relationships with the students, especially as I continue to develop a better understanding of their cultural and personal backgrounds. Throughout this year, I was able to foster trust, mutual respect, and comfort between the students and me. For example, there was a teenager in the program who was frequently in trouble with the directors due to some behavioral issues. I made it a priority to approach them with kindness, always greeting them by name to ensure they felt seen and valued. Over time, I noticed that these small, consistent gestures had a positive impact, as they were often surprised by the attention and care.

This year, when I returned to the program, that same teenager greeted me with a big smile and excitement, saying, "It's you!" It felt like a significant moment of connection and growth. I believe that, ultimately, what young people need most is to feel seen, understood, empowered, and supported. If I can offer that to the students at RISE, I consider my time there a success.

**How is CEL different from volunteering?**

I do have experience with volunteering in the past, including some consistent commitments, which might make it seem like CEL at first glance — but it's not. CEL involves a much greater level of intentionality. For example, volunteering typically lacks the elements of learning, partnership, and reflection that are central to CEL. Volunteering is often a one-sided activity, where the volunteer shows up to help with a task and then moves on once it's completed. There's usually little focus on program planning, development, or sustainability, which can sometimes limit its impact or even unintentionally result in new challenges for the community. CEL, on the other hand, is built on a true partnership between the individual and the community. It emphasizes mutual learning, collaboration, and the establishment of long-term, sustainable programs that help to address the needs identified by the community itself.

**What should future Norton students know about CEL?**

CEL is just as meaningful, beneficial, and essential to our future careers as healthcare providers as any of our classes or clinical experiences. This ties back to the earlier question regarding the difference between volunteering and CEL. Volunteering is often seen as an extracurricular activity you choose to engage in, whereas CEL is an essential part of developing the knowledge and skills needed to provide comprehensive, equitable and individualized care to patients. CEL strengthens your connection to the community, which is the same community you serve in clinic. It educates you on social justice and the challenges your patients face. CEL also fosters cultural humility, helping you treat patients as equal partners in their care, with the understanding that no degree can give you more insight into a patient's needs than the patient themselves.



**Nikhila Rao**  
**Second-year medical student**  
**Rochester, NY**  
**Rochester Institute of Technology**  
**Pittsford Sutherland High School**

### **What do you think you gained from your CEL experiences?**

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) transcends “acts of service” to facilitate a deeper connection with those that we are serving. Through CEL, I have the valuable opportunity to engage with community members and hear their stories on a firsthand basis. An instrumental part of enacting change is learning what are the specific priorities and needs of a community. I now go into each service experience with the goal of engaging and understanding to a greater extent.

What I have gained from CEL has translated into so much change in other aspects of my life, most notably, my role as a medical student. When I am on hospital floors or in clinic, I feel more attuned to the concerns of patients, and I strive to comprehensively understand their backgrounds. Within myself, I am also introspecting more to see how I can develop greater empathy toward others, eliminate biases, and cultivate collaboration when working alongside the healthcare team. Through my CEL experiences, I also take the time to reflect upon how I am rendering service and if it is being done in a thoughtful manner. The manner or attitude in which service is done is just as important as the act of service itself. CEL has taught me that while I may have good intent as a volunteer, I should always make sure that I am not creating inconvenience or perpetuating any barriers.

There are always ways to improve and expand the positive impact we help create. This reflection component of CEL, both during and after the volunteering experience, enables me to pause, reflect, and recognize key lessons.

### **What do you think the people in these organizations gained from your involvement?**

It has been a pleasure to serve at various CEL organizations, and I hope that the people in these organizations feel supported and listened to. Various CEL volunteering experiences have demonstrated to me how inseparable unity and service are. There is such strength when there is a team of volunteers all selflessly working together towards a common goal. I hope that community members and organization members feel reassured and uplifted by this support and spirit of unity. Most importantly, I hope that through my involvement in CEL, I become a small part of real change and progress.

### **How would you say CEL is different from volunteering?**

At Upstate, volunteering with the focus of “Community Engaged Learning” has enabled me to reflect more deeply on how my role as a volunteer is leading to positive transformation within myself. This powerful lens of CEL has motivated me to go outside my comfort zone and take greater efforts in understanding the community and individuals that I am humbly serving. Volunteering is undoubtedly more than merely “giving” to those that are in need. Instead, CEL has transformed my outlook of volunteering into a two-way street: as

a volunteer, I am not only giving and sharing but also receiving so much in return. I come away from CEL experiences feeling inspired to pay forward the kindness that I received and to be part of a positive cycle of change. This meaningful reflection is at the core of CEL, and it is precisely what allows all of us students to further enrich our service experiences.

### **What should future Norton students know about CEL?**

CEL is an invaluable opportunity for you to serve as a team player, leader, and pillar of support for community members. There are numerous opportunities for volunteering and each CEL program is rewarding in its own way. From “Patient Navigation” CEL programs to “Tutoring and Mentoring” CEL programs, I strongly recommend volunteering for a diverse set of CEL experiences. You will find yourself taking away many important messages and unique experiences when you volunteer in a variety of settings, and with different populations such as children, refugees and patients.

Medicine is indeed centered around engaging, caring, understanding, and listening to your patients and community, irrespective of background. CEL is a much-needed reminder of what medicine is ultimately about and why you all chose to embark upon this fulfilling journey.





**Nilesch Rao**  
**Second-year**  
**medical student**  
**Rochester, NY**  
**Rochester Institute**  
**of Technology**  
**Pittsford Sutherland High School**

**What do you think you gained from your CEL experiences?**

My CEL experiences, specifically with “Music as Healing,” have impacted me in several ways. I have had the wonderful opportunity to play music for patients and staff in the Upstate Cancer Center, and interact with them afterward. These experiences have allowed me to think about the community we are serving with an increased level of awareness and understanding. I was able to see how much a moment of outreach can mean to those who are going through difficult situations. In addition, this initiative

has helped me strengthen my mental, physical, and spiritual state, and has helped me gain the confidence I will need for my future medical endeavors.

**What do you think the people in the organization gained from your involvement?**

I believe that this incredible experience has greatly impacted the patients and staff of the Upstate Cancer Center by making them feel welcomed and appreciated. Having to be in a medical setting, whether it is for one’s own health, the health of a family member or loved one, or for work is not an easy task. By reaching out to these individuals in this unique way, we have helped them feel positivity and have shown them that they are being sincerely cared for.

**How is CEL different from volunteering?**

It is a truly transformative opportunity. CEL is quite extraordinary in that we are

reaching out to the greater community with a deeper purpose of building long-term relationships and helping different populations feel as though they are being advocated for. In this way, we are making a more significant impact on the lives we touch.

**What should future Norton students know about CEL?**

All future Norton students should consider involving themselves in CEL because it would tremendously benefit the community as well as the students themselves. The opportunity to make positive contributions to society while simultaneously combining your ideas and passions is what will make a student’s medical school career much more well-rounded and fulfilling.

**Estelle Khairallah**  
**Second-year medical student**  
**Syracuse, NY**  
**Hamilton College**  
**Christian Brothers Academy**



**What do you think you gained from your CEL experiences?**

I’ve primarily participated in Assumption Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen, University United Methodist Church, and ARISE Adaptive Design, but I’ve also volunteered weekly with Book Buddies and recently was part

of a team that established a new volunteer experience called Music as Healing. Two of the organizations are faith-based — while I would consider myself a practicing Orthodox Christian, I don’t see my volunteering at those organizations as religious or spiritual. The opportunities themselves are at churches but they don’t feel religious by any means (which most people are surprised to find out at first).

I feel that when I volunteer with local organizations, it’s one of the few chances I get as a medical student to broaden my view and remind myself of why I’m here in the first place. Volunteering re-centers me and reminds me that even though I spend so much time “in a book” (though most everything is on my laptop), I’m in medicine

for the people. I find that on days when I volunteer in the mornings, my afternoon studying is much more productive and mindful.

**What do you think the people in the organization gained from your involvement?**

I believe that the organizations we’re working with appreciate the medical student (or health professions student) perspective. I can tell you for sure that ARISE Adaptive Design relies heavily on the knowledge that physical therapy students and providers bring. Even though I’m still just a medical student, I can tell that my opinion on adaptive equipment design is highly valued.

**How is CEL different from volunteering?**

It may surprise you, but I wasn’t big on volunteering prior to coming to Upstate. My undergraduate institution (Hamilton College) was sort of in the “middle of nowhere” so we didn’t have a lot of opportunities and the pandemic didn’t do us any favors with the travel restrictions our college put in place. When I did volunteer in high school, I definitely wasn’t mindful about it and I felt like I was just doing it, “because it’s the right thing to do.” Honestly, the only time I mindfully volunteered prior to medical school was because I worked with someone at the Samaritan Center who engaged me with the community in a more reflective sense while volunteering, very similarly

to how CEL works at Upstate. I definitely think that CEL bridges the gap between volunteering as the right thing to do, to a much more thoughtful, reflective, and mindful experience that impacts your approach to patient care. When I first started volunteering at Upstate and began engaging with the Syracuse community, I found a new passion. I honestly wish I had been involved in service earlier on.

**What should future Norton students know about CEL?**

To future Norton students, I would tell them that this program puts both your clinical and pre-clinical years into perspective and allows you to engage with your community beyond the clinic. The people you interact with when participating in CEL will be your patients and they have just as much to teach you as you have to teach them. I would take advantage of this valuable opportunity that Upstate provides to engage deeply with the surrounding community.



# Student engagement and community impact at SUNY

Student involvement and community engagement play pivotal roles in campus life according to Ryan Green, the director of Campus Activities. Upstate boasts an impressive array of more than 80 active student organizations with more than 300 students serving on organizations' e-boards.



These student organizations are deeply involved in various forms of community engagement, advocacy and volunteerism. Here are some key examples:

- Accessible Upstate: Advocates for accessibility and inclusivity on campus.
- Docs for Tots: A pediatric interest group with a history of community volunteer work.
- Environmental Justice and Sustainability: Focuses on promoting sustainable practices and environmental advocacy.
- Friends of MSF: Supports and promotes the work of Doctors Without Borders through humanitarian efforts.
- Health Advocacy for the Incarcerated: Engages in advocacy for the health rights of incarcerated individuals.

- Medical Students for Choice: Advocates for comprehensive health services and reproductive rights.
- Migrant Worker Health Club: Advocates for the health and rights of local migrant workers.
- Physicians for Human Rights: Focuses on advocacy for immigrant rights and humanitarian issues.
- Public Health Interest Group: Combines advocacy with volunteering and fundraising efforts to support public health initiatives.
- Refugee Health & Wellness Interest Group: Engages in advocacy to support the health and wellness of refugees.
- Seva Club: Concentrates on service-based projects and community outreach.
- Snehalaya: Advocates for victims of poverty, violence, sex trafficking, and HIV/AIDS, with a focus on India.
- Street Medicine Interest Group: Provides volunteering and shadowing opportunities in the community to support street medicine efforts.

The essence of student organizations at Upstate lies in their educational and cultural contributions. Green emphasizes that the primary goal of these groups is to enhance the campus community through events that are either educational or cultural. Each organization is required to host events that contribute to campus enrichment, and these events are open to all students, regardless of their college affiliation.

Students can explore current and active organizations on the university's platform at Campus Life. Most organizations provide a short description of their focus, allowing students to easily identify groups that align with their interests and goals. Additionally, the annual Club and Organization Fair, held every fall, provides a dynamic space for organizations to showcase their missions and activities, allowing students to connect with groups that resonate with their passions.

One of the hallmarks of these student organizations is their inclusivity and collaborative spirit. All student organizations are open to students from any of Upstate's four colleges, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration. This collaborative environment not only enhances the quality of campus events but also prepares students for future professional teamwork by emphasizing the importance of working together across different fields.

With a rich variety of student organizations, a strong focus on community impact, and a collaborative philosophy, the campus continues to nurture both the personal and professional growth of its students.



# Rechartered Phi Delta Epsilon Tau chapter serving the community

Phi Delta Epsilon is an international all-inclusive medical fraternity that emphasizes the principles of philanthropy, deity, education and equity. Founded in 1904 at Cornell University, Phi Delta Epsilon expanded its Tau chapter to what was the Syracuse University College of Medicine in 1919. The Tau chapter ceased operations late in the 20th Century and recently was revived by students leading to its official rechartering at Upstate Medical University Norton College of Medicine in February 2024.

Each Phi Delta Epsilon chapter partners with a local Children's Miracle Network Hospital for volunteer work and fundraising. For the Tau chapter, this partnership is with Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. Additionally, the organization works closely with ARISE Adaptive Design, a local organization committed to providing affordable adaptive equipment to children and adults with disabilities. In the first year of its revival, members have held two major fundraisers, raising over \$1,300 for Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, delivering more than 300 CandyGrams care packages for patients, and raising more than \$200 for ARISE Adaptive Design.

The organization has also introduced Crafts for the Kids, a new volunteer experience with Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital where students can engage in activities such as painting, crafting, and other creative projects with pediatric patients. In addition, the organization hosted a food and clothing drive in collaboration with the pre-medical New York Nu chapter at Syracuse University and donated items to Vera House and the Salvation Army. The organization has also collaborated with Syracuse University's OttoTHON, a dance marathon fundraiser with profits benefitting Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. The organization celebrated Stand for the Kids, Phi Delta Epsilon International Day of Philanthropy where all chapters and members across the globe raise awareness and funds for their local Children's Miracle Network Hospital.



# Empowering medical students to drive systemic change

The responsibility of a physician extends beyond delivering excellent care; it encompasses the challenge of transforming systems that obstruct the provision of optimal care. The Physicians and Social Responsibility (PSR) 2 elective, directed by Rachel Fabi, PhD, associate professor in the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, is designed to equip second-year medical students with the tools to address and rectify systemic inadequacies within healthcare. This course builds on the foundational principles of PSR 1, empowering students to identify and tackle the underlying policies, systems, and assumptions that perpetuate healthcare injustices.

The course features a comprehensive approach, combining eight two-hour seminar sessions with a mentored project component. The seminars focus on levels of systems change and advocacy skills essential for physicians. Topics include understanding healthcare policies, navigating institutional advocacy, and engaging with marginalized communities. These sessions provide the theoretical grounding necessary for the practical application of advocacy skills in the mentored projects.

The mentored projects, requiring 40 hours of work outside of class, allow students to focus on specific advocacy efforts. These projects can range from clinical service in settings that care for marginalized populations, to policy work with professional organizations and advocacy groups. Each project aims to address a unique issue within the healthcare or public health landscape, translating seminar knowledge into actionable solutions.

This year, student projects included some exciting work within our community. Isabel Sia's project with Housecalls for the Homeless exemplifies the integration of immediate medical needs with broader systemic solutions. Marcea Bond's work with Doula4aQueen illustrates the intersection of healthcare policy and reproductive health aimed to advance legislation for Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in New York State. Maddie Lee's collaboration with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) highlights the role of community engagement in mental health advocacy. Nia Johnson and Alina Mufti worked together on a project with the Assumption Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen focused on enhancing resource accessibility for underserved communities. Although challenges in securing donations limited their achievements, their project highlights the importance of addressing



specific community needs and the complexities involved in resource distribution. John Babich's initiative with Greener By Default aims to promote plant-based meals as the default option for inpatients at Upstate's facilities seeking to improve patient health, reduce environmental impact, and decrease healthcare costs.

The course empowers medical students to address systemic issues through advocacy and public health projects. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, students contribute to immediate improvements and long-term advancements in healthcare policy and practice. Their projects exemplify the principle that physicians have a responsibility to deliver excellent care and drive systemic change for a more just and effective healthcare system.



## Program helps teens gain social skills through fantasy gaming

Upstate Medical University researchers are finding *Dungeons & Dragons*, the fantasy role-playing game, is helping teenagers with social adjustment issues better understand and relate to others.

Having heard at a 2020 conference about fantasy games as a means of therapy for young people, Robin Dean, PsyD, MEd, assistant professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Upstate, inaugurated the idea here, involving Anthony Gobbo, MD and Vincent Wong, MD, both of whom are fellows in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

The three have seen some notable changes in teens who have participated. One teen, who had been diagnosed with autism, was reluctant to even attend at the start — unable to go farther than a parent's car due to significant anxiety — but became an active and engaged participant of the weekly games once they were able to make it through the door.

*Dungeons & Dragons* involves players working together to complete a quest. The action is led by a dungeon master who describes the challenges as players encounter them. Players give their characters names,

histories and personalities. Using multi-sided dice and character sheets, they work together to get past obstacles and overcome otherworldly opponents. The game, created in the early 1970s, has millions of players around the world spawning motion pictures as well as prominent mention in the TV series, “*Stranger Things*.”

For the Upstate sessions, seven teenaged players are led by a dungeon master. In the recent session, Wong served as dungeon master and three other Upstate staffers organized the session and assisted players.

Wong said the game capitalizes on “the collective unconscious,” the shared mental concepts that everyone seems to know. Using the idea of archetypes — such as the wise old man, mother, and wizard — that don’t need to be taught to be grasped, according to 20th Century psychiatrist Carl Jung. Jung’s idea has been expanded by others to include the “monomyth” of the hero’s journey and other ideas often expressed in fantasies.

Games are played in sessions of a given length. Dean said eight weeks seems to be an ideal period over which to play the games once a week. A longer session, one lasting

three months, “proved too long for our population,” Gobbo said. While months-long sessions might be fine for others, the Upstate sessions needed to be shorter to allow for a “reset,” and to ensure those in therapy got the support they needed, he said.

As therapy, Wong said, *Dungeons & Dragons* allows players to think about others in ways to which they may not be accustomed. He recounted how one teen voluntarily relinquished his spot in the game so that others could play. “He wanted everyone to have a good time,” Dean said. The ability to recognize and prioritize the needs of others was not something he had shown before. That’s a success at what Dean referred to as “trying out an experience that can then be generalized into the real world.”

*Dungeons & Dragons* therapy has included teens labeled with attention deficit disorder, obsession-compulsive disorder and autism. Wong said that because of the way the game is played, the therapy was not tried on those whose autism makes them non-verbal or unable to control their physical movements. Likewise, those experiencing psychotic episodes where they can’t discern reality from fantasy are not candidates for the therapy.



The need for staffing can also limit who can play.

For players, the changes brought about include remembering others' names, dealing more effectively with change and showing curiosity about others.

Gobbo said facing unexpected challenges in the game can help participants learn how to deal with challenges in real life. He shared that in one game, players were facing off against Baba Yaga, a character in Slavic folklore known for eating children. "They were at Baba Yaga's house with a mission of preparing a meal for her, or they were going to be the meal."

For one player, that meant going into the garden to collect vegetables. "What this

youth didn't necessarily know would be the case, is those vegetables were alive and able to move and able to talk," Gobbo recounted. "So, he got attacked by vegetables."

The player recovered well enough to use "flame breath" to conquer the vegetables. Learning how to deal with that unexpected development, Gobbo said, helped this player develop "flexibility." That newly learned skill can help him navigate change, "with less distress or dysfunction."

Gobbo said that a strength of Dungeons & Dragons as a means of therapy is that there are rules, but players as a group can decide to ignore a rule. That creates flexibility, which means participants need not fear being wrong.

As sessions come to an end, players meet with staff to discuss their experiences. Dean said what comes through clearly is that participants see "this group is a space where each of them feels OK to be themselves. I think in a lot of other areas in their lives, they've been the awkward kid or the one that nobody understands."

Dean said the Dungeons & Dragons therapy has been widely successful in helping participants. "We do see improvements in every category of social skill. If the youth have a particular deficit in an area, there's generally more improvement."

Robin M. Dean, serves as dungeon master, guiding teens through a quest, and toward improved social skills.



## Diabetes Education Day at Upstate

The Joslin Diabetes affiliate at Upstate Medical University hosted a School Diabetes Education Day in August. The event was for teachers and other school staff who might encounter students with diabetes. Topics covered included glucose monitoring, hypoglycemia and activity, diabetes terms and different scenarios educators may encounter with students with diabetes.

## Upstate Professor volunteers at Diabetes Camp

David Hansen, MD, MPH, assistant professor of Pediatrics, volunteered with the American Diabetes Association's Camp Aspire this summer. Hansen, in red shirt, helped the camp host 110 children with diabetes between the ages 8 and 17. The camp serves as a lifeline for children with diabetes to develop the critical skills needed to thrive while managing their diabetes.



## “Checkup from the Neckup” shares health, happiness insights with the public

Rich O’Neill, PhD, professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, heard the phrase “checkup from the neckup” nearly 50 years ago. It rang light and deep and sparked his career trajectory.

Joining SUNY Upstate’s faculty, O’Neill participated in the Central New York Psychological Association, volunteering for media interviews on psychological topics, adopting the playful moniker “Sigmund Cronkite.” This persona caught the eye of Melanie Rich, then Upstate’s Marketing and University Communications director, who asked him to host staff development videos. Their collaboration birthed his “Checkup from the Neckup” segments, exploring psychological science in everyday life. These aired on Upstate’s public radio show for over a decade, and on YouTube.

Building on this, O’Neill and Rich launched “Cycle of Health” with Central New York’s PBS television station, WCNY. Over 17 seasons, the show has evolved from

four doctor-reporters to O’Neill interviewing panels of various health and happiness experts, making complex medical and psychological concepts easier to understand. By breaking down barriers to health information, “Cycle of Health” empowers viewers with knowledge to improve well-being.

Recently, O’Neill embraced WCNY’s Community FM, producing a half-hour show, “Checkup from the Neckup: Happier, Healthier, Successier.” Here he discusses critical health topics with local and national experts (streaming 24/7 at [WCNY.org/communityFM](http://WCNY.org/communityFM)).

In 2024 O’Neill launched, “Medical Student Minute,” in which Norton College of Medicine students will share their most exciting learnings relevant to the public.

Through these initiatives, O’Neill continues to reach the community with accessible, straightforward information about health, inspiring audiences toward happier, healthier and more successful lives.





UPSTATE

## *Frame of Mind*

### **Residents launch mental health podcast, “Upstate Frame of Mind”**

Two medical residents at SUNY Upstate Medical University have launched a podcast for anyone interested in psychiatry and mental health. “Upstate Frame of Mind,” features Faiz Kidwai, DO, MPH, and Gerson Nunes, B. Med.

In his fourth year as a resident in Upstate’s Psychiatry Department, Kidwai explained that the goal of the podcast is to deliver information about mental health that is “accessible to both practitioners and community members alike.”

“We are interested in discussing any and all topics related to mental health that are germane,” he said. “For instance, some topics that we are hoping future guests can speak about are mass shootings, palliative care for mental health conditions, mental health needs of an ageing population and nutrition.”

In the first four podcasts the pair released, topics have included Upstate Medical University’s Psychiatry High Risk Program. On that podcast, Robert Gregory, MD, professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and former chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Upstate, discusses Dynamic Deconstructive Psychotherapy, an approach he developed.

The podcast launched in 2023 looking at, “Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Care of Gender and Sexual Minorities.” That episode featured Eric McMaster, assistant professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and director of the Child Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows at Upstate.

While so far the podcast has included interviews with Upstate faculty, Kidwai said that won’t necessarily be the case for future podcasts. “We have a bevy of great minds at Upstate whom we love to showcase, but we aren’t shy to extend ourselves to other institutions as well,” he said.

Gerson, a third-year resident, noted that creating and continuing the podcast has been a learning experience, beyond what they hear from their guests. “I think the most surprising part about producing a podcast is that it takes a team to get it done. After we agree on a certain topic, we need to reach out to the interviewee, come up with the questions, record and edit it, and promote the episode once is ready to be aired,” he said. “All these steps are much easier to accomplish when you have a group of people working together to make it happen.”

Among those at Upstate Kidwai and Nunes credited for the podcast’s success are Richard O’Neill, PhD, professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences; Vincent Wong, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry fellow; Pratik Jain, MBBS, resident in Psychiatry; and medical student Madeline Lee.

The podcast has allowed the two to hear from “health care professionals in our community trying to make a difference in their patient’s life through advocacy and empowerment,” Gerson said. The guests highlight resources available in the community.

“Upstate Frame of Mind,” is available on Spotify.

# Upstate Pediatric and Adolescent Center is dedicated to serving the community

At Upstate Pediatric and Adolescent Center (UPAC), the commitment goes beyond providing exceptional healthcare; it extends deeply into the heart of the community they serve. This year, UPAC has provided care to more than 11,000 patients through 24,000 visits in their new offices at the Nappi Wellness Institute while Upstate Pediatrics in Baldwinsville cares for 6,000 patients through 16,000 visits.

UPAC serves as a key educational site for Norton College of Medicine students. From Upstate Medical University 45 pediatric residents, as well as more than 100 medical students, physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners (NPs), and nursing students and residents from specialties such as psychiatry and emergency medicine, rotate through UPAC. Students and residents also rotate through Upstate Pediatrics.

UPAC's dedication to serving families facing economic and social challenges is evident in their work with Medicaid patients, who make up 85 percent of their population. UPAC bridges gaps for parents who may lack formal education or experience difficulties navigating complex systems. UPAC's services are designed to support single-parent families and those facing economic hardships, ensuring that every child receives the care they need.

Their ENHANCE program (Excellence in Health Care for Abused and Neglected Children) provides primary care, psychological support, and coordination with the Department of Child and Family Services (DCSF) as one of the oldest standalone clinics for children in foster care in the country. Each year, approximately 450 foster children receive the comprehensive care they need. Steven Blatt, MD, division director of General Pediatrics and medical director of UPAC notes, "Children in foster care have suffered some of the most overwhelming family, psychological, and medical traumas imaginable. Helping these children heal and assisting their biological parents and foster parents care for them requires the expertise of medical and mental health professionals developed by the ENHANCE team during the past 35 years."

UPAC's outreach extends into the community through collaborations with local school districts, the county health department, and non-profit organizations. UPAC provides school immunizations and hosts immunization clinics, helping children meet health requirements for school.

In partnership with the CNY Diaper Bank, the UPAC Diaper Bank, led by Winter Berry, DO, associate professor of

Pediatrics, has distributed more than 800,000 diapers over the past eight years, helping address an unmet financial burden of its patients.

Through partnership with the Early Childhood Alliance of Onondaga County, UPAC supports early childhood development. Their programs include reading initiatives, developmental screening, and the distribution of age-appropriate books and developmental toys. Another UPAC program, Reach Out and Read, further enriches this effort by providing books to patients during their visits. Jenica O'Malley, DO, assistant professor of Pediatrics and the UPAC faculty member who leads both programs, is a Physician Champion for early childhood development. Berry is the director of the Healthy Steps program, a national program funded by the Office of Mental Health (OMH), to offer developmental and mental health support for children from birth through age three.

With its move to the Nappi Wellness Institute, UPAC has expanded integrative Mental Health services, offering counseling and psychiatric services fully integrated within the pediatric office. This integration allows them to address complex needs efficiently and effectively. Similar services are integrated in Upstate Pediatrics.

UPAC's respiratory therapist helps children with respiratory illness better address environmental health issues often worsened by poor housing. Lead poisoning rates for children in Syracuse are among the highest in the country. The Central and Eastern NY Lead Poisoning Resource Center is led by Travis Hobart, MD, MPH, an Upstate pediatrician.

Located within UPAC and led by Karen Teelin, MD, MEd, Adolescent Medicine services are designed to meet the diverse needs of young people, including sexual health, reproductive health, and eating disorders. They also offer specialized care for transgender youth, treating around 450 individuals annually, and provide support through child psychology and adolescent mental health services.

UPAC and Upstate Pediatric are dedicated to supporting the community's well-being. Their wide-ranging services, innovative programs, and unwavering commitment to supporting underserved populations highlight their role as a vital resource in the region. Together, they strive to create a healthier, more supportive environment for all the families they serve.



(Top) Jenica O'Malley, DO, assistant professor of Pediatrics, shares a book with young Syracuse students as part of Upstate Pediatric and Adolescent Center's outreach to the community.  
(Bottom) Winter Berry, DO, associate professor of Pediatrics, talks with a new mother. In eight years, UPAC has distributed some 800,000 diapers to those in need.

# Norton students teach health advocacy to college students with developmental disabilities



Wednesday from 1 to 2 p.m. is the best hour of the week say three second-year medical students at Upstate Medical University Norton College of Medicine. That's when they cross the street from Upstate to Syracuse University and teach a course on "Health Advocacy" to students in S.U.'s InclusiveU.

InclusiveU is a program that brings together students of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want to experience college life in an inclusive setting. "The goal is to prepare students to live as independently and safely as possible," said Amelia Gabor, a Cazenovia native who, along with fellow students Mary "Maddy" Locastro and Jonathan Bearden teach the course at S.U.'s School of Education.

They share lessons on health matters with the students, including nutrition, exercise, mindfulness and sleep hygiene. They find the students to be engaged. "They are curious and interested in their health," Gabor said of the nine students in their class.

Students will often come to the next class excited to share that they made use of what they learned the week before. After a recent lesson on nutrition, students reported they went to the dining hall and ordered salads.

The course involves a lot of active learning with students taking part in lessons. A recent class on going to the doctor had the instructors demonstrate stethoscopes, reflex hammers and penlights, the latter used to check eyes for health. Then the students were offered a chance to use the tools on the instructors.

"There's a lot of anxiety and confusion at a visit to the doctor's," said Gabor. The idea is that a chance to touch the medical tools might put students more at ease.

"The students bring in personal experiences," said Locastro, a Marcellus, NY, native who has volunteered and worked in the field of developmental pediatrics for a decade. One thing the three heard from students is that doctors often address their parents but not them during an office visit. Locastro said hearing that can help future doctors.

In an effort to improve the experience for patients with developmental disabilities, the three have invited classmates to volunteer in the classroom. "Part of our goal is to ensure our peers are comfortable with this population," Locastro said. "We three recognized

that disability education isn't a focus for students at most medical schools," she said. "We are all going to encounter this population."

They have found their classmates to be nervous on the way to volunteering in a class, but they soon relax and are laughing with the students and fellow teachers. Afterward, said Gabor, everyone says the same thing: "That was so fun!"

Locastro has been involved in developmental pediatrics for years, assisting families dealing with insurance procedures so they can acquire medical equipment needed by their children, as well as working on adaptive design for children with disabilities.

Gabor's interest dates to kindergarten when she became friends with Harry Dydo, a fellow pupil. Later, in second or third grade she recognized he had a disability, Down syndrome. They remained friends up to and through high school. After graduation, Gabor went to Villanova University. Dydo went to InclusiveU.

In phone calls during their first semester, Gabor would hear from Dydo about the program. Before long, she was proposing to Villanova administrators that the Philadelphia-area college create a similar program. Her efforts led to the creation of VUnited, a student organization that seeks to enhance the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. This 6-week program exposes participants to a college experience with social and academic components as individuals work toward achieving a certificate from Villanova University.

Having created the program at Villanova, Gabor was excited to apply to the Norton College of Medicine, knowing it would put her steps away from InclusiveU. She reached out during her first semester at medical school and in her second semester was, along with Locastro and Bearden, teaching a course.

The three are already scheduled to teach the course again in the spring semester.

As for Dydo, Gabor said he is doing very well. He has an apartment near S.U., a job at the S.U. fitness center and is one of the managers for the Orange men's basketball team. Gabor added that when she's out for a run, she'll often stop by the fitness center and check in with her childhood friend.



# Norton College creates the first Say Yes medical school scholarship

For more than three decades, Say Yes to Education has helped students from some of the poorest neighborhoods pursue their dreams of higher education. In 2024, the Norton College of Medicine became the first medical school to offer a full tuition-and-housing scholarship to a Say Yes student.

Upstate officials say the number of Say Yes scholarships to be awarded each year will depend on the number of Say Yes students accepted into Upstate's medical school.

The recipient of the first Upstate Say Yes Scholarship is Alex Guerrero. A Syracuse, NY, resident who emigrated from Cuba, Guerrero graduated from Henninger High School in 2018 and received a Say Yes scholarship to attend SUNY Cortland, where he received his bachelor's degree in 2022.

"Upstate Medical University offers numerous programs aimed at creating opportunities for education and job pathways for many of our Syracuse neighbors," said Mantosh Dewan, MD, president of Upstate Medical University. "Eliminating boundaries to higher education and employment is a most gratifying undertaking and a major focus of work as an academic medical center, as we look to prepare tomorrow's health care workforce."

"The Upstate Say Yes Scholarship is one of the many ways Upstate is doing this important work," he said. "I am especially pleased to welcome Alexander Guerrero as our first Upstate Say Yes Scholarship recipient. The story of his young life is inspiring and I'm eager to watch his development as a physician."

This first-ever Upstate Say Yes Scholarship will provide financial support to include four years of tuition to medical school, housing in Upstate's Geneva Tower and a yearly \$5,000 stipend for the four-year medical degree path. The total scholarship gift will exceed \$240,000 for the four-year degree program.

Ahmeed Turner, executive director of Say Yes Syracuse, said, "Alex is an example of the talent we have right here in the Syracuse City School District. We're proud of the progress he's made and happy we were able to assist in making his journey possible."

Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh who participated in the announcement with SUNY Chancellor John King, recognized Guerrero and his family, during the festivities.

"To see how far you've come is a testament to your drive as well as the support of your family," Walsh said. "We celebrate the people who made the Say Yes to Education program possible. It's also an opportunity for us to spread the word about the program and what we have achieved as a community with Say Yes."

Before submitting his application to the Norton College of Medicine, Guerrero completed two years or 4,000 hours of research as a student in Upstate's post-baccalaureate Research and Education Program (PREP-Up). In this program, Guerrero worked alongside Upstate faculty and recent PhD graduates on research related to neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Fragile X Syndrome, which causes intellectual disability.

Over the last four years, he has spent weekends working as a patient care technician in the Emergency Department at Garnet Health Medical Center in Middletown, NY.

To be eligible for an Upstate Say Yes Scholarship students must have been accepted in the Norton College of Medicine and fulfilled Say Yes to Education Syracuse requirements, among them, graduating from a Syracuse City School District or Syracuse charter high school, and attending a Say Yes partner college or university.

Guerrero received a traditional white coat, one of the most common symbols of the medical profession, from Norton College of Medicine Dean Lawrence Chin, MD,

"I hope to use this Say Yes scholarship to the best of my ability and hope to give back to the community once I graduate," Guerrero said.

Alex Guerrero, a graduate of Syracuse City Schools who studied at SUNY Cortland, was awarded a Say Yes scholarship to the Norton College of Medicine, the first such scholarship awarded in the country. Upstate President Mantosh Dewan, MD, looks on as Norton Dean Lawrence Chin, MD, presents Guerrero with the traditional white coat.





# Binghamton Clinical Campus

## Clerkships and electives in a community setting

For nearly 50 years, medical students at SUNY Upstate's Norton College of Medicine have had two campuses through which to complete third-year rotations and fourth-year electives — the main campus in Syracuse and a clinical campus in Binghamton.

Situated 75 minutes south of Syracuse, the Binghamton Clinical Campus coordinates placements for approximately 40 students each year in required clinical clerkships at community-based facilities, including the UHS Healthcare System, Guthrie Lourdes, and private practices, where they are often taught by Upstate alumni.

While both campuses follow the same curriculum, a unique feature of the Binghamton campus is the longitudinal Family Medicine clerkship, in which students are assigned to one physician, with whom they spend a half-day each week for the duration of the clerkship year. In contrast, students on the Syracuse campus complete the Family Medicine clerkship in a five-week block.

The longitudinal Family Medicine clerkship is often a highlight for Binghamton students. It allows for strong mentoring relationships with preceptors and the chance for extended interactions with individual patients, said Leann Lesperance, MD, PhD, associate dean for Academic Affairs at the Binghamton Clinical Campus.

Binghamton campus student Brendan Maloney agrees. "Being able to work one-on-one with the attendings for most of my clerkships has greatly bolstered my clinical knowledge, critical thinking, and patient interaction skills."

"The attendings and residents here also love to teach, which really adds to the experience. Since you're often the only medical student they'll have at one time, they focus their all into teaching you the best they can — both what's good for the boards and what's best in practice when you get into residency and beyond," he added.

All Norton College of Medicine students start at the Syracuse campus, where they complete their foundational science coursework. They express their preference regarding where to complete their clerkships much earlier — soon after their admissions interview. The admissions committee reviews applications, blind to the campus choice. Upon acceptance to the College of Medicine, the applicant's preference is considered, and a campus is assigned.

Students choose the Binghamton option for various reasons, including the more intimate nature of smaller clinical facilities and the significant amount of one-on-one contact with practicing clinicians. Students are also drawn to the continuity of care provided by the longitudinal





Family Medicine Clerkship and the opportunity to be up close for unusual cases, Lesperance said.

She reports that some students may have reservations about going to the Binghamton campus — at first. She told of one student who was assigned to the campus. “The student grumbled a bit, but midway through their third year they had already decided to stay in Binghamton for fourth year.”

Later, she recounted, the student asked her, “can you believe that I asked to not be here and now I feel like this was the right place for me?”

Maloney said the option to stay for fourth year is a great opportunity to continue working with attendings with whom students have established a strong relationship. He added that the staff at the Binghamton Clinical Campus make students feel welcome. “They go out of their way to make your experience in Binghamton the best it can be, and personally, they have already greatly succeeded.”

The Binghamton campus experience prepares students well for applying to residency, regardless of specialty choice. Outcomes data show Binghamton students successfully match into the full range of specialties, including pediatrics, orthopedic surgery, radiation oncology, otolaryngology, family and internal medicine, neurosurgery, general surgery, and obstetrics and gynecology, and into programs that are large and small, as well as nearby and across the country. But perhaps the best indicator of the Binghamton campus success is the dozens and dozens of Binghamton Clinical Campus students who

graduate from Upstate, complete residencies in their area of interest, and return to the Binghamton area to care for patients and teach the next generation of Clinical Campus students.

(Previous page) Upstate Medical University's Binghamton Clinical Campus.

(Above and below) Leann Lesperance, MD, associate professor of clinical campus, with students enrolled in the Binghamton program.



# RMED program introduces students to rural medicine

Small towns and rural areas in New York state need doctors. Upstate Medical University Norton College of Medicine recognized the need in the 1980s and before the decade was out, created a Rural Medical Education Program (RMED) aimed at exposing medical students to the unique aspects of rural medicine.

Students take the same courses as their classmates, but in the third year, while others are rotating through various specialties, they spend about a quarter of their rotation time alongside a practicing physician in a rural practice. In addition, there are electives and summer

programs to give them greater exposure to the practice of medicine in a rural or small-town environment.

They gain insight into the difficult-to-teach or measure aspects of delivering medical care far from the resources available in an urban area.

Lauren Meyer, PhD, director of what is now officially called the Rural Medical Scholars Program but still universally referred to as “r-med,” explained that the program is a boon to students interested in practicing in rural areas, as well as the preceptors with whom they work.



Lauren Meyer, PhD

Preceptors take part in the program for many reasons, Meyer said, including the possibility of recruiting students to join their practice after they graduate and fulfill residency requirements. “A lot of the preceptors are RMED grads themselves and they precept to give back to the program,” she said.

But preceptors also find having a student alongside to be personally beneficial. A former chemistry professor, Meyer said that preceptors are in a teaching role and, “when teaching I found I had to inherently improve myself.”

Preceptor Felix Oben, MD, once noted that having RMED students around pushed him to stay on top of developments in medicine.

Otherwise, he said he’ll hear from a student, “sorry, I think that’s out of date.”

Started in 1989 by Thomas Wolff, MD, who remains involved in the program, the RMED program has evolved over the years, Meyer noted. Recent additions include having students do research in rural areas and “journey mapping,” in which students work with a rural physician and patient to talk about health challenges the patient has faced and how it has affected them. Additionally, the RMED program has accepted its first student enrolled in the Norton College of Medicine three-year MD program.

Today, nearly 90 students are taking part in RMED. While many graduates go on to family medicine residency programs, other choose specialties such as internal medicine, surgery, emergency medicine, pediatrics and ear, nose and throat, Meyer said.

Meyer, who earlier in her career was a pre-health advisor to university students thinking about medical school, shared that the RMED screening process for students is rigorous, with many more applicants than available spaces in the program.

Successful candidates often come from rural areas, or have experience in rural areas, because applicants from urban areas may not understand the reality of rural life. “You think you know what rural is from TV, but you don’t,” she said

She said that meeting and talking with students helps reveal if they are aware that being a rural or small-town doctor isn’t a 9-5 job. “You are going to be a pillar of the community,” she said. “Everyone is going to know you.”





# Lectureship brings ideas to improve the healthcare system

The SUNY Upstate Center for Bioethics and Humanities hosted a Grand Rounds followed by a public event at the Salt City Market — the 2024 Reiss Lectureship in Ethics and Equity. This year’s lecture, delivered by author and physician Dr. Ricardo Nuila, titled “The People’s Hospital,” offered a profound exploration of healthcare challenges and innovations.

Nuila, an internal medicine physician at Houston’s largest public hospital, engaged the audience with his account of patients struggling to access medical care from his book, “The People’s Hospital: Hope and Peril in American Medicine.” His talk raised intriguing questions about whether the healthcare model at his hospital could potentially reshape American medicine, offering new avenues for reform in healthcare delivery.

Rachel Fabi, PhD, associate professor in the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, who helped organize the event, was struck by Nuila’s compelling storytelling. She described how he uplifted compelling and often heartbreaking patient stories, accompanied by beautiful watercolor illustrations, to underscore his message about the precarity of the American healthcare system and how it might be improved.

The Reiss Lectureship, established through the generous support of Drs. Jake and Betty Reiss, underscores their longstanding commitment to the Norton College of Medicine. Alumni of the Class of 1968, the Reisses have been instrumental in advancing medical education and support for students.

Their philanthropy includes establishing the Reiss Family Visiting Lectureship in Ethics and Equity aimed at fostering critical discussions on bioethics and social justice. They endowed a scholarship fund in 2005 and the CHANGE Scholarship in 2016, which provides funding for medical students interested in bioethics and advocacy. Their latest project focuses on enhancing global medical education through a partnership with Maseno University School of Medicine in Kenya.

Paul Norcross, executive director of Alumni Affairs, highlights that the Reisses’ ongoing engagement with Upstate reflects their enduring commitment to improving medical education and student experiences. Their contributions continue to inspire and make a tangible difference in the lives of future medical professionals.

# Educational legend leaves an anatomical gift, herself

Ruth Johnson Colvin was a giant in teaching. Colvin founded Literacy Volunteers of America in 1962 and remained active with the organization until her death at 107 in August.

Her commitment to education was not stopped by death. The longtime Syracuse resident donated her body to medical education through Upstate Medical University’s Anatomical Gift program.

“I like to think of it that she is now having an effect on the medical literacy of this population. Really, a continuation of what her lifelong work was,” said Upstate spokesperson Darryl Geddes.

Dana Mihaila, MD, PhD, director of the Anatomical Gift Program at Upstate, said that by their donations individuals such as Colvin make the study of anatomy possible for students and health professionals.

Each year around 200 people pass away, having pledged to donate their bodies to Upstate’s Anatomic Gift program. Some of the donors are studied by students in the Norton College of Medicine’s Gross Anatomy lab. Some by students in other health professional programs at Upstate’s four colleges. Some are sent to other medical schools that don’t have their own anatomical gift program and depend on Upstate

to supply the bodies from which students directly learn human anatomy.

As for Colvin’s body, Mihaila said, that will remain at Upstate. “We want to introduce her to our medical students. She will help them understand the structure of the human body.”

Each spring a memorial service is held at Upstate honoring those who donate their bodies to medical science and education. Each program is largely led by students who, through music and poetry, reflect the respect and gratitude they have for donors and their families.



“The men and women we honor, along with their families, have contributed greatly to the education of our future health care professionals,” Mihaila said.

Christopher Bushnell, president of the second-year class at the Norton College of Medicine shared, “their gift is truly invaluable, and it is a privilege to learn from them.”

# Medical students help high schoolers succeed in 'Brain Bee'

Maddy Lee, MS3, Norton College of Medicine Class of 2026, was interviewed about the Syracuse Brain Bee Competition held at SUNY Upstate Medical University. Dana Mihaila, MD, PhD, NCOM associate dean and assistant professor of Neurology serves as the faculty mentor for the Brain Bee Competition.

**Can you give a brief overview of what these competitions are?**

The Brain Bee Competition is a neuroscience competition for high school students. The students have several months to prepare for a written exam and gameshow-style live competition format. The winner of the Local Syracuse Brain Bee will move on to the National USA Brain Bee, and the winner of the National USA Brain Bee will move on to the International Brain Bee where they compete with people from different continents! The goal of our local chapter is to get more high schoolers interested in the field of neuroscience and support these students throughout the competition through review

sessions and providing additional resources to help prepare the winner for the National competition.

**How was the idea for the events conceived?**

I first became interested in neuroscience when I participated in the Brain Bee in high school in 2015. When I returned, I found out the competition had ended and I had been one of the last participants! My friend Niki Shah volunteered with the Brain Bee near her university and together we worked to restart the Brain Bee at Upstate to give other high school students an opportunity to learn about the brain.

**How many schools and students participate? How are they identified?**

Because it was our first year, we had trouble getting students to sign up, however, after trial and error, we were able to get 11 students signed up. A few students did drop out right before the competition though, as they felt unprepared. Later a student who I convinced to participate regretted not trying harder because he realized the questions weren't



as difficult as he thought they would be. I reached out to teachers from multiple school districts as well as principals and vice-principals who spread the registration form. Afterward, I reached out to the students with registration information and gave them access to the review sessions PowerPoints.

Last year's winner was from Jamesville Dewitt High School. She was super grateful for the experience and loved finding other people who were passionate about the brain.

#### **How are students helping with these events?**

We had a team of medical students who helped us hold review sessions for the high schoolers on topics from basic neuroanatomy to language development. They also made a bank of exam questions from which Niki Shah chose questions from for the written and oral exam. They also helped with other tasks related to setting up the day of the competition.

#### **Is there anything else we should know?**

We host the Syracuse Brain Bee through the Upstate Neurological Institute. If anyone wants to

donate to support the funds that go into making the competition happen and help pay for part of the winner's plane ticket, please write that you are donating specifically to the Syracuse Brain Bee!

### **Coming next, Anatomy Bee**

Building on the success of the Brain Bee, Upstate will participate in the Anatomy Bee in January 2025. Jenette Ball, DC, assistant professor of Cell and Developmental Biology will serve as mentor. This initiative promotes education in anatomical sciences for high school students, testing their knowledge in anatomy, embryology, histology and diagnostic skills in a format similar to a spelling bee. This is the second year of the national competition, created by four anatomists to foster curiosity and community. Upstate will recruit local high school students to participate, with medical students providing tutorial support and proctoring the event this year. The top students from local competitions will advance to a regional in-person competition in March 2025.



# Exceptional Moments in Teaching

## Meet some of the extraordinary people educating the next generation of physicians

Student comments drive the Norton College of Medicine's Exceptional Moments in Teaching recognition. Each month a faculty member and a resident are held up as examples of the level of teaching, caring and knowledge that marks a Norton College Education.

Below are recent honorees, along with excerpts from student comments.



**Oneeb Ahmad, MD**  
Clinical assistant professor  
of Internal Medicine

*"I learned so much from Dr. Ahmad. He gave me candid advice about applying IM, pros + cons, etc. and was very encouraging. He knew I struggled with abnormal heart and lung sounds and went out of his way to point out to me patients with these issues. I hope to be just like him when I am an attending."*



**Amy Caruso Brown, MD, MSc, MSCS**  
Associate professor  
of Bioethics and Humanities and Pediatrics

*"Dr. Amy Caruso Brown was a fantastic facilitator; she was kind, highly skilled at navigating complex ethical situations, and fostered a low-stress learning environment."*



**L. Jade Archuleta, MD**  
Resident, Department  
of Obstetrics and Gynecology

*"Dr. Archuleta really cared about her students and would try her best to make them feel as comfortable as possible. I hope to be as empathetic and kind to others in practice as Dr. Archuleta was to those around her, including me."*



**Marcia Des Jardin, MD**  
Chief resident, Department  
of Obstetrics and Gynecology

*"Despite some of the extremely busy nights that we worked together, Dr. Des Jardin was always sure to teach me high-yield topics that have been extremely helpful to know throughout my shelf exam studying and OB GYN clerkship in general. Dr. Des Jardin is very inspiring and even has me considering OB GYN as a specialty now."*



**Eric Beck, MD**  
Resident, Department of Neurology

*"Dr. Beck takes great joy in teaching, and he does it with grace and humility. If we got any questions wrong, he would simply say "close!" and then quickly help us to identify our knowledge gaps and overfill them, along with providing memory aids to make it stick."*



**James Distin, DO**  
Clinical assistant professor  
of Emergency Medicine

*"Dr. Distin also allowed students to write notes on ED encounters to gain a better understanding of the responsibilities expected in residency and afterward. I am grateful I had the opportunity to learn from Dr. Distin, as it is clear he places a strong emphasis on teaching and helping medical students learn."*



**Sean Bresnahan, DO**  
Clinical assistant professor  
of Family Medicine

*"He has the best bedside manner, and he has a special knack for connecting with people and putting them at ease. He is also extremely efficient and timely on a daily basis and set a great example for how an efficient practice can be run."*



**Mashaal Dhir, MD**  
Associate professor of Surgery

*"Dr. Dhir is an all-around great person to be around. He provided lots of excellent teaching points. Super friendly with patients even when giving challenging and sad diagnoses. Skilled surgeon and always very nice to students. I appreciate Dr. Dhir and his hard work for all his patients."*





**Syed M. Ovais Hasan, MD**  
Assistant professor of Family Medicine

*"Dr. Ovais Hasan was enthusiastic when it came to teaching, provided a great learning environment, and was instrumental in my journey through medical school. I gained so much from this rotation. He helped me grow as a person and as a future physician. His care for his patients was phenomenal, and I can only hope to practice the way he does in the future."*



**Marc Hedlund, MD**  
Resident, Department of Emergency Medicine

*"Dr. Hedlund went above and beyond in taking advantage of teaching opportunities during a busy shift in the Emergency Department, all with a calm demeanor and positive attitude."*



**Michael Kennedy-Yoon, MD**  
Resident, Department of Pediatrics

*"Dr. Kennedy-Yoon provides unsolicited positive reinforcement and carries a positive attitude that lifts up the entire team. When he finds room for improvement in the medical students, he mentors. Whether it be a medical or teambuilding teaching point, he is able to give concrete and specific tips in a discrete manner to help that student improve."*



**Sahib Laskar, MD**  
Resident, Department of Surgery

*"Despite the hectic and often overwhelming nature of our patient list, I noticed he always made time to answer questions and provide guidance. His willingness to share his knowledge and expertise was instrumental in my learning experience."*



**Margaret Maimone, PhD**  
Associate professor of Cell and Developmental Biology

*"I was struggling in the initial portion of the 'Molecules, Cells and Microbes' course and not passing my formative assessments. Dr. Maimone stuck to her word and followed up with students who were not doing well. She took time from her busy schedule to meet with me to discuss how I was studying and how I could improve."*



**James Megna, MD, PhD**  
Professor emeritus of Psychiatry and Behavior Sciences

*"Dr. Megna's ability to connect with his patients is second to none, and I could tell that his patients really felt comforted when in his presence. I learned a ton by watching him communicate with his patients and would consider him an excellent role model for anybody to have."*



**Mina Michael, MD**  
Assistant professor of Neurology

*"Dr. Michael encouraged and pushed us to make our interpretations, which was an important skill rather than relying on the charts. He taught me that getting my history is just as important as any exam."*



**Shahid Mughal, MD**  
Assistant professor of Medicine

*"Dr. Mughal demonstrates the utmost emotional intelligence in working with students; he is incredibly patient and kind with every single student. During direct observations, he always made sure to say something the student did well before giving feedback for improvement."*

# New facility brings state-of-the-art cancer care to underserved area

In 2024 Upstate opened a new state-of-the-art cancer center in Verona, a community 45 miles east of Syracuse. The facility provides cancer care to residents of Madison and Oneida counties, two historically underserved regions.

Norton College of Medicine students and Upstate residents are a regular feature at the facility.

The state-of-the-art, comprehensive center is just 15 minutes from the existing Oneida center, which has transferred services to Verona.

The best cancer care involves more than one doctor. Upstate Cancer Center at Verona continues Upstate's tradition of offering multidisciplinary care with a team of nationally renowned experts, including board-certified surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists and other specialists, who consult together to manage each patient's specific treatment. The center features the latest cancer-fighting technology and access to clinical trials not available elsewhere in the region.

The Oneida Nation was integral to the opening of Upstate's new cancer center in Verona. Upstate University Hospital CEO Robert Corona credited the Nation for help securing the location. "We struggled wondering how we would get the land, but our partners at the Oneida Indian Nation stepped up and helped us find this beautiful land that will be healing land for this community."

Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter attended the opening ceremony for the new facility and gave Upstate officials a traditional handmade medicine bag to mark the occasion.

Halbritter, under whom Oneida Nation Enterprises has grown to include stores, casinos and media, spoke of the land on which the center stands, "I can't think of any better use than healing."

In addition to 15 infusion chairs, 15 exam rooms and two rooms for minor procedures, the center has an on-site pharmacy, plus sophisticated machines for diagnosis and treatment:

Computerized tomography can show a tumor's shape, size and location, or the blood vessels feeding the tumor, without cutting into the patient.

A CT simulator is a 3D treatment planning system that allows radiation oncologists to design the safest and most effective treatment for each patient before radiotherapy begins.

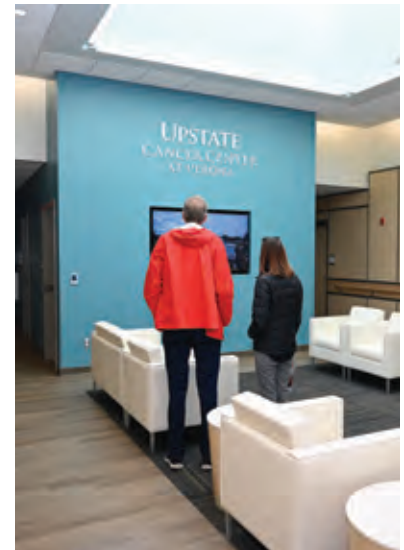
A linear accelerator aims several types of external beam radiation at cancer tumors with pinpoint accuracy, meant to spare nearby healthy tissues.

Magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, can sometimes show doctors if a tumor is cancerous, or if a known cancer has spread to other parts of the body. It may also help a doctor plan surgery or radiation therapy.

PET CT is an advanced nuclear imaging technique that enables doctors to examine abnormalities at the cellular level. It combines positron emission tomography, or PET, scans with computerized tomography.

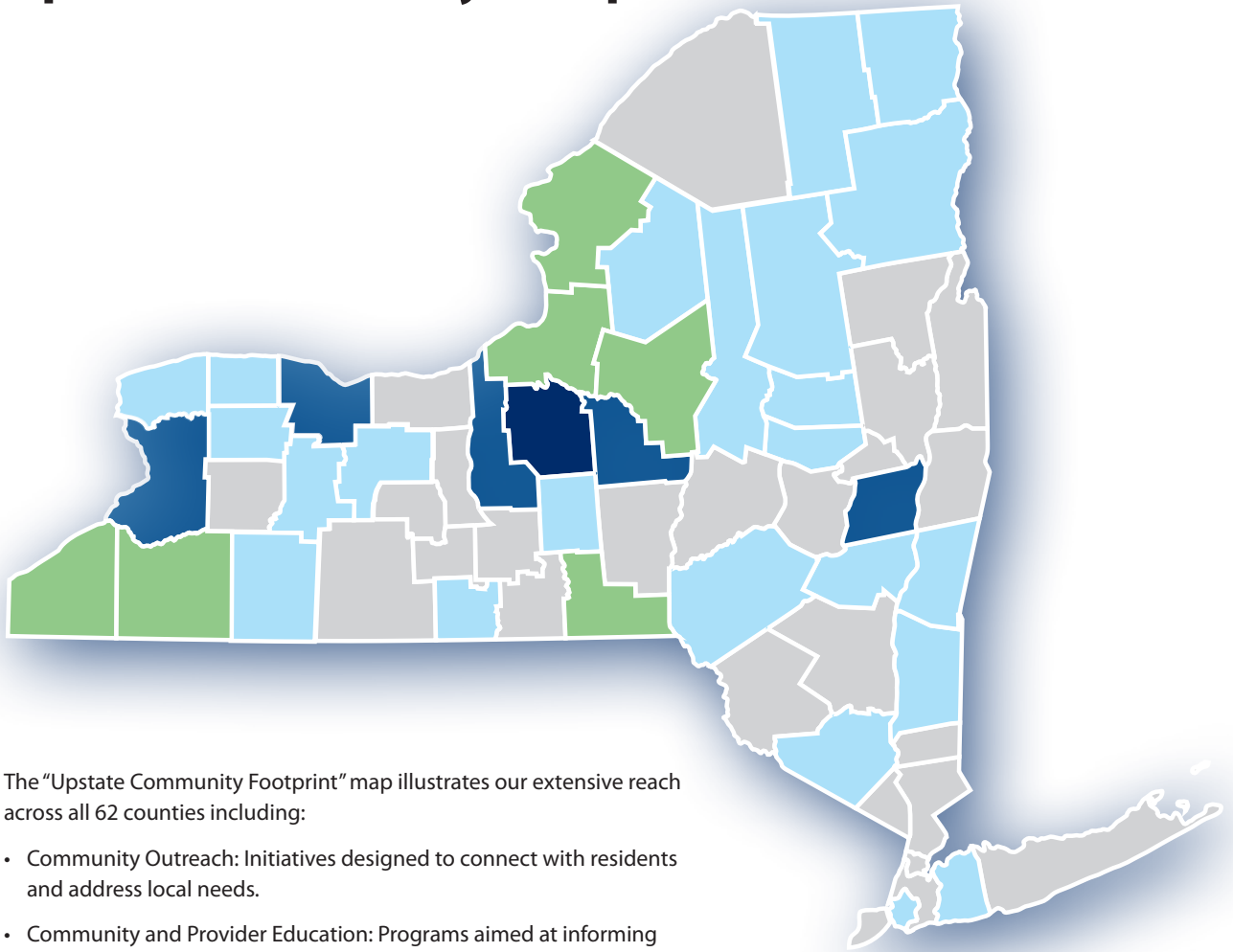
Varian TrueBeam radiotherapy delivers precise dosages of radiotherapy quickly — and synchronized with the patient's breathing pattern.





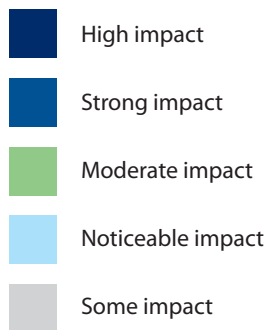
(Top) The opening of the Upstate Cancer Center at Verona was marked by the gifting of a traditional medicine bag to Upstate by Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, right. Robert Corona, DO, Upstate Medical Hospital CEO, holds the gift while Brian Thompson, MD, assistant dean for Diversity, looks on.

# Upstate Community Footprint

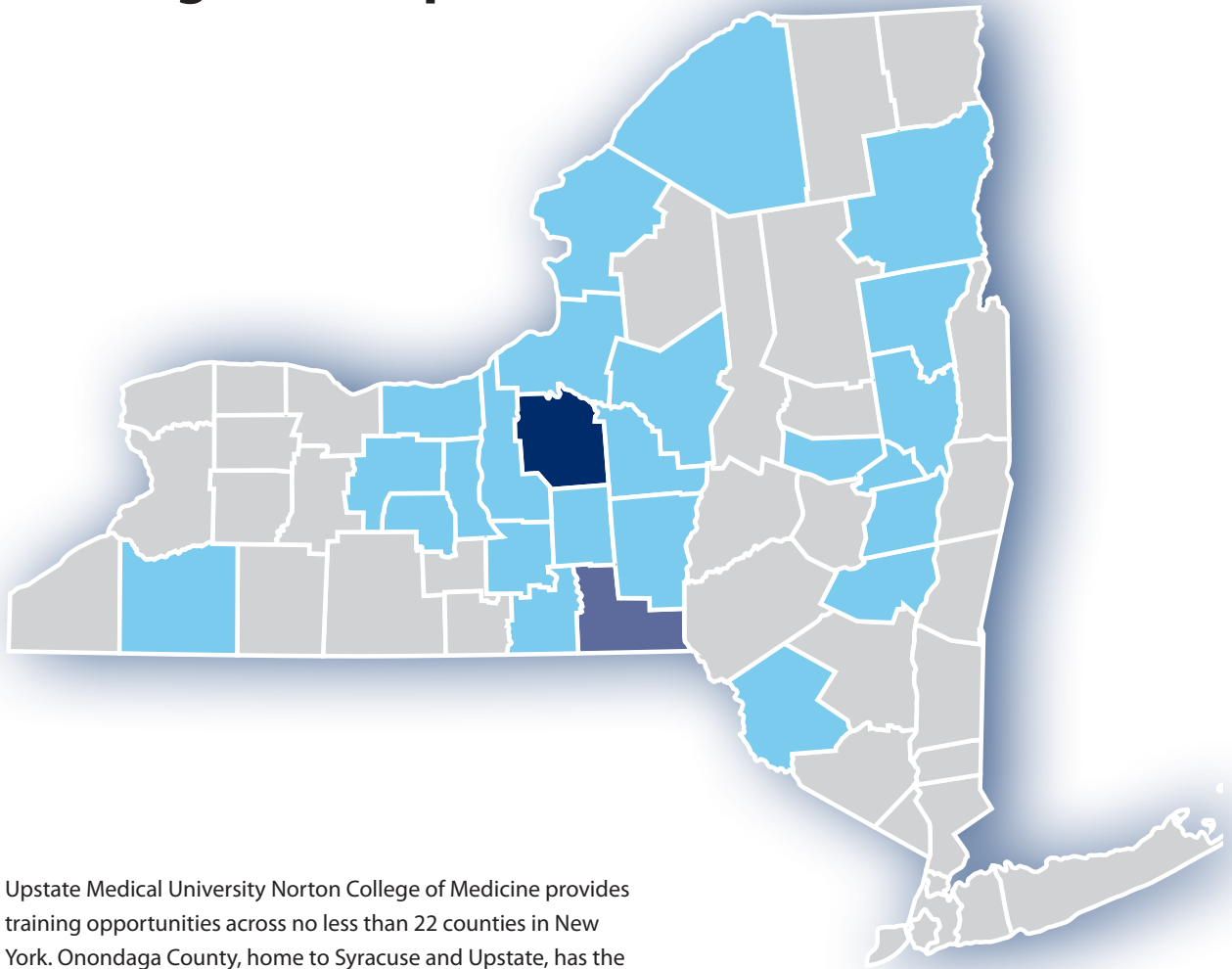


The “Upstate Community Footprint” map illustrates our extensive reach across all 62 counties including:




- **Community Outreach:** Initiatives designed to connect with residents and address local needs.
- **Community and Provider Education:** Programs aimed at informing both the public and healthcare providers about important health topics and resources.
- **Clinical Care:** Direct healthcare services provided to community members, enhancing access to vital medical support.
- **Volunteer Activities:** Opportunities for staff and community members to contribute their time and skills to meaningful causes.

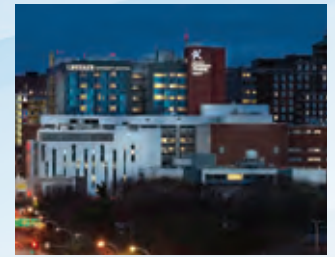


# Training Sites Map



Upstate Medical University Norton College of Medicine provides training opportunities across no less than 22 counties in New York. Onondaga County, home to Syracuse and Upstate, has the highest concentration of learners. Broome County, where Upstate’s Binghamton Clinical Campus stands, comes in second. Learners — including students, residents, and fellows — benefit from the opportunity to serve and learn from a wide variety of colleagues and patients.

-  Majority of training sites
-  Significant number of training sites
-  Some training sites



# Upstate Medical University, growing in size, strength and impact

The Norton College of Medicine's commitment to community reflects Upstate Medical University's mission, "improve the health of the communities we serve through education, biomedical research and patient care."

Upstate, the region's only academic medical center, includes three colleges in addition to the Norton College: the College of Nursing, the College of Health Professions and the College of Graduate Studies.

**The College of Nursing** offers advanced degrees to RNs, including a DNP and post-master's certifications.

**The College of Health Professions** provides clear career pathways to students, the next generation of caregivers.

**The College of Graduate Studies** turns consumers of information into producers of knowledge through master's and PhD programs focused on biomedical research.

With more than 12,000 healthcare professionals, educators, administrators and support staff, Upstate is an important part of the economy for Syracuse, NY, and across its service area that stretches from the Canadian border to the northernmost counties of east-central Pennsylvania.

Upstate includes Upstate University Hospital, home to the region's only level one trauma center, Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital and Upstate Community Hospital. Upstate provides support, including round-the-clock telemedicine stroke care, to hospitals throughout the region. It is to Upstate these hospitals send their most challenging cases.

Upstate's Emergency Department has experienced immense growth in the number of patients seen. Forty-nine percent of the increase in patient volume in Syracuse has come to Upstate, one of three hospitals in the city. Ambulance traffic has climbed from an average of 55 a day to 80 a day in 2024. Enlarged facilities and a dedicated team of professionals has helped Upstate keep up with the increase.

Upstate's hospital leadership has been recognized by Becker's Hospital Review. Hospital CEO Robert Corona, DO, MBA, was named to the 2024 list of 96 academic medical center CEOs to know. As CEO, Corona has emphasized collaboration and innovation in strengthening Upstate as a transformative and high reliability organization. The foundation of this work are four pillars: Quality of Care, The Upstate Experience, Innovation and Sustainability.

Responding to the surge of uncivil behavior that came on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic, Upstate leadership created the "Respect and Heal Campaign," aiming to make hospitals safer places where people act respectfully. The campaign has been joined by 11 other hospitals or healthcare systems, spreading the message articulated by Corona that "all staff will be treated with respect, and that we redouble our commitment and implement and strengthen violence prevention strategies to ensure a safe healing environment for our health care workforce and patients."

The fact that the environment is a priority at Upstate was recently recognized by a national organization. The Partner Recognition Award comes from Practice Greenhealth, a leading organization dedicated to environmental stability in health care. The award given to Upstate Community Hospital is one of Practice Greenhealth's Environmental Excellence Awards given annually to honor health care's achievements in sustainability.

"In a shifting health care landscape, a focus on sustainability can help build resilience while better protecting the health of patients and the community," said Gary Cohen, Practice Greenhealth founder. "Upstate Community Hospital demonstrates the kind of leadership, innovation, and performance that can drive the entire health sector toward more environmentally responsible practices."

Recognizing the need for expanded mental health services, Upstate — already at the forefront of cutting-edge services for adolescent mental health — is pushing forward with programs to help.

The Upstate Foundation, in conjunction with Upstate Medical University, Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, Upstate Department of Psychiatry and Elmcrest Children's Center, has embarked on a collaborative response. The campaign for child and adolescent mental health supports programs that address the overarching issue — pediatric mental health providers cannot keep up with the needs of children and families because the current demand is simply too great.

Upstate also recently received \$1.1 million in federal funds to establish a Suicide Prevention Center, a virtual coordinating center that will organize programs that already exist within Upstate so that there is a single point of entry for suicidal individuals and a clear pathway to treatment.

Also growing is the number of residents at Upstate. The university welcomed 201 new trainees this year, swelling the number of residents and fellows at the academic medical complex to 691.

# Dalai Lama recovers from surgery, cared for by Upstate

Some patients at the Upstate Cancer Center were surprised to see his holiness the Dalai Lama walking through an infusion area in August. The Dalai Lama spent six summer weeks recuperating from knee replacement surgery while under the care of Upstate physicians and a physical therapy team from Upstate's Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation department as he stayed at the home of long-time Upstate benefactors Sam and Carol Nappi.

His Holiness, 89, had been wheelchair bound for the past four years due to knee issues, and in 2020 the Nappis, along with Upstate President Mantosh Dewan, MD, and other representatives from Upstate, traveled to India to coordinate this surgery and the follow-up care plan. Accompanying Dewan from Upstate were Timothy Damron, MD, the David G. Murray, MD, Endowed Professor of Orthopedic Surgery; Barbara Krenzer, MD, professor of anesthesiology; and Lawrence Chin, MD, dean of the College of Medicine.

After the knee surgery in July, Upstate physicians and physical therapists provided post-surgery physical therapy several times a day and routine care at the Nappi home in the town of Pompey, where His Holiness stayed along with his personal physician and several dozen members of his monk delegation.

On his website, His Holiness thanked the Upstate medical team: "The doctors and staff at both the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York and Upstate Medical University in Syracuse provided exemplary medical care and unwavering support throughout the process."

Upstate used its Hospital at Home program infrastructure to provide the long-distance care. Launched in 2022, Upstate Hospital at Home allows patients who need inpatient care but are well enough to be home to

safely finish their treatment in their own home. These patients receive at least two in-person nurse visits and one in-person or telemedicine visit from a provider daily, delivery of all necessary equipment, supplies and prescriptions, and 24/7 remote monitoring. Upstate modified its Hospital at Home care regimen for the Dalai Lama. Research shows that patients who can stay at home have better clinical outcomes. They have fewer hospital readmissions, emergency room visits or need for nursing home care.

Dewan said that the Upstate staff went above and beyond providing round the clock care on weekends and in early morning. For example, a blood draw occurred at 5 a.m., with a team of three, including a phlebotomist and an ultrasound technician, to better coordinate with the Dalai Lama's early morning schedule.

His Holiness returned to Dharamsala, India, Aug. 28.

(Top) His holiness The Dalai Lama greets Upstate Medical University President Mantosh Dewan, MD.

(Bottom) His Holiness the Dalai Lama's recovery was managed by a team from Upstate Medical University while he stayed with friends nearby.





## Upstate prostate surgeons named among nation's best

Upstate University Hospital urologists Gennady Bratslavsky, MD, and Joseph Jacob, MD, have been recognized as two of America's Best Prostate Cancer Surgeons for 2024 by Newsweek.

The inaugural list of best prostate cancer oncologists and surgeons includes 150 physicians nationwide.

"I am honored not only to be named as one of the top US surgeons, but to lead the only academic urology department recognized between New York City and Ohio," said Bratslavsky, who serves as chair of Urology and the Phillip Capozzi, MD, Endowed Professor of Urology. "Even more impressive is the fact that Upstate Medical University and Upstate Cancer Center has not one but two surgeons recognized for such honor. Even more, in the entire country, there were only a handful of academic departments with two surgeons recognized as best in their field."

"It is gratifying to be recognized nationally based on the independent and unsolicited study that focused on surgical outcomes," said Jacob, chief of urological oncology at Upstate. "This further underlines our efforts in improving patient outcomes and our ability to perform this major surgery that allows patients to go home the same day of surgery. It was also rewarding to see that Upstate was the only Cancer Center other than Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City recognized in all of the New York state.

Bratslavsky and Jacob are fellowship-trained in urologic oncology, which requires two additional years of training after completing at least five years of residency training. Bratslavsky and Jacob also serve on the board of the Society of Urologic Oncology Clinical Trial Consortium.

According to Newsweek, the ranking reflects physician performance information based on Medicare data, an online survey of thousands of medical experts, a quality-of-care rating from each specialist's peers and consideration of their certifications from the American Board of Urology, Radiology and Internal Medicine. Previously, there has been very little objective data on surgeons' performance as much of the surgeons' reputation is based on the "word of mouth."



# Outpatient health educator honored by women's health organization

Cathy Narcavage-Bradley, MSN, RN, a clinical outpatient health educator at the Upstate Community Hospital Family Birth Center, has received the Award of Excellence in Practice from the Association of Women's Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN).

Narcavage-Bradley was one of only four nurses to be honored with an award of excellence at the AWHONN national convention earlier this month.

The award honors Narcavage-Bradley for her achievements in women's health, obstetrics and neonatal nursing and her valuable contributions to the association.

At Upstate, Narcavage-Bradley led the initiative to gain Upstate Community Hospital its Baby-Friendly Designation, awarded in 2022. She leads the Upstate Birth Equity Improvement Project, Safe Sleep Committee and the Breastfeeding Quality Initiative as well as facilitates the Family Birth Center's health education, community outreach and patient education programs.

Board-certified in advanced public health nursing, Narcavage-Bradley has earned bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing and a doctor of nursing practice degree. She also has earned special certifications, including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Adult/Adolescent/Pediatrics, certified lactation counselor, Lamaze certified childbirth education, among others.

An organization of more than 20,000 members, AWHONN is committed to empowering and supporting nurses caring for women, newborns and their families through research education and advocacy.



Cathy Narcavage-Bradley MSN, RN is pictured at far left.

# Behavior Analysis leader elected president of APA division

Andrew Craig, PhD, assistant professor of pediatrics, behavior analysis studies, and neuroscience and physiology at Upstate Medical University, has been elected president of the American Psychological Association's Division 25 (Behavior Analysis). His four-year term will begin in January 2025 and will include service as president-elect, president and past-president.

Craig, who joined the Upstate faculty in 2019, also serves as director for research at the Golisano Center for Special Needs, a multidisciplinary clinic that provides comprehensive services for pediatric populations with specialized

needs such as IDD, developmental delays, and physical disabilities.

Craig's research is aimed at developing more efficient and effective strategies to treat substance use disorders and other behaviors of concern.



Andrew Craig, PhD



(Left) A therapist works with a patient at the Golisano Center for Special Needs.

## Improvements expand learning and simulation spaces

As an academic medical center, with the Norton College of Medicine at its heart, Upstate Medical University is always updating, remodeling and, often, adding on.

The completion last year of the 200,000-square-foot Nappi Wellness Institute created more on-campus space for clinicians, patients, residents and Norton students. Situated on the main downtown campus, the new space is facilitating the Norton College's Longitudinal Clinical Preceptorship program.

This year, Upstate completed extensive renovations to Silverman Hall. Once known as City Hospital, the building was a center of healthcare for Syracuse in

the first half of the 20th Century. In the 21st Century it houses classrooms and simulation areas for those studying to be healthcare professionals. The renewed facility features lots of airy collaboration space, encouraging students and faculty to engage in interprofessional discussions.

From the level one trauma center to the Golisano Children's Hospital and Community Hospital and at clinical space throughout the region, Upstate's Physical Plant and Environmental Services teams ensure Upstate's facilities are cared for and modernized to meet the changing challenges of health care.

1. Nappi Building
2. Upstate Cancer Center
3. Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital
4. New Academic Building
5. Upstate Health Care Center
6. Biotech Accelerator
7. Geneva Tower (student housing)
8. Binghamton Campus
9. Campus Activities Building
10. Upstate Cord Blood Bank
11. Neuroscience Research Building
12. Upstate Community Campus
13. Upstate University Hospital
14. Weiskotten Hall
15. Silverman Hall

1





## BASIC SCIENCE

### Biochemistry and Molecular Biology



**Chair: Stewart Loh, PhD**

Postdoctoral Fellow, Stanford University, 1993–1996

PhD: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993

In the department of Biochemistry and Molecular biology, the goals of our research are to: (1) uncover the molecular interactions, mechanisms and pathways that underlie life, and (2) apply these discoveries to the detection, treatment, and understanding

of disease. Research in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology department encompasses themes of structural biology, protein engineering, genome stability, epigenetics, gene regulation, cell cytoskeleton dynamics, bioenergetics, and mitochondrial biology. Our research programs employ approaches ranging from in vitro biophysics to animal studies, with the purpose of defeating diseases such as cancer, developmental syndromes, and neurodegenerative and aging disorders.

Our third goal is to prepare the next generation of biomedical scientists for careers in academia and industry. Our department spearheads the Graduate Program in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, which consists of 35 faculty and 46 PhD and MD/PhD students across four basic science and five clinical departments. This program — of which the student composition nearly doubled in the last 10 years — establishes an extraordinarily collaborative research community. Our faculty work closely with students and postdocs to provide a hands-on mentoring and training experience for young scientists. Integrative grants that synergize the expertise of multiple labs are the norm. Nearly all our researchers publish regularly with colleagues from around the world as well as from Upstate. We are also active in medical student education, particularly in teaching first-year medical students.

Department faculty continue to have a very strong record of extramural research funding, primarily from NIH. In addition, nine PhD and MD/PhD students in the program are funded by fellowships from NIH and the American Heart Association.

### Cell and Developmental Biology



**Interim Chair: Mira Krendel, PhD**

PhD: Rutgers University, Newark, NJ, 2000  
Postdoctoral Fellow: The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, CA

Our department has two core missions: research and education. Our research advances the understanding of fundamental mechanisms of cellular function and development, while our teaching is focused on the anatomical sciences as

well as cell and developmental biology. The aim of our training and educational programs is to apply biological knowledge to critical medical problems and empower the next generation of scientists, clinicians, and educators. Research in the Department of Cell and Developmental Biology explores the molecular and biochemical mechanisms of cellular function and development in several exciting areas including cancer biology, cardiovascular development and disease, skeletal muscle development, kidney disease, immune response, and leukocyte inflammatory phenotype. Other areas include understanding the mechanisms regulating actin cytoskeletal dynamics during endocytosis and cell migration, studying cell adhesion regulation, and analyzing the biology of oligodendroglia and myelin formation during development, remyelination and repair in spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis. One of the core areas of our education mission is to provide cadaver-based gross anatomy education to medical students, residents and fellows in the Norton College of Medicine, as well as to students in the colleges of Health Professions and Graduate Studies. Gross and Microscopic Anatomy are taught to medical students using active learning strategies and a personalized, small-group approach. In addition, faculty in our department design and administer the Microcredential Programs in Gross Anatomy and Neuroanatomy, which provide medical and graduate students with an opportunity to gain experience in Anatomy teaching and educational research.

### Microbiology and Immunology



**Chair: Stephen Thomas, MD**

MD: Albany Medical College, 1996

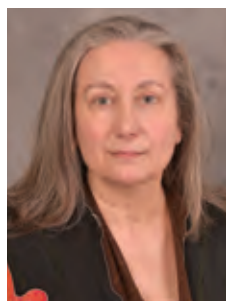
The Department of Microbiology and Immunology investigates the drivers and mechanisms of high-impact human health issues caused by infection, autoimmune disorders, malignancies and neurologic diseases. We study disease entities and pathogens including systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), human

immunodeficiency virus (HIV), herpes simplex virus, varicella-zoster virus (VZV), enteroviruses, cardiotropic infections, cancer, malaria, Alzheimer's, vector-borne diseases such as dengue, Chikungunya, Zika, and Powassan, respiratory viruses, and cytomegalovirus (CMV). Our scientists are virologists, immunologists, vector biologists, and epidemiologists. We explore virologic and innate and adaptive immune responses to infection, tumor immunology, and we study how viral infections affect cellular metabolism. We research how viruses evade the immune system, remain dormant, and then reactivate to cause disease. Infectivity, gene regulation, DNA replication, virus/host interactions, antiviral drugs, and animal and human models of disease are also of interest.

Explorations are conducted at the molecular, biochemical, and genetic levels, with goals of developing gene therapies, vaccines, and improved treatment options. Research tools include cell culture,

animal models, samples from human infection models, molecular genetics and gene therapy, single-cell RNA sequencing, state-of-the-art microscopy, and a full complement of traditional humoral and cellular immunologic assays. The Department is home to four cores: Flow Cytometry, Electron Microscopy, the Vector Biocontainment Laboratory, and Metabolic Analysis. We are privileged to educate the next generation of PhD and MD/PhD scientists, and our faculty participate in the teaching of medical students. We have faculty with unique expertise in education and serve in dedicated roles within the College of Medicine to design, plan, and implement the evolving medical school curriculum.

## Neuroscience and Physiology



### Chair: Francesca Pignoni, PhD

PhD: University of California at Los Angeles  
Postdoctoral Fellow: University of California at Los Angeles

The basic Department of Neuroscience and Physiology carries out research on the mechanisms of nervous system development, neuronal stem cells maintenance, neural circuit function, brain cancer initiation and growth, pre-/post-natal effects of substance

abuse, retinal degeneration, brain degeneration in muscle-brain disorders and dementias, and neurodevelopmental defects and neuroinflammation in neurological and psychiatric disorders. Diseases that receive particular attention include retinitis pigmentosa and Usher syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, drug addiction, glioblastoma, and neuromuscular dystrophies. The Department has experienced considerable growth in research, graduate education, and medical education over the past 2-plus years. We have added four more scientists to our research faculty and three educators to our teaching faculty. The Department has grown to 13 active labs and four full-time educators. In medical teaching, we have prepared our full- and part-time educators for the transition to the new medical school curriculum. In addition, we have launched the master's degree in Physiology for MDs. Through this program, medical students pursue a master's degree and experience a full year of biomedical research, after passing the USMLE STEP 1 exam and before starting MS3. Finally, the department has continued to pursue the modernization of the Neuroscience PhD Program in collaboration with participating faculty from the Neurosurgery, Ophthalmology, and Psychiatry departments. In 2024, the department spearheaded the first 'SUNY Neuroscience' (Upstate, Binghamton, Buffalo, Stony Brook, and Optometry) presence at the Society for Neuroscience Annual meeting — the largest scientific conference in the world. In research, we have added one young research faculty member in 2022 (neural circuits in nutrition and behavior), two in 2023 (substance abuse), and one in 2024 (Alzheimer's) with the long-term goal of establishing a Substance Abuse Research Center at Upstate in collaboration with the department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences as well as a Center for Dementia Research in collaboration with the department of Neurology. We also collaborate with the Department of Neurosurgery in the area of neuro-oncology research.

## Pharmacology



### Chair:

#### Richard J.H. Wojcikiewicz, PhD

PhD: University of Sheffield, UK, 1985

The Pharmacology Department faculty and staff serve the dual institutional missions of research and education. Our research programs emphasize mammalian systems and translation to the clinic. Specific focus areas are molecular pharmacology, drug development and delivery, nanomedicine, cancer biology and therapeutics, cardiovascular genomics and regeneration, epilepsy, metabolic disease, wound healing, sepsis, immunotherapy, ion channels and cell signaling. These programs are strongly supported by extramural funding, primarily from NIH and DoD. Collaborations with other Departments are encouraged and promoted. Notably, Dr. Juntao Luo has recently helped establish SIRC — the Sepsis Interdisciplinary Research Center — with a group of researchers, particularly from the Department of Surgery. In recent years, a priority has been the recruitment of talented assistant professors conducting high-quality research to advance and perpetuate the Department's legacy of excellence: Dr. David Auerbach (cardiovascular, epilepsy), Dr. Nori Urao (wound healing, metabolic diseases), Dr. Yamin Li (lipid nanoparticles, drug delivery), and in 2024, Dr. Nathan Tucker (cardiac genomics) and Dr. Sarea Wang (cardiac regeneration). The delivery of high-quality education in Pharmacology to both Medical and Graduate students is also a priority. A content leader manages the teaching of Pharmacology to medical students, including the recruitment of teaching faculty from the Pharmacology Department as well as Clinical Departments. Graduate students receive high-quality classroom and laboratory training as preparation for careers in academic research and/or industry.

## CLINICAL

### Anesthesiology



**Chair: Xiuli Zhang, MD**

MD: Qingdao Medical College

The Department of Anesthesiology at the Alan and Marlene Norton College of Medicine, SUNY Upstate Medical University, delivers high quality care and uncompromising safety to all perioperative patients requiring anesthesia services at the Upstate University Hospital, trains the next generation of anesthesiology clinicians and educators, and engages in

academic activity to further knowledge in the field of anesthesiology. Our faculty includes 30 physicians representing every subspecialty area in anesthesiology — cardiothoracic anesthesia, pediatric anesthesia, critical care, neuro-anesthesia, regional anesthesia, and pain medicine. Together with our residents, fellows and CRNAs, these teams handle the most complex cases, including cardiovascular surgery, invasive cardiology, ENT, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, transplant, trauma, urology, gastroenterology, oncology, and so on.

There is a diverse educational experience for our residents and fellows in the Department. At Upstate University Hospital, a level I trauma center and the only children's surgery center in the region, residents see a broad-based patient population as they learn the practice of anesthesiology and its subspecialties. Hands-on patient care combined with traditional didactic education forms the basis of our trainees' educational experiences. We have acute and chronic pain management services, so that pain fellows encounter an equally diverse patient population as they build a knowledge base in both acute and chronic pain. With the anesthesia simulation curriculum at the state of art Upstate Simulation Center, our trainees are experiencing better learning than ever before. Our faculty's dedication to classroom lecture, bedside teaching and M&M conference continues enhancing trainees' learning experience.

While the nationwide shortage of anesthesia providers has forced us to focus more on clinical service, many of our faculty and residents continue to engage in academic activities. Numbers of abstract and presentation have been accepted for this year's ASA and PGA annual meeting. We continue research efforts in the areas of neuro-anesthesia, neuro-monitoring, subarachnoid hemorrhage, intraoperative neuro-monitoring, neuroprotection, brain ischemic injury, intra-operative fluid management, pediatric anesthesia, optimizing the perioperative epidural infusion, and new approach in understanding pain.

### Emergency Medicine



**Chair: William Paolo, MD**

MD: Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 2005

The Department of Emergency Medicine at SUNY Upstate Medical University exists to promote the specialty of Emergency Medicine and related fields through excellence in patient care, education, and research. Our department continues to serve the community through primary

and tertiary emergency care, comprehensive medical education at multiple levels, and robust academic work.

We provide support across all four years of the medical school curriculum, EM residency training, prehospital provider programs, and eight different fellowship training programs. The emergency departments and urgent cares we staff serve over 110,000 patient visits per year and function as the gateway for inpatient care at University Hospital and specialty care for our region. This year, our Pediatric ER received Upstate's Patient Experience Award, reflecting our commitment to high-quality care.

In August 2020, the Upstate Women in Emergency Medicine committee was founded to provide a network of professional and personal support, mentorship, education, and information for women in the department. This initiative underscores our dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.

We are proud of our ongoing academic contributions, with more than 30 publications and presentations in peer-reviewed science this past year. Our ED staff has shown incredible perseverance throughout the COVID pandemic, serving the Central New York region with grace, resolve, and compassion.

In addition, we have embarked on an expanded research mission, led by our new vice chair of Research. This initiative aims to advance emergency medicine through innovative research and collaboration, enhancing our academic footprint.

We have recently started a successful faculty development series, which is part of our commitment to continuous professional growth and excellence in patient care. Furthermore, we have officially designated our divisions of Toxicology, EMS, Hyperbarics, Ultrasound, Pediatrics, and Quality. These specialized divisions are integral to our operations, providing focused expertise and improving patient outcomes in their respective areas.

As we continue to face record-high volumes of sick patients, these developments are crucial in maintaining and improving the quality of care we provide. We are dedicated to upholding our mission and values as we navigate these challenging times.

## Family Medicine



### **Chair: Clyde Satterly, MD**

MD: Medical College of Pennsylvania, 1994

Upstate's Department of Family Medicine focuses on a patient-centered approach to care. Primary care and preventive services are provided to patients through the practice of evidence-based medicine. The department has adopted the Quintuple Aim as its mission: to provide better health, improved outcomes at lower costs while

focusing on health equity and provider well-being. The mission of our Family Medicine Residency Program is to prepare exceptional family medicine trained physicians who will provide exemplary care to urban, suburban and rural communities. The program focuses on policies that support community health and a holistic approach to healthcare and prevention. The Rural Medical Scholars Program offers four years of rural health electives, culminating in a microcredential in Rural Medicine. The program hosts innovative pre-clinical sessions developed by rural medical students. Clinical rotations with mentorship opportunities across specialties in rural communities throughout New York State highlight the program. Currently, most of the host communities have at least one Rural Medicine graduate serving as a voluntary faculty member to precept the next generation of small-town physicians. The Occupational Medicine Program focuses on the widespread effect the workplace has on chronic disease, mental health and substance abuse. This effect is under-recognized and unexplored leaving approaches to disease treatment and prevention lacking in efficacy. The program functions largely through grant support but also offers consultation services to industry.

## Geriatrics



### **Chair: Sharon Brangman, MD**

MD: Upstate Medical University, 1981

The SUNY Upstate Medical University Department of Geriatrics offers outpatient services through our University Geriatricians for a geriatric assessment and our Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease (CEAD). It has established itself as an innovative leader in the management of Alzheimer's disease. The Center is supported in part

by a grant from the New York State Department of Health. Our staff includes geriatricians who work in conjunction with geriatric nurse practitioners, social workers and nurses with expertise in geriatrics. Case management services are provided by our social workers with a particular emphasis on elders at risk, especially those who live alone or with frail caregivers. An individualized care and management plan is developed for each patient, and depends on the disease stage, patient's level of function, and amount of support that is available. Referrals are made to appropriate community resources, such as adult day care, home care, respite or long-term care, and the social worker follows each care plan so that it can be

adjusted or revised, as needed. The goal of all treatments and care plans is to reduce the stress and burden Alzheimer's disease has on the patient and family. The Department of Geriatrics offers a wide variety of medical learning opportunities including the ability to shadow during undergraduate years, clerkships and electives during Med School, required inpatient and outpatient rotations during residency and a one-year Fellowship in Geriatrics for those interested in furthering their knowledge on the specifics of Geriatric Medicine. Our Department also has a clinical trials program with a dedicated team and a growing number of clinical trials for new treatments for Alzheimer's Disease. Our inpatient consult service, located both Downtown and on the Community Campus, is called the Acute Care of the Elderly (ACE) Team. In June 2022 we led the establishment of the Ortho CoCare program which provides perioperative team management of older adults with hip fractures.

## Medicine



### **Chair: Cynthia Taub, MD, MBA**

MD: Beijing Medical University, 1987

MBA: Yale School of Management, 2020

The Department of Medicine (DOM) at Upstate Medical University is a vibrant and dynamic department dedicated to excellence in patient care, quality improvement, education, and research. We are a family of providers, staff, and students that serves as the pivot point for roughly

half of all clinical, educational, and research activities at Upstate. We are organized into twelve divisions (cardiology; dermatology; endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism; gastroenterology; general internal medicine and palliative care; hospital medicine; hematology and oncology; infectious disease; nephrology; pulmonary and critical care; rheumatology and pharmacology) allowing for comprehensive and collaborative care of nearly any medical condition to meet the diverse needs of patients and communities in central New York.

We are actively involved in the education of our nearly 300 students and trainees (both in the classroom and at the bedside) and engaged in basic science, translational, and clinical research projects (with roughly 200 ongoing IRB protocols). DOM has offered 12 seed grants (more than \$300,000) in the past three years and held our third annual Research Retreat in Fall '24. We have won the Upstate GME's Annual Research Awards two years in a row. We have revitalized our Chair's Medicine Grand Rounds, as well as divisional grand rounds that hosted national and internationally known speakers. Additionally, we organized a successful "Women in Medicine" symposium that attracted local high school students, medical students, house staff and faculty at Upstate and beyond. DOM's "Black History Month Celebration" focused on discussions of health equity and access to care, which was followed by community health education and screening. Throughout the year, we have participated in numerous community engagement activities, such as the AIDS walk, Anti-Racism Duck Race, Bellegrove Baptist Church Community Giveback, just to name a few.

The department is committed to delivering high quality, evidence-based, and patient-centered care. We are at the forefront of the

Sepsis Campaign reducing sepsis-related mortality rates (observed/expected mortality <1). "Voice of Patient" rounds, GEMBA walks, Quality Highlights and many other initiatives are led by DOM's vice chair of Quality and 15 quality officers. Nearly every division has increased its accessibility in the past year, by both expanding its provider pool and offering more access options. For example, cardiology has seen an increase in echo volume by 27.9%, cath lab volume by 22.5%, EP volume by 17.5% and stress testing by 29%; oncology patient visits increased by 17.8%.

Most importantly, DOM values each member of the team, promoting a climate of inclusion, collaboration, safety, flexibility, growth, and meaningful goals in life.

### Neurology



**Chair: Luis Mejico, MD**

MD: Catholic University de Cordoba, Argentina, 1993

The Neurology team at SUNY Upstate Medical University provides state-of-the-art neurological care to the community and the region. The Neurology Department faculty serve the educational needs of graduate students, medical students and residents in neurology and other fields, plus fellows

in various aspects of basic and clinical neuroscience. Physicians and staff routinely work with patients to educate and inform them about treatment options and matters related to their health and well-being. In addition, the Department is engaged in basic, clinical, and translational research in neuroscience with the goals of furthering understanding of neurological diseases and developing new treatments that will improve the lives of our patients.

The Department recently launched the Neurodegenerative Disorder Center as a way to incorporate all aspects of modern neuroscience to foster cutting-edge patient care, research and education; among a multidisciplinary team with members across various specialties. The center became one of the first in the country to begin offering treatment with the recently approved Alzheimer's drug, Lecanemab. Our main clinic at the Upstate Health Care Center building moved to a renovated new floor. As part of a Neurological Institute initiative, the second phase of this renovation later in the year will expand our department's ambulatory setting footprint as well as welcome Neurosurgery to the space, allowing joined multidisciplinary clinics to be developed. The Neurology Clinic Research Section had another year of solid performance with an extensive portfolio of clinical research. We graduated 10 fantastic neurologists, all of whom went on to pursue fellowship training, and we welcomed 10 other promising residents into the program.

### Neurosurgery



**Chair: Jonathan Miller, MD**

MD: Case Western Reserve University, 2002

Founded in 1957, the Department of Neurosurgery at Upstate Medical University is the only comprehensive academic neurosurgery program in Central New York and is internationally renowned for clinical care, resident education, and scientific research.

Our faculty provide multidisciplinary expertise for treatment of disorders of the brain, spine, and peripheral nerves in adults and children. Upstate University Hospital includes a pediatric and adult level 1 trauma center, comprehensive stroke center, level 4 comprehensive epilepsy program, and 27-bed neuroscience ICU. Our team also provides care at Upstate Community Hospital and Crouse Hospital.

The neurosurgery residency program at Upstate involves robust training in all areas of neurosurgery and has trained more than 100 residents over the past 60 years. The experience is tailored to each resident's individual goals and includes opportunities for intensive research as well as advanced training in multiple neurosurgical subspecialty areas.

Neurosurgery research at Upstate is integrated into the clinical program to allow rapid translation of new discoveries. Our basic and clinical research programs are supported by federal funding (including NIH), foundation grants, and philanthropy.

We are committed to delivering the highest quality compassionate care to ensure the best outcomes for our patients while advancing neurosurgical care through groundbreaking discoveries and training of the next generation of neurosurgeons.

### Obstetrics and Gynecology



**Chair: Timothy Canavan, MD, MSc**

MD: SUNY Health Science Center in Brooklyn, 1988

MSc: University of Pittsburgh, 2005

Clinical research is actively pursued both in the department and with the collaboration of other departments within the medical university. Each resident is expected to become involved with one of the ongoing projects or initiate a new line of investigation

with a faculty advisor. Third- and fourth-year residents present papers on their case studies and research investigations at the annual Senior and Chief Residents' Departmental Scientific Forum, now in its eleventh year. The research rotation with academic, faculty and fellowship tracks, prepares our residents for these pursuits and a career of lifelong learning. Clinical research trials are available to our patients through our participation in the National Cancer Institutes' cooperative group, Gynecologic Oncology Group (GOG), or through a pharmaceutical sponsored study. The research trials are currently open for ovarian cancer, uterine cancer and endometrial cancer. The research team is composed of Mary Cunningham, MD, as principal investigator; W. Douglas Bunn, MD; Margaret Mahan, RN NP, and Elizabeth Anderson, clinical research associate.



## Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences



**Chair: Robert D. Fechtner, MD**  
MD: University of Michigan Medical School

The Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science has continued its growth and progress in research, education, and clinical care. In celebration of our 25 years of vision research, the Center for Vision Research hosted an all-day symposium featuring leading experts in vision research. Speakers included the director of the National Eye

Institute; guest vision scientists from Harvard University, Washington University, UC Berkley as well as a panel of leaders in research funding and many alumni/ae of the CVR. Our keynote address was presented by the Honorable David A. Paterson, 55th Governor of New York, and author of "Black, Blind and In Charge." We continue to enjoy substantial extramural funding for our work and have just completed recruitment of two Empire Innovation Program scientists. Our scientists are seeking fundamental understanding of vision, from molecules to cell, from tissue to visual perception. We will apply this knowledge to finding cures for blindness. The Center for Vision Care is the home of our residency training program and clinical practice. We have eight core faculty members and 40-plus community faculty volunteers covering all ophthalmology subspecialties. The residents work with the faculty learning clinical, diagnostic and surgical skills. Our residency program was recognized this year as ranking No. 6 out of 18 in the state of New York in the most recent Doximity survey. This year, with the support of University Hospital and the faculty, we have acquired a surgical simulator for training our residents. This system allows surgeons to practice and master essential microsurgical skills in a virtual environment before moving to the operating room environment. We also hope to use this simulator as a resource to expose medical students to the field of ophthalmology and ophthalmic surgery. The Department values community involvement. We are the eye care resource for a diverse immigrant and refugee community and for our financially disadvantaged community members. Our full-time faculty, volunteer faculty, residents, students and staff are committed to this mission to serve central New York and care for patients with an extraordinary variety of interesting, unusual and challenging ophthalmic problems.

## Orthopedic Surgery



**Chair: Stephen Albanese, MD**  
MD: SUNY at Buffalo, 1980

The Department of Orthopedic Surgery offers easy access to multiple clinical programs that provide the latest in basic and advanced musculoskeletal care. Recent changes to the program include the expansion of the shoulder and foot and ankle divisions.

Upstate orthopedic surgeons continue to provide level 1 trauma care for children and adults from throughout the region. The Department is a community resource for the management of complex musculoskeletal issues in hand, foot and ankle, pediatrics, oncology, spine and sports medicine.

The Department provides well balanced clinical and research experiences for medical students and residents. Medical students rotate on several of the clinical services and frequently participate in research projects under the guidance of orthopedic surgery faculty members. The orthopedic surgery residency program has a total of 25 residents with five graduates per year. Residents rotate through a variety of clinical settings that provide experience in all the major subspecialties of orthopedic surgery. Many of the residency program graduates currently practice in the Upstate New York region. There are also post-graduate programs in spine and hand surgery.

There is strong collaboration between research scientists and clinicians, leading to many research projects that result directly from the practice of orthopedic surgery at Upstate. Research is currently focused in the areas of orthopedic oncology, joint replacement, spine surgery, sports medicine, osteoporosis and bone biology, upper and lower extremity biomechanics and fracture fixation.

## Otolaryngology



**Interim Chair: Amar Suryadevara, MD**  
MD: SUNY Upstate Medical, 2003

The physicians and staff of the Department of Otolaryngology are committed to excellence in patient care, teaching, and research. The department has dedicated specialists in each area of Otolaryngology who provide expert care for patients. The Department's academic program has a rich history, with the first

Professorship of Otolaryngology dating back to 1872. The first full-time chair, Dr. George Reed, took his position in 1964. Since then, many faculty and residents have come through the program. The residency program provides strong clinical training in all subspecialties of otolaryngology. The Department takes three residents a year. Approximately half of our residents go on to fellowship training and usually match in their top choices. There is also a one-year fellowship in craniomaxillofacial surgery. The clinical and surgical experience is enhanced through weekly basic science and subspecialty lectures, Grand Rounds Lectures, Multi-Specialty conferences, Morbidity and Mortality Conference, and Journal Club. Throughout the year, a series of surgical anatomy laboratories are held in the College of Medicine gross anatomy lab and a temporal bone dissection course is performed within the department's temporal bone laboratory. PGY-5 residents also partake in a microvascular anastomosis laboratory. Residents also have a total of four months dedicated to research during the PGY-3 year. Research by faculty covers an array of interests, including intracranial hypertension, Menieres disease, outcomes in cleft and craniofacial surgery, cosmetic and reconstructive facial surgery, head and neck oncologic surgery, health disparities in cochlear implantation, voice disorders, head and neck and sinonasal/skull base malignancies.

### Pathology



**Chair: Michel R. Nasr, MD, FRCPC**  
MD: Kursk State Medical University, 1999

The Pathology Department has a long history of scholarship, discovery, education and innovation. A fully integrated academic department with divisions that cover most pathology speciality areas, Pathology is innovating in digital imaging, telepathology, bioinformatics and molecular diagnostics.

We established a new UpState Pathology REsearch Core (SPORE) lab with the goal to coordinate activities of clinical and research components in the department lab, ensuring fully integrated services. The Department of Pathology is a key component of the Upstate Cancer Center. This is a program focused on preparing pathology residents and fellows to be partners in delivering care that is predictive, preventative, personalized and participatory.

The Department of Pathology has 35 faculty and laboratory scientists representing the most comprehensive roster of speciality pathologists in the region. The depth of the expertise is offered as a resource to other laboratories and physicians in the region.

As the science progresses in identifying specific disease targets making personalized medicine a reality, the Pathology Department is prepared to be a resource in providing guidance to clinicians and patients to make informed treatment decisions based on evidence.

Faculty and staff are committed to providing the highest education to our residents and medical students. Our trainees find a balanced and comprehensive program sufficient to prepare them for a career in academia, private practice, research or industry. Research in the Department is currently focused on developing and validating prognostic and predictive biomarkers and models for improving disease prognostication and management of cancer patients using molecular tests and machine learning approaches. Other areas of research focus on utility of technology for rapid on-site evaluation of fine needle aspirates, and use of various analytical techniques to identify and quantify evidence of exposures to potentially toxic materials in tissues.

Community outreach in the department includes courier services throughout 18 counties in Upstate and Central NY. Outreach includes more than 80 outside clients including Laboratory Directorship to Carthage and Claxton-Hepburn Hospitals. Our residents rotate to these hospitals from time to time to experience the challenges of small outreach laboratories. Our faculty serve as volunteers at local police departments, high school classrooms and churches.

### Pediatrics



**Chair: Gregory Conners, MD, MPH, MBA**  
MD: SUNY Stony Brook, 1989

Committed to serving children and families across the region, the Pediatric Department's mission includes delivery of the highest quality pediatric care, provision of excellent teaching and development of life-long learning skills for all levels of learners, discovery through influential,

cutting-edge research, patient safety, quality improvement, and support of our community through outreach and advocacy. We prioritize diversity, inclusion, and equity. The Department of Pediatrics has grown substantially in recent years, and now includes 90-plus employed faculty members, including multiple psychologists at the Golisano Center for Special Needs or embedded in medical areas and clinics. We are the leading provider both of pediatric primary care and of pediatric sub-specialty care in Central New York. We collaborate closely with colleagues in neonatology (Crouse NICU, St. Joseph's NICU), pediatric cardiology (Pediatric Cardiology Associates of CNY) and, through the Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, with pediatric specialists in numerous other departments. Several clinics have moved into new, larger spaces in close proximity to Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital.

The Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, the only children's hospital in the region, is integral to health care for children across an 18-county region. We collaboratively prioritize safety and track quality metrics. Our expert staff provide great care in great spaces. Young patients can play video games, enjoy their favorite cartoons, learn, stay in sync with friends and classmates, and act like the kids and adolescents they are. They can connect with their families, day or night. Facilities include pediatric intensive care rooms, pediatric operating rooms, rooms customized for patients with cancer and blood disorders, epilepsy/seizure monitoring capability, school and playrooms, and specialized procedure rooms and equipment, all for children. Many patients are admitted through the Pediatric Emergency Departments; some come to our Pediatric Intensive Care Unit via our specialized Pediatric Transport Team.

We continue to address the growing needs for mental health care in children and adolescents. Our growing Golisano Center for Special Needs provides ambulatory care for children with developmental disorders such as autism and plans to add an in-patient unit in late 2024.

## Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation



**Chair: Robert Weber, MD**  
MD: Ohio State University, 1971

The Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation supports clinically and educationally based scholarship. Faculty and residents focus on function, disability, neurophysiology, technology, quality, and health and wellness. Resident physicians complete at least one project during their three-year training program that results in

an accepted scholarly submission with a PM&R national professional society, publication, educational module, or quality improvement activity. This year, we partnered with the Veterans Administration to sponsor a one-year joint Spinal Cord Injury Medicine (SCIM) fellowship. Upstate's Level I Trauma Center designation for adults and children brings the vast majority of patients with spinal cord injuries to University Hospital, and the VA Medical Center's state-of-the-art Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders (SCI/D) Center is among the largest facilities of its kind in the nation. Recently, the focus of PMR's clinical research turned to the concern for health and well-being of people with disabilities. Initially using the TriNetX Research Network, a global federated network of electronic medical record (EMR) data, Department researchers were among the first to recognize the high risks for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and disparities in outcomes related to the pandemic. Collaborations with Syracuse University Aging Studies Institute researchers resulted in publications further defining the risk for mortality among adults with IDD, and influencing equitable vaccination policy at a national level. Additionally, the Department remained active with research and publications in the areas of neurophysiology, neuro-robotics in spinal cord injury, and health care disparities and differences for people with a variety of disability conditions.

## Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences



**Chair: Thomas Schwartz, MD**  
MD: Upstate Medical University, 1995

The Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Department is a multidisciplinary group of faculty members where psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurse practitioners and others work together to provide care to our patients, train students, interns, fellows, residents, and conduct new and innovative research

projects. Our trainees learn research methods and how to provide different evidence-based interventions including psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, in order to reduce emotional and behavioral suffering in our patients. In regard to clinical practice and access to care, we have been able to triple the number of patients seen over the last 2-3 years. Despite COVID limitations, our researchers have had a record number of publications and continue to obtain federal funding consistently. Over the last year we conducted a strategic mission retreat and have started to develop new plans and programs based upon our findings. We have created the roles of

Quality, Diversity, and Wellness officers and have added them to our organization chart with cross-cutting reporting across our 10-plus divisions. These officers sit on key committees within the department to better address our faculty needs in all of these key areas. We are committed not only to improving patient care, teaching and research, but also more widely to improving the academic faculty experience over time. The Department culture prides itself on protecting its academic mission by continuing to provide high-quality research and teaching while also meeting the growing clinical and administrative demands on our faculty. We have seen expansions in the number of trainees on site and have attempted to match that with new faculty hires. The Department has accepted these challenges with grace and has been able to expand in all areas of administration, research, teaching and clinical care.

## Radiation Oncology



**Chair: Jeffrey Bogart, MD**  
MD: Upstate Medical University, 1989

The Department of Radiation Oncology at SUNY Upstate Medical University continues to be at the forefront of the latest treatment technology and clinical research, providing residents with a rich and comprehensive training environment. In the 2021-22 academic year, departmental faculty had major presentations at national meetings

presenting results of national clinical trials in both pediatric and adult malignancies. We also oversee the radiation oncology section of that annual RSNA meeting, one of the largest meetings in the world. Our continued focus is on quality and implementation of advanced technology throughout our system to further reduce the risk of treatment-related side effects. Our basic science initiatives with Dr. Pawar and Dr. Simone continue to advance with the goal of improving the therapeutic ratio for patients undergoing radiotherapy for cancer treatment. In order to expand our geographical reach and provide quality care to surrounding areas, we have developed a strong partnership in both Cortland to the south and Auburn to the west to provide radiation oncology services, and we are a core part of the recently completed cancer center in Verona.

## Radiology



**Chair: Arabinda Choudhary, MD, MBA, FACHE**

MD: Medical College of Calcutta, 1994  
MBA: The Wharton School at the University Pennsylvania, 2017

The Department of Radiology provides imaging and interpretation services to all clinical and research departments at University Hospital, as well as to three outpatient facilities. The department

provides a full complement of tertiary care radiologic services, including Neuroradiology and Interventional-Neuroradiology, Interventional Radiology, specialized Musculoskeletal, Thoracic and

## DEPARTMENTS

Abdominal Radiology, Women's Imaging, and Molecular Imaging. The Department includes our Diagnostic Radiology Residency program. Within the program, we offer Early Specialization in Interventional Radiology and a 16-month pathway for specialization in Molecular Imaging. We also have post-graduate fellowship programs in Neuroradiology and Interventional Radiology. Faculty and staff are deeply committed to providing the highest quality patient care and resident education possible. For the Department, these goals are not only compatible, but complementary. The success of the program is manifested by residents' performance on the Core and Certifying Board Examinations and by the ease with which they are able to obtain desirable fellowships, academic or private practice positions. The department is involved in several studies. For example, a post-radioiodine treatment dosimetry and staging by I-131 SPECT/CT and the ARROW study, which is looking at using the PSMA targeting small molecule 1095 with I-131 as a targeting radioligand therapy (RLT) to treat metastatic prostate cancer. Additionally, we have partnered with the Urology Department on a new molecular diagnostic imaging protocol using Tc99m sestamibi to differentiate Oncocytoma from Renal Cell Carcinoma. There is also a collaborative study with MD Anderson and Northwestern called Doorway-90. This is a liver-directed therapy trial for individualized dosimetry for treatment of liver tumors.

### Surgery



**Chair: Robert Cooney, MD**  
MD: University of Vermont College of Medicine, 1985

The Department of Surgery at Upstate is a diverse group of general surgeons, subspecialists, and researchers. With over 40 surgeons, University Surgical Associates is one of the largest surgical practices in CNY. The Department specializes in treating complicated illnesses and conditions

serving as a regional referral center for the CNY population of over a million. Our surgical expertise is extensive with fellowship-trained surgeons offering specialized surgical care for breast disease, burns, cardiac conditions, colorectal and emergency surgery, endocrine surgery, general and hernia surgery, hepatobiliary and pancreas surgery, pediatric surgery, minimally invasive and bariatric surgery, surgical oncology and thoracic surgery, transplant and trauma surgery, as well as comprehensive vascular surgery. Our faculty are committed to education and training the next generation of physicians and surgeons. The surgery clerkship is highly rated, and our general surgery residency training program attracts outstanding students from medical schools around the country, graduating six chief residents per year. The operative experience for trainees is extensive and diverse, including rotations at Upstate University and Community Hospital, Crouse Hospital and the VA Medical Center. Many residents pursue research opportunities as part of their surgical training at Upstate and are recognized nationally for their research.

The Department of Surgery has research facilities that house both surgical and basic research scientists who are full-time members of the Department. Funding from the NIH and DoD supports research in multiple areas including: gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, pulmonary, sepsis, organ injury, trauma and burns, immunology, metabolism and cancer.

### Urology



**Chair: Gennady Bratslavsky, MD**  
MD: Albany Medical College, 2000

The Department of Urology at Upstate Medical University is a diverse academic group representing numerous urologic subspecialties across various backgrounds and subspecialized trainings. Our mission focuses on education, research, health care, and improving the lives of our community.

Over the past 13 years, the Department of Urology has increased nearly tenfold in faculty and is now the home of nearly 30 outstanding clinicians and translational scientists as well as 15 residents (urologic surgeons in training) covering nearly 20,000 square miles of Central NY. Many of our urologists are board certified and many of our faculty members serve on boards of national and international urologic organizations. We provide support and outstanding care to every county in CNY and we staff several nearby collaborating hospitals and healthcare systems. The clinical expertise is unparalleled with every urologic subspecialty covered by its fellowship-trained faculty, including urologic oncology, female and pelvic floor medicine, endourology, reconstructive and transgender medicine, pediatric urology, all aspects of men's and women's health, robotic and minimally invasive surgery, as well as general urologic health. Our faculty also serve as PIs on numerous clinical trials. We remain committed to research with several active wet and dry labs headed by world class scientists in biochemistry and molecular biology, genetics, and bioinformatics, and train many PhD students. Currently, the translational scientists are supported by numerous extramural grants, including R01, R21, DOD, NIH MIRA grant, NY Empire scholarship as well as several intramural and foundation awards. The Department of Urology is home to an abundance of educational projects for local high school students, medical students as well as resident physicians in training, and is a continuous source of high-impact, high-quality publication in the field of biomedical research. Our faculty are committed educators with many serving on committees or participating in projects aimed at improving the quality of education and diversity within the College of Medicine.

## OTHER ACADEMIC

### Bioethics and Humanities



**Interim Chair:**  
**Amy Caruso Brown, MD, MS**  
MD: Emory University, 2008

The Center for Bioethics and Humanities, a department of the College of Medicine, advances the scholarly and professional understanding of bioethics, law and health humanities. Our goal is to promote health care and health policy that is patient- and family-centered, compassionate and just.

The Center offers education to learners of all levels at Upstate's four colleges and affiliated hospitals, including co-designing and co-directing the Health Systems Science curriculum (in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine) and leading the Physicians and Social Responsibility sequence and microcredential for medical students. The Center is also the academic home for the Upstate Bias Checklist Collaborative, a national collaborative of health professions educators seeking to reduce bias in educational content.

The Center's Ethics Consultation Service serves Upstate's downtown and community campuses, and Golisano Children's Hospital, as well as Crouse Hospital. The service provides ethical input upon request to all faculty, staff, students, patients, and families seven days a week and 365 days a year. Our faculty also chair Upstate's Hospital Ethics Committee.

Bioethics and Humanities faculty conduct a wide range of empirical and theoretical scholarship in ethics, law and policy, and many are established as national experts in specific bioethical issues. Selected current research programs explore the intersections of the carceral system and healthcare and the impact of trauma on healthcare outcomes, approaches to resolving entrenched treatment disagreement in pediatrics, reflective writing as a means of improving empathy in healthcare, legal and ethical issues in administering and foregoing life-sustaining intervention for patients with intellectual disability, the intersections of bioethics and healthy policy, how cultural narratives of disability shape public perceptions of ethical responsibility, ethical issues related to brain injuries, animal research ethics, the ethics of xenotransplantation, mental health ethics, philosophy of psychiatry and ethical issues in artificial intelligence applications in healthcare, shared decision-making, communication and moral distress. Each spring, the Center invites a nationally known scholar in ethics and equity to spend three days at Upstate for the Reiss Family Lectureship in Ethics and Equity.

The Department publishes a literary journal, "The Healing Muse," which celebrates the mission and the work of health care professionals while providing them and the patients they serve a place to reflect on all the aspects of healing, health, and wellness. It continues to attract more and more writers and artists, with the quality of the work growing stronger with each issue.

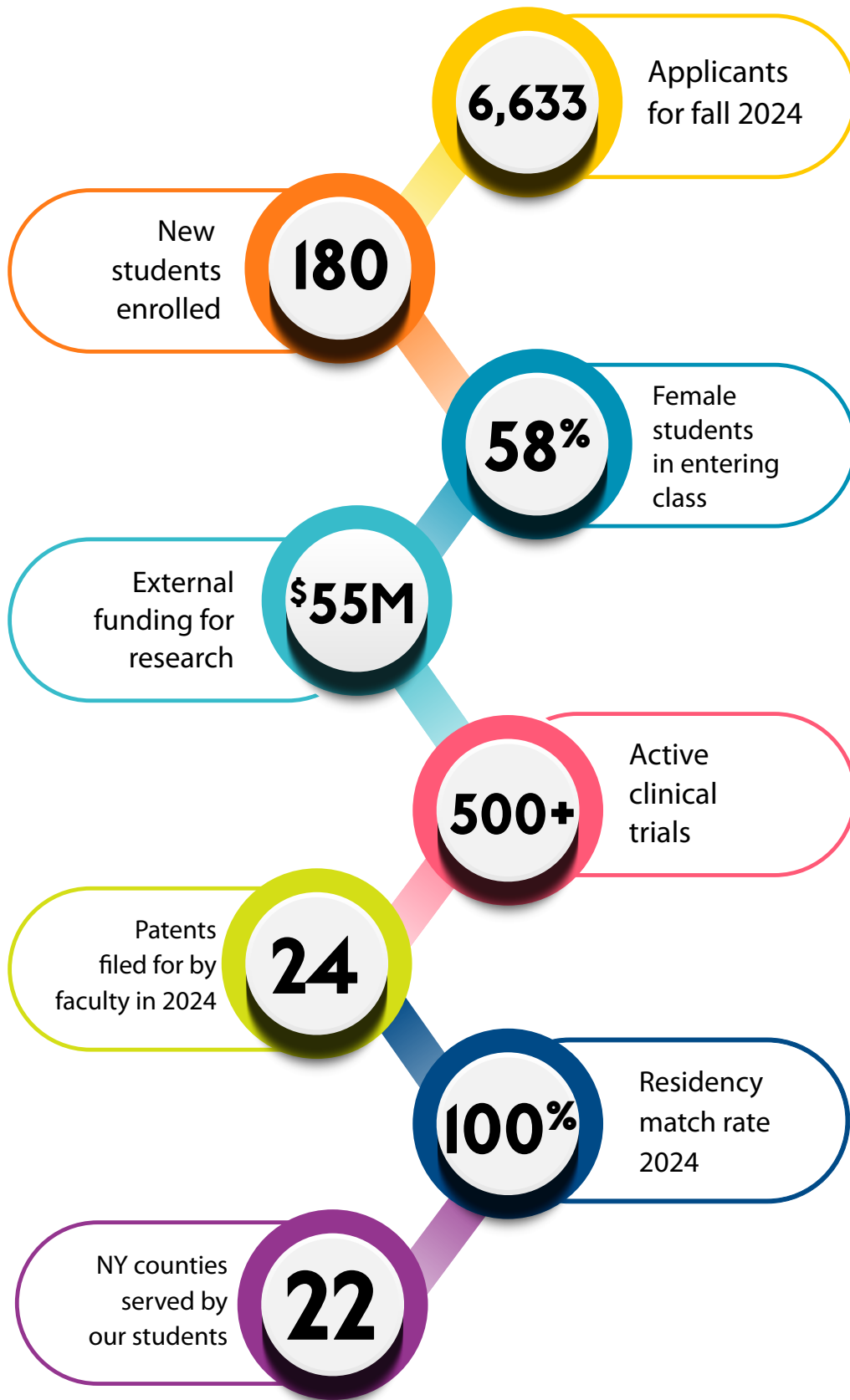
### Public Health and Preventive Medicine



**Chair: Christopher Morley, PhD**  
PhD: Syracuse University, Social Science, 2009

The Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (PHPM) is committed to educating students and conducting research in public health, preventive medicine, health promotion, and health services. PHPM members recognize the social determinants of health, and the pursuit of health equity, at the core of their training and departmental

mission. PHPM operates through four divisions, the largest of which is the Division of Education (Martha Wojtowycz, PhD – vice chair for Education, Zoreslava Osiv, MBA – director of Educational Administration), which encompasses our Master of Public Health Program (MPH, CAS, MD/MPH, and Public Health Scholars), Preventive Medicine instruction in the MD program (Travis Hobart, MD MPH), including co-leading the Health Systems Science Course with the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, the Consortium for Culture and Medicine (Rebecca Garden, PhD – director) and the Community Engaged Learning program (Simone Seward, DrPH – director). PHPM is also an active participant in efforts to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Research Division is centered on the Center for Research and Evaluation (CRE – Dongliang Wang PhD, director), a core facility offering consultation on research design and analysis. The Division of Practice and Outreach (Telisa Stewart DrPh, director) focuses upon engagement with external partners to improve use of public health sciences in real-world settings, and is an outgrowth of departmental efforts to support community partners to navigate the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alyssa Indelicato MPH, Director of Scholarship and Departmental Administration provides coordination and support across divisions. Cutting across divisions, faculty research includes studies on community violence, healthy aging and dementia, health workforce and primary-care development, maternal/childcare, medical education, cancer screening and prevention, behavioral health, disabilities, and COVID-19 epidemiology. Activities include the development of surveillance systems and reports, the design of behavioral messaging campaigns, and program planning and evaluation. All faculty and professional staff contribute to the intellectual life of the department.





STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

**UPSTATE**

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

NORTON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
**UPSTATE**  
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
NORTON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

**OFFICE OF THE DEAN**  
750 East Adams Street, Syracuse, NY 13210

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 110  
Syracuse, NY

NORTON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE  
**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**