

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to the 2025 Annual Report from the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine! As I reflect back on the completion of my first full year as Dean, so many amazing accomplishments of our still developing and growing school come to mind in research, education, clinical care and community engagement. Since the founding of the Fertitta College of Medicine, our mission has been to educate physicians who provide compassionate, high-value care to patients, families and communities, with a strong emphasis on primary care and essential specialties. Having graduated our second class in May and seeing 100% of our graduates moving on to residency programs, our major goals as a college are to achieve full accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and grow our class size to 120 students per year. The news is good for these goals, as we had a positive consultation visit with the LCME in the spring of 2025 and are on track for full accreditation in 2026. As to class size, we have seen tremendous growth in the availability of clinical rotation sites with existing partners and the addition of many new affiliated clinics and health systems to accommodate future class expansion.

Our faculty has been growing to meet the accelerating needs of the larger student body, helped by a new and significant increase in non-formula funding granted in the 89th Texas legislature session. New educators, clinicians and researchers have joined the faculty this year, and many other searches are planned or in progress. Our clinical footprint led by our UH Health Family Care Center clinic has grown as well, achieving "look-alike" status as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in the spring, which will allow for enhanced payments for Medicare and Medicaid visits. The number of patients we served increased by more than 23% this year, and we established a medical-legal partnership to help mitigate the legal and social barriers that our patients so often experience. Through the efforts of the Family Care Center and several other groups within the college, we will continue to nurture our community relationships and develop stronger and deeper ties to the many organizations that share our mission and values.

Research is thriving in the Fertitta College of Medicine, through the efforts of our faculty and students, and through collaborations. We have established and strengthened research ties to many of the other University of Houston colleges, as well as built bridges to other research-intensive medical schools in the Houston region. As a part of a new affiliation agreement with Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance (DHR) in the Rio Grande Valley, UH and DHR will build a new Medical Education and Research building adjacent to their main hospital. This will house our education staff and programs and provide new laboratories for research to be used by students and residents working with UH and DHR faculty. We will also break ground on our own Medical Research Building adjacent to the College of Medicine in February, 2026, allowing further growth of the research mission. The coming years promise to be an exciting time for the Fertitta College of Medicine as we embark on this next chapter. I am proud of our faculty, residents and students who have made all of this progress possible. I hope you enjoy reading about them in the coming pages.

JONATHAN MCCOLLERS, M.D.

Dean Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine & Vice President of Health Affairs

Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine
is accountable to society for improving the overall health and health care of the population of Greater Houston, Texas and beyond by:

Educating a group of physicians who will provide compassionate, high-value (high-quality at a reasonable cost) care to patients, families, and communities, with a focus on primary care and other needed specialties.

Conducting interdisciplinary research to find innovative solutions to problems in health and health care.

Providing integrated, evidence-based, high-value care delivered to patients by inter-professional teams.

Engaging, collaborating with, and empowering patient populations and community partners to improve their health and health care.

MEDICINE WITH A MISSION.

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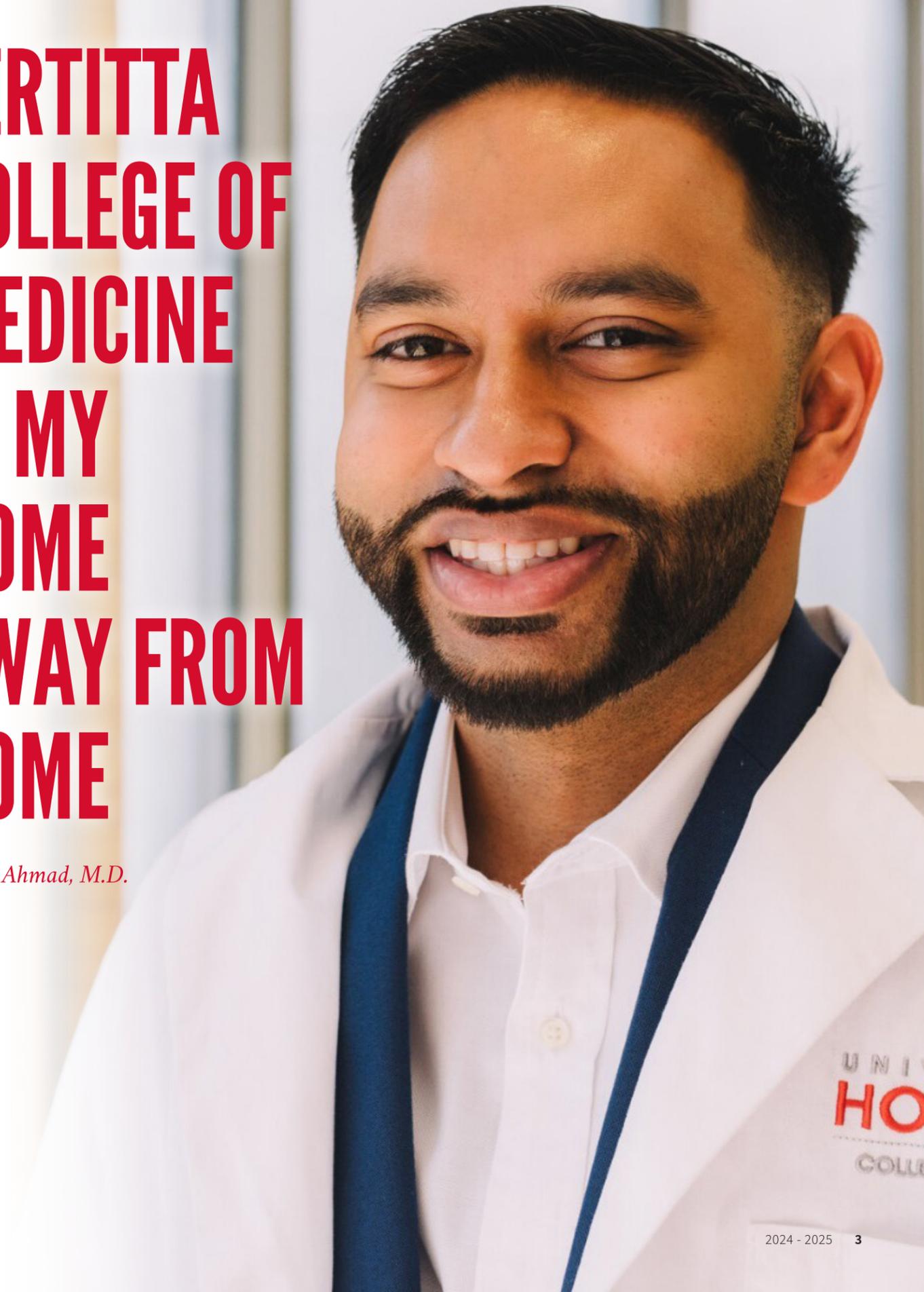
UH Marketing



Tilman J. Fertitta Family
College of Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

FERTITTA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IS MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Nabeel Ahmad, M.D.



MEDICAL EDUCATION



COMMENCEMENT 2025

The College of Medicine has officially graduated its second class and has sent a new batch of doctors out into the world. Of this class, 67% will remain in Texas and 67% will train in primary care. These dedicated professionals are ready to provide high-quality, compassionate care in communities across Houston, Texas, and beyond.



WORDS OF WISDOM

from Dean Jonathan McCullers

To the graduates: You have left an indelible mark on our institution. Your journey through the rigors of medical education is a testament to your strength and character, especially since it came during unprecedented times at a new College of Medicine. We are immensely proud of all you have accomplished and excited to watch you shape the future of health care.

As I reflect on the ceremony's energy and the powerful words shared by our commencement speaker, Cynthia Cross, M.D., FAAP, Medical Chief of Community Health and Regional Services, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, I encourage each of you to carry that inspiration forward. Let this memory be a reminder of the impact you are destined to make as you move into your residency training. Warmest congratulations once again — and welcome to the alumni family.

MATCH DAY 2025



Match Day 2025 is a defining moment for our students and a proud milestone for the college. It represents the culmination of years of dedication and resilience, and as these future physicians take their next steps, they carry with them our mission – to improve health care and health outcomes in communities. The College of Medicine had a 96% match rate this year, with 67% of students staying in Texas and 67% going into primary care specialties.

96%
Match Rate

67%
Matched in Texas

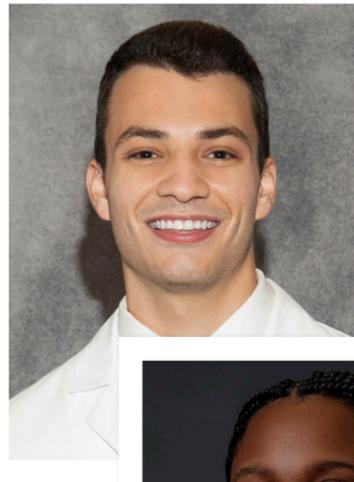
67%
Matched in Primary Care

CLINICAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Longitudinal Primary Care (LPC): Students practice history-taking, physical examination, communication skills and patient management under the supervision of primary care physicians who are members of the volunteer faculty. Students learn to function as a member of a primary care team providing continuity of care to patients.

Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC): Based on a hybrid-rotation model that exposes students to various fields of medicine, simultaneously, for enhanced learning and retention of knowledge. In this model, learning occurs within concentrated experiences in four hospital-based inpatient settings of internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics and obstetrics-gynecology. In addition, students learn across longitudinal, primarily ambulatory, experiences to allow continuity of patient contact and care, assessment and supervision, and clinical and cultural engagement.

Advanced Clerkship & Electives (ACE): Is the final phase of medical school and occurs from the late third year through the fourth year of medical school. ACE includes a minimum of 40 weeks of experiences: four required core clinical rotations (16 weeks) and 6 months (24 weeks) of elective rotations which can include clinical rotations, classroom courses, and research.



CELEBRATING OUR FUTURE OB-GYNS.

The Fertitta College of Medicine is proud to celebrate the success of the Class of 2025, with nearly 22% of graduates matching into the highly competitive specialty of obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN). This remarkable achievement reflects both the dedication of our students and the strength of our medical education program.

Pictured are the five graduates entering OB-GYN, joined by their faculty mentors and advisors, Pooja Patel, M.D., M.P.H., M.M.S., FACOG, and Kimberly A. Pilkinton, M.D., M.P.H., FACOG, whose guidance and expertise have been instrumental in preparing these future physicians for success.

Matching into OB-GYN is no small feat, given the specialty's competitive nature and growing demand for women's health physicians nationwide. We are thrilled to see our graduates continuing this important work and carrying forward our mission to provide compassionate, community-centered care.

ETHAN BLYTHE, MS3,

served with 'Doctor of the Day' at the Texas state capitol. On his journey, he commented that "it was a great experience! I attended with Dr. Jorge Duchicela as part of my rural rotation. I had the opportunity to be introduced on the floor of the House and Senate and then saw both representatives and their staff in clinic throughout the day."

NYEOMI MCGASKEY, MS3,

has been appointed to be the Executive Coordinator of Learning & Growth of the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Pediatric Trainees for a one-year term. This opportunity provides a wealth of great rewards that include opportunities to network with AAP leadership, participate in SOPT Executive Committee meetings and make a difference in the lives of pediatric trainees and the children and families they serve.

MS4 STUDENTS

Iliana Sanchez and Elliott Flint started their rotations at DHR Health in the Rio Grande Valley, a new partner for the College.

Chinasa Anokwuru, Angelique Basquine, Malachi Troy Miller, Mason Cordell Neal, Iliana Oberkircher, Kenekwuku Ugochukwu, Linda Yamthe were awarded the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) Alliance Scholarships by the Texas Medical Association. Their dedication to service, academic excellence and community care is shaping the future of medicine.



PRECEPTOR HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR MEDICAL STUDENTS

“

Dr. Kahla is an amazing surgeon who took time to answer my questions, give me hands-on experience by letting me see patients, letting me document notes after seeing patients, even letting me come see him on a Friday and watch a couple procedures. He is very caring, and his team and staff are amazing. They truly made me feel so welcome and I enjoyed learning from them. They worked hard to convince me to do surgery so that I could come back and work at their office, and I considered it because they made learning so fun. Whoever has him next is very lucky.

”

“

My time with Dr. Jones-Reed was an incredibly valuable and supportive learning experience. She created a welcoming environment where I felt safe to ask questions and contribute to patient care without fear of being wrong. From day one, she encouraged me to develop my own treatment plans and thoughtfully explained the rationale behind various medical decisions. It was inspiring to witness the strong sense of community she's built with her patients and how she transforms difficult moments into ones of hope and encouragement. Her office staff also played a meaningful role in my learning and were consistently helpful and kind. Overall, I felt both challenged and supported, and I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to learn in such a collaborative and compassionate setting.

”

SIMULATION ACTIVITY HOURS & MEDICAL STUDENT CONTACTS

548

Simulation Activity Hours

3,387

Medical Student Contacts

8,179

Total Simulation Individual Contact Hours
(including non-medical, student learners)

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS IN THE AREA

17 TOTAL NUMBER OF RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

13 SPECIALTIES

- 136** Internal Medicine
- 37** Emergency Medicine
- 32** Surgery
- 15** Cardiovascular Disease
- 7** Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine
- 5** Gastroenterology
- 4** Obstetrics and Gynecology
- 3** Critical Care Medicine (Internal Medicine)
- 2** Pulmonary Disease
- 2** Nephrology
- 2** Surgical Critical Care
- 2** Vascular Surgery - Independent
- 1** Colon and Rectal Surgery
- 0** Transitional Year



FACULTY AFFAIRS

DEAN'S CABINET

- Jonathan A. McCullers, M.D.,**
Vice President for Health Affairs & Dean
- Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H.,**
Director, Humana Integrated Health System Sciences Institute
- Jeremekia Amos, M.B.A.,**
Associate Vice President, Business Operations
- Neena Arora, M.H.A./M.B.A.,**
Assistant Vice President & CEO, UH Health Family Care Center
- James H. Bray, Ph.D.,**
Chair, Behavioral & Social Sciences
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- David S. Buck, M.D., M.P.H.,**
Associate Dean, Community Health
- Michelle A. Carroll Turpin, Ph.D.,**
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- Jamie M. Everett, M.D.,**
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- Maureen O. Grissom, Ph.D.,**
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- Thomas Hunt, M.D., D.Sc.,**
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- Kristin Kassaw, M.D.,**
Associate Dean, Student Affairs
- Jacqueline Levesque, A.Ed.,**
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- Jake Valentine, M.D., M.Ed.,**
Assistant Dean, Clinical Skills



FACULTY DATA

59	23	845
Full Time	Adjunct	Voluntary

JOINED THIS YEAR

7	9	182
Full Time	Adjunct	Voluntary

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

- Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Donald Briscoe, M.D.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Maureen Grissom, Ph.D.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Kristin Kassaw, M.D.,** was promoted to associate dean for student affairs.
- Gregorio Gomez, Ph.D.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Jacqueline Levesque, A.Ed.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Terence Ma, Ph.D., M.B.A.,** was promoted to associate dean for assessment, quality improvement and accreditation.
- Kimberly A. Pilkinton, M.D., M.P.H., FACOG,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- David Raskin, Ph.D.,** was promoted to clinical professor.
- Stephen Scott, M.D., M.P.H.,** was promoted to vice dean for education.
- Michelle A. Carroll Turpin, Ph.D.,** was promoted to associate dean, admissions & outreach.

GRAND ROUNDS: ADVANCING MISSION-DRIVEN EDUCATION

The Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine’s weekly Grand Rounds embodies our mission to educate compassionate physicians dedicated to improving the health of underserved communities. Every Tuesday, faculty, staff, medical students and community physicians gather in person and virtually to engage with thought leaders who share the latest in clinical care, medical education and community health innovation.

In alignment with the college’s commitment to lifelong learning and social accountability, Grand Rounds provides opportunities for meaningful dialogue and reflection that extend beyond the lecture hall. One of the most impactful sessions of the year featured James J. O’Connell, M.D., president of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program and assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. O’Connell, a nationally recognized leader in homeless health care, presented “Continuity within Chaos: Caring for Individuals Living Chronically in Shelters and on the Streets.”

His presentation deeply resonated with attendees, inspiring them to consider new models of community engagement and patient advocacy. As one learner reflected, “This was an excellent lecture... an impetus for the College of Medicine to implement a similar model in our community.” Another shared, “I will be sure to meet people where they are in regard to their health care.”

Through distinguished speakers like O’Connell, Grand Rounds continues to elevate the college’s educational mission, bridging medical expertise with compassion, humility, and service to the most vulnerable members of society.

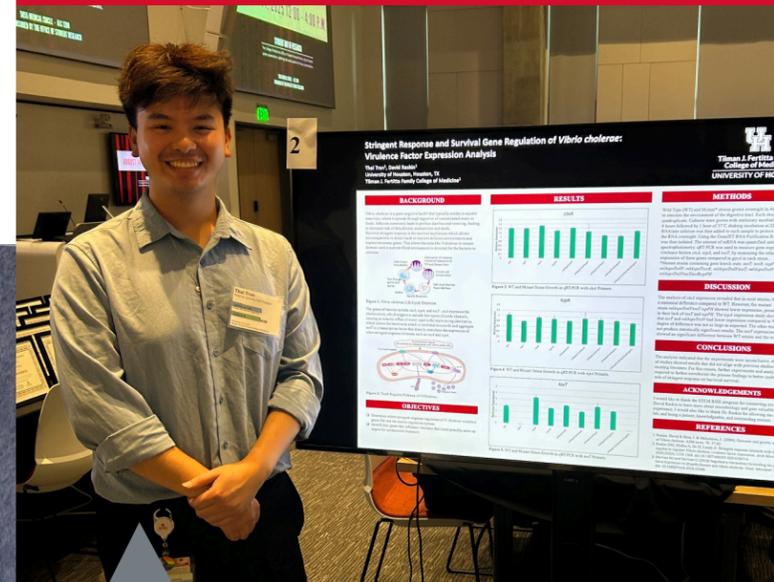


STUDENT RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



The Texas Pediatric Society awarded MS3s Ashlynn McCall, Megan Vu, Nyeomi McGaskey, along with faculty and staff Mohamed Zebda, D.O., M.P.H., Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H., and Mary Tipton, a \$5,000 grant by the Texas Pediatric Society to fund their KIDSAFE program at Blackshear Elementary.

The Houston Global Health Collaborative awarded a Student Research and Service Grant to Mathew Mendoza, MS2, an Albert Schweitzer Fellow. Mendoza has partnered with Cuney Homes on his research project to shed light on and to address the barriers and enablers to physical activity in Houston’s oldest and largest federally subsidized housing complex. The project seeks to gather insights directly from Cuney Homes residents and community stakeholders to inform and adapt physical activity interventions for a healthier and thriving Cuney Homes and Third Ward.



Isabella Martingano, MS4, and Emma Lakey, MS4, with mentors David Raskin, Ph.D., and Kevin Rowland, Ph.D., published a study on Efficacy of NSAIDs in reducing pain during intrauterine device Insertion: A systematic review. Martingano and Lakey were lead co-authors on this amazing research.

MS2 Thai Tran presented his research on Stringent Response and Survival Gene Regulation of *Vibrio cholerae*: Virulence Factor Expression Analysis at the College of Medicine’s annual Student Research Day. *Vibrio cholerae* is the etiologic agent of Cholera, an epidemic diarrheal disease that produces approximately 2 million cases per year globally. The goal of our research is to determine how environmental nutrients regulate the expression of virulence genes of *V. cholerae*. Our research showed that low nutrients activate a pathway that increases the expression of virulence genes. Tran was mentored by David Raskin, Ph.D.

Skyler Kilgore, MS2, mentored by Benjamin King, Ph.D., M.P.H., and LaShaune Johnson, Ph.D., presented his research on ClearPath at the college’s SHERP (Summer Health Research Program) Summer program. ClearPath is a scalable model designed to address the spread of HIV by integrating multiple best practices via trusted community liaisons and a website to boost community engagement and continuity of care. During the proposed pilot program, we intend to track testing, PrEP uptake, stigma, and care linkage in order to evaluate overall impact. This project showcased the importance of interprofessional education and collaboration in solving complex health issues.





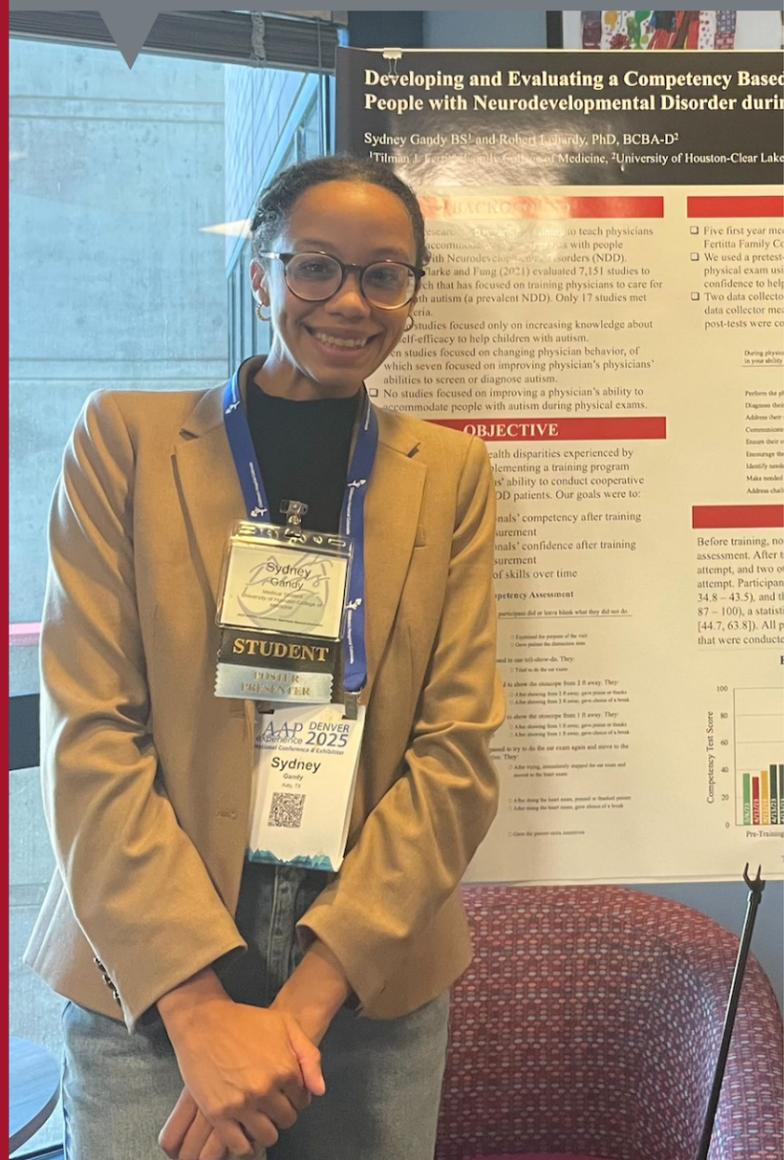
Shreya Desai, MS3, mentored by Maureen Grissom, Ph.D., conducted research to present at the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Conference on Practice and Quality Improvement. Her project, 'An Opportunity for Behavioral Faculty: Incorporating Self-Directed Learning into UME Coursework' examined how self-directed learning is integrated into the college curriculum and provided insights into students' and faculty's engagement and takeaways from self-directed learning.

Desai also performed research on 'The South Asian Family Approaches to Disease (SAFAD) Study'. She joined the SAFAD study team as the project was just getting started in 2020 as part of her internship and thesis experience while earning a master's in Community Health and Prevention Research at Stanford University, and has continued to collaborate on this project since.

This community-based participatory research project aims to better understand the unmet needs of South Asian breast cancer survivors and the family/friends who care for them (phase 1), and then use those findings to co-design a culturally attuned behavioral program for South Asians managing breast cancer (phases 2). Phase 1 of this study used a mixed-methods approach to understand the experiences of and identify unmet needs of South Asian breast cancer survivors, South Asian family/friends who care for someone with breast cancer, and health care providers who provide care to patients with breast cancer. Phase 2 of the SAFAD study is underway with the support of a R21 grant from the National Cancer Institute and the Stanford Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Innovator Grant.

Sydney Gandy, MS4, under the mentorship of Robert Leahardy, Ph.D., at UH Clear Lake, studied "Developing and Evaluating a Competency Based Training to Meet the Needs of People with Neurodevelopmental Disorder during a physical exam".

This research aims to address health care experienced by individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD) by implementing a training program designed to enhance physicians' ability to conduct cooperative physical examinations for NDD patients. Participants were assessed on confidence in ability to care for those with NDD before and after the training module and competence to complete the training and if that competence is maintained overtime. Gandy presented her research to the National Med Peds Residents Association.



FACULTY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

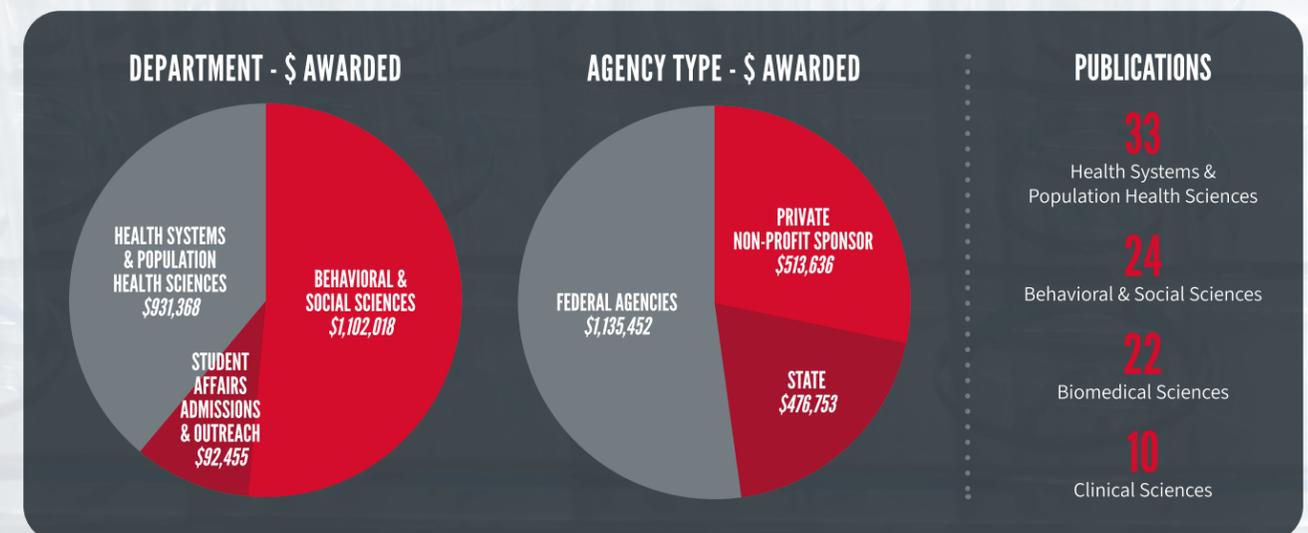
Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H., received the 2023 Rosalind Franklin Society Awards in Science in the category of medicine and surgery for her paper "Comparing In-Person Only, Telemedicine Only, and Hybrid Health Care Visits Among Older Adults in Safety-Net Clinics." The RSF Awards in Science recognized the best paper by a woman or underrepresented minority in science in 100 peer-reviewed journals. Adepoju's findings suggest that hybrid opportunities in clinics may bridge racial and ethnic disparities in access to care.

Winston Liaw, M.D., M.P.H., Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H., LaShaune P. Johnson, Ph.D., Bill Elder, Ph.D., Lu Wang, Ph.D., and Diana Grair, M.D., received a grant from the Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning Consortium to Advance Health Equity and Researcher Diversity Program. This is for their project titled "Health Behavior Counseling Using Multi-Modal Large Language Models in Pursuit of Health Equity for Minoritized Populations." The grant will allow the interdisciplinary team (comprised of UH faculty and staff) to explore how artificial intelligence can be implemented in primary care settings.

Michelle A. Carroll Turpin, Ph.D., associate dean for Admissions and Outreach and clinical associate professor, and fellow co-PIs were recognized at the President's Circle Award ceremony for securing nearly \$2 million in NSF funding for STEM mentorship programs: STEM RISE and RESET in STEM. These innovative initiatives connect UH medical students and STEM majors with local students to provide hands-on research, teaching, and mentoring opportunities, empowering the next generation of scientists and health care professionals. Through cross-college collaboration with the Fertitta College of Medicine, University of Houston College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, University of Houston College of Education, and UH Cullen College of Engineering, these programs are transforming how we engage, uplift, and inspire our community through STEM.

Rajeev Raghavan, M.D., internal medicine program director at the HCA Kingwood location and one of our voluntary faculty, was recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine for his article on patient care titled 'Driving Jackson'.

Maureen Grissom, Ph.D., presented her research on "Do Medical Students Really Need to Attend Class?" at the national Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) conference on Medical Student Education in San Antonio at the end of January. Co-authors for her research are: Jerome Crowder, Ph.D., and Bich-May Nguyen, M.D., M.P.H., FAFAP, as well as Leslie Rojas and Katie Velez.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HOUSEHOLD CENTERED CARE PROGRAM

The Household Centered Care/Healthy Connections Program works with families from our neighboring communities including the East End and Third Ward. Students work in interprofessional teams of nursing and medical students, community health workers, and faculty members. Home visits allow us to teach first-hand about teamwork and non-medical drivers of health. New this year, partnerships with the H-E-B Community Investment Program and Common Market provided food assistance to participants.

62 Community Participants
190 Students - 122 Medical, 68 Nursing
4 Community Health Workers
94 Number of Visits



OUTREACH AND STUDENT PATHWAYS Health Career Collaborative

Health Career Collaborative, hosted by the office of outreach and student pathways, along with student mentors, is an ongoing national program that exposes high school students from underrepresented backgrounds to health-related careers in medicine. The project goals are to encourage graduation and provide students access to a diverse range of health-related careers by providing mentorship and an engaging health curriculum with project-based learning. One such program, directed by MS1 students, Credo Djeje and Raven Hollis, was held at Yates High School in the historic Third Ward. The high school students presented and discussed health topics relevant to their community.

HEALTH COMMONS



Congratulations to the four inaugural Health Commons Fellows! Jasmin Ali, MS2, Mathew Mendoza, MS2, Nyeomi McGaskey, MS3, and Angelique Basquine, MS3, (not pictured) participated in a year of research and service supporting food access, healthy eating and shared governance in Third Ward and Cuney Homes. Each fellow will receive a \$1,000 stipend. The Health Commons is the College of Medicine's model for community engagement that prioritizes shared leadership. Through an intentional approach to power-sharing, the community and the college co-create policies and programs to improve community health. Current projects include starting a food buying club and food cooperative at Cuney Homes in Third Ward.

JOINT ADMISSION MEDICAL PROGRAM

The office of outreach and student pathways, along with medical student mentors, hosted JAMP scholars from schools across Texas. The College of Medicine helped host the Joint Admissions Medical Program (JAMP) students this summer. The program is a joint effort between the medical schools and the public and private universities of Texas. JAMP assists students in acquiring the skills and knowledge to be successful by providing mentoring, summer enrichment programs, scholarships, and ultimately, acceptance to one of the Texas medical schools. In a college first, we were delighted to extend a huge welcome to the very first JAMP students joining the college! Kaylyn Calderon, Rose Greze and Saamiya Syed have officially joined our ranks as admitted medical students. Kaylyn, Rose, and Saamiya completed our pre-matriculation program, and we were incredibly impressed. They demonstrated exceptional preparation and maturity throughout the course, truly setting a high bar for our incoming classes. We're so grateful to these talented 'JAMPers' for allowing us to train them and be a part of their journey into medicine!



GHANA

Inside the gleaming halls of the University of Houston's Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine, future physicians are on the cutting edge of technology and innovation — every tool, from digital anatomy tables to virtual surgery modules, is designed to prepare them for the rapidly evolving world of modern medicine.

It's not quite the same at the University of Ghana Medical School — the nation's largest and one of Africa's most respected medical schools — where some facilities are state-of-the-art while others are more basic with few bells and whistles. What thrives there is something technology can't replicate: a culture of compassion, resilience and community-rooted care.

The UH delegation that visited Ghana for a week in July immersed itself in every layer of Ghana's health system — from the bustling wards of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra to the humble exam rooms of Danfa Clinic, a rural outpost in the Aburi Hills. Ghana's health system is widely considered the best in west Africa — and one of the best in all of Africa. But it falls in the bottom half of health systems around the world.

At Korle Bu, the team joined clinical rounds where they met children with malaria and sickle cell disease, adults battling meningitis and kidney disease, and expectant mothers in Pregnancy School, a community-based prenatal program that empowers women and strengthens families.

For Yole Odharo, a fourth-year medical student at the Fertitta College of Medicine, the experience was deeply meaningful and inspiring.

"As an immigrant from Nigeria, my early struggles with access to quality health care shaped both my path toward medicine and my passion for global health," Odharo said. "The exchange in Ghana broadened my perspective and renewed my resolve to pursue a career that bridges local and global health care, and it reminded me that medicine is not only about knowledge and technology but also about resilience, creativity and the will to serve."

The partnership in Ghana is just the latest example of the Fertitta College of Medicine's growth as a truly global institution. For the past several years, students and faculty have provided care in rural

GLOBAL IMPACT

communities in Honduras. And earlier this year, the college signed a memorandum of understanding with a medical school in Nepal, paving the way for joint research and faculty development and, eventually, student exchanges.

"When students immerse themselves in other cultures, they develop empathy, adaptability and a deeper understanding of health care beyond our borders," said Dr. Jonathan A. McCullers, UH vice president of health affairs and dean of the Fertitta College of Medicine.

"Trips like this remind you why you chose medicine in the first place," Omolola E. Adepoju, Ph.D., M.P.H., health services researcher and clinical associate professor at the Fertitta College of Medicine, said. "You see people doing so much with so little, and it reignites your commitment to service. Our students returned with humility and gratitude — and a deeper understanding of what it means to care."



HONDURAS

For the third consecutive year, students from the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine traveled to a remote village in rural Honduras to deliver much-needed medical care. Reflecting the college's mission, the trip provided a unique opportunity to offer integrated, evidence-based, high-quality care through interprofessional collaboration. While some students had previously taken part in medical service trips to Central America, for many, this experience marked the first time they could apply the knowledge and skills gained in medical school within a community where access to health care is limited.

Each day of the medical trip was filled from dawn to dusk, beginning at 6 a.m. and often stretching late into the evening. The clinic in Santa Ana opened its doors at 8 a.m., where students assisted in caring for as many as 100 patients daily. After clinic hours, the group engaged deeply with the local community, embracing the vibrant Honduran culture. Whether playing games with local children or participating in meetings with community leaders, the students experienced moments that will stay with them for a lifetime.

Overall, the trip proved to be another remarkable success. Hundreds of residents received essential medical attention, while students from the Fertitta College of Medicine applied and expanded their clinical skills in a setting few ever encounter. The experience not only advanced the college's mission to enhance health and health care in underserved regions but also strengthened the bond between the college and the people of Santa Ana. The journey fostered lasting connections, meaningful learning, and new opportunities, continuing the legacy of compassionate, community-centered care.



SWANSEA

The College of Medicine developed a student exchange program this year and we were lucky to have three students join the college this semester. Richard Odai (L), mentored by Diego F. Alvarez, M.D., Ph.D., and Maryam Vasefi, Ph.D., Tobias King (M), mentored by David Raskin, Ph.D., and Samantha King (R), mentored by Tameka A. Clemons, Ph.D. during their time at the college.



NEPAL

"From the time I was a child, I knew that part of my calling in medicine would be serving in places where people had little or no access to care," Lani Ackerman, M.D., director, global health says. *"But as my career progressed, I also discovered a deep passion for teaching — that became my gift."*

Ackerman's medical journey has taken her around the world — Alaska, China and the Amazon jungle, just to name a few.

But nothing could compare to the complex tapestry of challenges and opportunities she would find at the top of the world — Nepal — where she has spent more than three decades quietly making a difference in the lives of millions of people.

Ackerman first arrived in the Himalayas in 1990, along with her husband, and initially practiced medicine, trained health workers and developed medical education programs for two years in Bhutan, Nepal's neighboring country. A few years later, they moved to Nepal.

Within a few years, she and her Nepali colleagues founded a medical school to address the severe shortage of doctors and other health care workers and expanded the small community hospital and outreach clinics in areas of maternal and child health — a critical need as Nepal then had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.



Despite the danger from a growing civil war — Ackerman says she and her family were almost killed on several occasions — she launched grassroots programs, including an orphanage, a literacy and non-formal education program, a veterinary program and organic farm training, through what became a large non-governmental organization. Everything was built around one philosophy: equipping and empowering locals to develop their own communities.

Political and economic instability continue to push Nepali out," Ackerman says. "That's why it's critical we support them locally — through sustainable partnerships, not short-term missions."

At UH, Ackerman leads the Fertitta College of Medicine's global health efforts with that same collaborative vision. In April, the college signed its first memorandum of understanding with a Nepali medical school, paving the way for joint research, remote faculty development and, eventually, student exchanges.

PATIENT CARE

LEADERSHIP

Assistant Vice President & CEO
Neena Arora, M.H.A./M.B.A.

Chief Medical Officer
Diana Grair, M.D.

Chief Behavioral Health Officer
David F. Curtis, Ph.D.



CLINIC VISITS BY SPECIALTY

2,970

Family Medicine

357

Pediatrics

703

OB/GYN

2,763

Psychology

806

Psychiatry

688

Ancillary

8,287

Total

FQHC LOOK-ALIKE STATUS

The UH Health Family Care Center, an on-campus health clinic that provides affordable, comprehensive and integrated primary care and mental health services to the University of Houston and its surrounding communities, including Third Ward, East End, South Houston and neighboring areas, achieved a major milestone this year when it received its Federally Qualified Health Center, or FQHC, Look-Alike designation from the Health Resources and Services Administration.

“Becoming an FQHC Look-Alike is no small feat. It required months of preparation, coordination and an unwavering focus on quality and compliance,” said Neena Arora, assistant vice president and CEO of the Family Care Center. “This designation not only validates the exceptional work we’re already doing, but it also opens new opportunities to expand our services, enhance access to care and better serve our community.”

“Earning this designation is a powerful validation of the quality, commitment and compassion that define the Family Care Center. It not only strengthens our credibility as a trusted health care provider, but it also significantly enhances our capacity to reach and serve more individuals and families in need across our community.”
- Jonathan McCullers, M.D., vice president of health affairs at UH and dean of the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine.

The Family Care Center opened in November 2022 and is one of the pillars of UH’s interdisciplinary, value-based health care model. Staffed by physicians, psychologists and medical students, it is a place where patients can go for all of their family’s health care needs – from behavioral health and pediatrics to internal medicine and obstetrics.

Some of the areas served by the Family Care Center are home to the highest rates of chronic disease in Houston. But Dr. Diana Grair, the Family Care Center’s chief medical officer, believes the new FQHC Look-Alike designation will help to change that.



This reinforces our culture of treating patients as partners in their health care journeys, respecting their unique needs and backgrounds,” Grair said. “Our approach builds trust, strengthens relationships and keeps our patients and their families coming back, knowing they are valued and supported every step of the way – and the FQHC Look-Alike designation will greatly enhance our efforts.



SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

BACK TO SCHOOL

As the new school year approached, the UH Health Family Care Center, partnering with Boynton Chapel Methodist Church, opened its doors and heart to the community with its Back-to-School Block Party. The event offered families more than just school supplies; it provided a day of fun, connection, and vital health resources in one of Houston’s underserved neighborhoods.

Children left with backpacks full of supplies, but also with smiles from games and activities designed to make the day memorable. Parents had the opportunity to connect with trusted health care providers, and families received free medical screenings to help start the year with confidence and peace of mind.

The clinic’s mission, Neena Arora, M.H.A./M.B.A., assistant vice president and CEO of the Family Care Center explained, extends beyond the exam room. “Providing school supplies and screenings goes hand-in-hand with our mission to care for the whole family,” Arora shared. “By making sure children are equipped for school and offering preventive health checks, we are addressing both educational readiness and long-term wellness. These efforts reduce barriers that families in our community often face, showing that our clinic is not only a place for medical care but also a trusted partner in supporting healthy, thriving futures.”



Thanks to a growing partnership between Blackshear Elementary School and the UH Health Family Care Center, a new privacy banner now shields the school's front gates—offering students, staff, and families increased safety, dignity, and peace of mind.

The initiative was spearheaded by Assistant Principal LaRue A. Ellis, M.P.A., after concerns about campus visibility and security were raised during a series of community town halls. As an open-campus school in Houston's Third Ward, Blackshear lacked a physical barrier to deter potential threats. The newly installed privacy screen now offers a simple yet effective safety upgrade, particularly during transitions in and out of the building.

"This banner may seem like a small thing, but it's a big step toward protecting our students and supporting our community," Ellis said. "We're proud to have the University of Houston as a true partner in prioritizing the well-being of our school family."

"The Family Care Center represents the best of what can happen when people come together for a greater purpose," Reverend Linda Davis said. "It's a place where dignity is restored, hope is rekindled, and lives are transformed. This privacy banner is just one more example of how we can meet real needs through partnership."

The privacy banner is part of a much greater collaboration between the University and the school. In recent years, the center has become an active and visible presence in the community, providing school physicals at multiple campuses, including Blackshear, and participating in school-based events such as Open Houses and Family Engagement Nights. The clinic's providers—many of whom are also faculty at the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine—regularly volunteer their time to deliver care and health education in neighborhood settings.

As the partnership between Blackshear Elementary and the UH Health Family Care Center continues to grow, leaders on both sides say they remain committed to creating safe, healthy, and thriving environments for families in the Third Ward and beyond.

BLACKSHEAR BANNER



Family Care Center

UH HEALTH



LONE STAR
LEGAL AID

MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

At the UH Health Family Care Center, physicians and attorneys are coming together with a shared mission: to treat not only the medical conditions of patients, but also the legal and social barriers that can stand in the way of better health.

Through a new Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) between the UH Health Family Care Center (FCC) and Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA), patients will now have access to free legal services as part of their care. The initiative reflects a growing recognition in health care, health does not exist in a vacuum, and factors such as housing, family stability, employment and access to benefits often shape a person's well-being as much as medicine.

Winston Liaw, M.D., M.P.H., a family physician and chair of health systems and population health sciences at the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine, has been involved with medical legal partnerships since 2018. He recalls one case vividly: a patient whose asthma and skin issues were made worse by mold in her apartment. With the help of an MLP attorney, she moved to safer housing, and their hospitalizations decreased significantly. "Helping someone fight an eviction or resolve unsafe housing is beneficial regardless of any health outcome. But we also see tangible medical benefits," Liaw explained.

For many in Houston's Third Ward and surrounding neighborhoods, where the Family Care Center is located, the need is great. "Private attorneys are expensive and out of reach for most lower- to middle-income families," Makopoulos-Senftleber, staff attorney with LSLA said. "By providing free legal services, our MLP gives access to justice for those who otherwise would not have it."

He pointed to recent cases where LSLA's work made an immediate difference: helping a disabled veteran respond to a child support lawsuit, and preparing legal documents to protect three disabled adults in another family. "In both cases, the legal help eased stress, provided stability, and allowed patients to focus on their health," he said.

Clinic leadership sees the MLP as a natural extension of its mission to deliver whole-person care. "This partnership is incredibly important, not just for our clinic, but for our patients and the broader community we serve," said Neena Arora, CEO of the UH Health Family Care Center. "Health doesn't exist in a silo. Many patients face legal challenges that directly impact their well-being. By integrating legal support into the care team, we can address root causes of health issues and improve outcomes in a more holistic way."

RECOGNITIONS OVER THE YEAR

LIGHT BULB AWARD

This award was presented to the team that has shown the ability to create new and innovative practices in the classroom and/or the office in an exemplary manner.

College of Medicine IT Team

HELPING HAND AWARD

This award was presented to a staff member who went above and beyond to support operations and people through service marked by grace, consistency and generosity.

Katelyn Velez, M.B.A.

DISTINGUISHED MENTORSHIP AWARD

This award was presented to the faculty member who has shown exceptional dedication to mentorship while allowing mentees to grow academically, professionally and personally.

Jamie Everett, M.D.

BEACON OF POSITIVITY AWARD

This award was designed to recognize the staff member who brings joy to those around them through considerate contributions that boost the morale of the workplace.

Mynika Collins

DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

This award was presented to the faculty member who has gone above and beyond to educate their students in ways that leave lasting impacts.

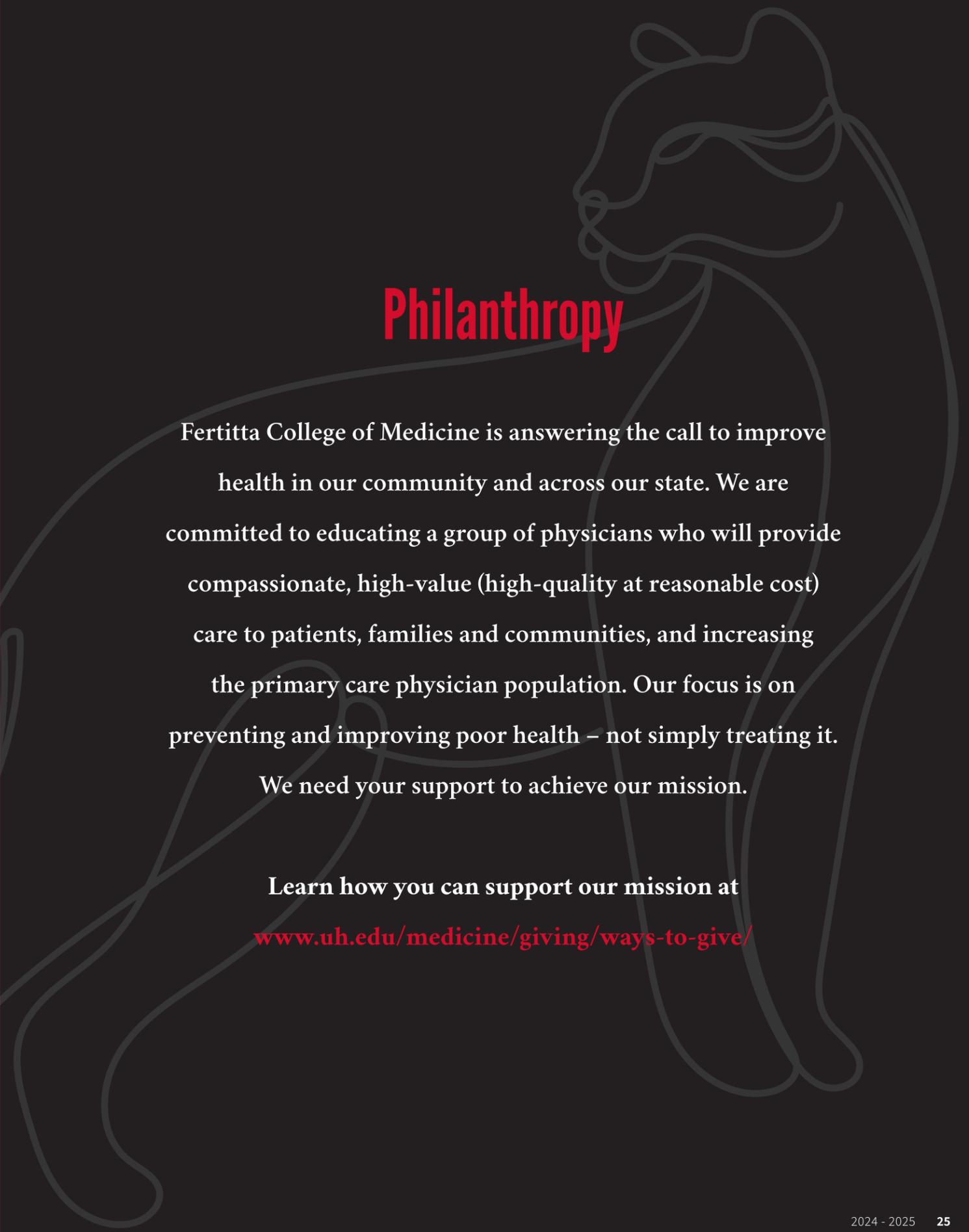
Claudine D. Johnson, M.D.

RISE AWARD

This award was designed to shine light on a staff or faculty member who is a perfect representation of the College of Medicine's core values.

Riley Battenfield, M.B.A.

Philanthropy



Fertitta College of Medicine is answering the call to improve health in our community and across our state. We are committed to educating a group of physicians who will provide compassionate, high-value (high-quality at reasonable cost) care to patients, families and communities, and increasing the primary care physician population. Our focus is on preventing and improving poor health – not simply treating it.

We need your support to achieve our mission.

Learn how you can support our mission at
www.uh.edu/medicine/giving/ways-to-give/



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