

2025



Improving the Lives of Individuals and Communities

FSU | COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

FSU College of Medicine's Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report

July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025

This report is published by the Florida State University College of Medicine's Department of Public Affairs and Communications and designed by the college's Creative Services team.

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We work hard to adhere to our mission of producing physicians, physician assistants and other health care professionals with a commitment to primary care medicine and patient-centered care. We can have the best curriculum there is, but if we do not start at the beginning — the selection of the right students — we would not be successful.

In 2025, we admitted our 25th M.D. class — the Class of 2029. We selected these talented students based on their many outstanding attributes and interests including GPA and test scores, interest in primary care specialties and working with all groups of patients. The numbers speak for themselves. Of the 120 students admitted, more than 53% are from a rural or an economically disadvantaged area. We have found that many of our alumni with similar backgrounds return to those communities to provide much needed care. The same holds true for our Physician Assistant program. Of our 314 PA alumni, 78% practice in Florida and more than a third of all PA alumni practice primary care or psychiatry.

We are equally proud of students in our doctoral program in Biomedical Sciences and the 94 alumni from that program. Our Ph.D. program trains students so that they are prepared to contribute to any facet of basic, clinical or translational science. Our students have gone on to traditional post-doc training and academic careers, positions in pharmaceutical and biotech companies, government agencies, and even careers in science writing, translating the remarkable advances in medical research into terms everyone can understand.

Without question, our alumni are making a positive impact in the communities in which they live and work. And the same can be said for our faculty. In addition to our outstanding medical education program and clinical practices through the Florida Medical Practice Plan, the research enterprise at the FSU College of Medicine continues to grow. Researchers in a variety of disciplines such as pediatric rare diseases, health and nutrition, liver disease, behavioral health and autism, to name just a few, are directly addressing some of humankind's most vexing problems.

The three-legged stool of medical education, research and clinical practice come together at Florida State University, and, clearly, the College of Medicine is a major driver. The strength we have at the college, coupled with the power of a major research university, bode well for the continued growth and positive impact of FSU Health. A bold initiative of the university, FSU Health brings together researchers, educators, clinicians and community clinical partners under one umbrella to transform health and health care in Florida.

FSU Health's partnership with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare continues to take shape in substantive ways. We look forward to the opening of the FSU Health Academic Health Center in Tallahassee this coming summer. The 140,000-square-foot building will house residency programs, outpatient clinical and educational spaces, a simulation center, laboratories and clinical research space. This state-of-the-art health center was made possible with a \$125 million appropriation from the Florida Legislature and Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Additionally, a new FSU Health acute care hospital is under construction in Panama City Beach. When complete, it will join an existing medical office building. FSU received 16.5 acres of land donated by The St. Joe Company for the hospital's site. The first phase can accommodate up to 180 beds and will offer a broad range of health care services, including general medicine, emergency medicine, general surgery and diagnostic imaging. Later, specialized services are planned, such as cardiac care, neurology and orthopedics.

In the following pages you'll see how the college is making a positive impact throughout the state of Florida and the nation. Rest assured, as we continue to grow, we will not lose sight of our mission.

Alma B. Little, M.D.
Dean, FSU College of Medicine

2024-25

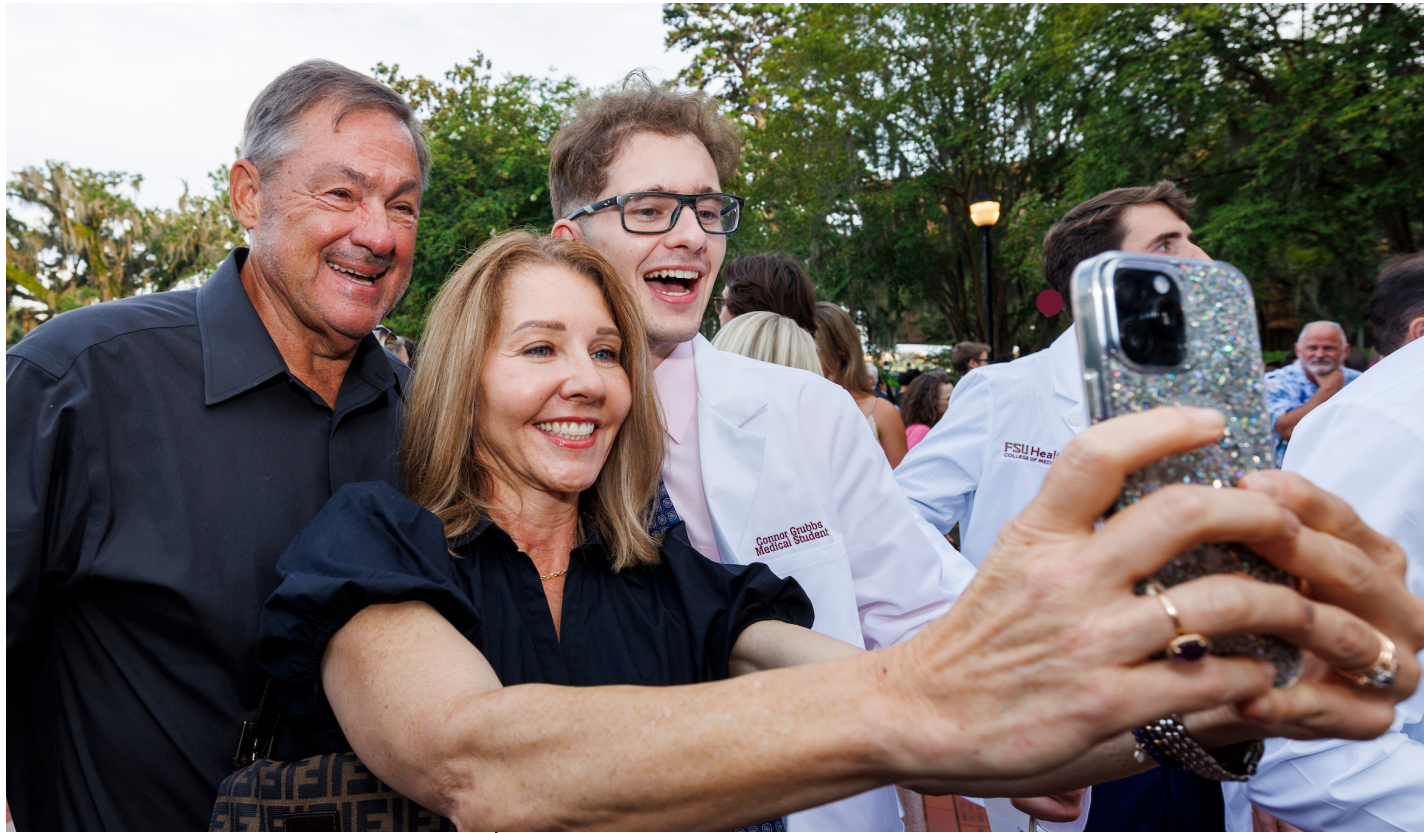


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Photo: First-year medical student Connor Grubbs celebrates with his parents after receiving his first white coat.



What we do:

The Florida State University College of Medicine educates the next generation of physicians, physician assistants, scientists and other professionals who provide expert, compassionate care and advance knowledge. Its graduates are responsive to community needs, especially through service to medically underserved populations. It fosters research driven by innovation, creative thought and scientific inquiry. And, the college creates a culture where most graduates stay in state, providing care to thousands.

Advancing our Mission



When you combine the power of a research-intensive university with a community-based college of medicine that ranks first in the state of Florida among public universities for its primary care program, great things happen. Health care improves – even in rural and underserved areas – patients get better and communities benefit from innovative research.

The Florida State University College of Medicine holds true to its mission of educating health care professionals who value the importance of providing care to the underserved. A good portion of its alumni stay in the state to meet the needs of Floridians. Couple this with the fact that the college is community-based, meaning its students are out in the field learning from practicing physicians and serving thousands of patients each day, you quickly see the positive impact this College of Medicine has.

A large part of the college's mission (see inside front cover) is to serve the underserved. That starts with choosing the right students. Test scores matter, but so do other factors, such as where they grew up, what motivates them and how they've already served in their community. Students are immersed in a culture that values mutual respect, teamwork and open communication – and prepares them to become lifelong learners.

The FSU College of Medicine directly addresses the shortage of health care professionals in the state of Florida by educating the next generation of physicians, physician assistants, researchers and other providers.

Our Academic Degrees

- M.D.
- Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences
- M.S. in Biomedical Sciences – Bridge to Clinical Medicine
- M.S. in Physician Assistant Practice
- B.S. in Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences

*The following data cover Fiscal Year 2025
(July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025)*

Our Students

Medical Students: 497

- 490 Florida residents
- 28 from rural background
- 85 first-generation college students
- 155 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 302 female
- 195 male

PA students: 174

- 55 from underserved backgrounds
- 44 first-generation college students
- 39 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 141 female
- 33 male

Bridge students: 12

- 12 Florida residents
- 2 from rural background
- 6 first-generation college students
- 5 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 10 female
- 2 male

Ph.D. students: 36

- 24 U.S. citizens (22 from the Southeast, including 14 from Florida)
- 12 international students (representing eight foreign countries)
- 23 female
- 13 male

Our Alumni

- M.D. Total: 2,069.
- PA Total: 314. Of those, 78% are in Florida and 38% practice primary care or psychiatry.
- Ph.D. Total: 94 awarded in Biomedical Sciences. The College of Medicine also participates in the multi-college Neuroscience doctoral program, contributing an additional 18 graduates since program inception.
- Bridge Total: 222, all of whom were matriculants to the FSU College of Medicine. Excluding the 35 currently enrolled, 97% have graduated from medical school.

Faculty

- Full-time: 177
- Part-time: 3,307 (this includes residency, preceptor and clerkship faculty not employed by the college.)

Facilities

- On the central campus, the College of Medicine's two buildings (including a research building) total 300,000 gross square feet.
- Adding in the leased or owned buildings at the regional campuses and the Immokalee rural training site brings the total to more than 376,000 square feet.
- The college also has a 10,000-square-foot primary-care health center (FSU PrimaryHealth™), serving the communities in Southwest Tallahassee.

Regional Campuses & Training Sites

- Students spend the first half of their College of Medicine experience at the central campus in Tallahassee. Then they branch out across the state, working alongside and learning from community providers at one of the college's regional campuses or training sites.
 - › Daytona Beach Regional Campus
 - › Fort Pierce Regional Campus
 - › Orlando Regional Campus
 - › Pensacola Regional Campus
 - › Sarasota Regional Campus
 - › Tallahassee Regional Campuses
 - › Marianna Rural Program
 - › Immokalee Health Education Site
 - › Thomasville (Georgia) Program
- The college partners with more than 170 health care organizations statewide and thousands of clinicians to provide clinical training to our students.

Academic Departments

- Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine
- Biomedical Sciences
- Clinical Sciences
- Family Medicine and Rural Health
- Geriatrics

Residencies and Fellowships

The College of Medicine sponsors the following Graduate Medical Education Programs:

Residencies

Cape Coral

- › Internal Medicine, OB/GYN, Transitional Year

Fort Myers

- › Family Medicine

Miramar Beach

- › Family Medicine

Pensacola

- › Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, OB/GYN, Emergency Medicine

Sarasota

- › Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine

Tallahassee

- › Family Medicine, General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Psychiatry

Winter Haven

- › Family Medicine, Transitional Year

Fellowships

Fort Myers

- › Global Health

Pensacola

- › Forensic Pathology, Primary Care Sports Medicine, Orthopaedic Sports Medicine

Sarasota

- › Emergency Medical Services, Complex GI Surgical Fellowship, Advanced Head and Neck Surgical Fellowship, Hospice and Palliative Care Fellowship



Tallahassee

- › Micrographic Surgery & Dermatologic Oncology, Family Medicine OB Fellowship, Surgical Critical Care (Trauma) Fellowship

School of Physician Assistant Practice

The PA program graduated its sixth class in December 2024, resulting in 314 alumni. The challenging 27-month program was designed to prepare graduates to practice medicine as part of the physician-PA team. The first class graduated in 2019 and the program reached full enrollment of 180 in 2021. The school has earned Accreditation-Continued status by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA).

Bridge to Clinical Medicine Program

The Bridge program is designed to expand the pool of successful medical school applicants from medically underserved, rural and inner-city communities. It is a 12-month program that provides both education in medical knowledge and experiences in clinical practice.

Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences Program

This program, established in 2016 with the cooperation of six other FSU colleges, is designed for undergraduates interested in health-related careers. A rigorous science curriculum serves as its foundation, and students may select one of three interdisciplinary majors that fits their developing career goals.

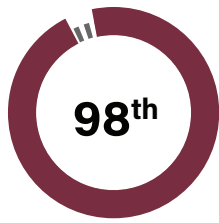
Photo: Students in the School of Physician Assistant Practice find out which of the six regional medical school campuses they will attend for the clinical phase of their education during Mini Match Day.

Mission scorecard

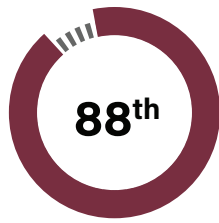
Highlights from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Mission Management Tool 2025 compared to all other medical schools.

All measures are reported as a percentile ranking among U.S. and Canadian M.D. programs.

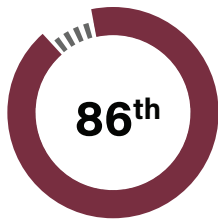
OUTCOMES



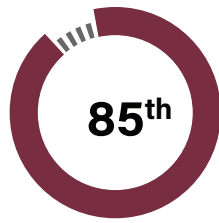
Percentile for practicing in underserved area



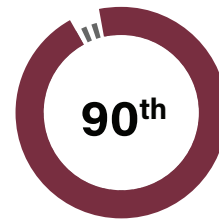
Percentile for training in family medicine



Percentile for practicing in-state

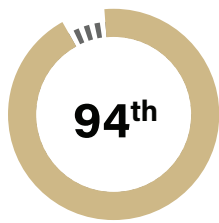


Percentile for training in primary care

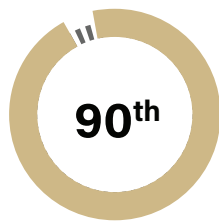


Percentile for practicing in primary care

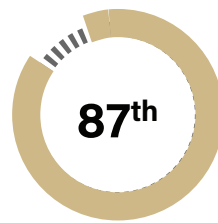
DIVERSITY



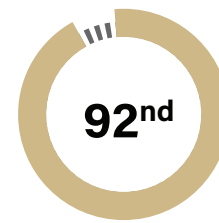
Graduates who are Black or African American



Graduates who are Hispanic, Latino or Spanish

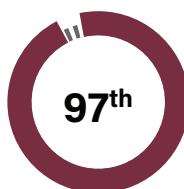


Faculty who are women

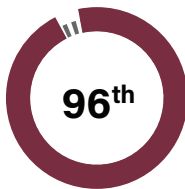


Faculty who are Hispanic, Latino or Spanish; American Indian or Alaska Native; Black or African American; or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

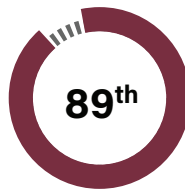
CLERKSHIPS



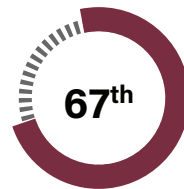
Quality of OB/GYN clerkships



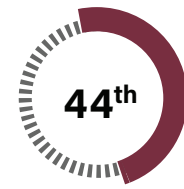
Quality of general surgery clerkships



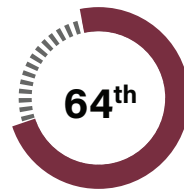
Quality of family medicine clerkships



Quality of psychiatry clerkships

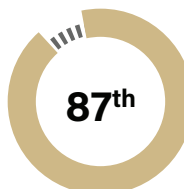


Quality of internal medicine clerkships

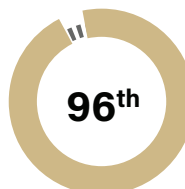


Quality of pediatric clerkships

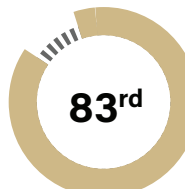
SERVICE



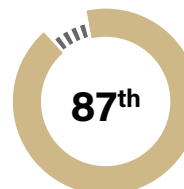
In a loan forgiveness program with a service commitment



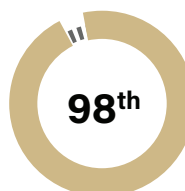
Field experience in community health



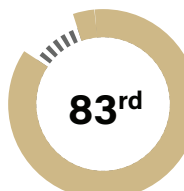
Military service



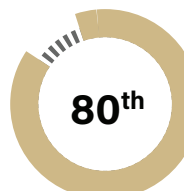
Plan to care for the medically underserved



Graduates prepared to care for people of different backgrounds



Experience in health disparities



Experience in cultural awareness/competence

Medical School Graduation Questionnaire 2025 Report Highlight

FSU	Other	Preparation for Residency
97.2	94.7	I am confident I have acquired the skills required to begin a residency program.
100	96.2	I have a fundamental understanding of common conditions and their management encountered in the major clinical disciplines.
100	98.6	I have the communication skills necessary to interact with patients and health professionals.
98.2	96.8	I have basic skills in clinical decision-making and the application of evidence-based information to practice medicine.
98.1	96.5	I have a fundamental understanding of the issues in social sciences of medicine.
100	98.4	I understand the ethical and professional values that are expected of the profession.
100	97.3	I believe I am adequately prepared to care for patients from different backgrounds.
96.2	89.1	I have the skills to apply the principles of high-value care (quality, safety, cost) in medical decision-making.
98.1	94.2	I have the skills to address the social determinants that differentially influence the health status of patients.
86	90.9	My knowledge or opinion was influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspective of individuals from different backgrounds.
68.2	78	The diversity within my medical school enhanced my training and skills to work with individuals from different backgrounds.

Clerkship Quality*

Class	FSU	Other Schools
Emergency Medicine	94.3	88.7
Family Medicine	90.6	88.7
Internal Medicine	94.3	93.3
OB/GYN	87.8	82.2
Pediatrics	93.5	89.9
Psychiatry	93.4	91.2
Surgery	90.6	86.2

Faculty Professional Behaviors

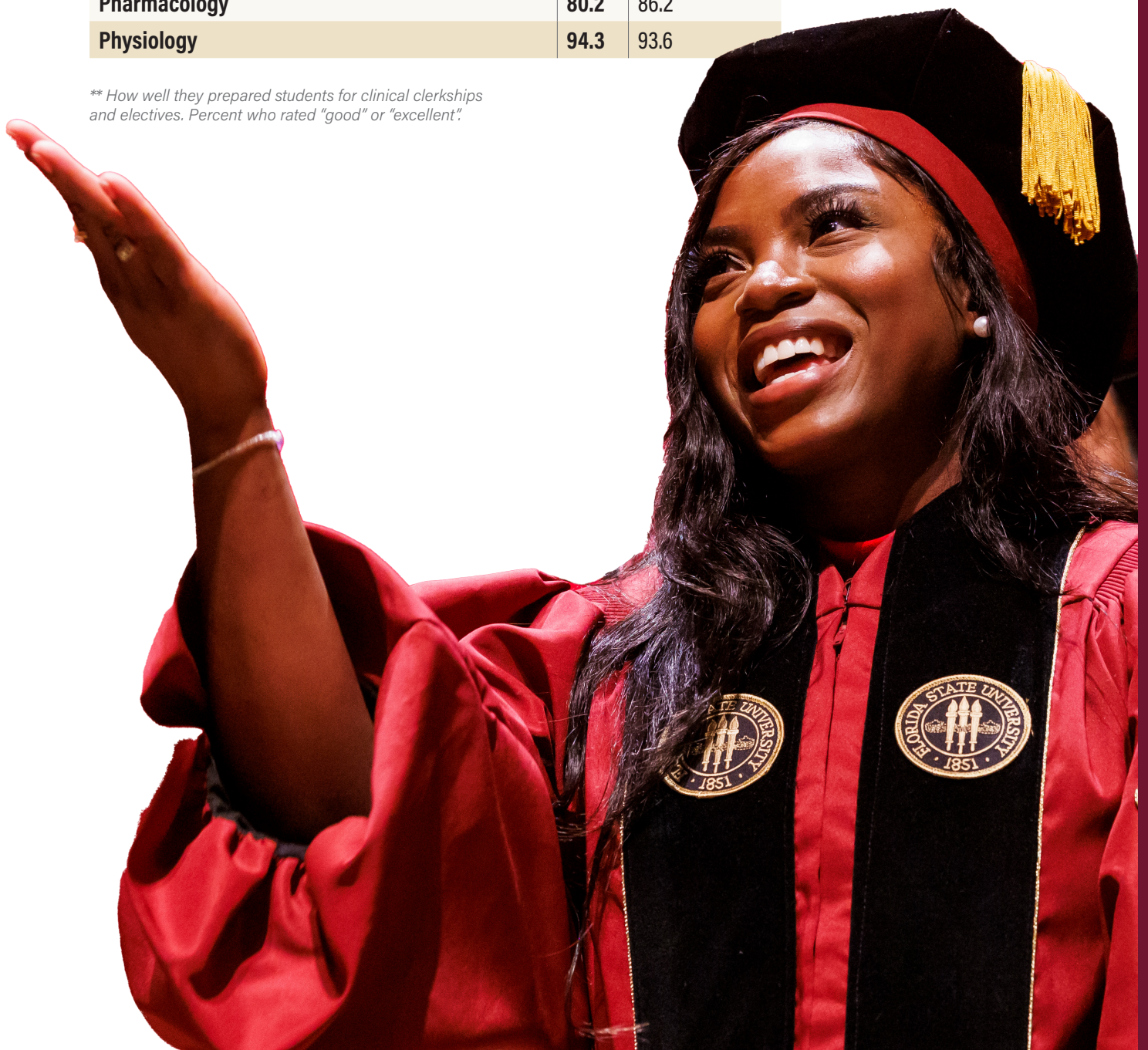
FSU	Other Schools	Question
96.3	94.1	My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a future physician
85	77.5	My medical school has done a good job of fostering and nurturing my development as a person.

* Compared to graduates of all other U.S. medical schools, FSU students who answered "agree" or "strongly agree".

Rating Science Courses Basic to Medicine**

Basic Science Prep for Clerkships	FSU	Other Schools
Behavioral Science	95.3	92.6
Biochemistry	84.8	75.8
Biostats and Epidemiology	81.2	73.9
Genetics	82.9	76.8
Gross Anatomy	95.2	86
Immunology	89.7	84.1
Intro to Clinical Medicine/Intro to the Patient	96	94.2
Microanatomy/Histology	77.3	77.8
Microbiology	91.5	87.5
Neuroscience	92.3	87.8
Pathology	86.8	86.3
Pathophysiology of Disease	95.3	95
Pharmacology	80.2	86.2
Physiology	94.3	93.6

** How well they prepared students for clinical clerkships and electives. Percent who rated "good" or "excellent".



Match Day success



I MATCHED!

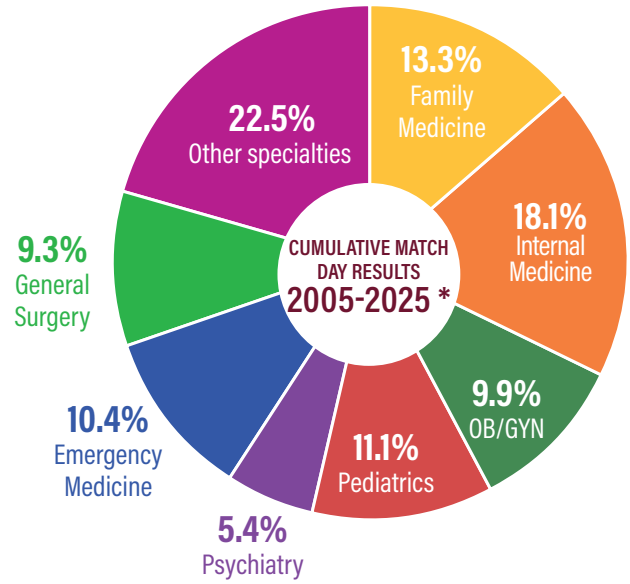
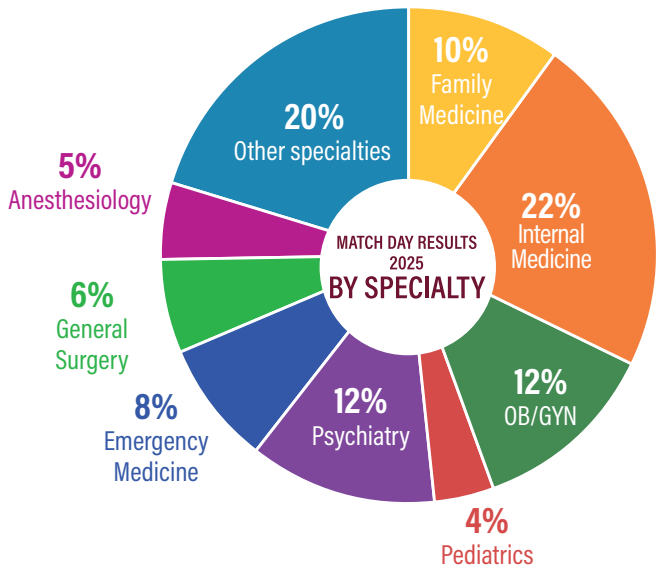
in **Peds/Psych/Child Psych (Triple Board!)**

at **Cincinnati Childrens Hospital!**

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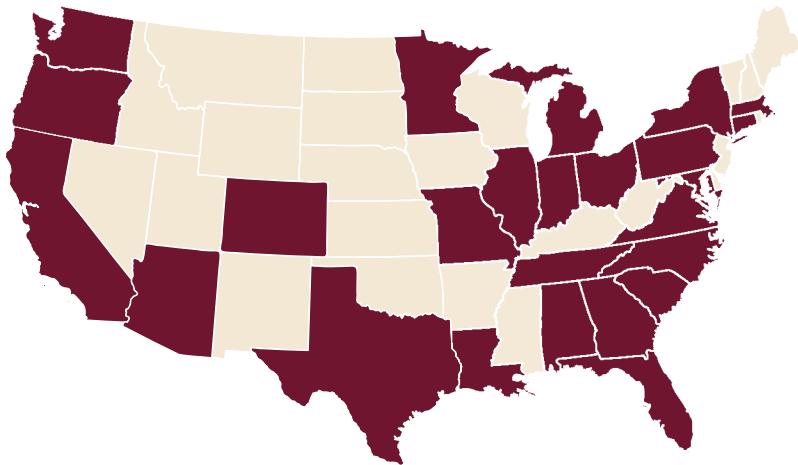
Class of **2025** | #FSUMatch2025
#Matchday2025

M.D match data



[Other specialties: <5% each, include Child Neurology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Orthopedic Surgery, Otolaryngology, Pathology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Plastic Surgery, Diagnostic Radiology, Interventional Radiology, Radiation Oncology, and Urology.]

* Alumni in the 7 leading specialties comprise 77.5% of all graduates (1,604 of total 2,069. Number of graduates confirmed by the FSU Registrar's Office).



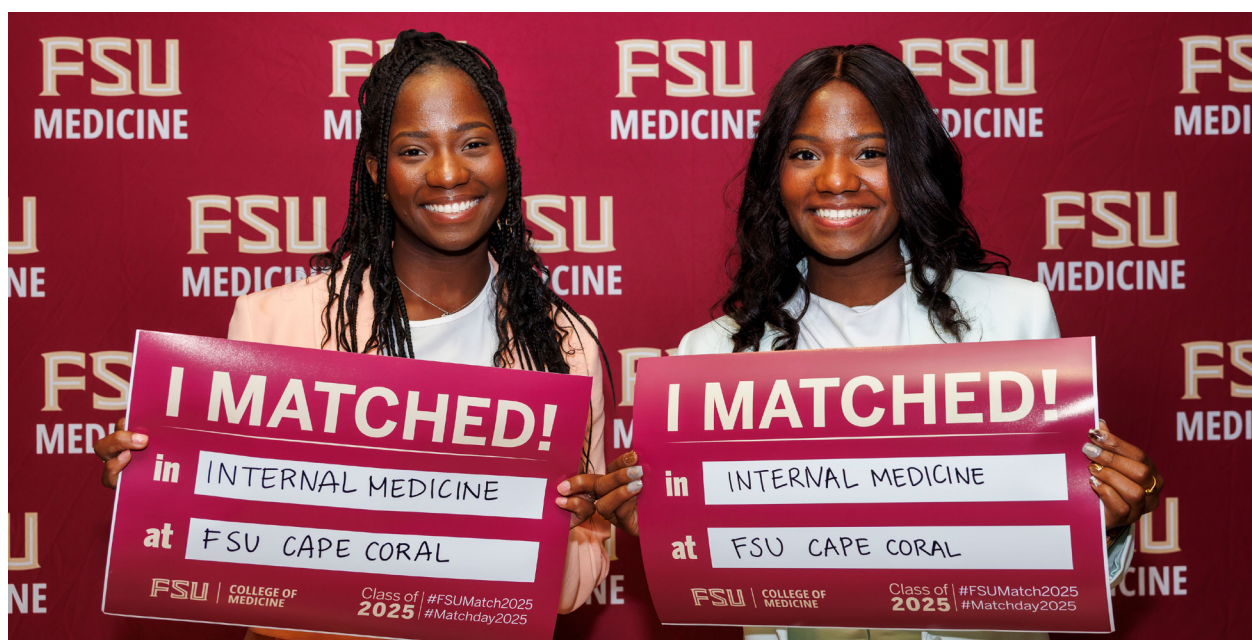
Rank	State	No. of Practicing Alumni
1	Florida	46%
2	Texas	7%
3	Alabama	6%
4	North Carolina	4%
	Tennessee	4%
	Georgia	4%
5	Virginia	3%
6	Mississippi	2%
	South Carolina	2%

[4% (4) matched in New York and in Ohio; all other states outside the Southeast had <3% matches; 19 states and the District of Columbia had 0 matches]

2025 M.D. GRADUATES MATCHED IN THE SOUTHEAST **70%**

Left photo: The FSU College of Medicine hooked Sean Gabany as a junior high student participating in the SSTRIDE pathway program in Crestview. As an FSU undergrad, he was active in its college component, USSTRIDE. In 2025, he was the only graduate to triple-match in three specialties – Pediatrics,

Psychiatry and Child Psychiatry. He's continuing his training at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. He and girlfriend Katie Allen of Fort Myers sustained a long-distance relationship during his last three years of medical school, but now both call Cincinnati home.



Match Day spotlights hopes, dreams and next stops in medical training

By Audrey Post

FSU College of Medicine

Amanda and Tamara Raymond have been through a lot together. From their premature birth to their undergraduate days as pre-med students at the University of Florida, the Loxahatchee twins have always been in sync.

Their bond held strong as they were admitted to the Bridge to Clinical Medicine master's program at the Florida State University College of Medicine in 2020, then to the M.D. Class of 2025 the next year. With the Fort Pierce Regional Campus the closest one to their hometown, they wanted – and got – assigned there for their final two years of clinical studies.

Asked whether they do everything together, they answered in unison, “Pretty much!”

But would they be together through residency, the next step in their medical education after their May 17, 2025, graduation? On Match Day 2025, they got the answer they were hoping for, matching with the FSU Internal Medicine Residency Program at Cape Coral Hospital in southwest Florida.

“We both ranked it our first choice,” Amanda said.

“We were hoping,” Tamara added.

Held the third Friday in March each year, Match Day is when fourth-year medical students across the country hear “open your envelopes” at 12 noon (ET) and simultaneously learn where they will spend the next few years. At FSU, College of Medicine Dean Alma Littles, M.D., spoke the magic words, which sparked several minutes of whooping and hollering.

Photo: The Raymond twins pose for a photo after they matched together.



Top: Savannah Calleson Cummings shows her Match letter to her family; she matched in family medicine at the University of North Carolina Hospitals.

Middle: Rachel Cathey and Luis Cervera couples-matched at the University of Tennessee – Knoxville, she in Anesthesiology and he in OB/GYN. The couple wed three weeks before graduation.

Bottom: Joy was in the air as Phasin Ladapong Gonzalez showed he matched in Internal Medicine at FSU's residency program at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare.

The Raymonds were two of 57 students (51%) matching in a primary care specialty – family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics & gynecology – filling areas of greatest need in Florida and beyond.

Collectively, 52 of 113 graduates will be staying in Florida, a slight decrease from last year's 48% and an indicator that even as Florida adds residency slots, more are needed. Studies show that physicians tend to set up practice within 50 miles of where they completed their residencies.

Class President Sean Wimberley, who had a 10-year career as a registered pharmacist, dates his affiliation with the FSU College of Medicine to his time as the PA program's Clinical Pharmacology IV course director.

“There are thousands of students who wish they could be in our shoes today. Let's honor them — and ourselves — by becoming the very best physicians we can be,” Wimberley said, “and by serving as proud ambassadors for the FSU College of Medicine and the mission that brought us here.”



Photo: Class President Sean Wimberley addressing the class of 2025 on Match Day

Making a positive impact on **individual lives** and **entire communities**



FSU pathway programs

Finding, recruiting and retaining exceptional students who have the desire and aptitude to pursue a degree in health care — particularly those from rural and underserved areas — is the goal of our pathway programs. Since their inception, thousands of students have been served, with many going on to pursue careers in their chosen health care professions.

SSTRIDE

Students Served: 2,816
(1994-2024)

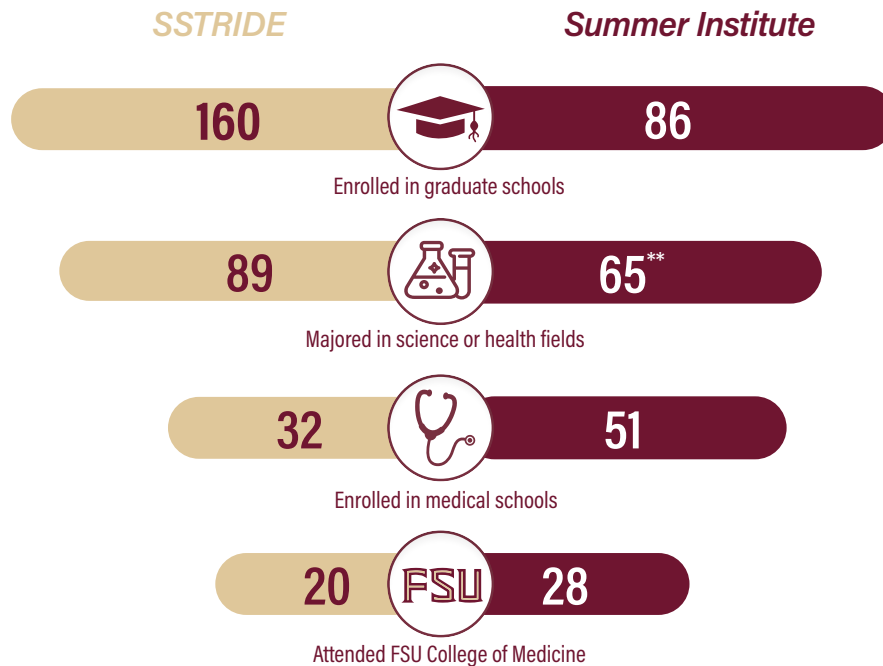
The SSTRIDE Program is offered to students from designated middle and high schools in Florida. Of the students served, 1,581 voluntarily provided information about their college careers, with 1,492 (94.4%) reporting enrolling in college and 677 graduating from college as of summer 2024.

Summer Institute

Students Served: 946
(2008-2024)

The Summer Institute is a weeklong, residential program designed for high school sophomores and juniors committed to pursuing a career in the medical field. Of the 637 students tracked, 100% graduated from high school, with 629 (98.7%) entering college (208 choosing FSU). By summer 2024, 399 earned a college degree.

Post-College Outcomes*



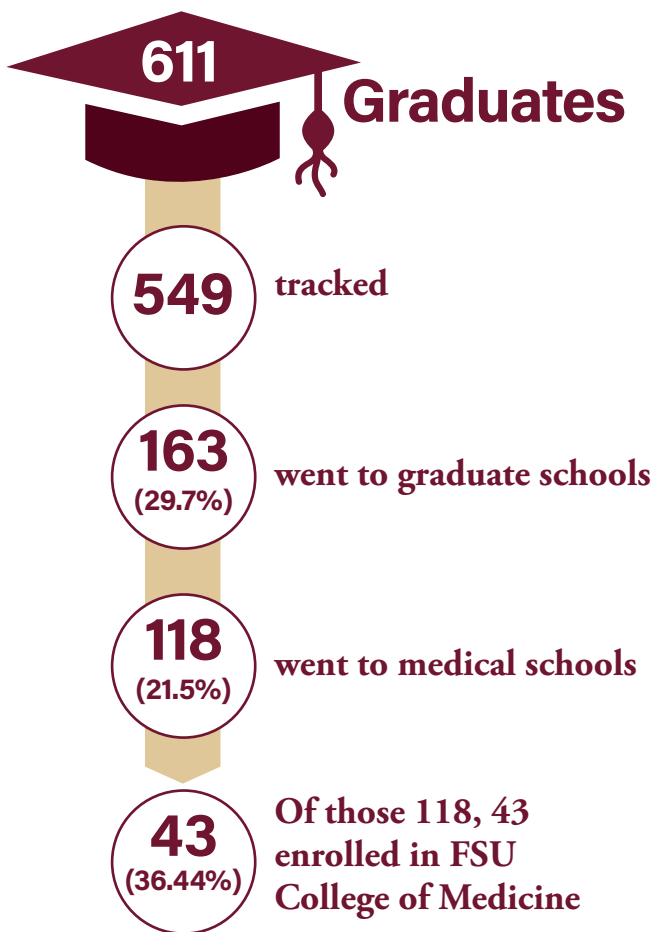
* Of those tracked for post-college information.

** 4 participated in FSU College of Medicine's Bridge program, 2 participated in the College of Medicine's Physician Assistant program.

Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences (IMS)

Students Served: 3,330
(2016 – 2025)

The IMS Bachelor of Science Degree Program educates students who aspire to enter a health profession. Students may pursue individual specialized and pre-professional interests with any of the three major options — Clinical Professions major, Community Patient Care major, or Health Management, Policy and Information major — to help prepare for entry into professional training programs or become part of the health care workforce.



150 students chose health care or medical graduate programs



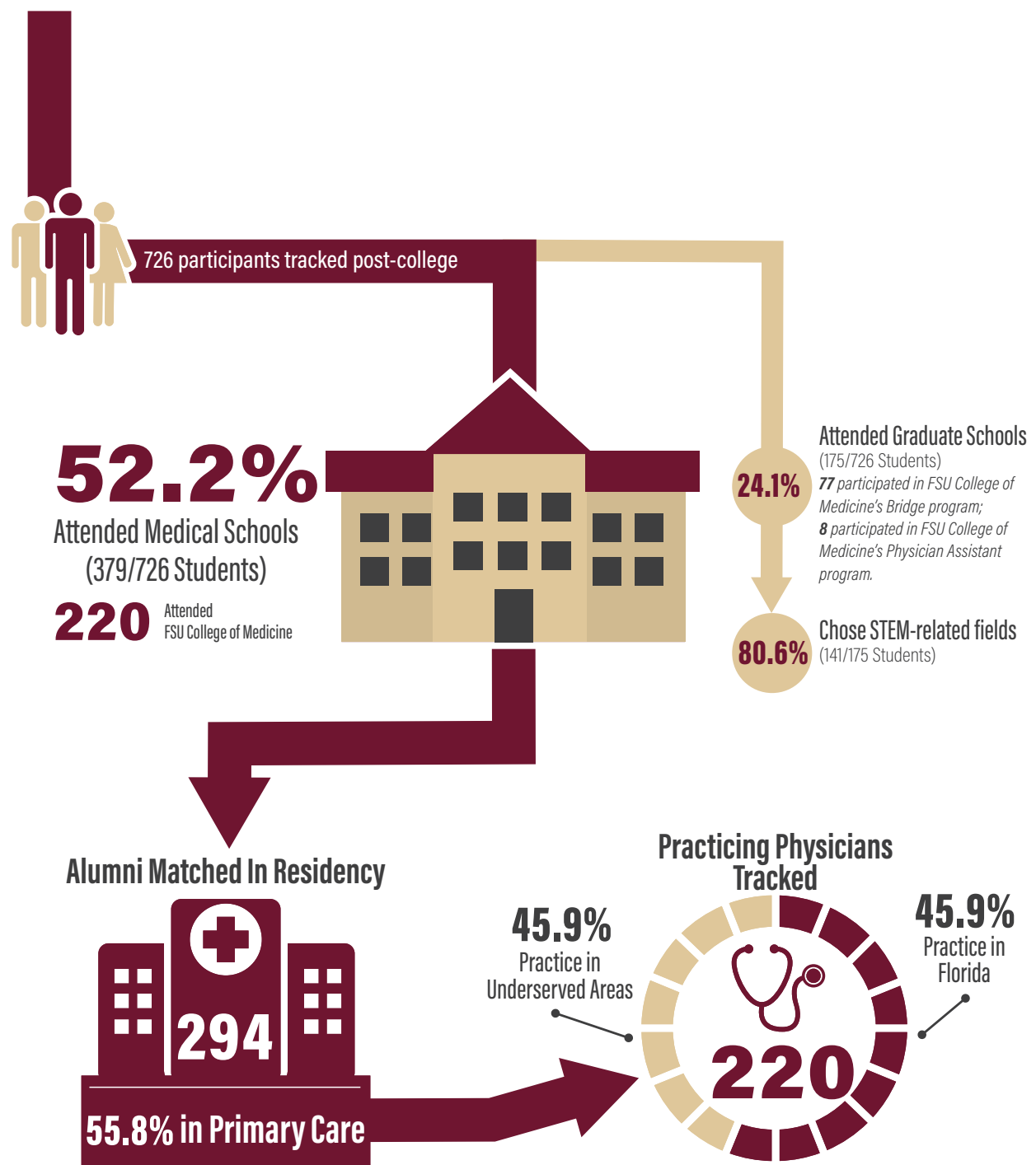
* 18 in FSU College of Medicine Physician Assistant program
 ** 5 participated in the FSU College of Medicine Bridge program as of summer 2024

USSTRIDE

Students Served: 912

(1994-2024)

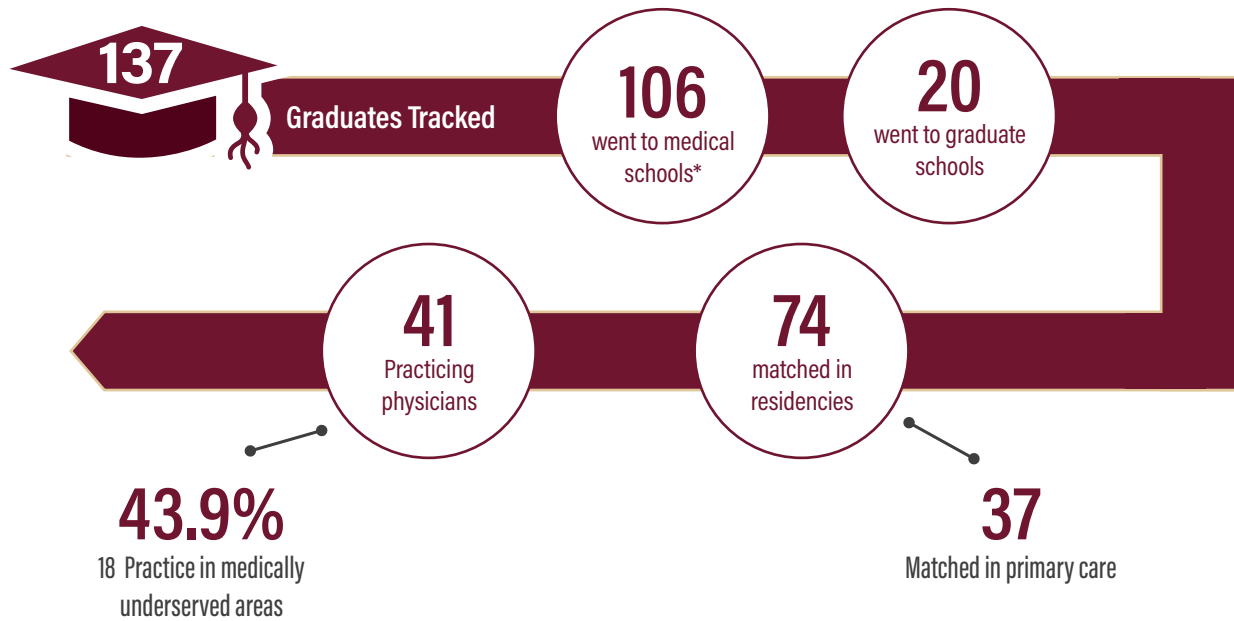
Undergraduate SSTRIDE or USSTRIDE is the college component of the FSU College of Medicine outreach programs and serves as an extension of the pre-college program. USSTRIDE is open to Florida State University, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee State College, post-baccalaureate and SSTRIDE Connect students. Premedical students interested in applying to our medical school and working in rural or underserved communities are invited to apply and participate in USSTRIDE.



Honors Medical Scholars

Students Served: 192

(2006-2024)



*98 went to FSU College of Medicine.

Bridge to Clinical Medicine Program Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences

Students Served: 237

(2001-2024)

A year-long, postgraduate program providing select undergraduate students from medically underserved backgrounds a track to prepare for a medical education. This chart looks at graduates of the Bridge program who also went on to graduate from medical schools.





Photo: Students in the College of Medicine’s physician assistant program practice clinical skills on patients, gaining hands-on experience that prepares them for careers in health care.



Our research

A record-setting year

Fiscal Year 2025 saw the College of Medicine record **all-time** highs for proposals and awards

164

Proposals

125

Awards

Research Expenditures

\$29,546,560

FY 2025

\$3.53
million

increase over FY24



FY25 also marked a **single-year** record for expenditures

Faculty Principal Investigators FY25

54

Unique faculty submitting proposals to external funders

31

Unique faculty receiving awards from external funders

Top 4 New Awards, FY25



>\$8 million*

**University of Florida-
Florida State University
Clinical and Translational
Science Award (CTSA)**
funded for 7 years by NIH/
NCATS to improve human
health by accelerating
clinical and translational
science innovation.



\$2,997,922

**F. Andrew Kozel, M.D.,
Professor, Behavioral
Sciences & Social
Medicine:**
Rapid treatment of post-
traumatic stress disorder
with accelerated, non-
invasive brain stimulation.



\$3,390,870

**Nicole Ennis, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor,
Behavioral Sciences &
Social Medicine:**
Open road driving
performance task to
examine long-term
medical marijuana use
and prescription opioid
positivity in adults 50 and
older.



\$2,106,067

**Choogon Lee, Ph.D.,
Professor, Biomedical
Sciences:**
Genetic basis of circadian
rhythms and sleep
disorders.

* Allocation not yet finalized.



"We sincerely thank our researchers and supporting staff for their outstanding contributions to the College's research growth and success. Their commitment to excellence, collaboration and innovation has strengthened our research portfolio and advanced discoveries that improve health and well-being. The achievements reflect the dedication and expertise of every member of our research community. Together, we look forward to building on our momentum, fostering new collaborations and driving transformative research in the years ahead."

-Xian Jin Xie, Ph.D.

Senior Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs
FSU College of Medicine

College of Medicine Research: A Five-Year Progression

5-year totals | 2021-2025

\$131,026,067

**Research
Expenditures**

\$139,631,294
Award Dollars

696
Proposals

538
Awards

Year-by-year breakdown

2021-2025

2021	2022	2023
<p>135 Proposals 97 Awards \$21,959,074 in Award Dollars \$25,605,384 Expenditures</p>	<p>121 Proposals 102 Awards \$26,358,646 in Award Dollars \$25,592,451 Expenditures</p>	<p>123 Proposals 103 Awards \$29,203,255 in Award Dollars \$24,265,613 Expenditures</p>
2024	2025	
<p>152 Proposals 112 Awards \$32,734,820 in Award Dollars \$26,016,058 Expenditures</p>	<p>164 Proposals 125 Awards \$29,388,771 in Award Dollars \$29,546,560 Expenditures</p>	

Sharing Information and Advancing Medical Research

Scholarly Output from the College of Medicine

(2024-2025)

416 Total Published Work

2,798 Total Citations

Top 10 published authors*

RESEARCHER	OUTPUT	CITATIONS
Angelina Sutin, Ph.D. <i>Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	141	2,430
Antonio Terracciano, Ph.D. <i>Professor, Geriatrics</i>	132	1,512
Martina Luchetti, Ph.D. <i>Assistant Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	106	906
Bonnie Spring, Ph.D. <i>Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	58	361
Sylvie Naar, Ph.D. <i>Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	45	169
Regan Bailey, Ph.D. <i>Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	44	332
William Bobo, M.D. <i>Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	43	278
Karen MacDonell, Ph.D. <i>Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	33	104
Jarrood Mousa, Ph.D. <i>Associate Professor, Biomedical Sciences</i>	30	260
Mary Gerend, Ph.D. <i>Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine</i>	26	192

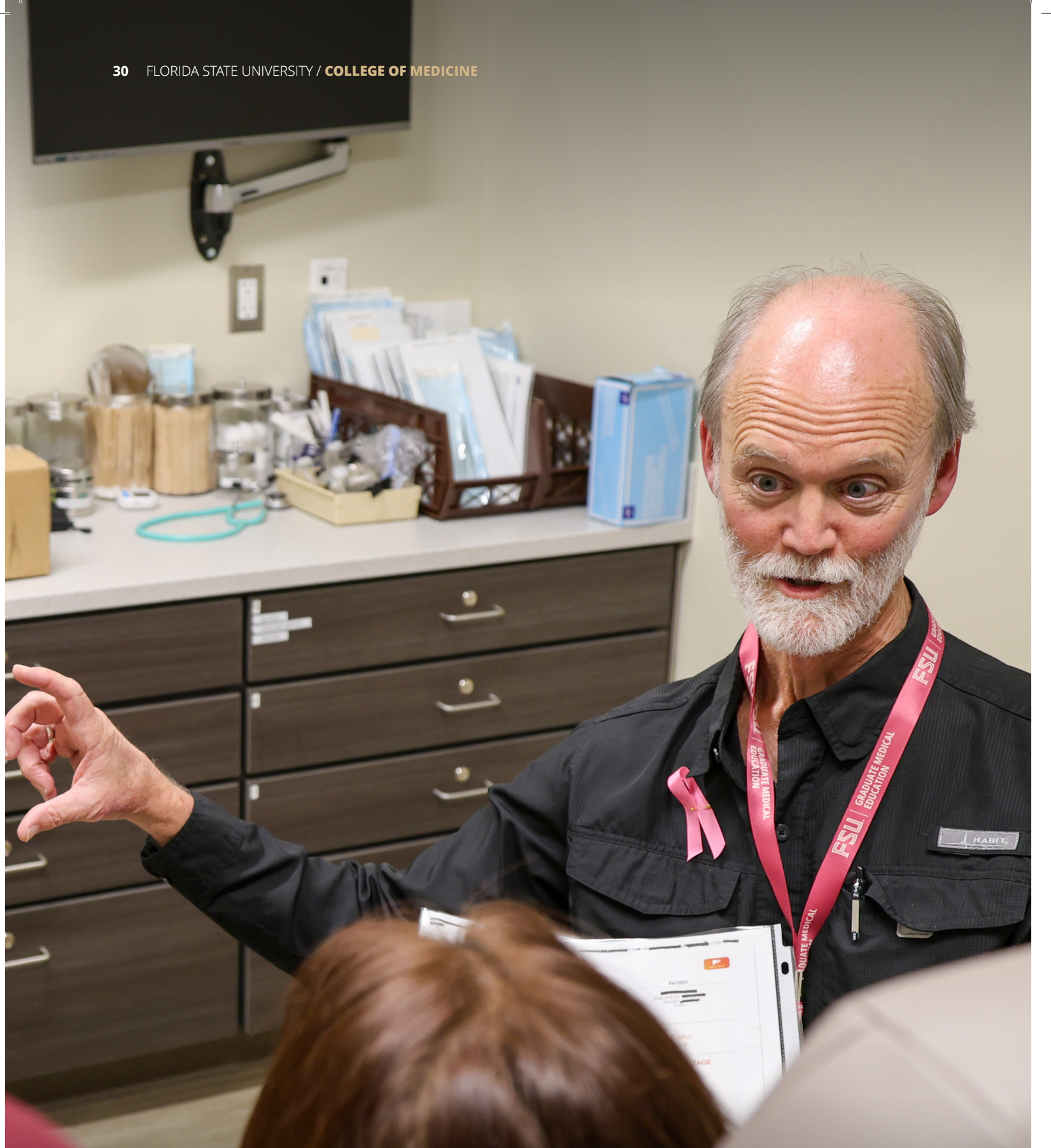
* All information sourced via SciVal. Top 10 list reflects publications and citations over a 3-year period (2022-2025) and includes articles, reviews, chapters, notes, editorials, letters, books, conference papers, data papers and erratum.

Patent applications for the College of Medicine, FY 2025

Inventors (* = Lead)	Patent	Patent Type	Patent Status	Application Number
Invention Title: Stretch-induced Ischemia for Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease				
<i>Mina-Michael Barsoum, Judy Delp*</i>	<i>20-008PRCCN</i>	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>18/813,159</i>
Title: New Method for Selective Elimination of H3.3 Mutant Pediatric Glioblastoma Cells via Simultaneous Inhibition of both Classic and Alternative Non-Homologous End Joining (NHEJ) pathways and Concomitant Induction of DNA double strands breaks (DSBs)				
<i>Akash Gunjan*</i>	<i>16-092PRCDV</i>	<i>Divisional</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>18/901,200</i>
Title: D-Serine Inhibits Neuroinflammation Due to a Brain Injury				
<i>Stephen Beesley</i>	<i>19-037PRC2CN</i>	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>18/914,847</i>
Title: Niclosamide Formulations and Methods of Use				
<i>Eric Holmes*, Gary Ostrander</i>	<i>20-051PRCCN2</i>	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Issued</i>	<i>18/926,688</i>
Title: Novel Antifibrotic Drugs Discovered by Deconvolution of the Positional Scanning of Chemical Libraries				
<i>Branko Stefanovic*</i>	<i>20-047PRCCN2</i>	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>18/945,850</i>
Title: Automated NIRS/VOT Assessment of Microvascular Health in Skeletal Muscle				
<i>Judy Delp*, Steven Gordon, Cesar Rodriguez, Cole Smith</i>	<i>23-076PRC</i>	<i>Utility</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>18/948,415</i>
Title: Parainfluenza virus 3 monoclonal antibodies				
<i>Jarrod Mousa*</i>	<i>24-051PR</i>	<i>Provisional</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>63/721,628</i>
Title: New Method for Selective Elimination of H3.3 Mutant Pediatric Glioblastoma Cells via Simultaneous Inhibition of both Classic and Alternative Non-Homologous End Joining (NHEJ) pathways and Concomitant Induction of DNA double strands breaks (DSBs)				
<i>Akash Gunjan*#</i>	<i>16-092PR2C</i>	<i>Utility</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>19/082,283</i>
<i>Akash Gunjan*#</i>	<i>16-092PR2CWO</i>	<i>PCT</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>PCT/ US2025/20317</i>

= Two applications were filed for this invention, one for a domestic utility patent and one for an international patent through the Parent Cooperation Treaty.

Source: FSU Office of Commercialization, Division of Research



Florida Healthy Liver Program™

Florida Healthy Liver Program™ promises a **brighter, healthier future** for those with liver disease

By Patrick Crowley

FSU College of Medicine

Gabriella, 15, has a beautiful smile that can light up a room and talks enthusiastically about her volleyball and flag football teams. Her sunny personality is infectious!

Susan Hayes, 67, is a retiree, soft-spoken and thoughtful. Originally from Michigan, she moved to North Florida to be close to her children.

Gabriella and Susan have something in common. Both benefitted from a simple scan that revealed a startling indication — an unhealthy liver — but for different reasons. For Gabriella, after further testing, she was diagnosed with liver steatosis (formerly called a fatty liver), mostly due to a sedentary lifestyle, her weight and a diet rich in carbs (think white bread, pastas, snack foods, sugary drinks and the like). Susan was diagnosed with autoimmune hepatitis. “Basically, my immune system is attacking my liver and causing cirrhosis,” she said.

Their similarities may end there, as Gabriella’s condition has improved dramatically in just seven months with diet modification and exercise, while Susan’s condition is being addressed with medication. But had it not been for a Fibroscan™ in their primary care physician’s office, their conditions could have gone undetected for months or years as their livers slowly succumbed to disease.

According to Dr. Scottie Whiddon, Susan and Gabriella’s primary care physician and co-medical director of FSU PrimaryHealth™, this early detection underscores the need to get these devices — in this case an Echosens Fibroscan™ — into the hands of primary care physicians.

“We’re the initial point of care,” he said. “We’re the soldiers on the ground. “Our goal is to not only find people early but educate everyone about the impact this simple scan can have when it comes to early diagnosis and treatment.”

Whiddon and a cadre of other like-minded physicians and health care providers believe so much in the tremendous benefit of this scanner that they established the Florida Healthy Liver Program™, a collaboration between FSU Health and Mayo Clinic in Florida based at the FSU College of Medicine. They are now conducting a feasibility study to see if getting these scanners into the hands of primary care physicians will lead to early diagnosis and better care.

“Dr. Cyneetha Strong (co-medical director of FSU PrimaryHealth) visited the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and presented our initial data,” Whiddon said. “In the first six months, 55 adult and pediatric patients underwent a scan. A total of 42% demonstrated both liver fibrosis and steatosis. The scanner is an incredible tool and it’s simple. You can do a point-of-care scan in just a few minutes.”

Left photo: Rosaria and her daughter, 15-year-old Gabriella, hear the results of Gabriella’s latest liver scan from Dr. Scottie Whiddon. According to Whiddon, Gabriella was able to reverse her condition in just seven months through lifestyle changes, such as incorporating a better diet and exercise.

Those few minutes can spare patients months of more aggressive treatment — and potentially a liver transplant — since the issue would be diagnosed at its earliest stages.

“I was scared at first,” Gabriella said, “but after the doctor explained it, I felt a lot better. Before I found out, I wasn’t doing anything. I was just being homey and lazy.”

But the advice given by her physicians hit home.

“I joined a sport — which helped me, because I started exercising almost every day,” said Gabriella, whose mother, Rosaria, asked that neither one of their true names be used, due to Gabriella’s age. “I couldn’t eat junk food because I was involved in sports and being in sports really helped.”

Her mom agreed, saying, “I saw that she herself made the decision to go on a diet, eat more vegetables, exercise. She started one sport and then started another one. I saw she was the one who wanted to change and that she was the one who made those changes. She was the one who really spearheaded the effort.”

Susan’s journey started innocently enough. When she moved from Michigan, she wanted to get established with a primary care doctor.

“When I moved to Tallahassee, I didn’t know anything,” she said. “I didn’t know the doctors, but I did, or course, recognize Florida State University so, I thought, that would be a good place to look. Being from Michigan, we had Michigan State and the University of Michigan Health System connected to universities, which I think is important.”

Another thing Susan and Gabriella have in common is that neither had symptoms that would make them suspect a liver disorder.

“I was surprised,” Susan said. “I had no idea what it was. I have no family history of liver problems and I was having no symptoms.”

It was Susan’s bloodwork that tipped off Whiddon, who then suggested the liver scan.

“When we did her labs and her liver enzymes were up a little bit, I said, ‘well, you know, we’ve got this new machine. Let’s just check you out and see. It’s probably liver steatosis,’” Whiddon said. “I can’t recall if she was an S3 or an S4, but she was an F4.”

Liver steatosis is graded on a scale of S0 to S4, with 0 meaning not fatty and 4 being severely fatty. Liver fibrosis is based on a scale of F0 to F4, with 4 meaning the patient has progressed to cirrhosis.

Susan and Gabriella are just two examples of many patients who could benefit from a liver scan, but in order to get this tool in the hands of primary care physicians, help is needed. According to Whiddon, the cost of a new scanner is close to \$400,000, a prohibitive cost for primary care clinics such as FSU PrimaryHealth. Whiddon said a goal of the current feasibility study is to determine if these machines can make a difference in patients’ lives and, in the end, lead to early diagnosis, less aggressive treatment and, therefore, reduce the overall cost of care.



Photo: A liver scan is a non-invasive test used to help determine the health of a person’s liver. Here, Whiddon performs the scan on Susan Hayes, who said the only thing she feels is a slight “thumping” on her abdomen.



Photo: Susan Hayes chats with Whiddon after her scan. Susan's condition is being treated with medication, while Gabriella is able to control her issue with lifestyle changes.

So far, the study is quickly proving these assumptions to be true. With data in hand, and stories like Gabriella's and Susan's, the Florida Healthy Liver Program is approaching industry partners and private donors to help fund the cost of scanners so they can be placed in more physician offices.

What does the future hold? For Susan, it means controlling her ailment with medication and routine checkups. For Gabriella, her mom says she hopes it leads to a healthier lifestyle and, if the scanner becomes more prevalent in physician offices, a healthier community.

"This would be a great help to other people," Rosaria said. "And, if Gabriella can do it, you can do it. You just have to push yourself to better yourself, but you can do it!"

What is the Healthy Liver Program?

The Florida Healthy Liver Program™ began when **Mayo Clinic in Florida** donated an **Echosens Fibroscan** to **FSU PrimaryHealth™**, an FSU Health clinical practice located in an area of southwest Tallahassee, Florida, that was considered a "health care desert" before the clinic opened in 2019.

Since primary care settings are usually the first line of defense for patients, the goal of the program is to scale the pilot to six other clinics — **and private support is vital to make this happen**. The program will further define the role and benefits of primary care liver disease screening, to include treatment of earlier stage disease with gastroenterologists and promote multidisciplinary management.

The Florida Healthy Liver Program will prove effective in broader population screening for liver fibrosis in primary care and will expand its scope by further engaging federal, industry and legislative support to protect the health of our communities.

To learn more about the program or how to make a gift, visit med.fsu.edu/healthyliver.

Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases



IPRD's rapid growth, potential long-term impact, exemplify 'bench to bedside' goal of biomedical research

By Bob Thomas

FSU College of Medicine

Big. Bold. Courageous.

Those were the words Pradeep Bhide, Ph.D., used in June 2024 to describe the goals for what is now known as the Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases at Florida State University.

Formally launched during FSU Day at the Florida Capitol on Feb. 1, 2024, IPRD began taking shape a year earlier when Rep. Adam Anderson (R-Palm Harbor) brought his vision, driven by personal tragedy, to the Florida Legislature. In July 2023, Gov. Ron DeSantis turned the vision to reality with his signature on the state budget appropriation of \$1 million for the establishment of the FSU Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases.

Its mission? To transform the lives of children affected by rare diseases through research, education, diagnosis and clinical care.

Children like Andrew Anderson, the son of Adam and Brianne, who was diagnosed with Tay-Sachs disease in 2016 and died in 2019. A rare and fatal genetic disorder causing nerve damage to a child's brain and spinal cord, Tay-Sachs is one of approximately 7,000 known rare diseases. Approximately 350 million people worldwide live with a rare disease, including 30 million in the United States. Roughly half of all rare diseases begin in childhood.

It became the Anderson's mission to ensure other families don't have to endure the same pain. Adam

turned to his alma mater, Florida State University, for assistance and received enthusiastic support from FSU President Richard McCullough when they initially met in 2023.

"In many ways, [Adam] is the engine driving this," Bhide said. As IPRD's executive director, Bhide developed a five-year plan for the institute, broad in scope and ever-evolving, lending itself to interdisciplinary contributions throughout the university and beyond.

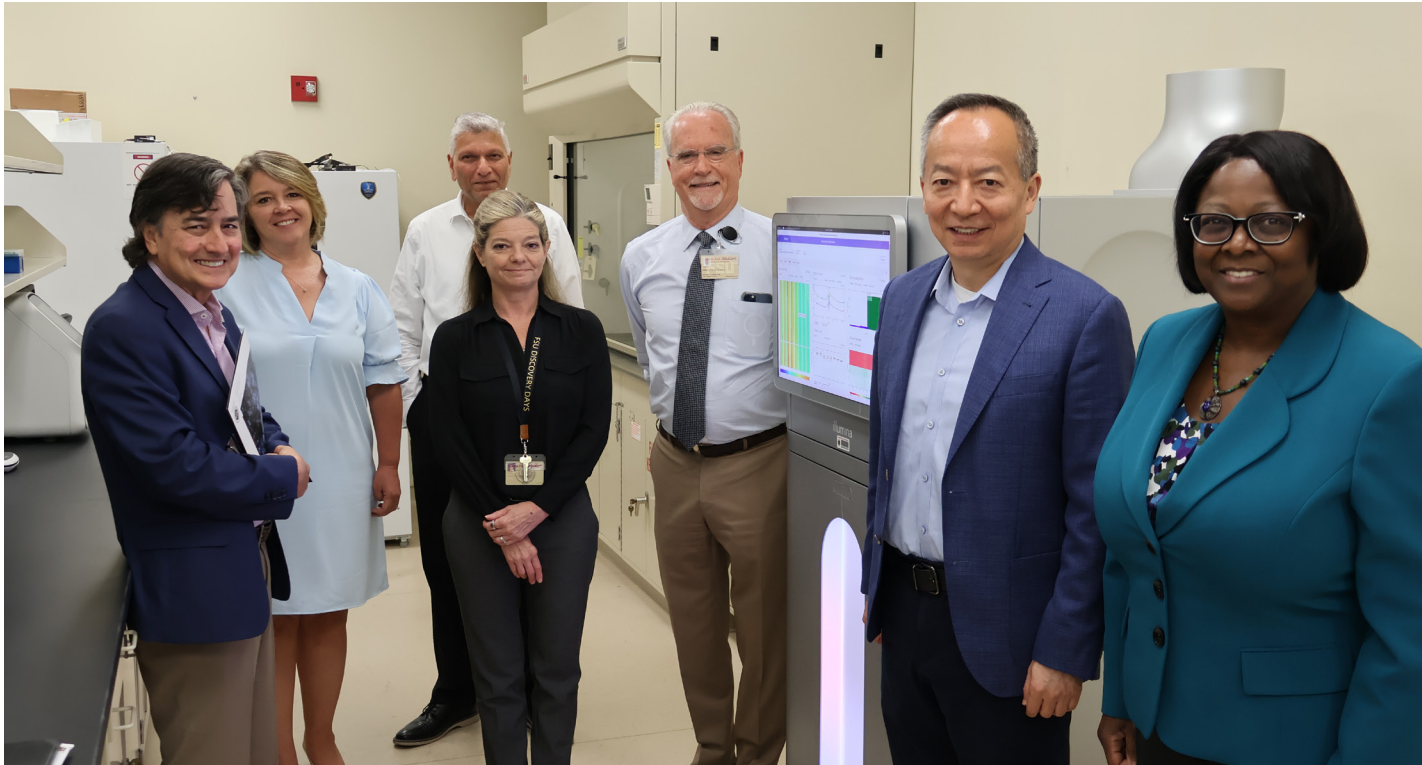
"Deliberately, I have, with everybody's cooperation, advice, and guidance, designed IPRD to be a comprehensive program," said Bhide, who is also FSU College of Medicine's Jim and Betty Ann Rodgers Eminent Scholar Chair of Developmental Neuroscience. "For any health care or health-related topic,



Left photo: Cynthia Vied, Ph.D., who leads IPRD's Diagnostic Lab, examines DNA samples before they are sequenced in the lab's Illumina NovaSeq X.

Photo: Florida Rep. Adam Anderson meets with media members following the Sunshine Genetics Act press conference at the College of Medicine.

Continued on next page >>



there are many legs upon which the stool stands, but the patient, or the child, or family, they only see the top of it.

“IPRD is created to deliver diagnostic tools and treatment for children and families. I cannot just make it stand on one leg. It needs to be a comprehensive, well-rounded program. ... In order to build that, I need research, and education and training for the next generation of professionals. I need a clinical diagnostic facility, and a treatment delivery mechanism, which is a clinic.”

With additional funding from the Florida Legislature following the 2024 and 2025 sessions, and the ongoing financial support from McCullough and FSU Vice President for Research Stacey Patterson and College of Medicine Dean Alma Littles, Bhide is committed to stabilizing that stool.

Just two-plus years into the five-year plan, IPRD’s build-out is well underway.

Assembling the Personnel

From the very start, Bhide acknowledged the importance of putting together a team capable of transforming the lives of children affected by rare diseases.

“Building the workforce is a top priority,” said Bhide, who is assembling a team driven to make Florida the national leader in pediatric rare disease research and precision medicine.

Bhide quickly identified and enlisted the help of internal personnel, with the support of then-Biomedical Sciences department chair Richard Nowakowski, Ph.D., College of Medicine research colleagues Cynthia Vied, Ph.D., and Michelle Arbeitman, Ph.D., who were among the first to sign on and hold key associate director positions for IPRD Genomics and Research & Training, respectively.

All four made up IPRD’s initial research advisory council, which reviewed grant applications and awarded funding for research focused on discovering and developing technologies for the diagnosis and treatment of a broad spectrum of rare diseases.

In July 2025, Bhide appointed Antonia Nemec, Ph.D., as IPRD’s associate director for Research Operations.

Identifying and bringing key personnel to IPRD has accelerated since the February 2025 addition of acclaimed human geneticist, distinguished scientist

Photo: From left, FSU Provost James Clark and VP of Research Stacey Patterson join Florida IPRD leaders Pradeep Bhide, Cynthia Vied, David Ledbetter and College of Medicine Senior Associate Dean Xian Jin Xie and Dean Alma Littles in the new IPRD Diagnostic Lab.

and administrator David Ledbetter, Ph.D., FACMG. Ledbetter joined IPRD and the College of Medicine's Department of Clinical Sciences from the University of Florida-Jacksonville.

"I cannot emphasize how fortunate I am to have David Ledbetter here," Bhide said. "His name is like gold. There isn't a person in neurogenetics, developmental genetics and genetic counseling that doesn't know him."

Ledbetter's experience and pioneering contributions to human genetics have followed him through prestigious academic and leadership positions at Baylor College of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, University of Chicago, Emory University School of Medicine and Geisinger Health System. His research has been continuously funded by NIH since 1984 and well-chronicled by his prolific scholarly output.

Although he had learned about IPRD earlier, Ledbetter's interest grew substantially after Rep. Anderson submitted legislation to create the Sunshine Genetics Act, which proposed establishing

a statewide pediatric genetics network and a pilot program to perform genome sequencing on 100,000 healthy babies at birth. That would mark a 10-fold increase in the number of rare, treatable conditions newborns are screened for – going from 60 to 600.

"The ambitious goal is for Florida to be the first state in the United States to make this universal for all babies born each year," said Ledbetter, who joined IPRD five months before Gov. DeSantis signed the Sunshine Genetics Act, which included \$7.5 million in state funding.

In a joint July announcement at the College of Medicine, FSU announced its \$2 million contribution in support of Sunshine Genetics, which is central to the IPRD venture.

Ledbetter's commitment has directly impacted IPRD's recruitment of essential staffing across many, if not all, of its components – research, pediatric health center, diagnostic lab, viral vector and gene editing core, and the new master's degree program in genetic counseling,



Acclaimed geneticist David Ledbetter, Ph.D., speaking at an international conference, has played an integral role in IPRD's growth since joining the College of Medicine in February 2025.

“They find him,” Bhide said.

“We’ve hired two outstanding genetic counselors, and have good leads on several more,” said Ledbetter, who has an ambitious goal of hiring 30 genetic counselors by 2030. “I hired over 25 genetic counselors at Geisinger Health in a small, central Pennsylvania town of 5,000 people. Imagine what we can do in Tallahassee and North Florida.”

Genetic counselors Saanchi Shah, Ph.D., M.S., CCG and Beth Joirle, M.S., CCG, arrived at IPRD from UCLA and Orlando, respectively, and will also serve as assistant professors in the Clinical Sciences department. They have accompanied Ledbetter and IPRD consultant Andy Faucett, M.S., CCG, to recent conferences, continuing the institute’s recruiting efforts.

Faucett worked alongside Ledbetter at both Geisinger Health and Emory.

The team has been to the American Society of Human Genetics meeting in Boston and to a Seattle meeting of the National Society of Genetic Counselors, “where there is a clear buzz about genomics in Florida,” Ledbetter said. “Most people are not sure exactly what is happening, but most have heard there’s something big.

“When I tell them Rep. Anderson’s vision, and the plans for Sunshine Genetics, they all want to know how to convince their states to follow suit.”

The IPRD-Clinical Sciences connection also includes Janelle Stanton, Ph.D., who arrived from University of Florida College of Medicine — Jacksonville in a post-doctoral role with IPRD and now holds a research faculty position within the department. In January, Lauren Harper, Ph.D., will move from the Psychology Department in the College of Arts & Sciences to the College of Medicine, where she will serve as a clinical psychologist and assistant professor in Clinical Sciences. Harper earned her master’s and doctorate degrees from FSU and has also completed a post-doctoral Pediatric Neuropsychology Fellowship at Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The dual assignments with IPRD and College of Medicine academic departments are by design. “We are recruiting people where they see patients for 40-60% of the time,” Bhide said. “Many of these specialists want to be involved in research. So, whatever that percentage would be, a significant component of their time is going to be clinical work, research, and teaching, as needed. It helps with finding salary support, and there’s grant funding that helps a lot.”

Bhide said this model helps avoid burnout, which is not uncommon when highly skilled clinicians relocate to smaller towns, adding that Tallahassee had just one genetic counselor before the recent hiring of Shah and Joirle. He believes this model could also work in a collaborative effort with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare.

“Credit to David [Ledbetter], because of him, we are advertising for people that spend only 50% of their time in the clinic,” Bhide added.

Nora Pepper, M.D., a 2010 College of Medicine graduate, will lead IPRD’s Pediatric Health Center. She came to FSU from TMH, where she served as a pediatric hospitalist, caring for both sick children and healthy newborns.

“I loved my team. I loved the nurses. I loved everything about it,” said Pepper, who joined the Clinical Sciences Department as an assistant professor in September 2024. That move came just a few months after then-department chair Jonathan Applebaum, M.D., and current interim-chair Michael Sweeney, M.D., planted the seed.

“I always loved the idea of coming back to FSU,” said Pepper, who remains active at TMH, serving as chair of the hospital’s Medical Executive Committee and also as a trustee on the hospital’s board. “So, we took the leap.”

An invitation from Bhide to sit in on Rare Disease Day, and later to attend IPRD meetings, slowly drew her in. When Bhide explained that IPRD would include a fully operating pediatric clinic, her interest was piqued.



“I had an attending once tell me, ‘You know, any child at any time can become special needs, you know,’ and I’ve seen that,” Pepper said.

As a compassionate pediatrician with leadership skills who is also a Tallahassee native with TMH connections, Pepper checked all of the boxes to lead IPRD’s clinical piece.

“We need to keep these kids here [in Tallahassee],” Pepper said. “They’re our families; our responsibility. We are a huge region. It’s overdue for us to have comprehensive medical care here for pediatrics.”

Doing just that was bolstered by the addition of Boris Kantor, Ph.D., as director of the Viral Vector and Genome Editing Core facility. With decades of experience in viral vector design, production and gene editing, he joined IPRD

from Duke University. Bhide called it “a major step forward in our mission to accelerate breakthroughs in rare disease research and precision medicine.”

Building the IPRD Infrastructure

While the brick-and-mortar needs of IPRD will continue to grow, progress is being made.

- **IPRD’s Diagnostics Lab**, where whole genome sequencing will take place, is located in the college’s Biomedical Sciences wing. Its Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments-certified, more commonly known as CLIA-certified, which means it meets federal standards to ensure the accuracy and reliability of patient test results for diagnosis and treatment. It will begin processing clinical diagnostic samples in early

2026. Only then will it be eligible for the highest level of accreditation from the College of American Pathologists (CAP).

The lab’s NovaSeq X, purchased by the university for IPRD in 2024, can sequence the entire genome of 128 patients from DNA samples in 48 hours. It will yield results by identifying genetic abnormalities and assist in confirming the diagnosis of previously undiagnosed conditions, which can end the wait commonly known as a patient’s diagnostic odyssey. Patients with rare diseases often endure years of testing before gaining a diagnosis. This information can allow clinicians to establish treatment planning at an earlier stage, which is critical to care.

Photo: From left, Dorothea Lantz, FSU President Richard McCullough, Florida Rep. Adam Anderson, College of Medicine Dean Alma Littles and IPRD Executive Director Pradeep Bhide, pose with ceremonial checks during a press conference announcing the launch of the Sunshine Genetics Act.

- **IPRD's Viral Vector and Gene Editing Core**, also in the college's Biomedical Sciences wing, is fully operational. This is where "precision medicine" takes place, developing treatments and potential cures for rare diseases. The quality-controlled facility specializes in the design, development and production of viral vectors, which carry "therapeutic" genes, to effect change. Precise editing of DNA is accomplished through advanced gene-editing tools such as CRISPR–Cas systems, while complementary technologies like optogenetics and engineered proteins or antibodies, help researchers control, visualize and modulate biological processes with exceptional precision. The Viral Vector and Gene Editing Core is slated to move to the FSU Health Academic Health Center on the Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare campus when it is completed late in 2026.
- **IPRD's Precision Pediatric Clinic** is taking shape at an existing facility on Phillips Road. A team of physicians, clinical geneticists, genetic counselors and additional health-care professionals will occupy the building as early as February 2026. The clinic will take a "genome-first" approach, offering specialized diagnostic care for children with undiagnosed or complex conditions while also providing comprehensive general pediatric care for all children and families. It will also serve as a hub for patient recruitment into research studies
- Still to be determined is the base location for the **Master's in Genetic Counseling Program**, which has been approved by the Florida Board of Governors, and tentatively scheduled to roll out with its first class in the fall 2027. Bhide indicated that IPRD is closing in on the selection of a program director, who will chart the course for securing its accreditation.

The training and preparation of genetic counselors, who will provide guidance to individuals and families navigating the complexities of genetic information in the rare disease space, is critical to IPRD's mission. The program, just the second to be offered in-state, will also help fill

the growing need for skilled and compassionate experts in the wake of advances in genetics and genomics.

- **The Rare Disease Research Program** will not require an independent facility. Since 2023, the IPRD Research Advisory Council has solicited investigators, university-wide, to submit research grant applications for projects focused on discovering and developing technologies for the diagnosis and treatment of a broad spectrum of rare diseases.

To date, the council has awarded grants for approximately 20 projects through four rounds of funding cycles (twice annually). While the majority of those grants have gone to College of Medicine researchers, they have also been awarded to investigators in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, and the Department of Health, Nutrition and Food Sciences. All research has been conducted in existing laboratory space.

The Momentum Continues

The mere thought of providing meaningful assistance and hope to children and families in need – through research, clinical expertise, counseling and education – has a huge appeal.

Cynthia Vied, a lifelong research scientist who was charged with setting up and is now leading IPRD's Diagnostic Lab, was moved by the story of Adam Anderson's son, Andrew.

"Hearing his story and knowing what happened to his family, it made all of us that became part of the IPRD want to do more and help other families that go through what they call the diagnostic odyssey," said Vied, adding that she has been energized to learn and grow alongside IPRD's development. "This was the first time I'd been involved with anything that had direct human impact, and obviously I had not done anything clinically related.

"Hearing about rare disease and pediatrics really gets people motivated, us included, and also administra-



From the top, Boris Kantor, Ph.D., joined the College of Medicine from Duke University and leads IPRD's Viral Vector and Gene Editing Core. Saanchi Shah, Ph.D., arrived at IPRD from UCLA and is its first genetic counselor. IPRD Executive Director Pradeep Bhide, Ph.D., said "building the workforce is a top priority."

tive people. That's been a real eye-opener – how other people are also motivated to help us get things done as well. And of course, Dr. Alma Littles has been one of the biggest champions from the very beginning. ... We owe her a lot, as well," Vied said. I mean, it takes a village, and we're a really small village."

That village continues to grow. While all parties are grateful for the significant support from the Legislature and university administration, Bhide continues to look for new revenue streams and ways to maximize relationships. With Anderson's help, he's connected with Quest Diagnostics, which is exploring the possibility of outsourcing its genome sequencing to the Diagnostic Lab. Along with Ledbetter, Anderson has facilitated extended conversations with other corporate entities about assisting the Sunshine Genetics Pilot Project, specifically with sequencing the genome of 100,000 Florida newborns.

Ledbetter led the first Sunshine Genetics Steering Committee meeting at the University of South Florida in Tampa, which brought together experts from throughout Florida, including clinicians, researchers, hospital personnel, corporations and universities.

Vied called it "humbling" to be in the presence of so many committed to the cause.

"It was like, 'What can we do? How do we help?'" she said. "It was extraordinary."

Then, again, so is the work already underway, as well as the vision for the future.

When asked about the magnitude and potential impact IPRD can have, Ledbetter said:

"It will certainly be the No. 1 resource in the state of Florida for information on rare disease research, health care providers with expertise, patient advocacy groups, educational programs, conferences, etc. With the new gene therapy and gene editing core and research programs being established, it will also be a center of new treatments and cures for rare diseases that currently have no treatments.

"Beyond Florida, it will be a model for other institutions and states to emulate and try to replicate."

When **private support** is coupled with **the common good**, great things happen

The Florida State University College of Medicine thanks and recognizes donors for their friendship and support throughout the year. The following honor roll represents cumulative giving during Fiscal Year 2025, which ran July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

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Photo: Your generosity can be used to support a variety of projects and programs at the College of Medicine — including student scholarships! Pictured are recipients of scholarships generously underwritten by the Capital Medical Society. The recipients include in front, from left: Brittani Kongala,

Jason Bowden, Destyni Weiss and Mikalin Huckeba; in back, Kathleen Wingate (accepting for daughter, Kaleigh), Cattie Li, Dhenu Patel, Taeja Garrick Cannella, Tyler Odum and Emma Hughes. To date, the Capital Medical Society Foundation has awarded more than \$850,000 in scholarship to FSU College of Medicine students.

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College of Medicine **SSTRIDE** Program opens doors for promising students, thanks to support from Naples Children Foundation

By Patrick Crowley

FSU College of Medicine

Walking the main streets of Immokalee, Florida, it's plain to see this is a hard-working community, built on agriculture and the rich traditions of its seasonal farm workers. Open-windowed, repurposed school buses rumble down the dusty road, filled with workers after a long, hot day harvesting food destined for our refrigerators, pantries and restaurants.

Located in Collier County about 40 miles northwest of the Everglades and 45 miles northeast of Naples, Immokalee is often called "Florida's farm." No beaches here. Just acres and acres of prime cropland and the hardworking people who work it.

Practically smack-dab in the middle of town are Immokalee's middle and high schools — just a couple blocks from Main Street. The student demographics: 80% Hispanic, 17% Black and slightly more than 1% white with the remaining 2% a mix of Native American and Asian. Both schools are doing all the right things, as they each earned a B grade from the Florida Department of Education in 2025.

It's within the walls of those schools that, thanks to longstanding philanthropic support of the Naples Children Foundation, the SSTRIDE Program of Florida State University's College of Medicine works.

Photo: Immokalee SSTRIDE students take part in chemistry class. Pictured are, from left, Cynthia Encarnacion Vera, Mia Valdez, Mileyda Lopez-Figueroa and Marisol Jasso, all seniors who will graduate in 2026.

Its goal? To spark an interest in medical careers among its most promising, high-achieving students.

SSTRIDE – Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence – is one of several pathway programs of the College of Medicine. It finds the best and brightest in select middle and high schools in Florida and provides an intensive science curriculum (chemistry, biology, etc.) taught by teachers in the local classrooms beginning in eighth grade all the way through high school. In Immokalee, each class has an average of 20 students.

Yaneli Morales Velasquez, a senior SSTRIDE student at Immokalee High School, is one of those promising students. Bright and high achieving, her interest in medicine began after her own health scare when she was only in seventh grade. Velasquez had a serious heart condition which required her to be life-flighted from Naples to Miami.

“This was very unexpected,” Velasquez said in an interview with NCF. “This is when my passion started for medicine. One of the nurses had told my mom, ‘Oh, you have one of the brightest daughters. I see her working here one day.’ And that kind of brightened my eyes, and I really wanted to be like them.”

Immediately after being released and sent home, Velasquez knew the deadline was approaching to apply for SSTRIDE.

“I was a little lost for a couple weeks, but I knew my pathway, and so that’s when I applied ... because I knew SSTRIDE was going to lead me down my path,” she said.

It’s this kind of outcome that motivates the team at NCF and is a reason for its long-standing partnership and support of the College of Medicine. NCF made its first gift to the college in 2007 and, since then, the partnership has grown.

“We are so very happy with the impact this program has made and being able to track those outcomes,” said Sarah Kelly, NCF’s senior vice president, Grants

and Community Impact. “We are all about investments and looking at the return on investment, and SSTRIDE definitely shows that high return.”

The SSTRIDE program is diligent with tracking success, constantly measuring what works and what does not, which contributes to the ongoing success of the program. That’s especially true in Immokalee.

“The data is the data,” Kelly said. “I mean, that’s what we must use to benchmark, right? A lot of times, when you look at success stories, you look at the broad view, but you also have to look at individual stories about the human impact the programs have.”



Kristen Dimas (M.D., '16), a family medicine physician at Lee Health in Fort Myers and a core faculty member in the FSU Family Medicine Residency Program there, grew up in Immokalee. She became involved in the SSTRIDE program as an FSU undergraduate during the summer between her freshman and sophomore years. At that time, SSTRIDE was just a two-week program in Immokalee and Dimas got one of only two positions available to teach and mentor students on-site.

“I really loved interacting with the students in that way,” Dimas said. “And now, SSTRIDE has grown into such a bigger program that runs all year long, all through the school year. Students really get a lot more support and education and I think it’s so much better for them to be immersed in that experience. They get to see so much more. I’m just really proud with how far it has come.”

Photo: Kristen Dimas (M.D., '16), now a family practice physician at Lee Health, served as one of the very first mentors/instructors of the SSTRIDE program when it began more than 10 years ago in Immokalee. She is now a faculty member in the FSU Family Medicine Residency Program at Lee Health and continues to lend her support to SSTRIDE.

The growth of the program has paralleled its success. Of the 136 Immokalee students who have gone through SSTRIDE, everyone successfully graduated high school and applied for college — with a 100% acceptance rate, according to Jodi Truel, SSTRIDE program director for the Southern Region. Truel is tasked with keeping meticulous statistics for the program. A total of 96% of those Immokalee grads moved on to college, with the remaining 4% choosing the U.S. military as a career path. As of this year, nearly 20% of the graduates have been admitted to FSU, far exceeding the original goal of 10%.

“The statistic I think a lot of times we overlook is that each cohort of about 20 students is bringing in over \$2 million in scholarship offers,” Truel said, which is testament not only to the students’ academic success but also to their commitment to earning a degree. “Let’s be honest, most of these families couldn’t afford to send their students to college. But because we work so hard with them with scholarship planning in their senior year, that’s how they can afford to go.”

Without SSTRIDE, many of these bright students would not have thought about a career in health care, let alone as a doctor. This pathway program has

opened doors not only to them, but also to the underserved communities that many of them will return to, live in and provide access to much-needed care.

“If it wasn’t for NCF, we would not have a SSTRIDE program in Immokalee,” Truel said. “I believe the FSU College of Medicine 100% believes in SSTRIDE. However, it’s hard to fund outreach. We rely on partners such as NCF to help us out — getting the students from middle school and then high school — and then the College of Medicine and FSU take over from there.”

This is an exciting time for the Immokalee SSTRIDE program, as the first students who began the program in eighth grade are now graduating from college, with some applying to medical schools such as FSU.

“I thank NCF for allowing these students to see what’s possible, allowing them to see that they can dream big,” Dimas said. “Knowing and seeing students from SSTRIDE who are achieving those dreams makes it real for the students — they can see someone like me and see students who went through this program make it and they then can think, ‘I can do that.’”

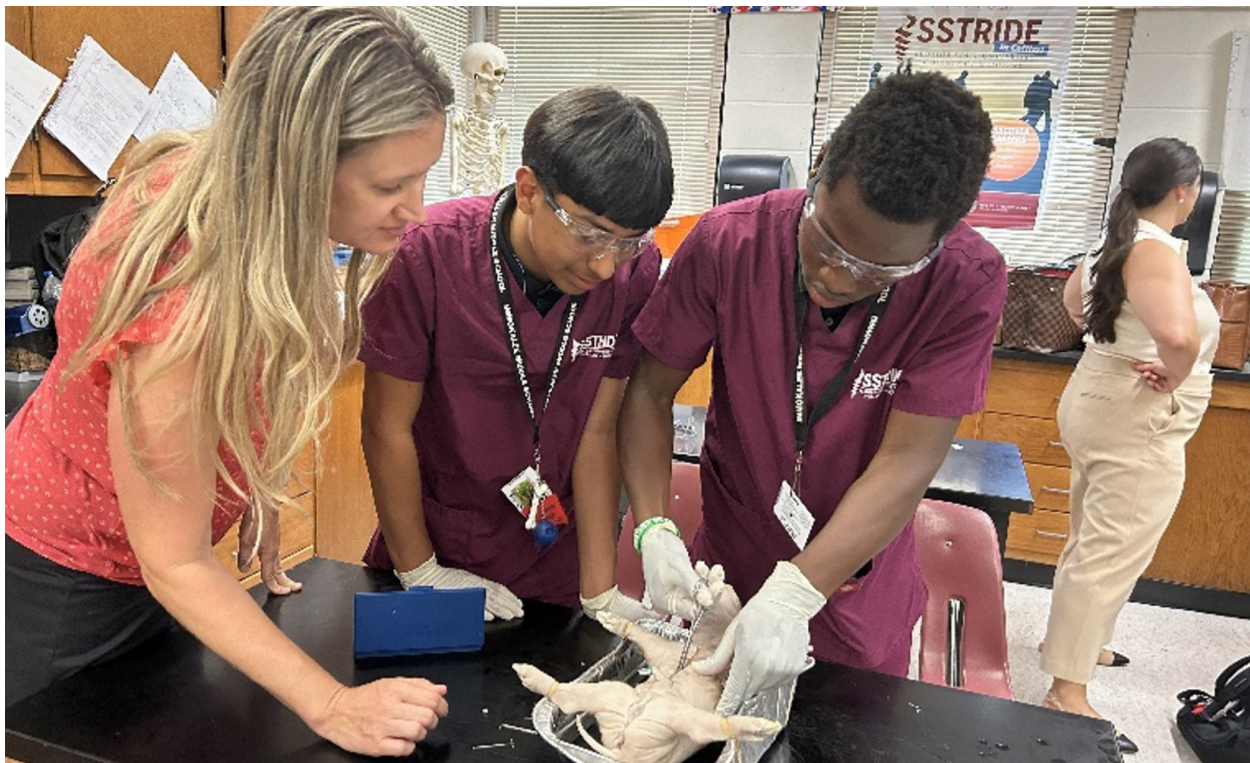


Photo: Tenth-graders get hands-on experience during a pig dissection session. Melanie Villa, past SSTRIDE teacher and coordinator, instructs students Bryan Lopez and Youvensley Methelus.

It's in the numbers: Proof of success

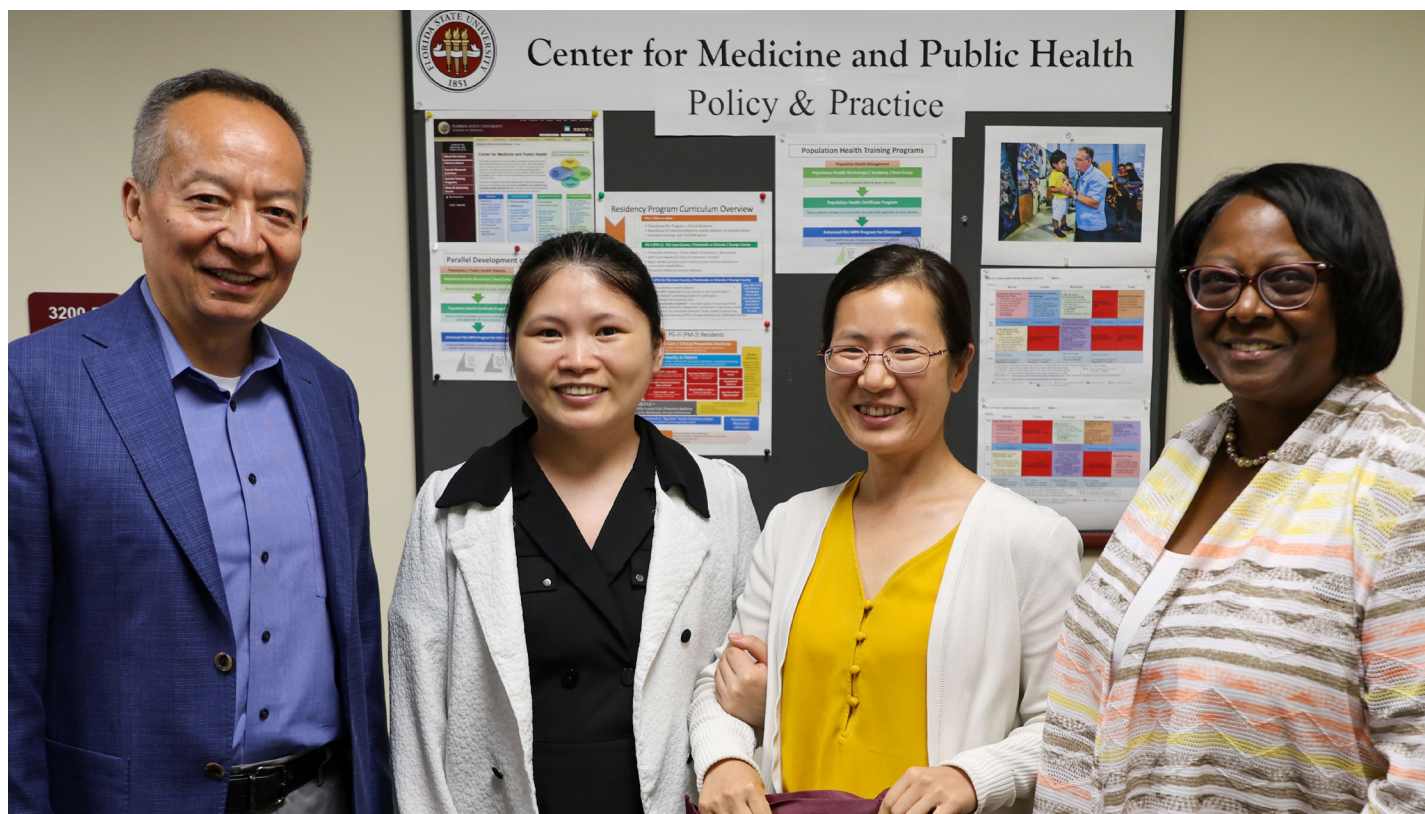
The SSTRIDE program bolsters the FSU College of Medicine's commitment to educating health-care professionals who believe in the importance of being responsive to community needs, especially through service to older adult, rural and under-served populations. When private support such as that from the Naples Children Foundation is coupled with the public good, great things can happen, as evidenced by the success of SSTRIDE. NCF has been supporting the SSTRIDE program for more than 10 years.

FSU College of Medicine SSTRIDE Program

- **221 Immokalee students served**
- **136 graduates** to date
- **100% college acceptance** rate
- **96% post-secondary matriculation rate**, plus **4% choosing U.S. Military**
- **80% of graduates** chose STEM or pre-med majors
- **Top 5 seniors** from Immokalee's class of 2025 were SSTRIDE students



Photo top: Hands-on experiential learning is an important part of the SSTRIDE program. Here, Immokalee seniors Saidee Rincon and Mileyda Lopez-Figueroa work with a SSTRIDE mentor at the liquid testing table.



Yang Hou's star continues to rise as a welcoming researcher and educator

By Audrey Post

FSU College of Medicine

As Florida State University continues to rise in stature as a research university with an R1 classification, the College of Medicine plays a key role in that growth.

R1, the highest level in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, indicates very high research activity as well as a high number of doctoral graduates, and the college's growing faculty excels at both researching and mentoring.

For a shining example of the caliber of faculty the College of Medicine is attracting, look no farther than Yang Hou, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine.

Photo: Xian Jin Xie, Ph.D., senior associate dean for research and graduate programs (far left), and Alma B. Littles, M.D., dean of the FSU College of Medicine (far right) congratulate Assistant Professor Yang Hou, Ph.D., (second from right) with a tote bag of

Hou's multiple awards – not only here but also at the University of Kentucky, where she spent three years before coming to FSU, and from professional organizations including the American Psychological Association – are a testament to her passion for research, teaching and mentoring. In 2022, the year she joined our faculty, Hou was named a Rising Star by the Association for Psychological Science.

In fiscal year 2025 alone, Hou earned College of Medicine's Outstanding Junior Faculty Researcher honors and a Florida State University Inclusive Teaching and Mentoring Award, one of two people selected for fostering inclusive learning environments and providing

college "bling" after she was awarded a Department of Defense grant of almost \$900,000 for her research. Ever welcoming and inclusive, Hou insisted Liyan Yu, Ph.D. (second from left), a post-doctoral researcher in Hou's lab, join them for the photo.

exemplary mentorship both inside and outside the classroom.

For Hou, a former school psychologist who went on to earn a doctorate in Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, she's simply "paying it forward."

"Supportive mentors who embraced my cultural background and recognized my potential were critical to my success. I know how transformative good mentorship can be," she said. "Through structured, inclusive and evidence-based mentoring, I help students build research proficiency, leadership skills and commitment to addressing health disparities.

"Supporting their growth is one of the most rewarding parts of my work."

Hou researches neurofibromatosis type 1, a genetic rare disease affecting about one in 3,000 people worldwide that is usually diagnosed in childhood. She first learned about the disease while a postdoctoral fellow at the National Cancer Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health, and it deepened her interest in understanding how unpredictable diseases affect individuals and their families.

NF1 causes tumors to grow on nerves throughout the body, including the brain and spinal cord, and is characterized by changes in skin pigmentation. Complications can be life-limiting as well as shortening the life span by eight to 15 years, and there is no cure. Treatment consists primarily of managing the symptoms, which can cause trouble with learning, cognition, and behavior, heart and blood vessel conditions, vision loss and pain.

In her letter nominating Hou for the college's Junior Faculty Researcher award, Professor Heather Flynn, Ph.D., her department chair wrote, "Dr. Hou's research is trailblazing in its application of advanced quantitative methods to explore the neurobehavioral impact of NF1 throughout the various life stages."



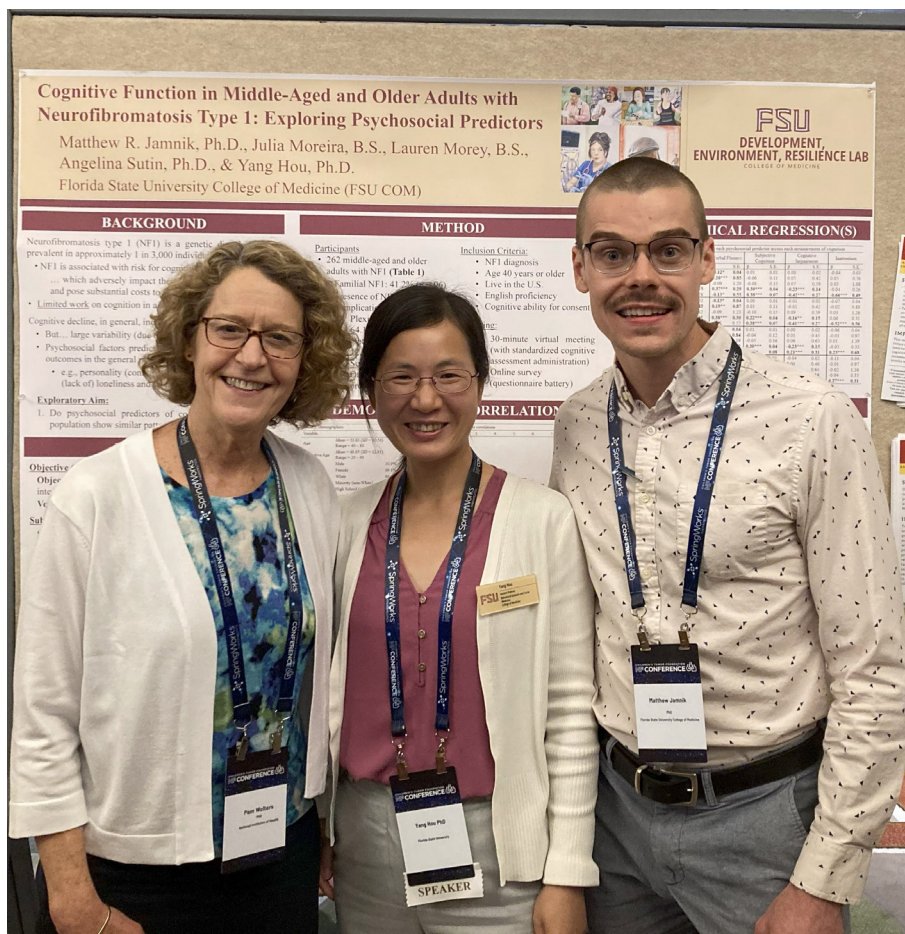
One of Hou's projects, funded by the Department of Defense (DoD), "is especially groundbreaking," Flynn said, "as it establishes the first comprehensive neuropsychological dataset for children and adolescents with NF1. Collaborating with 12 top researchers from around the world, Dr. Hou has tackled the common problem of sample sizes in rare disease research."

The dataset the team created enables detailed analyses of neurobehavioral changes with age, identification of distinct subgroups and their observable traits, and insights into how cognitive, academic, socioemotional and behavioral functions are interrelated in NF1.

Hou's SMART-NF1 project, funded by an FSU Council on Research and Creativity Seed Grant and the Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases, uses smartphone and wearable technology to capture real-time cognitive and emotional functioning and daily activities in adolescents with NF1.

Hou also directs two major studies on cognitive aging in adults with NF1, funded by the Children's Tumor Foundation and the DoD, creating the first comprehensive datasets to identify both risk and

Photo: FSU College of Medicine Dean Alma Littles, M.D., poses for a celebratory photo with Assistant Professor Yang Hou, Ph.D., after Hou was named College of Medicine Outstanding Junior Researcher for academic year 2023-2024.



protective factors for late-life cognitive function. In parallel, she collaborates as a statistician on clinical trials testing interventions to improve mental and physical health.

“The broader impact of Dr. Hou’s work is substantial,” Terra Bradley, Ph.D., assistant dean for research administration and senior research associate, wrote in another of the three nominations for Hou as outstanding junior researcher. “Her findings are providing a roadmap for clinicians and families to better manage patient care, as she is identifying critical developmental periods when neurobehavioral challenges are likely to surface.

“This will enable timely implementation of support strategies that can positively impact quality of life.”

In addition to building a portfolio of interdisciplinary funded research from federal, private and internal FSU sources, Hou also published 23 articles,

seven as first or co-first author and another four as the senior author, in her short time here. In total, she has published more than 50 peer-reviewed papers in top-tier journals such as *American Psychologist*, *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *Pediatrics*, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, *Neuropsychology Review*, *Child Development*, and *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*. She also serves on the editorial boards of a number of psychology journals. It’s not surprising that she makes sure her mentees – undergraduate students, graduate students, medical students and post-docs – have ample opportunities to gain publication and presentation experience and build expertise.

Professor Angelina Sutin, Ph.D., a BSSM research collaborator and a prolific researcher and publisher herself, describes Hou as “a fantastic colleague” and a “great asset.”

Photo: Assistant Professor Yang Hou, center, poses with her post-doctoral fellowship mentor at the National Institutes of Health’s National Cancer Institute, Pamela Wolters, Ph.D., and a post-doctoral scholar in her FSU lab, Matthew Jamnik, Ph.D., at the 2025 NF1 Conference in Washington, D.C. Wolters introduced Hou to clinical research and the field of neurofibromatosis Type 1, and she continues to collaborate with her on research. (Photo courtesy of Yang Hou.)



“As a scientist, she brings tremendous expertise to the department and the college,” Sutin said. “She is generous with her time and expertise to her trainees, as well as other faculty. It has been a pleasure to watch her succeed! I look forward to see what she accomplishes next.

For her part, Hou describes Sutin as ‘an invaluable mentor,’” inspiring her work in aging and providing generous guidance on grant writing and career development.

Colleagues describe Hou as having a quiet dignity, of being ambitious but not in an overbearing way, and of being kind and supportive, always there and ready to help. Some even wonder when she sleeps.

So what fuels this dynamo?

“I grew up in a small, impoverished village in Sichuan, China, where only three of more than 20 children in my age cohort went on to college. I was the first in my extended family to pursue higher education and the only one to complete graduate training,” Hou said. “Witnessing the diverse and often difficult paths of peers – including early parenthood, incarceration, and even tragic loss – sparked a lifelong curiosity about what shapes human development and why people’s life trajectories diverge.

“That question led me to psychology, with a goal of helping individuals overcome challenges and achieve better outcomes.”

She wrestled for years whether to stay a practitioner or become a researcher, ultimately choosing the latter.

“My doctoral work focused on how environmental and social factors — such as discrimination, immigration, and socioeconomic adversity — affect children and families, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.”

Hou founded the Development, Environment and Resilience (DEaR) Lab at the College of Medicine, which bridges developmental, clinical and quantitative psychology.

“My lab’s mission is to advance equitable, evidence-based approaches to mental health and well-being, particularly for underrepresented groups such as individuals with genetic disorders,” Hou said.

“Ultimately, I hope my legacy will be twofold: advancing science that improves the lives of individuals among underserved groups, and cultivating the next generation of interdisciplinary researchers committed to equity, resilience and mental health.”



DM at FSU's 2025 gift brings total to more than \$10 million for pediatric outreach services

By Audrey Post

FSU College of Medicine

In 2025, Dance Marathon at Florida State University celebrated its 30th year of fundraising for pediatric health care, raising \$1.3 million to support Children's Miracle Network programs in the Gainesville area and pediatric outreach programs of the FSU College of Medicine.

Dubbed "DM at FSU," the yearlong fundraising effort is a true "town and gown" partnership, with "mini marathons" held at middle and high schools in Leon and Wakulla counties contributing \$258,985 to the effort.

Dance Marathon has been around longer than the FSU College of Medicine, which in 2025 celebrated the 25th anniversary of its creation. It also celebrated the 20th anniversary of its inaugural graduation.

That first class was in its second year of studies in Tallahassee – preparing to fan out to regional campuses in Orlando, Pensacola or Tallahassee come summer – when DM at FSU and CMN decided to add the College of Medicine as a beneficiary, evenly splitting the proceeds after expenses.

Photo: Thousands of students take part in Dance Marathon's yearlong fundraising effort, culminating in a whirlwind weekend of non-stop dancing – the largest student-run fundraising effort on campus. Dance Marathon at FSU stands as one of the five founding Miracle Network Dance Marathons in the country and consistently ranks among the top five Miracle Network Dance Marathon programs nationwide.



“I remember – vividly – dancing with members of our first two classes at Tully Gym in 2003, along with our faculty and our then-dean, Ocie Harris,” Dean Alma Littles, M.D., shared at the 2025 closing ceremony in March. “The moves were a little bit simpler than the ones I just witnessed ... but we all had a blast!

Of the \$1.3 million raised this year, \$617,177.06 was given to the College of Medicine, bringing the total over the years to more than \$10.3 million. It was another achievement in a year of multiple milestones.

Among the community partnerships in pediatric health care funded by DM at FSU are FSU PrimaryHealth™, a clinic in southwest Tallahassee that was labeled both a food and health care desert before its opening six years ago; Big Bend Hospice’s free grief counseling for children; FSU Institute for Infant and Child Medical Music Therapy, which works in the neo-natal intensive care unit at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare; FSU Early Head Start and the Gadsden School-Based Rural Health Clinics, a collaboration among the College of Medicine, Gadsden County Department of Health and Gadsden County Schools.

Juliana Olodude, MHA, lead specialist in the Outreach and Enrollment Department at the Bond Community Health Center, said Dance Marathon support enabled Bond to expand its mobile health services and take its dental programs on the road.

“When you meet people where they are, you often have to show them that the care is real and accessible,” she said. “Having a mobile unit that is equipped like a doctor’s or dentist’s office reinforces that this is serious, quality care. It helps people feel worthy of receiving the health care they may not have had access to before.”



Photo: The DM at FSU Executive Committee joins FSU and College of Medicine administrators to celebrate more than \$10 million in donations since 2003 from the Children’s Miracle Network to support pediatric outreach services in the Tallahassee area.

Five from College of Medicine honored at university faculty awards ceremony

The 2025 Florida State University Faculty Awards Ceremony, originally scheduled for April 22, was held Oct. 7 at the Augustus B. Turnbull Conference Center, and five from the College of Medicine were among the honorees.



Associate Professor of Biomedical Sciences **Robert Tomko Jr., Ph.D.**, earned two awards, including the university's most prestigious for teaching, the Distinguished Teacher Award. He also won the Developing Scholar Award.



Professor **Antonio Terracciano, Ph.D.**, of the Department of Geriatrics, won the Distinguished Research Professor Award.



Associate Professor **Debra Cole, Ed.D., PA-C**, director of Didactic Education in the School of Physician Assistant Practice, and Assistant Professor of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine and **Yang Hou, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine, were each honored with an Inclusive Teaching & Mentoring Award. (Read more about Hou on page 50.)



Ann DelRossi, program manager of the Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences bachelor's degree program, won the Outstanding Undergraduate Advising Award.

Welcome to our new faculty members

In fiscal year 2025, the College of Medicine welcomed the following 24 new faculty members into its ranks:



Shawn Akhavan, M.D.
(M.D. Class of 2014)
Assistant Professor
Clinical Sciences/Internal Medicine



Regan Bailey, Ph.D.
Professor
Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine
Co-Founding Director, Institute for
Connecting Nutrition and Health (ICON-
Health)



Dustin Begosh-Mayne, M.D.
Assistant Professor
Program Director, Transitional Year
Residency
Lee Health Cape Coral



William Bobo, M.D., MPH
Professor
Behavioral Science and Social Medicine
Strategic Director, Behavioral Health
Services for FMPP Inc.



Jason Chapman, Ph.D.
Research Faculty III
Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine



Alexandra Cowan-Pyle, Ph.D.
Research Faculty III
Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine
ICON-Health



Ransome Eke, M.D., Ph.D., MBA
Associate Professor
Family Medicine and Rural Health



Donald English, Ph.D., LP
Assistant Professor
Division of Student Affairs and Admis-
sions



Ashley Falk, M.D.
Associate Professor
Program Director, Transitional Year
Residency,
BayCare Winter Haven Hospital



Xiaofei Jia, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Biomedical Sciences



Carrie Johnson, M.D.
Associate Professor
Program Director, OB/GYN Residency
Lee Health Cape Coral



Boris Kantor, Ph.D.
Professor
Biomedical Sciences
Director of the Viral Vector Core Facility at
the Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases



Selin Karakose, Ph.D.
Research Faculty 1
Geriatrics



David Ledbetter, Ph.D.
Professor
Clinical Sciences
Associate Director for Precision Medi-
cine at the Institute for Pediatric Rare
Diseases



Welcome to our **new faculty members**



Laura Reid Marks, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine



Kenneth O'Dell, M.D.
(M.D. Class of 2016)
Teaching Faculty I
Family Medicine and Rural Health
Assistant Course Director for Year 1 & 2
Clinical Skills



Chandler Pendleton, M.S.
Assistant in Research
Division of Research and Graduate
Programs



George Pennington, M.D.
Associate Professor
Program Director, General Surgery Residency
Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare



Nora Pepper, M.D.
(M.D. Class of 2010)
Assistant Professor
Clinical Sciences/Pediatrics



Geneva Scott-King, APRN, DNP
Assistant Professor
Family Medicine and Rural Health
Gadsden County School-Based Health
Clinics



Bonnie Spring, Ph.D.
Krafft Professor
Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine
Director, Florida Blue Center for Rural
Health Research and Policy



Patrick Stover, Ph.D.
Professor
Biomedical Sciences
Co-Founding Director, Institute for
Connecting Nutrition and Health (ICON-
Health)



Sarah Temple, M.D.
Associate Professor
Program Director, Emergency Medicine
Residency Sarasota Memorial Hospital



Xian Jin Xie, Ph.D.
Professor
Biomedical Sciences
Senior Associate Dean for Research and
Graduate Programs



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FSU Health
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Rolando Gomez III
Medical Student

FSU
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

25
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY
2000-2025

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