

**FSU**  
**COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

# A Report to Our Community

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2024



*med.fsu.edu*





**FSU College of Medicine's  
Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report**  
*July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024*

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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## 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. 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 tens of thousands.



# Pursuing excellence

## for our students, patients and alumni

As I reflect on my first six months as dean of this great College of Medicine, I am proud to share many of our accomplishments in the past year and celebrate some of the achievements of our students and graduates.

FSU Health continues to move forward with the ongoing construction of the academic health center in Tallahassee and the opening of the ambulatory care facility in Panama City Beach, both collaborative projects with FSU and Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. Our Graduate Medical Education (GME) sponsorships continue to grow, providing more opportunities for students to complete residency and fellowship training in Florida.

Our alumni — more than 2,200 strong — along with the strength of our academic and research programs illustrate the breadth and depth of our success.

What is success? How do you measure it and what does it look like? These questions, and the answers to them, are always on our minds, but I want to highlight a few of them. We consistently benchmark our progress against key indicators, so we know in which areas we are doing well and where we need to devote extra effort. We owe this constant pursuit of excellence to our students, their future patients and to the profession as a whole.

Many performance measures are quantifiable. For example:

- United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 pass rate for the M.D. Class of 2025 was 95%, while the national average was 92%.
- USMLE Step 2 pass rate for that class was 99%, while the national average was 98%.
- First-time takers of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination for the Class of 2023 had a pass rate of 95%, with the national average being 92%.
- Our School of Physician Assistant Practice recently received Accreditation-Continued status by the Accreditation Review Commission for the Physician Assistant Inc. through September 2032.
- Our Ph.D. program in Biomedical Sciences continues to grow and now has 70 alumni, with an additional 17 graduates through our multi-college Neuroscience doctoral program.

Other things are qualitative in nature but, if you look closely, they are still tied to quantitative measures. For example, we know our college is “the place to be” and is sought after by students who wish to pursue an education that prepares them for a rewarding career in health care. We know this because over the years, we’ve seen a steady increase in applications. For the PA class of 2026, we had 1,954 applicants for 60 seats, and for the M.D. class of 2028, there were 7,082 applicants for 120 seats. Clearly, it is very competitive, but we have been successful in admitting students committed to the program and the profession, who go on to practice medicine, teach and conduct cutting-edge research.

I am proud of our College of Medicine — and I hope you are, too, as we each play a role in its ongoing success. Rest assured, we will continue our pursuit of excellence to ensure our students and graduates are well-prepared to practice in their chosen fields in the years ahead.

Warm regards,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alma B. Littles, M.D." in a cursive, flowing script.

**Alma B. Littles, M.D.**  
Dean, FSU College of Medicine









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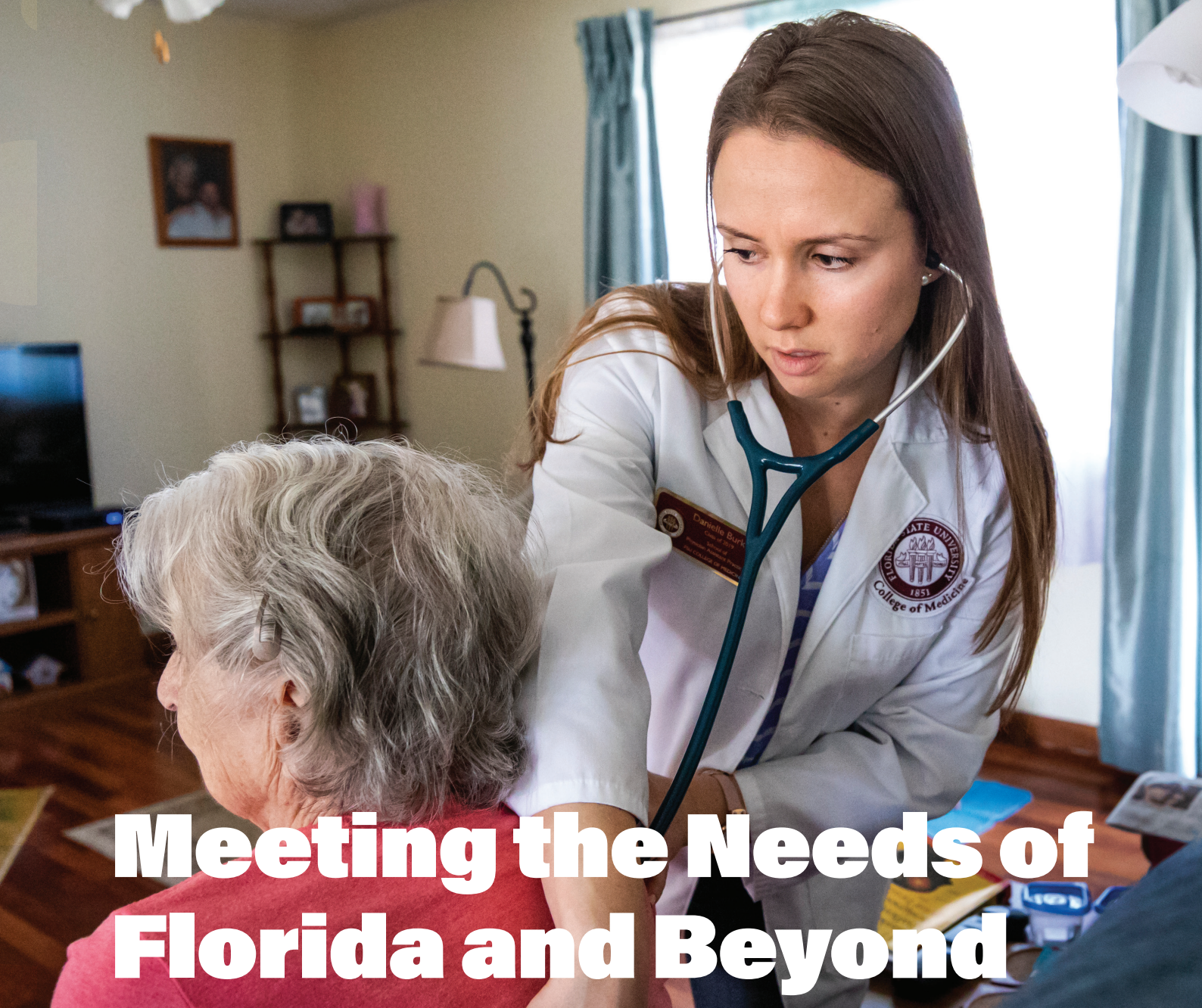
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# Meeting the Needs of Florida and Beyond

## *What makes us stand apart from other medical schools?*

Is it that we hold true to our mission of educating health care professionals who value the importance of providing care to the underserved? (We do.) Or is it that a good portion of our alumni stay in the state to meet the needs of Floridians? (They do.) Both are true — and couple those with the fact we are community based, meaning our 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 on the health of individuals and entire communities.

Instead of learning in an academic medical center, seeing only the sickest patients and learning largely from residents, our students learn one-on-one from community health care providers in their offices, clinics and other outpatient settings, as well as in area hospitals. Those communities are all over the state, near our six regional campuses and our clinical training sites.

We're mission driven. A large part of our mission 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. We immerse them in a culture that values mutual respect, teamwork and open communication — and prepare them to become lifelong learners.

*Continued on next page >>*



We're focused on primary care. Through 2024, more than half of our M.D. alumni matched in one of these primary-care specialties: internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics or obstetrics-gynecology. Most of our alumni now practicing in Florida are in primary care, and a good percentage of those are in underserved settings, where recruiting new physicians can be a challenge.

## Our Academic Degrees

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

## Our Students

*The following data covers Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024).*

### **Medical Students: 491**

- 16 from rural background
- 82 first-generation college students
- 138 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 298 female
- 193 male
- 473 Florida residents

### **PA students: 178**

- 10 from underserved background
- 44 first-generation college students
- 39 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 144 female
- 34 male

### **Bridge students: 12**

- 2 from underserved background
- 7 first-generation college students
- 9 socioeconomic disadvantaged
- 8 female
- 4 male

### **Ph.D. students: 51**

- 35 U.S. citizens  
(28 from the Southeast, including 17 from Florida)
- 16 international students  
(representing 11 foreign countries)
- 31 female
- 20 male

## Faculty

- **Full-time:** 186
- **Part-time:** 2,994 (this includes residency, preceptor and clerkship faculty employed by our partner-providers.)

## Facilities

- On the central campus, the College of Medicine's two buildings, one designated for research, total 300,000 gross square feet.
- Adding in the leased or owned buildings at the regional campuses and the Immokalee 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.

## Our Alumni

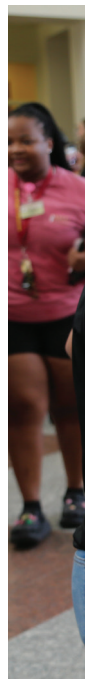
- **M.D. Total:** 1,953. Of those, 1,078 have completed residency and, in many cases, fellowship training and are now practicing physicians. Of those in practice, 53% are in Florida, and 50% of those are practicing primary care.
- **PA Total:** 255. Of those, more than 70% are in Florida and nearly one-third are in primary care specialties.
- **Ph.D. Total:** 70 awarded in Biomedical Sciences. The College of Medicine also participates in the multi college Neuroscience doctoral program, contributing an additional 17 graduates since program inception.
- **Bridge Total:** 176, with 173 accepted to the FSU College of Medicine.

## 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 Campus
- 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

## Academic Centers & Institutes

- Area Health Education Center
- Autism Institute
- Center for Behavioral Health Integration
- Center for Brain Repair
- Center for Child Stress & Health
- Center on Global Health
- Center for Medicine and Public Health Policy & Practice
- Florida Blue Center for Rural Health Research and Policy
- Center for Translational Behavioral Science
- Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases

## Residencies

The College of Medicine sponsors the following residency programs:

- Cape Coral - Internal Medicine
- Fort Myers - Family Medicine
- Sarasota - Emergency Medicine

- Sarasota - Internal Medicine
- Tallahassee - General Surgery
- Tallahassee - Internal Medicine
- Tallahassee - Psychiatry
- Winter Haven - Family Medicine
- Winter Haven - Transitional Year

## Fellowships

- Fort Myers - Global Health
- Pensacola - Forensic Pathology
- Sarasota - Hospice & Palliative Medicine
- Sarasota - Emergency Medical Services
- Tallahassee - Micrographic Surgery & Dermatologic Oncology

## Bridge to Clinical Medicine Program

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

## Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences Program

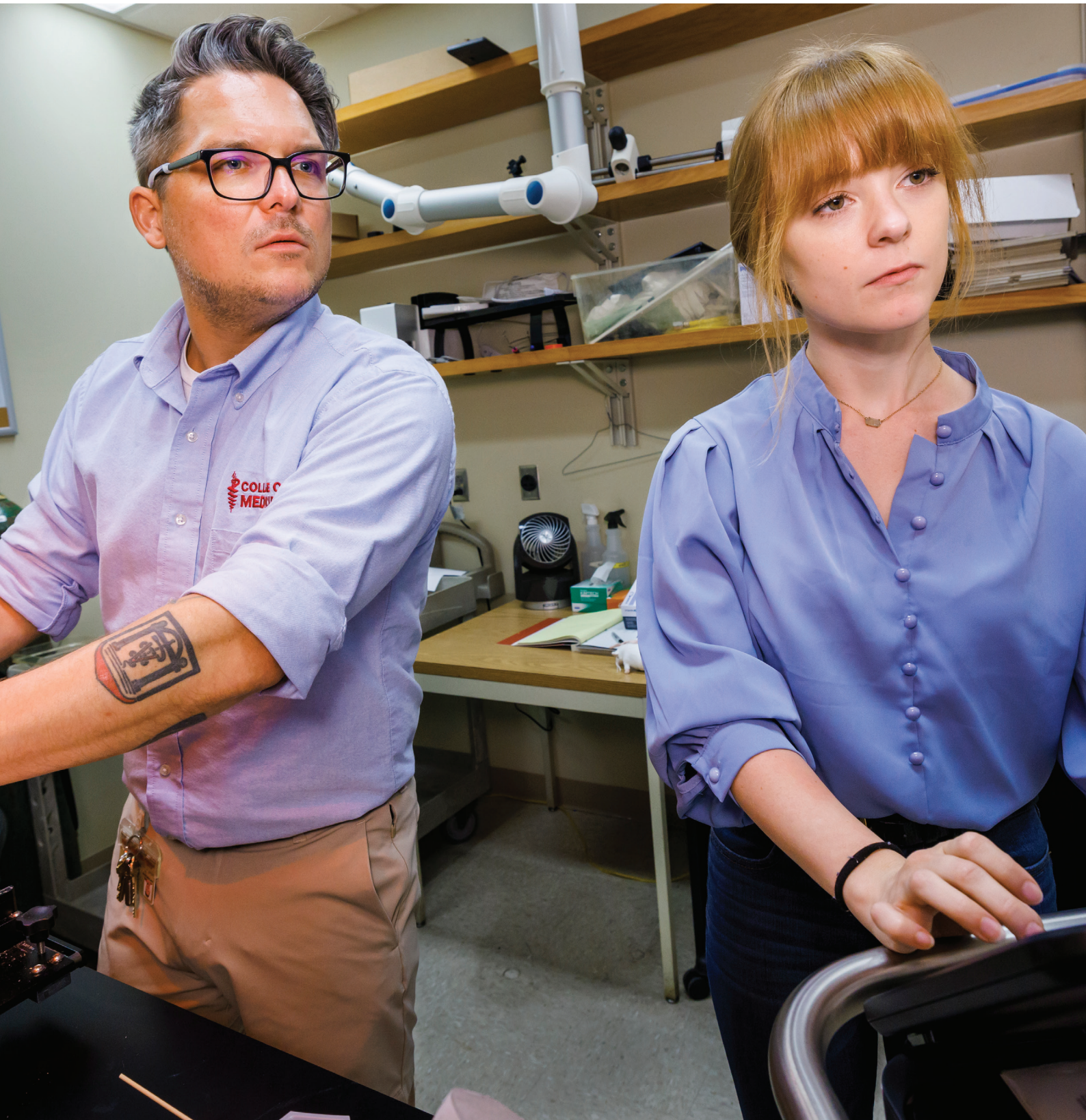
This program, established in 2016 with the cooperation of six other FSU colleges, is designed for undergraduates interested in health-related careers. A rigorous science curriculum serves as its foundation, and students may select one of three interdisciplinary majors that fits their developing career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

## School of Physician Assistant Practice

The PA program graduated its fifth class in December 2023, resulting in 255 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. Based on latest information self-reported by 123 alumni, more than 70% practice in the state of Florida.







*Assistant Professor Stephen Chelko, Ph.D., and doctoral candidate Emily Shiel work in the Chelko Lab in the Department of Biomedical Sciences. Chelko has a patent pending for isolating peptides and using them to prevent myocardial cell death and/or sudden cardiac death.*

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY APPLICATIONS FILED IN FY 2024			
Provisional Patent 5	Non-Provisional Patent 4	International Patent ^2	Copyright 13
<div>^ Includes Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) applications</div> <div>Source: FSU Office of Commercialization, Division of Research</div>			

# Understanding Patent and Copyright Applications

Source: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

There are three types of patents: utility patents, design patents and plant patents. Utility patents cover the creation of a new or improved product, process or machine. Design patents cover unique visual characteristics of a product (think the curved Coca-Cola® bottle or the Mercedes-Benz® hood ornament). Plant patents are granted to people who invent, discover or asexually reproduce a new variety of plant.

Utility patents may be provisional or non-provisional. Provisional patents serve as placeholders to establish a date the inventor stakes a claim to a product, invention or process. From the date the provisional patent application is filed, the inventor has a year to further establish the claim and add details in support. It gives time to further develop the invention before filing the official patent application, called a non-provisional patent application or utility patent application.

If a non-provisional patent application is successful, a utility patent is issued, granting exclusive rights

to produce, use, sell and import the invention for a specific period of time, usually 20 years. Inventors may also apply for international patent protection through the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

Provisional patent applications are not reviewed the way non-provisional applications are, so the clock is ticking to get the official application in order and filed within the year or the provisional patent expires.

The Patent Cooperation Treaty provides a unified procedure for filing patent applications to protect inventions in other countries, known as international or foreign patents. As of October 2024, there were 158 signees to the treaty; notably, Argentina, Pakistan, Taiwan and Venezuela are not among them.

Copyright is a property right given to authors that allows them to control, protect and use their artistic works that are original, creative and fixed in a tangible medium of expression, such as books and videos.



# Your medical library: A treasure trove

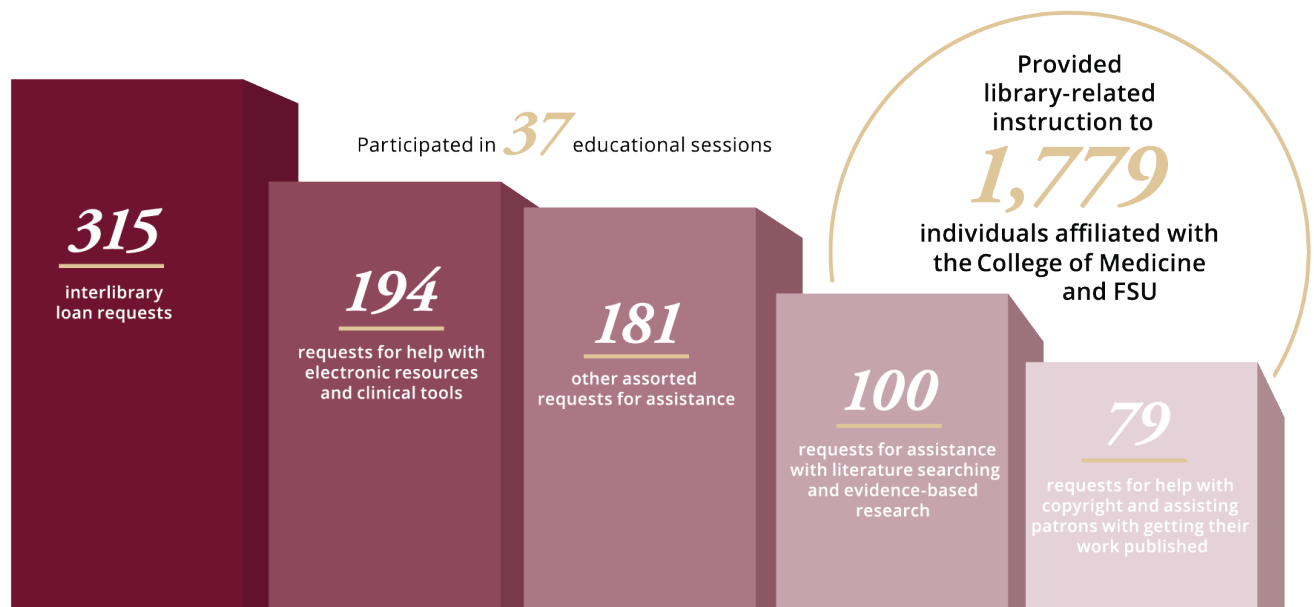
*Source: Martin Wood, MSLIS, AHIP, medical library director*

***The Charlotte Edwards Maguire Medical Library contains a robust collection of online and mobile app-based clinical tools, authoritative medical texts as e-books, electronic research databases and an expansive digital collection of e-journals that fuel discovery throughout medical, health, scientific, social and behavioral research.***





*From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the medical library team fulfilled:*



A total of **869** requests

Library staff serves active students, residents, faculty, staff, clinicians and researchers from throughout Florida State University.

The values that guide the library staff's work include collegiality, trust, recognition, critical thinking and healthy discussion, engagement, empowerment and innovation.

*In the coming year, the library team will:*

- Take on more prominent roles in research and educational initiatives within the FSU College of Medicine and FSU Health.
- Apply its information expertise to conversations about artificial intelligence and its practical uses in the classroom, clinical learning and research efficiency.



# Florida Blue Foundation grant to help transform health care for vulnerable populations

By Audrey Post

*FSU College of Medicine*

The Florida Blue Foundation, the philanthropic affiliate of Florida Blue – the state’s Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan – is providing a five-year, \$500,000 grant to the FSU College of Medicine to support the Community Health Immersions Curriculum.

The Community Health Immersions Curriculum creates opportunities for students to see how social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, housing uncertainty, economic and educational limitations and health care access, can exacerbate chronic health issues in many populations.

“The Florida Blue Foundation’s generosity will allow us to expose our students even earlier in their educational journeys to the social determinants of health,” said Anthony Speights, M.D., senior associate dean for Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences and director of the Bridge to Clinical Medicine program.

The curriculum is presented throughout the College of Medicine’s degree offerings: three undergraduate majors in Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences (clinical professions, community patient care, and health management, policy and information), master’s degree programs in Physician Assistant Practice and Bridge to Clinical Medicine, and the doctorate in medicine, as well as university pre-health organizations and the Honors Medical Scholars.

The curriculum aligns with the College of Medicine’s mission to educate and develop exemplary



*Anthony Speights*

health care providers who practice patient-centered health care, discover and advance knowledge and are responsive to community needs, especially through service to underserved populations, specifically those in Florida.

With parallel tracks to the same goal, Florida Blue Foundation and the College of Medicine have a long-standing partnership. The two have joined forces in the past, particularly with Florida Blue Foundation’s support of the college’s Rural Learning Experience (RuLE), an introduction to rural life and its limited access to health care that has been described as “an eye-opening experience” for many students who weren’t familiar with rural communities.





*Gillis Langston and patient. Housing insecurity is one of the primary social determinants of health, as students observe during clinical rotations.*

Susan Towler, Florida Blue Foundation's executive director, said exposing students to the challenges many people face in daily living will help cultivate a new generation of health care workers who are not only aware of but also prepared to confront those challenges head-on.

"Our partnership with the FSU College of Medicine goes beyond mere financial support; it represents a commitment to a transformative movement aimed at reshaping the health care landscape for our most vulnerable communities," she said. "In doing so, we are ensuring that future health care professionals possess the knowledge, skills and empathy needed to meet the unique needs of their patients and contribute to a more equitable health care system for all."

A portion of the grant will be used as the foundation for an endowment to fund the annual excursion, where incoming M.D., PA, Bridge and select undergraduate students spend a day in a rural Panhandle or Big Bend community.

Nicknamed "the rural trip," the immersive day trip has long been a part of the College of Medicine's curriculum. Cancelled during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic and then held virtually once in-person classes resumed, the full excursion was held in May 2024 for the first time in five years.

Individuals in rural communities often encounter significant barriers to care, including a shortage of health care

providers, the necessity of traveling long distances for medical services and higher rates of uninsurance, which contribute to poorer health outcomes and shorter life expectancies compared to their urban counterparts. Addressing these challenges is central to Florida Blue Foundation's mission to help people and communities achieve better health.

"With this endowment, we are not only providing support for students to pursue their educational goals but also increasing the pipeline of skilled health care workers equipped to serve their communities," Towler said. "This initiative will help bridge the gap in health care access and empower future leaders who are deeply connected to the areas they will serve, ultimately making a lasting impact on the health and well-being of rural Floridians."



*Susan Towler*





***“We know what we’re going to accomplish  
far exceeds where we are now.”***

*– Ben Smith*



# Maturing PA Program Charging Toward a Bigger, Brighter Future

By Bob Thomas

*FSU College of Medicine*

Ben Smith, DMSc, PA-C, DFAAPA, joined the Florida State University College of Medicine faculty in 2016, a year before students in the first School of Physician Assistant Practice class arrived on campus. In roles ranging from principal teaching faculty to director of didactic education and associate program director, he's been instrumental in the program's growth.

Promoted to program director and associate dean in November 2022 after 11 months in an interim role, Smith has quantifiable evidence of the programs' growth from the outset.

- More than 300 graduates have joined the health care workforce, practicing medicine as part of the physician-PA team.
- The first five graduating classes have a 100% passing rate of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE), which is required to enter practice.
- With 82% of its alumni practicing in Florida – according to self-reported information – FSU-produced PAs are helping to shrink the state's gaping void of medical providers. Nearly a quarter practice in primary care.

"Just like a child grows, we have grown from birth to reach a level of maturity that exceeds the number of years we have been established as a program," said Smith. "The experiences that we've had and the opportunities that we have taken have allowed that maturation to occur."

The path has not been without its challenges. The program was placed on Accreditation-Probation in September 2020. Smith, his colleagues and the current and recently graduated students were finally able to breathe a sigh of relief on Oct. 18, 2024.

That's when the FSU PA Program was notified it had been granted Accreditation-Continued status by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), the independent body authorized to accredit 310 qualified PA educational programs across the nation leading to the professional credential, Physician Assistant.

The 49-month saga included a two-day site visit by the ARC-PA June 24-25, 2024, which was followed by a September commission review. The next validation review of the FSU program is scheduled for the fall of 2032.

"While the experience has not been completely as expected, we have arrived at an accomplishment we knew we were going to achieve," said Smith, who is already looking ahead after shepherding the program through the process. "We know what we're going to accomplish far exceeds where we are now."

Elijah Dorneval always had faith, too.

President of the PA Class of 2024, he and his classmates interviewed for seats in fall 2021 and began their intense, 27-month education in August 2022.

*Continued on next page >>*



“As I went through this program – the way that it’s structured and the staff that it has – to me it was inevitably going to yield a positive outcome,” Dorneval said. “What I was seeing, how I was doing – how faculty and staff cared, always made time to speak to me and treated me with a high level of respect – all of these things aligning, God wouldn’t have put me on this track if it wasn’t positive.

“I had high confidence that we were going to be accredited.”

So did his classmate Hannah Cotton. The Quincy native, who earned undergraduate and master’s degrees at a private Christian school in Tennessee, chose to return home despite the probation status.

“Everything about the classes and clinical structure that I was looking for in a school checked out for me,” Cotton said. “The benefits far outweighed the accreditation question.”

That’s not to say there wasn’t a range of emotions that accompanied the October news.

“I felt very proud of our program because I know our faculty and staff worked so hard to get that accreditation status,” Cotton said. “It was so exciting, not so much for me personally, but just for the people that I care about who have poured into me over the last two-and-a-half years.”

Smith’s confidence never wavered:

“It is an exceptional program. It provides tremendous preparation for the next generation of physician assistants. The achievement of



*Program Director and Associate Dean Ben Smith applauds the PA Class of 2024 graduates.*

Continued-Accreditation is an indication of who we are. The support and comments from the students are representative of who we are.”

Not only did the Class of 2024 flourish as the program was under the ARC-PAs microscope, the program also continued to grow in strength.

The currently enrolled classes of 2025 and 2026 drew 1,834 and 1,954 total applicants, respectively, the two largest totals in the program’s history. Their members also rank among the highest in terms of academic achievement, based on average math, science and cumulative grade-point averages and verbal and quantitative GRE averages.

“Over time, the process to get into the FSU PA School has become increasingly competitive,” Smith said. “That’s happened because of the way alumni, faculty and staff are representing the program.



“The word on the street is that we are a quality program. While pleased with our accomplishments, I’m not satisfied with our current place. We will continue to strive daily to grow. What we’re doing is really amazing, and what we’ve done in the short period of time is remarkable. Our eyes are on the future.”

Mirroring the College of Medicine’s community-based education model in its M.D. program, the PA program continues to turn out well-prepared graduates, thanks to clinical immersion in the final 12 months of the program. Students get hands-on opportunities through specialty rotations under the supervision of preceptors, experienced practitioners in their respective fields, in a variety of settings including hospitals, clinics and offices while based at one of six regional campuses throughout Florida.

“It is a privilege to provide educational and training opportunities for future health care providers -- experiences that exceed established standards and help our alumni provide expert care for those thousands of people who will be served on a daily basis,” Smith said. “We have an expectation of our graduates when they hit the ground running on the first day of their careers.”

Continuing to build relationships with preceptors is part of Smith’s aim to “grow the FSU PA brand across the state of Florida.”

“I envision growth to also represent the impact that faculty will have in the health care system, both in the clinical setting and providing scholarly advancement. We have the foundation in place for what we’re going to become.”



From left to right, PA Class of 2024 graduates Jeffrey Lewis, Nicholas Touchstone, Justin Esteve and Elijah Dorneval show off their diplomas.











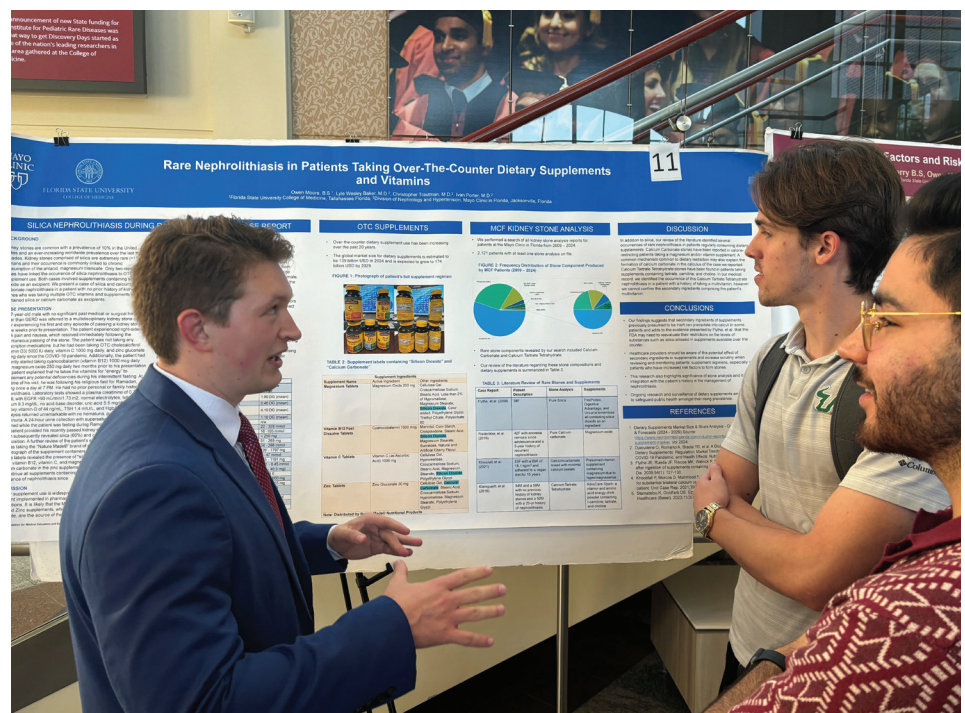
# Beyond research: FSU – Mayo Clinic partnership teaches more than science

By Patrick Crowley  
*FSU College of Medicine*

To say teachers and mentors have the ability to shape young minds and the trajectory of life-long careers is an understatement. The cadre of seven Florida State University College of Medicine students selected to take part in the inaugural FSU – Mayo Clinic Summer Research Fellowship Program learned more than science. They learned the art of balancing a career with the demands of their families and personal lives.

“I really credit my mentor, Dr. Ivan Porter,” said Owen Moore, a second-year FSU College of Medicine student. “He taught me a lot about the lifestyle of medicine and not just how to do research. He taught me about what it’s like to be an academic physician and have a family. He taught me things that aren’t necessarily in textbooks. He taught me how he manages his time, how he sees his kids and still manages to do that while publishing papers and being a great clinician. When I saw his lifestyle and received guidance from him, it really opened me up to what kind of career I can have in the future.”

Porter, a 2008 graduate from the FSU College of Medicine, was one of seven Mayo Clinic physician mentors during the 10-week program, based in Jacksonville. Two other FSU alumni served as mentors – Charles Ritchie (M.D., ’08) and Beau Toskich (M.D., ’07) – along with Mayo physicians Emmanuel Gabriel, M.D., Ph.D., Daniel Trifiletti, M.D., Chrisandra Shufelt M.D. and Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa,



*FSU College of Medicine student Owen Moore, at left, explains his research and findings to first-year medical students Bryan Fisher and Kareem El-Samsam during the annual Summer Research Poster Presentation in the college atrium.*





Mayo Summer Research Fellows pose with Dean Alma Littles, center, and FSU Associate Vice President for Health Innovation and Strategic Alliances Emily Prichard, far right. They are, front row from left, Claudia Silver, Jade Boers, Kamelia Klejc, and Shiva Patel. Back row, from left, Jake Guzzino, Owen Moore and Brittney Jabot.

M.D., who was instrumental in establishing the FSU-Mayo partnership. Quiñones-Hinojosa is the James C. and Sarah K. Kennedy Dean of Research, Mayo Clinic in Florida.

“I felt it was important to launch this program simply because there are moments in life that dictate how one will practice medicine for the rest of their life — and that happened to me when I was a medical student,” Quiñones-Hinojosa said. “I had the opportunity to do research and I realized that I wanted to care for patients physically through my hands and my knowledge through surgery and at the same time I wanted to give them hope through research.”

That hope resonated with student Jake Guzzino, who was mentored by Trifiletti.

“I am still very much open-minded regarding my specialty. But every time I do research, I move more and more away from my undergraduate philosophy of ‘I strictly want to see patients; I do not want to do research,’ to ‘I definitely want to have some component

of research in my practice,’” Guzzino said. “Patient care will definitely be my number one, but seeing the impact research has, it makes me realize that this kind of work can impact many more patients than I can ever see myself.”

“Through this partnership, our students have an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a world-class academic health center,” said College of Medicine Dean Alma Littles, M.D. “To see the impact it has on their view of a career in medicine is amazing — and I think partnerships such as this are just the beginning. Research in all disciplines is, and always has been, a priority of Florida State and it’s gained laser-focus through ASPIRE, the university’s research strategic plan, as well as the creation of FSU Health, of which the college is a major driver. These initiatives will undoubtedly open more doors, both research and clinical, for our students.”

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Not only did the students benefit from this experience, but so did the physicians who mentored them — and some of the outcomes were surprising.

“Something unexpected for me was to simply see how curious our medical students are. It was refreshing,” Quiñones-Hinojosa said. “After you’ve been practicing and running a laboratory for so many years like me, and after having left Hopkins where I had a lot of medical students in my laboratory, I had forgotten that feeling that anybody can have when they are mentored, and you see in their eyes those moments of ‘Ahh! I discovered something — I’m going to give someone hope.’ And it was surprising for me to be reminded of that amazing feeling.”



*Kamelia Klejc*

For Kamelia Klejc, a second-year medical student who grew up in Jacksonville, the research program opened her eyes to a broader view of what it means to be a physician and most likely changed her professional trajectory.

“It showed me that being a physician will allow me to not only see patients, but also have an impact in the research setting,” said Klejc, who was mentored by

Shufelt. “I now realize I want to pursue research in the future. My project at Mayo focused on women’s health and I learned about the limited research there is in some women’s health topics and issues and that there is more to be done in that area. I am grateful for FSU and the partnership with the Mayo Clinic to allow students like us to participate in these experiences. They are invaluable to our training.”

No one can speak better about the impact the College of Medicine has on young minds than Toskich. A proud alumnus of the college, he has been involved in supporting his alma mater for quite some time. Earlier this year, he was instrumental in forging a partnership between Mayo Clinic in Florida and the college, culminating with Mayo donating a liver scanner to FSU PrimaryHealth™ in Tallahassee. Acting on an opportunity to build even stronger relationships, he quickly volunteered to be a mentor.

“Our group values insights from all levels of experience and enjoys sharing opportunities with early-career, inquisitive minds,” Toskich said. “It never ceases to amaze us as to how brilliant, thoughtful and hard-working our research trainees are. Their dedication inspires tremendous optimism for the future of medicine.”

As for Quiñones-Hinojosa, who championed this program from the beginning, he feels this is just a start.

“Let’s continue to build bridges,” he said. “This is an amazing program that has given us an opportunity to build relationships between these two amazing institutions. And I hope that we continue to strengthen those bridges to benefit humankind, to benefit patients, to give patients hope, to discover new cures and advance science.”



**Seven FSU College of Medicine students were selected to take part in the inaugural FSU – Mayo Clinic Summer Research Fellowship Program at Mayo Clinic in Florida, based in Jacksonville. The 10-week program took place in the summer between the students' first and second years at the College of Medicine.**

STUDENT	MENTOR	SUMMER POSTER PRESENTATION
<b>Owen Moore</b>	Ivan Porter, M.D.	Rare Nephrolithiasis in Patients Taking Over-The-Counter Dietary Supplements and Vitamins
<b>Jade Bowers</b>	Emmanuel Gabriel, M.D., Ph.D.	Survival Outcomes and Disparities in Surgery Refusal for Papillary Thyroid Cancer
<b>Brittney Jabot</b>	Charles Ritchie, M.D.	MPH Comparative Analysis of Cadaveric Tissue Rewarming: Precise Temperature Processing vs. Blanket Warming vs. Room Thawing
<b>Shivani Patel</b>	Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa, M.D.	Primary Dural Marginal Zone B-Cell Lymphoma (with Richard Byrne, M.D., of the Mayo Clinic in Florida)
<b>Jake Guzzino</b>	Daniel Trifiletti, M.D.	Rapid Early Progression of Glioblastoma: Evaluation of a Novel Prognostic Radiologic Biomarker
<b>Claudia Silver</b>	Beau Toskich, M.D.	Multicompartmental Dosimetry in Radiation Segmentectomy for Patients with Hepatocellular Carcinoma
<b>Kamelia Klejc</b>	Chrisandra Shufelt, M.D.	Cardiovascular Profiles in Women with Functional Hypothalamic Amenorrhea



*Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, the James C. and Sarah K. Kennedy Dean of Research at Mayo Clinic in Florida, spoke with students and faculty during a symposium at the College of Medicine as part of FSU Discovery Days. (Photo: FSU Photography Services)*







# Xian Jin Xie leads research, graduate programs

By Audrey Post

*FSU College of Medicine*

Xian Jin Xie, Ph.D., a distinguished educator and researcher whose work has advanced fields across the health care spectrum, has joined the College of Medicine faculty as senior associate dean for research and graduate programs. His first day was Oct. 28.

Xie brings extensive experience as an academic administrator, an accomplished researcher and an interdisciplinary collaborator. For the past 17 years, he has held multiple leadership positions at two flagship universities, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and, most recently, the University of Iowa.

“We are thrilled to have attracted a research leader of Dr. Jin Xie’s caliber to lead the Florida State University College of Medicine’s research efforts,” Dean Alma Littles, M.D., said. “His experience in strategic planning, professional and graduate curriculum development and engaging external funding sources has given him the exact skill set we need.

“In addition to his strong qualities as a scientist, he is also skilled in the art of medical and research education that is so integral to our medical school model, with an emphasis on mentoring, nurturing and empowering students and colleagues alike. He is simply a good fit for us; the right person at the right time.”

Xie said he is “thrilled” to join the College of Medicine community, where he was impressed by “the palpable sense of community and shared purpose among faculty, staff and students.”



*Xian Jin Xie*

“I believe that by emphasizing interdisciplinary partnerships, focusing on areas of strength and strategically developing new research programs, we can drive groundbreaking discoveries that directly benefit our communities,” Xie said. “Together, we’ll not only enhance our graduate programs but also position the FSU College of Medicine as a national leader in impactful research that transforms health care for all.”

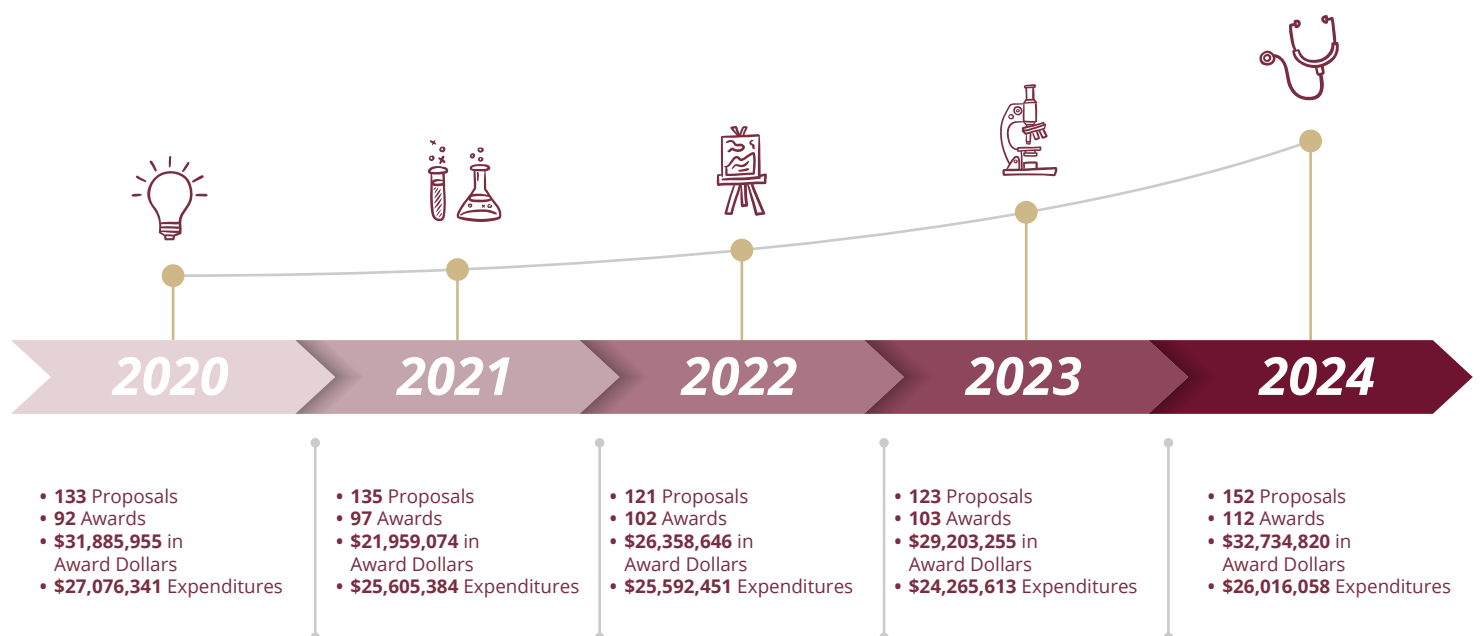


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# Five-Year Progression for College of Medicine Research

*College of Medicine: Proposal and award activity for FY 2020-2024*



FY24 saw a **5-year high** for number of proposals, awards and award dollars



## 5-year totals

2020 - 2024

# \$128,555,848

Research Expenditures

# \$142,137,940

in Award Dollars

# 665

Proposals

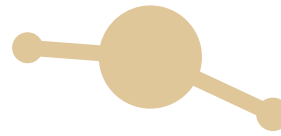
# 507

Awards

FY24 also marked **the most dollars spent** in expenditures, post-COVID



# Top 5 New Awards, FY24



## GER/North and Central Florida Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Partnership (NCF-GWEP)

**Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Grant/Lisa Granville, M.D./\$5 million** – Developing an age-friendly health system that addresses the 4Ms – medication, mobility, mentation and what matters most – among the geriatric population.

## BMS/An Immunodominance-based Pan-Pneumovirus Vaccine for Protection Against RSV and hMPV

**National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant-R01 Transfer/Jarrold Mousa, Ph.D./\$3.5 million** – Development of a novel vaccine that will protect against two closely related viruses – respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and human metapneumovirus (hMPV) – that cause thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of

hospitalizations worldwide each year.

## BMS/Epitope and Mechanistic Correlates of Broadly Protective Human Antibodies for Pneumococcal Infection

**National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant-R01 Transfer/Jarrold Mousa, Ph.D./\$2.8 million** – Uncovering the reason why *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, despite two approved vaccines, remains the leading cause of bacterial pneumonia and nearly 1 million deaths yearly worldwide. This research will examine the structural and mechanistic reasons for the vaccines' lack of efficacy.

## BSSM/A Mechanistic and Dyadic Approach to Identify How Interpersonal Conscientiousness Supports Cognitive Health and Lowers Risk of Dementia

**National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant RF-1/Angelina Sutin, Ph.D./\$2.3 million** – How can the personality trait “conscientiousness,” which is consistently associated with lower risk of cognitive impairment but is not well understood, help solve the public health crisis that is Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias? Understanding the mechanisms that explain why conscientiousness is protective could be the key.



Lisa Granville



Jarrold Mousa



152

Award Proposals in FY24

112

Awards in FY24

## BMS/The Bioecological Center for Rural and Children's Health (BeRCH)

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) STAR Grant/Gregg Stanwood, Ph.D., Javier Rosado, Ph.D./\$1.9 million –**

Separate of one another, chemical exposure and stressful or traumatic childhood experiences have detrimental effects on human health. But the cumulative impact of chemical and non-chemical stress exposures – especially among rural children and families in farming communities like Immokalee – has not been examined, until now. Assessing that impact and devising ways to reduce exposures and mitigate adverse health outcomes, long and short-term, in these underserved target communities is the goal.



*Gregg Stanwood and Javier Rosado*

### Keys:

The grants awarded are listed by College of Medicine department, followed by the official name (top line). The bottom line includes the awarding agency and grant type, the principal investigator and award total.

**BMS** – Department of Biomedical Sciences

**BSSM** – Department of Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine

**GER** – Department of Geriatrics



*Angelina Sutin*



# Giving from the heart

By Patrick Crowley  
FSU College of Medicine

“What the heart gives away is never gone. It is kept in the hearts of others.”

Richard and Syble Eads cite this quote from author Robin St. John as a testament to the life of Vera Kennedy, in whose honor they created an endowed fund with the purpose of helping the underserved and those financially struggling receive care at FSU PrimaryHealth™ in Tallahassee.

“This quote just sums up Vera,” Syble said. “She gave so much love and acceptance. We decided the fund had to be named for her because we want people to remember she gave from the heart and what she gave will go on long after we’re gone.”

The Eadses, who now live in New Smyrna Beach, established the Vera Kennedy Endowment for the Underserved Patients at the FSU Primary-Health Clinic when Kennedy was a young 103 years old.

“When I told Vera about the endowment, she said, ‘You don’t have to go through all that trouble for me,’” Syble said. “But then we told her that, among others, it will help the children in the community. She was then very excited and asked me to bring fliers to pass out at her next birthday party. She was thrilled when she found out it was going to help the clinic and children.”

Without question, children were near and dear to Kennedy’s heart

and the Eadses knew if they told her that children would benefit, she would be all for it.

“Vera said she powdered every bottom in Denison, Texas,” Richard said, and that may not be far from the truth. By the time Kennedy reached 99, she had racked up more than 20,000 hours of volunteer service at Texoma Medical Center in Denison, with much of that time being in the maternity ward. Her service earned her the 2014 Volunteer of the Year award for the state of Texas, an accomplishment she was very proud to be recognized for up until she passed at the age of 104 in June 2021.

Kennedy had close ties to Syble’s family, as she and her husband, J.W., worked on the Denison farm



*Richard Eads said he and his wife, Syble, visited Vera Kennedy in Denison, Texas, for her birthday every year. Their responsibility: Take Vera to get “her hair did” and get her to her birthday party.*





*Syble Eads with Vera Kennedy, who is holding a bouquet from the FSU College of Medicine, wishing her a happy 103rd birthday.*

of Syble's grandparents during the Depression-era 1930s. When Syble was just 9 years old, she first met Kennedy and to this day, she still holds a special place in Syble's heart.

"Vera valued education and reading, which is probably why her children were successful," Syble said. "She had a religious household and believed in hard work, as well as giving and helping everyone any way she could. When Vera passed, she was still living in the two-bedroom house she and her husband built in 1950 when he was working on the Katy railroad."

Richard added, "Vera was a special character. She is a throwback to lost times when people did things and didn't ask for recognition, they just did it because it was the right thing to do. She was a jewel of a person in a small town and the volunteer work she did there made a difference."

"In a way, the Eadses are the modern equivalent of that era," said Alma Littles, M.D., dean of the College of Medicine. "They have done so much to help others and never seek fanfare and recognition. We at the College of Medicine are grateful for their friendship and the support they've provided to our community."

The Eadses credit a close friend, Sherri Swilley, for first introducing them to FSU PrimaryHealth, Sabal Palm Elementary School and the surrounding community. Swilley was the first to ask if they'd have an interest in supporting the College of Medicine's efforts in the southwest Tallahassee area, which was labeled a "medical desert" prior to FSU PrimaryHealth opening. Swilley served as the first head of Clinical Operations for the Florida Medical Practice Plan, the faculty practice plan for FSU, as well as the inaugural practice manager at FSU PrimaryHealth.

"We just want people to get the best care that they can get," Richard said. "And many people don't have anything other than Medicare or Medicaid; maybe no insurance. Many may not have the means to even go to the doctor."

There is a saying that people can give of their time, talent and treasure — and the Eadses have done all three. In addition to creating the endowed fund, they often provide soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other toiletries to Sabal Palm Elementary School, which is FSU PrimaryHealth's neighbor. And, when medical students partnered with the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace to build beds for children who did not have one, the Eadses were there to support the project. They are also long-time supporters of the Mount Dora Children's Home.

"We made the decision about 10 years ago to start seriously giving back to causes we believe in," Richard said. "We have a fund that supports the underserved on the east side of Gainesville. We also support the children's home. And, for the fund established in honor of Vera, we wanted to involve other people and friends. We not only gave of our own means, but we also invited other people we knew that could consider it."

Today, the Eades quietly lend their support to causes most meaningful to them and take comfort in knowing Kennedy's memory will live on in the hearts of people she never had the opportunity to meet — those who will have received support through her endowed fund.

# Our donors make great things possible

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 2024, which ran July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

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# Welcome to our new faculty members

In fiscal year 2024, the College of Medicine welcomed the following seven new faculty members to its ranks:



**Sara Alvarez, M.D.**  
Assistant Professor  
Clinical Sciences



**Taylor Thompson, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor  
Behavioral Sciences



**Debra Cole, Ed.D., PA-C**  
Assistant Professor  
Director, Didactic  
Education



**Lisandra Torres Aponte, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor  
Immokalee Health  
Education Site



**Wendy Doyle, MPAS, PA-C**  
Assistant Professor  
School of Physician  
Assistant Practice



**Enrique Urrea Mendoza, M.D.**  
Professor  
Clinical Sciences



**Jarrod Mousa, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor  
Biomedical Sciences





# Contact Information

## **Florida State University College of Medicine**

### **Central campus**

1115 W. Call St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4300  
850-644-1855 | [info@med.fsu.edu](mailto:info@med.fsu.edu) | [www.med.fsu.edu](http://www.med.fsu.edu)

### **Daytona Beach campus**

1200 W. International Speedway Blvd, Building 600 Ste. 101  
Daytona Beach, FL 32114  
386-252-0601 | [www.med.fsu.edu/daytona](http://www.med.fsu.edu/daytona)

### **Fort Pierce campus**

2498 S. 35th Street  
Fort Pierce, FL 34981  
772-464-0034 | [www.med.fsu.edu/fortpierce](http://www.med.fsu.edu/fortpierce)

### **Orlando campus**

250 East Colonial Drive, Suite 200  
Orlando, FL 32801  
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### **Pensacola campus**

11000 University Parkway Bldg 234, 2nd Floor  
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### **Sarasota campus**

5560 Bee Ridge Rd D-5  
Sarasota, FL 34233  
941-316-8120 | [www.med.fsu.edu/sarasota](http://www.med.fsu.edu/sarasota)

### **Tallahassee campus**

2619 Centennial Blvd, Suite 101  
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