

VCU School of Medicine

Virginia Commonwealth University

27th Annual Faculty Excellence Awards Program



Arnold Gold Faculty
Humanism Award



VCU/VCUHS Leadership
in Graduate Medical
Education Award



Teaching Excellence
Awards



MCVP Distinguished
Clinician Award



WISDM Professional
Achievement Award

Bruce Oliver Tucker Auditorium
Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Faculty Excellence Awards Program

12:00PM	Welcome.....	Amelia Grover, M.D. Interim Senior Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs & Faculty Development
27th Annual Presentation of Awards		
	Outstanding Departmental Teacher Awards..... in Health Sciences Education	Arturo P. Saavedra, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A. Dean, VCU School of Medicine Executive VP for Medical Affairs, VCU Health System
	Outstanding Teacher Awards..... in Undergraduate Medical Education	Luan Lawson, M.D. Senior Associate Dean of Medical Education and Student Affairs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Best Teacher in the Course and Clerkship Awards● Faculty with High Evaluation Awards● Charting New Directions Award● Distinguished Service Award	
	Teaching Excellence Awards.....	Arturo P. Saavedra, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A. Dean, VCU School of Medicine Executive VP for Medical Affairs, VCU Health System
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The Enrique Gerszten, M.D. Faculty Teaching Excellence Award● The Irby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching● The Distinguished Mentor Award● The Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award	
	MCV Physicians Distinguished Clinician Award.....	Scott Stringer, M.D., M.S. President, MCV Physicians Vice Dean Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs
	Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award..... presented by The Arnold P. Gold Foundation	Christopher Woleben, M.D. Associate Dean of Admissions
	Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine..... Professional Achievement Award	Pamela M. Dillon, Pharm.D. Associate Professor and Research Liaison, Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research President, WISDM Faculty Organization
	VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical..... Education “LGME” Awards	Brian Aboff, M.D., M.M.M Senior Associate Dean, Graduate Medical Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fellowship Director Award● Program Director Award● Program Coordinator Award	
1:00PM	Closing Remarks.....	Amelia Grover, M.D. Interim Senior Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs & Faculty Development

The Awards

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS*

The Enrique Gerszten, M.D. Faculty Teaching Excellence Award recognizes extraordinary accomplishment in all aspects of education. This award is the School of Medicine's highest recognition for teaching. The award is funded by gifts to the MCV Foundation. The recipient receives a cash award from the endowment fund for scholarship and educational development.

The Irby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching recognizes superior teaching in clinical medicine taught in the last two years of medical school and residency training and encourages excellence in an increasingly complicated and challenging educational environment. The award is funded by a gift to the MCV Foundation. A cash award from the endowment fund is given to the recipient.

The Distinguished Mentor Award recognizes significant contributions to the career development of others, such as mentorship to fellow faculty members, junior faculty, residents, fellows, graduate students, post-docs, medical students or other mentoring relationships. The recipient receives a cash award of \$500 and \$1,000 for scholarship and educational development.

The Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award recognizes an individual faculty member, a group, or an academic unit for a significant educational innovation or educational research. The recipient receives a cash award of \$500 with an additional \$1,000 for scholarship and educational development.

**A plaque with each award recipient's name and photo will be displayed in the McGlothlin Medical Education Center.*

LEONARD TOW HUMANISM IN MEDICINE AWARD PRESENTED BY THE ARNOLD P. GOLD FOUNDATION

The Humanism in Medicine Awards, initiated by The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, recognize a graduating medical student and a faculty member at participating medical schools. The purpose of the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award is to underscore the value of humanism in the delivery of care, and those who show respect, to patients and their families. The principles of integrity, excellence, compassion, altruism, respect, empathy and service are paramount qualities in the recipients of this award. The Gold Foundation bestows a personalized certificate and a \$1,000 prize each on a graduating medical student and a faculty member, nominated and selected by their peers. Additional information may be found at <https://www.medschool.vcu.edu/facultyaffairs/awards/>.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE, DENTISTRY, AND MEDICINE (WISDM) PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The primary purpose of this annual award is to recognize a faculty member who is a role model and mentor, promoting the professional development of all faculty, and who demonstrates excellence in the following areas: 1) success as a mentor and role model for all faculty members; 2) professional excellence: accomplished in their primary area of practice (clinical, basic sciences, etc.); 3) leadership: university administrative duties and other leadership roles; 4) scholarship; 5) teaching expertise. Additional information about the award and the list of previous recipients may be found at <https://www.medschool.vcu.edu/facultyaffairs/awards/>.

The Awards

MCV PHYSICIANS DISTINGUISHED CLINICIAN AWARD

Sponsored by the Medical College of Virginia Physicians (MCVP), this annual award recognizes clinical excellence among faculty at the VCU Medical Center. Criteria considered include, but are not limited to, the following attributes for patient care: compassion, clinical effectiveness, efficiency, comprehensiveness, availability and responsiveness to patients. For additional information, contact MCV Physicians.

VCU/VCUHS LEADERSHIP IN GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AWARD

This award recognizes outstanding contributions to medical education by program coordinators, residency and fellowship directors. Criteria for selection include: a fully accredited residency program; evidence of dedication and effectiveness in teaching residents/fellows; behaviors that are value-based and highly principled; an exemplary role model; a program with benchmark features from which the field can learn; participation in a national program directors association. For additional information, contact the Graduate Medical Education Office.

OUTSTANDING DEPARTMENTAL TEACHER AWARD IN HEALTH SCIENCES EDUCATION

Honors outstanding teaching in departments with substantial teaching commitments in undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies. Selection is determined by a process developed by each basic sciences department. Each award recipient receives an outstanding teacher pin, a certificate, and \$100 for educational development.

OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARDS IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

Best Teacher in the Course and Clerkship Awards recognize a faculty member as the best teacher in each course and clerkship in the Pre-Clinical and Clinical years through student and course director evaluations. Each award recipient receives an outstanding teacher pin, a certificate, and \$100 for educational development.

Faculty with High Evaluation Awards recognize faculty who have received a ranking of excellent or higher on student evaluations in the clerkships. Each award recipient receives a certificate.



The School of Medicine Teaching Excellence Awards Program was established in 1999. Additional information may be found at <https://medschool.vcu.edu/about/deans-office/faculty-affairs/awards/#d.en.628398>

Faculty Excellence Awards Recipients

Enrique Gerszten, M.D. Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

Kimberly S. Pedram, M.D., SFHM, FACP
Associate Professor of Internal Medicine

Irby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching

John D. Grizzard, M.D.
Associate Professor of Radiology

Distinguished Mentor Awards

Jason A. Carlyon, Ph.D.
Professor of Microbiology and Immunology

Richard K. Sterling, M.D., M.Sc., FACP, FACG, AGAF, FAASLD
Professor of Department of Internal Medicine

Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award

Adam Garber, M.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine; **Patrick Fadden, M.D.**, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine; **Moshe Feldman, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, School of Medicine-Dean's Office; and **Cana Curtis, B.S.**, Research Analyst, Office of Medical Education

Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award

presented by The Arnold P. Gold Foundation

Darren S. Witte, M.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor of Internal Medicine

Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine Professional Achievement Award

Gretchen N. Neigh, Ph.D., MBA
Professor of Neuroscience and Anatomy

MCV Physicians Distinguished Clinician Award

Jeffrey H. Haynes, M.D., FACS, FAAP
Arnold M. Salzberg Professor of Surgery

Faculty Excellence Awards Recipients

VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical Education “LGME” Award

"Fellowship Director Award"

Rashida H. Woods, M.D.

Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine

"Program Director Award"

Rebecca E. Forrest, M.D.

Professor of Internal Medicine

"Program Coordinator Award"

Cesley Watkins

Senior Fellowship Program Coordinator, Department of Internal Medicine

Outstanding Departmental Teacher Award in Health Sciences Education

Departments of Cellular, Molecular and Genetic Medicine; Family Medicine and Population Health; Microbiology and Immunology; Neuroscience and Anatomy; and Pharmacology and Toxicology

Outstanding Teacher Awards in Undergraduate Medical Education

Best Teacher and High Evaluation Awards in the Course and Clerkship

Charting New Directions Award

Distinguished Service Award

Enrique Gerszten, M.D. Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

Kimberly S. Pedram, M.D., SFHM, FACP



For more than 20 years, Dr. Kimberly Pedram has had a profound and expanding impact at VCU. Beginning as a student and rising to an acclaimed leader and innovator, she continues to be an influencer in medical education. Dr. Pedram graduated from the VCU School of Medicine in 2004, and even then, her talent was evident. A former professor, Dr. Linda Costanzo, Professor Emerita of Physiology & Biophysics and Cellular, Molecular and Genetic Medicine, recalled Dr. Pedram as “that special student who excelled academically, but never lost her perspective as a human being,” adding, “I adored teaching her and advising her in M1 and M2, as she brought spark, sincerity, and commitment to every interaction.” Dr. Pedram completed her Internal Medicine residency in 2007, after which she joined the VCU faculty in the Department of Internal Medicine’s Division of Hospital Medicine as a Clinical Instructor, earning the rank of Assistant Professor in 2009 and Associate Professor in 2021. Her commitment to education was further solidified by a Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate in Medical Education from VCU in 2022.

From her early days as a small group leader in Foundations of Clinical Medicine to her current role as an attending physician on inpatient services, Dr. Pedram has guided countless aspiring doctors, stimulating intellectual achievement and fostering deep understanding among her students, who praise her ability to make complex concepts “both accessible and meaningful.” She has the ability to lead

effectively while providing autonomy and to foster collaboration that reinforces learning. One student noted, “Dr. Pedram is an amazing attending. She is brilliant, humble, and a model clinician.” She’s known for her patience and for providing honest, constructive feedback, empowering students to feel prepared and confident in their developing clinical skills.

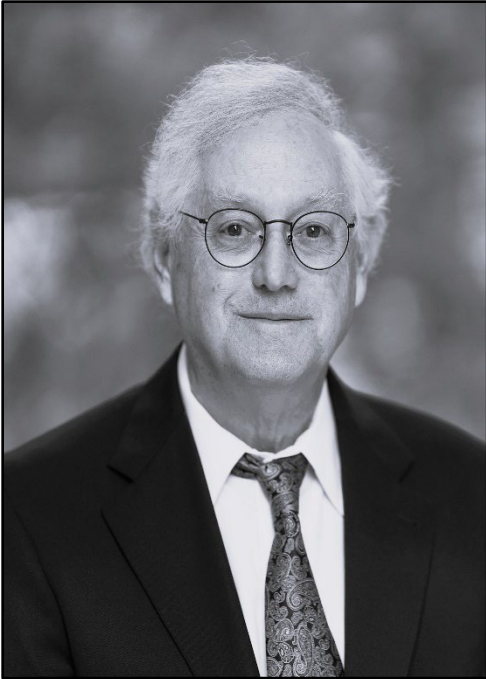
Dr. Pedram is also a visionary educator, widely recognized for her educational leadership and instructional innovation, as evidenced by receiving the VCU J. David Markham Award for Excellence in Teaching (2018), the VCU Department of Internal Medicine Excellence as a Clinician Educator Award (2019), and the VCU SOM Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award (2022). As a Course Director for the Practice of Clinical Medicine (PCM), a role she assumed in 2021 after serving as Physician Coordinator and Associate Course Director since 2011, Dr. Pedram continuously restructures and modernizes the curriculum, implementing self-directed learning, increasing simulation-based skill sessions, and creating unique remediation strategies aligned with competency-based assessment. She successfully maintained PCM continuity during the challenging COVID disruption and overhauled the course to eliminate traditional lectures in favor of asynchronous learning modules and spaced repetition, always prioritizing student feedback.

Beyond her direct teaching and curriculum development, Dr. Pedram demonstrates a steadfast commitment to mentorship and faculty development. As Associate Chair of Education for the Division of Hospital Medicine, a position she has held since 2018, Dr. Pedram leads the Peer Observation program, which enables faculty to observe one another and provide feedback using the Stanford Clinical Teaching framework. Through this program, faculty enhance clinical teaching skills for both observers and those being observed. This program has engaged over 70 hospitalist physicians and has been published in peer-reviewed literature and presented nationally. Dr. Pedram has advised, coached, or formally mentored over 75 students and trainees, inspiring them to achieve their professional goals and even contribute to improving the curriculum themselves. She also co-leads the M4 elective on teaching, helping to cultivate the next generation of medical educators.

Dr. Pedram’s legacy is defined by excellence, innovation, mentorship, and integrity. As Alan Dow, M.D., Division Chief, Division of Hospital Medicine notes, “Dr. Pedram elevates all around her.” He further states, “Dr. Pedram is a transformative teacher, mentor, collaborator, and leader who we are fortunate to count among our faculty. The Gerszten Award is overdue to her...”

Irby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching

John D. Grizzard, M.D.



Dr. John D. Grizzard, an esteemed Associate Professor in the Department of Radiology at VCU Medical Center, has “elevated the learning experience for every resident, student, and fellow who has rotated through cardiac imaging” through a combination of clinical excellence, pedagogical clarity, and genuine mentorship. Dr. Gianna Blundo, a Radiology Chief Resident, further notes that Dr. Grizzard “exemplifies professionalism, kindness and academic curiosity – qualities that make him an ideal model for trainees... His continued teaching even after a partial retirement further inspires us all to strive for lifelong learning.”

Dr. Grizzard received his M.D. from the Medical College of Virginia (VCU) in 1979. His postdoctoral training was extensive, encompassing an internship in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics (1979-1980), a residency in Pediatrics (1980-1982), and a fellowship in Neonatology (1982-1983) at North Carolina Memorial Hospital. He specialized in Radiology, completing a residency at MCV Hospitals (1983-1986) before entering private practice serving the greater Richmond community from 1986 to 2003. He then joined VCU's faculty as an Assistant Professor, later becoming an Associate Professor.

In 2004, Dr. Grizzard pursued Level III Cardiovascular MRI Training at the globally recognized Duke University Medical Center and became a consistent presenter at their Practicum. Dr. Cory Trankle, Assistant Professor in the VCU School of Medicine, attended the Duke University practicum “years ago,” noting it was “widely regarded as one of the most prestigious CMR centers in the world.”

The leaders at the center noted that “when they have a difficult case at Duke, particularly one involving a cardiac mass, these world experts call Dr. Grizzard and ask for his help.” Since 2004, Dr. Grizzard has served as the Section Chief of Non-invasive Cardiovascular Imaging and was honored as the Charles Baird Professor of Innovative Cardiovascular Imaging in 2009. He lectures for the Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance (SCMR), and his involvement with national committees, such as the SCMR Program Committee and as Vice Chair of the SCMR Communications Committee, further underscores his influence in advancing education and clinical practice on a broader scale.

Known for his superior clinical teaching and ability to simplify complex cardiac imaging concepts for a diverse audience, Dr. Grizzard’s generous sharing of knowledge ensures that every interaction is a valuable learning opportunity. He doesn't just teach; he actively guides and supports medical students, residents, fellows, and junior faculty in their career development, including research and scholarly projects. Dr. Jonathan Weinsaft, A.M. Gotto Professor of Medicine, vividly describes this attribute: “John is an incredibly collaborative, thoughtful, and kind individual who has been selfless in his devotion to trainees...” His mentorship is a hallmark of his character. Dr. Grizzard’s teaching is not just about images but about making connections to pathophysiology and comprehensive patient care. Dr. Zachary Gertz, Professor of Medicine, further emphasizes this stating, “No one can match his depth of knowledge, and his willingness to share that knowledge is a treasure.” Dr. Shaimaa Fadl, Dr. Grizzard’s successor as Section Chief, credits his “steady mentorship, thoughtful guidance, and tireless support” as pivotal to her own career development. This commitment to nurturing the next generation underscores his high standards of professionalism.

Beyond teaching, Dr. Grizzard has significantly contributed to academic literature. He is a co-author of the case-based textbook, *Cardiovascular MRI in Practice: A Teaching File Approach* and has authored numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles. His dedication to education has been acknowledged with awards such as the Anthony Proto Faculty Mentorship Award (2024) and the Klaus Ranninger Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching Diagnostic Radiology Residents (2004, 2013). Dr. Grizzard truly embodies the spirit of exceptional clinical teaching and professionalism that the Irby-James Award celebrates.

Distinguished Mentor Award

Jason A. Carlyon, Ph.D.



What do you get when you cross high expectations with encouragement, a supportive lab environment with scientific integrity, and approachability with excitement for research? Dr. Jason Carlyon and his exceptional mentorship! When Dr. Huiping Zhou, Interim Chair of Microbiology and Immunology, sent a request to Dr. Carlyon's former mentees for letters of support for his nomination, she was inundated with responses highlighting the vast impact he has had on them that continues to this day. Based on the anecdotes in the letters, it's no wonder: they paint a picture of a mentor who is not only scientifically rigorous but also deeply compassionate and dedicated to fostering individual growth and success. According to Dr. Andrea Beyer, an Associate Professor of Biology at Richard Bland College, Dr. Carlyon "ran his vigorous, well-funded successful lab with kindness, humanity and a bit of fun... He made the workplace into a team space." She expressed gratitude for how he "unified a diverse group of young scientists into a hard-working but fun (if not eccentric) 'family.'"

In her nomination letter, Dr. Zhou states, "Every graduate and postdoctoral trainee under his [Dr. Carlyon's] guidance has published at least one scientific paper, with some contributing to as many as nine publications," often in high-impact journals. In addition to his formal mentorship of 51 direct trainees (including students at all levels as well as fellows) and 62 rotation students, Dr. Carlyon has made significant contributions to academia through awards and publications, alongside a clear progression in his academic path. He earned a B.S. in Biology in 1993 (graduating Magna Cum Laude and with Honors) and a Ph.D.

in Microbiology and Immunology from VCU in 1999. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Yale University (2004), after which he served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Kentucky until 2007. He then joined VCU as an Assistant Professor, becoming an Associate Professor with Tenure in 2012 and a Full Professor with Tenure in 2015, a position he currently holds.

While at VCU, Dr. Carlyon has held key leadership positions, including Director of the Biosafety Level-3 Laboratory since 2010, Course Director for MICR 515 Principles of Molecular Microbiology, and Specialty Chief Editor for *Bacteria and Host* in *Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology* since 2024. He has also been a member of the NIH/NIAID Bacterial Pathogenesis Study Section and extensively involved in organizing scientific meetings. Dr. Carlyon's publication record includes a substantial body of work: 79 papers published in peer-reviewed journals including *Cell* and *Nature Communications*; seven reviews and invited papers in peer-reviewed journals; and three peer-reviewed book chapters. He has received 16 special awards and honors, most recently the VCU 2025 Distinguished Scholarship Award, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Methods to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) award R37 (2022), Induction into the National Academy of Inventors (2020), and Election as a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology (2019).

Dr. Carlyon's dedication to advancing the academic and professional careers of his mentees enables them to transition into successful roles across academia, government, and industry. Equally notable is his genuine interest in their well-being and growth, cultivating scientific independence and critical skills, as Waheeda Naimi, a former Ph.D. student, can attest: "Dr. Carlyon recognized potential in me that I had yet to see in myself, and he made it his mission to push me beyond my comfort zone. . . His mentorship went beyond technical guidance; he taught me how to think critically, how to communicate effectively, and how to maintain integrity in all aspects of research." Dr. Carlyon is clearly an exemplary role model. His lasting impact on the careers and lives of his mentees extends far beyond their time in his lab, making him a well-deserving recipient of this award.

Distinguished Mentor Award

Richard K. Sterling, M.D., M.Sc., FACP, FACG, AGAF, FAASLD



The best mentors empower others, provide support, and help mentees realize their full potential. Dr. Richard Sterling exemplifies these qualities and more as he positively impacts the careers, as well as the lives, of those he mentors.

Dr. Sterling earned his M.D. in 1988 from Thomas Jefferson University and completed his Internal Medicine residency (1988-1991) and fellowships in Gastroenterology and Hepatology (1991-1994) at the Medical College of Virginia at VCU, joining the faculty as an Assistant Professor in 1997. In 2007, he earned an M.Sc. in Biostatistics and Clinical Research from VCU and advanced to Professor of Medicine with tenure in 2011. He has held numerous leadership roles, including Chief of the Hepatology Section (2011-present) and Associate Chair for Research in the Department of Internal Medicine (2020-present). He also directed both the GI and Transplant Hepatology Fellowships and served as Associate Chair of Education and Training for the GI Division. He is currently the Chief Clinical Officer of the Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health and is a fellow in four national professional organizations: American College of Physicians, American College of Gastroenterology, American Gastroenterological Association, and American Association for the Study of Liver Disease.

Recognized as a multifaceted researcher, leader, and clinician, Dr. Sterling has been a pillar of the academic community since 1997. His influence extends beyond departmental boundaries, launching mentorship initiatives, creating research pipelines, and championing database tools that have measurably increased NIH funding. His research contributions are extensive, including development of the FIB-4 index for assessing liver fibrosis and significant work in the areas of viral hepatitis, liver disease in HIV patients, alcohol-associated liver disease, liver transplantation, and hepatocellular carcinoma. He has an impressive H-index of 87, over 350 peer-reviewed publications, and continuous extramural research funding from the NIH. He is described as a nationally and internationally recognized expert whose collaborative research has elevated VCU's reputation in liver disease and liver transplantation. He is also noted for his hands-on approach, guiding mentees through complex processes like grant applications and navigating research systems (REDCap, Epic, IRB).

Dr. Sterling received numerous teaching-related awards from VCU, including nine Outstanding Teacher Awards, one Best Teacher Award and one Outstanding Course Director Award for M2 Gastroenterology. In addition to receiving departmental awards for excellence in service (2018) and scholarship (2020), he was honored with the Thames-Kontos Faculty Mentoring Award in 2023. Dr. Sterling has also been voted as a "Top Doc" many times by Richmond Magazine. He has formally mentored over 60 individuals and is repeatedly lauded for his profound personal commitment to mentoring, which is characterized as transformational, marked by deep caring and lifelong advocacy. He is noted for his remarkable accessibility, consistently offering his time, guidance, and encouragement to learners and colleagues at every stage of their development, often without formal obligation. Testimonials from current and former students and colleagues confirm him to be a strong ally for trainees and someone who remains a valuable resource even after mentees move on to positions elsewhere. Furthermore, he actively engages in sponsorship, propelling mentees toward career opportunities, providing projects to advance their portfolios, and introducing them to leaders in the field to grow their networks. Dr. Sterling's mentees praise him for his patient, nurturing, and understanding approach, going above and beyond to ensure their success. His ability to identify strengths and weaknesses and bring out the best in individuals, coupled with his care for both professional and personal development, makes him a highly sought-after mentor. Dr. Sterling's "infectious enthusiasm" for teaching and his compassionate nature have earned him the description of "a scholar, but more importantly, a gentleman first." It is a great pleasure to recognize a mentor as well-respected and appreciated as Dr. Sterling.

Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award

**Adam Garber, M.D.; Patrick Fadden, M.D.;
Moshe Feldman, Ph.D.; and Cana Curtis, B.S.**



As a team, Drs. Adam Garber, Patrick Fadden, and Moshe Feldman, along with Research Analyst Cana Curtis, have embarked on a truly groundbreaking collaborative journey that positions VCU at the forefront of medical education for their use of progressive technologies that improve core educational processes, notably their pioneering application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLMs). Recognizing the "Assessment Burden" on medical schools and the labor-intensive nature of manually reviewing qualitative feedback, Dr. Feldman envisioned a solution leveraging AI and natural language processing (NLP). This novel approach, initiated when AI was scarcely used in medical education, evolved over three years into a sophisticated system capable of classifying supervising physician and resident feedback quality with 85% accuracy, a significant leap from an initial 40%. Drs. Garber and Fadden provided crucial medical expertise, scoring feedback examples to train the machine learning algorithms. Their foresight

is evident in their national presentations on using AI for acting internships as early as 2024, well ahead of the curve compared to broader educational trends. Ms. Curtis has been instrumental in data mining and evaluation analysis using their AI model to allow ongoing analysis of additional years of data while ensuring its accuracy. They now provide individualized faculty feedback on the quality of their evaluations at scale using their results, with the intention of improving evaluation quality and actionable feedback to students.

Dr. Fadden recognized the benefit of utilizing AI in medical education to assist in assigning patient care performance designations to students, using the RIME scale based off of numerous clerkship evaluations. He teamed up with Dr. Garber on this project to help reduce biases that could be present within evaluations and grading committees by providing a designation rationale, in order to compare these results to those of the Internal Medicine clerkship grading committee. While not yet used in practice, this validation and proof of concept phase could lead to accepted use for this purpose, significantly improving efficiency and accuracy in grading and potentially streamlining the process by leading to better utilization of grading committee faculty time to manually review the more challenging cases. Another powerful component of their project is their application of Virtual Reality (VR), including AI-enabled VR, and Mixed Reality (MR) for creating immersive learning experiences. Dr. Garber secured a prestigious Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation President's Grant for his project: *Teaching Effective Interprofessional Collaboration during Acute Patient Scenarios via Artificial Intelligence-Facilitated Virtual Reality Simulations*. This initiative developed an immersive, competency-based dynamic learning experience using VR headsets, allowing students to manage unstable patients and interact with AI-driven avatars of nurses and patients in a real-time simulation, better emulating reality. Such high-stakes scenarios foster critical clinical decision-making, teamwork, and ethical reasoning, offering a powerful and scalable training tool with national dissemination potential. Dr. Garber's work in this area also extends to using MR and VR to teach complex procedures like lumbar punctures and cross-coverage skills, highlighting his consistent pursuit of cutting-edge technology to advance medical education.

Dr. Feldman's foundational research on the variability in ACGME Harmonized Milestones across numerous programs directly informed their collaborative AI project, demonstrating their holistic approach to improving assessment systems. Dr. Fadden's involvement in developing an AAMC toolkit for student presentation skills further underscores their commitment to fundamental educational improvements. Their work aims to make the assessment process more fair, consistent, and effective in preparing future physicians for their careers. Drs. Garber, Fadden, and Feldman, as well as Ms. Curtis, represent a remarkable team of talent – "individual stars" who make up an "influential constellation," pushing the boundaries of medical education through their visionary integration of AI and VR, their dedication to educational research, and their refinement to core curricula and assessment practices.

Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award

Darren S. Witte, M.D.



Dr. Darren S. Witte, Medical Director for VCU Health-Chesterfield, embodies a rare combination of clinical excellence, humanism, and dedicated mentorship in the field of medicine. Before his medical pursuits, Dr. Witte distinguished himself academically, earning a B.A. in Physics, *Cum Laude*, from Brandeis University in 1992. His connection to VCU began that same year as he entered medical school and worked to earn his M.D. in 1996. He then completed a Combined Internal Medicine-Pediatrics Residency Training Program at Medical College of Virginia Hospitals/VCU, notably serving as Chief Resident from 1999-2000. He has been board-certified in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics since 2000.

Throughout his career as a Primary Care Physician, Dr. Witte has consistently cared for adults and children of all ages. What started as private practice in 2005 was later merged with the VCU Health System in 2013. The subsequent affiliation with the VCU School of Medicine and Med-Peds residency program have brought Dr. Witte some of his greatest joy as a physician.

In his interactions with patients, he displays a remarkable degree of empathy and caring. Students like Aiden Lefebvre, a VCU SOM Class of 2026 student, observed firsthand how Dr. Witte "delivers patient care with the same kindness, humility, and clarity that he brings to medical education," and how he "communicates with patients in a way that is both deeply respectful and easy to understand, ensuring that they feel heard and supported." This humanistic

approach is further evidenced by his Bedside Manner Award from *Our Health Richmond Magazine* in both 2016 and 2017, awards that speak directly to his compassionate interaction with patients.

Beyond his clinical practice, Dr. Witte is an incredibly influential educator and mentor in his roles as Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at VCU Health since 2013, PCM Small Group Leader, Project HEART Small Group Leader, and Community Preceptor. Anna Xystros, another VCU SOM Class of 2026 student, credits him as her M1/M2 PCM leader, stating he "not only taught me everything I know about clinical medicine, but he taught me how to listen and how to provide the most compassionate care for my patients." His teaching approach is characterized by "deep compassion, unwavering patience, and a genuine commitment to our development not just as future physicians but as empathetic caregivers," fostering a respectful, inclusive, and open learning environment. Students laud Dr. Witte as a "trusted mentor" and a "true model of humanistic care in medicine," noting his ongoing support and advice throughout their medical school journey.

Dr. Witte's achievement in clinical practice was also formally recognized with an Excellence in Clinical Practice award from VCU Health in 2020. He has contributed to public health discussions with an interview for *Our Health Richmond Magazine* in 2017, focusing on men's health screenings and has given a variety of lectures on primary care topics to the Med-Peds residents. His enthusiasm for teaching has been recognized with awards such as the VCU Medical Center Mickael M. Kannan Community Pediatrician Teaching Award, Department of Pediatrics in 2019 and the VCU School of Medicine Excellence in Teaching award, Practice of Clinical Medicine in 2017.

Dr. Witte's career is a testament to his long-standing commitment to patient well-being, thoughtful care, and the holistic development of future physicians.

Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine Professional Achievement “WISDM” Award

Gretchen N. Neigh, Ph.D., MBA



Dr. Gretchen Neigh, a Professor in the Department of Neuroscience & Anatomy at VCU School of Medicine, earned her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from The Ohio State University and held faculty positions at Emory University before joining VCU in 2016. She is an authority in biomedical science, demonstrating excellence in research, mentorship, and leadership, with a focus on advancing women's health and increasing representation in the sciences.

As a researcher, Dr. Neigh investigates the biological factors of risk and resilience, particularly the interactions among the endocrine, immune, and nervous systems; she has been foundational in establishing the biological basis of sex-specific stress-induced changes in risk. She has successfully secured continuous extramural funding for the past 21 years, including multiple NIH grants, and her work has been cited more than 5500 times. Dr. Neigh has also effectively disseminated her findings through numerous publications in top-tier journals, such as *Neuropsychopharmacology*, *Brain, Behavior, & Immunity*, *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology*, *Neurobiology of Stress*, and *Psychoneuroendocrinology*. Her research accomplishments include selection as Chair of the NIH Study Section on Biobehavioral Regulation, Learning, and Ethology (BRLE), over 120 peer-reviewed publications, and numerous presentations at national and international scientific conferences. Additionally, Dr. Neigh published a book on sex differences in physiology, was elected as a member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, and was appointed Director of Translational Research of the VCU Institute of Women's Health. In 2023, she

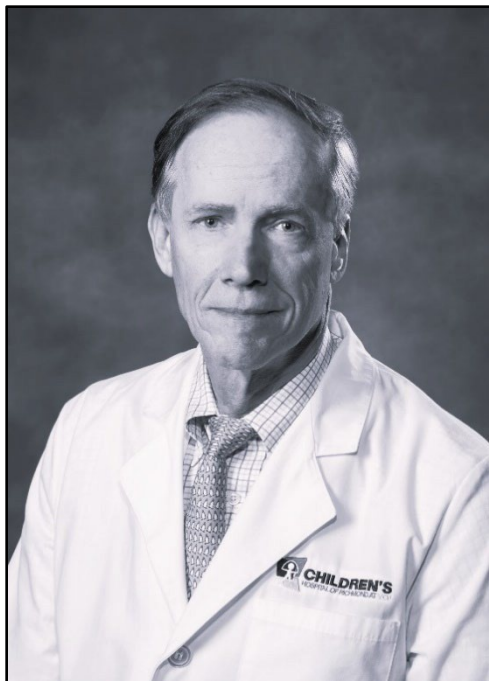
received the VCU National/International Research Excellence Award (NIRA) and the Rosalind Franklin Society Award in Women's Health for her contributions to the field.

As a mentor, Dr. Neigh demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to nurturing the next generation of scientists, from high school students to junior faculty. As Dr. Pamela Knapp, Professor and Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at VCU, writes, “Her trainees receive tremendous scientific and grant/publication writing guidance, but few scientists truly flourish using those skills alone. Just as importantly, Dr. Neigh provides lessons in the more practical aspects of career development, including networking, speaking, organizational skills, and understanding interpersonal relationships and power dynamics; how to say ‘no,’ and how to ask for what you need.” This holistic approach to mentorship has empowered nearly 100 individuals to achieve their full potential, which is reflected in their subsequent career achievements. Dr. Neigh’s leadership is equally commendable. Her lab has been described as a place of learning and a “nurturing, open, and inclusive environment.” She has effectively managed her research group and has taken on numerous leadership roles at VCU, such as director of research for the VCU BIRCWH. Her ability to connect with colleagues and build collaborative networks has not only enriched her own research but has also facilitated groundbreaking projects across various institutions, including The Ohio State, Emory University, and Johns Hopkins University.

Known for her engaging style, clear communication, innovative teaching methods, and curriculum development, Dr. Neigh is a dedicated and effective educator. She has been instrumental in creating and directing courses that are now essential components of the VCU curriculum, including a grant writing course that is noteworthy for its impact on student’s ability to secure funding. It is so popular she cannot accommodate all of the students who want to take it. This course, along with others she has developed, equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in the competitive world of scientific research. Dr. Jill Bettinger, Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at VCU, best expresses the overarching praise and respect others have for Dr. Neigh stating, “She truly combines excellent science with a strong ethic to provide positive teaching and mentorship to her students and colleagues. She is a credit to the VCU Community.”

MCV Physicians Distinguished Clinician Award

Jeffrey H. Haynes, M.D., FACS, FAAP



Compassion, clinical effectiveness, efficiency, comprehensiveness, professionalism, availability, and responsiveness to patients are not only the criteria for the MCV Physicians Distinguished Clinician Award, they are the hallmarks of Dr. Jeffrey Haynes's career. His impact on pediatric surgery and trauma care at the VCU Health System is unparalleled. As Chief of the Pediatric Surgery Division at Children's Hospital of Richmond (CHoR) at VCU and Pediatric Trauma Director, Dr. Haynes has been committed to the improvement of pediatric patient outcomes and care for three decades. He played an instrumental role in CHoR achieving and continuously maintaining its Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center designation by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) since 2013. Dr. Haynes's persistent advocacy also led to the creation of state-designated pediatric trauma centers, with CHoR proudly becoming the first in 2015. Renowned for his expertise in general, oncologic, thoracic, and minimally invasive pediatric surgery, Dr. Haynes and his team have served as the sole Pediatric Surgical group covering all of Central Virginia since 1999, providing crucial consultations and referrals for the entire region.

Vigneshwar Kasirajan, M.D., Stuart McGuire Professor and Chair, Department of Surgery, describes Dr. Haynes as a "deeply kind and humble soul" whose practice is built upon "giving the greatest care to our most vulnerable patients and their families" and providing "cutting-edge surgical care" for the best results. David Lanning, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Chief Medical Officer, CHoR and Professor of

Surgery and Pediatrics, lauds Dr. Haynes's trauma program for its "exceptional outcomes and high patient/family satisfaction ratings." Dr. Haynes has been instrumental in securing resources for in-hospital substance use screening for injured adolescents and developing programs focused on the long-term well-being of children following traumatic injury. Furthermore, Dr. Haynes actively engages with the EMS community, providing vital education and training on best practices for caring for injured children in the pre-hospital setting. He played a key role in developing and implementing CHoR's Pediatric Trauma Manual and the Pediatric Focused Trauma Care Course, a unique educational resource for residents and EMS personnel. He has contributed broadly to the pediatric surgical literature and has co-edited two pediatric surgical textbooks.

Dr. Haynes's comprehensiveness extends beyond the hospital walls; his practice serves both urban and rural communities, and he actively participates in international outreach programs such as the World Pediatric Project. His clinical service includes outpatient clinics at multiple locations and 24/7 emergency and inpatient coverage across CHoR/VCU Health System, Chippenham Hospital, and Henrico Doctors Hospital NICU. Additionally, his influential role in governance, serving for over a decade as the pediatric trauma representative to the Virginia Department of Health's Trauma Administrative and Governance Committee, highlights his wide-ranging impact. As a beacon of professionalism, Dr. Haynes is a "hardworking and dedicated surgeon, a high-impact leader," and a "natural teacher," according to Dr. Kasirajan, and he is an inspiration as well as a role model for students, residents, and fellow faculty. Dr. Haynes's leadership style, best characterized as a "spirit of collaboration," effectively brings together diverse disciplines to build consensus for evidence-based practices, which has significantly reduced complications and improved clinical outcomes. His availability is equally impressive; Dr. Lanning notes that Dr. Haynes is "always the first one to help cover" and maintains extensive call duties, totaling eight to 10 calls per month, including in-house coverage for the Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center. Additionally, Dr. Haynes teaches in various clinical settings at all hours of the day and night.

Dr. Haynes is the 2025 recipient of the Rao R. Ivatury Award recognizing clinical excellence, mentorship and education in acute care at VCU Health. His career is a testament to extraordinary clinical dedication and leadership. He truly embodies all the attributes of a distinguished clinician, standing as a shining example of VCU Health's commitment to exceptional patient care, education, and research.

VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical Education
“LGME” Award for Fellowship Program Director

Rashida H. Woods, M.D.

Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellowship Director



Dr. Rashida Woods graduated from Hampton University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She continued her education at Meharry Medical College, earning her Doctor of Medicine in 2007 and completing a general pediatrics residency at Baylor College of Medicine – Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston in 2010. Following residency, Dr. Woods spent two years as a critical care transport physician and sedation provider. During that time, she discovered a deep interest in pediatric emergency medicine, which led her to pursue fellowship training at University Hospitals Case Western Reserve University – Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, completing the program in 2015. After fellowship, Dr. Woods joined VCU as an Assistant Professor in the School of Medicine (SOM) and attending physician in the Pediatric Emergency Department at the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU. She was recently promoted to Associate Professor. Her clinical work centers on high-acuity pediatric care, and she’s especially passionate about improving systems and stroke care for children – a commitment that earned her recognition as one of *Richmond Magazine’s* “Top Docs.” Since arriving at VCU, Dr. Woods has taken on numerous leadership roles including medical director of quality improvement and patient safety for the division of pediatric emergency medicine and team lead of the pediatric stroke task force. She currently serves as Program Director for the Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellowship, where she’s led curriculum redesigns and strengthened core faculty engagement by empowering faculty to create curricula.

A committed educator and mentor, Dr. Woods teaches learners across the spectrum – from EMS providers to medical students – delivering lectures on pediatric stroke, trauma, airway management, and second victim syndrome. Her dedication to education extends to her own growth: she’s completed several teaching and leadership development programs and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in education with a focus on leadership. Her approach to teaching is grounded in creating spaces where learners feel seen, supported, and empowered. Outside the hospital, Dr. Woods is actively involved in the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Emergency Medicine. She serves on multiple committees focused on education, recruitment, and engagement. She was recently elected Chair of the Emergi-Quiz case-based competition and co-chairs the Opportunity and Engagement Committee for the Virginia AAP. She also volunteers her time to lead skills workshops for prospective students through various programs offered by the VCU SOM.

Notable nomination portfolio quotes: Dr. J. Moll (Vice Chair of Education) ~ "Assuming the director role from its founder is no small challenge, but Dr. Woods was from the beginning engaged, dedicated, and creative in this role. She was able to expand opportunities for the PEM fellows and worked to further define their roles and opportunities." S. Fleming (Senior GME Program Coordinator, EM Clerkship and Shadowing Coordinator) ~ "Dr. Woods exemplifies dedication to the continued growth of the PEM Fellowship Program, its trainees, coordinator, and staff. She encourages professional development, promotes learning opportunities, and supports the importance of well-being. Dr. Woods continues to be an excellent role model and valued team member to our program and department." Dr. F. Petruzella (Chief, Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine) ~ "She inherited a young program that was in many ways searching for its identity and has revamped and solidified it into an absolutely integral part of our division. In looking at the criteria listed in the nomination form, I can honestly think of no one who fits these descriptors better than Rashida. Her leadership and mentorship style is very much one of collaboration and empowerment, as well as fierce advocacy for her learners."

VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical Education
“LGME” Award for Residency Program Director

Rebecca E. Forrest, M.D.
Internal Medicine Residency Program Director



Dr. Forrest is an Associate Professor who has been a member of VCU faculty since 2016, serving as the Internal Medicine Residency Program Director since 2020. Dr. Forrest received her M.D. from Eastern Virginia Medical School and subsequently completed residency training in Internal Medicine at VCU Health where she also served as a chief medical resident before joining the Division of Hospital Medicine and becoming an associate program director for the residency program in 2016. She obtained a graduate Certificate in Teaching in Medical Education through VCU School of Medicine and is currently pursuing a Master of Education in Leadership Studies in the VCU School of Education.

Dr. Forrest is an academic hospitalist and was an inaugural member of the Procedure Medicine service. She serves on the VCU Health Wellness in Action Task Force, the VCU Health GME Resident Wellbeing Subcommittee, the VCU Women in Science, Dentistry, and Medicine Executive Council, and the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine Medical Education Research Committee. In her role as Associate Program Director, Dr. Forrest directed the residency didactic and clinical curriculum, leading and instructing faculty through developing and revising over 50 unique curricula and recently redesigned core conferences to interactive small-group, case-based and team-based learning formats. Dr. Forrest leads innovative curricula in reflective practice, wellness, resilience, pathophysiology and mechanistic thinking, and leadership. She contributes to medical education in the areas of wellness, resilience, reflection, competency-based medical education including

procedural competency. She has multiple peer-reviewed publications and has presented over 40 peer-reviewed abstracts and workshops as well as conference pre-course sessions nationally. She has been invited to speak nationally on resident wellbeing as well. Most importantly, Dr. Forrest values the individual relationships she forms with the residents in her program, offering career path guidance and support for every resident whether applying for jobs or fellowship training after residency. Dr. Forrest delights in problem-solving and innovating, seeing her role as a leader to not only guide learners down a path, but to remove obstacles, and when necessary, change the course or environment to ensure residency training is evolving to meet the

Notable nomination portfolio quotes: Dr. C. Barrett (Associate Chair for Education) ~ "What makes Dr. Forrest so impactful on the learners is the combination of her genuine interest in them as individuals; her attention to an inclusive and engaging learning climate; and her inspiring patient-centered clinical skills. Becky truly cares for and respects the learners. She wants them to learn, to succeed, and to pursue their personal professional paths. She identifies and engages with them wherever they are at the moment with an eye on where they need to grow to achieve their objectives. She translates her knowledge to them in a manner they can understand. With a growth mindset, she takes the time to provide individualized direct, fair, and timely feedback. Her primary interest is not in receiving accolades for herself but in learners progressing toward their success." Dr. T. Johnson (Associate Program Director) ~ "Without Becky as an open-minded and supportive advocate that consistently strives to improve the residency program, not only would we be without this vital curriculum, but I would also be unfulfilled and less accomplished. I have the deepest gratitude for her support, which led to the implementation of a well-received curriculum now in its third year." Dr. A. Dow (Division Chief, Hospital Medicine) ~ "She managed the challenges of resident safety and education during the COVID pandemic with grace and skill, ensuring adequate staff to cover the ever-increasing patient census while simultaneously protecting resident health and education."

VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical Education "LGME" Award for Program Coordinator

Cesley Watkins

Internal Medicine Fellowships Senior Program Coordinator



Cesley Watkins is the Senior Fellowship Program Coordinator in the Department of Internal Medicine Office of Educational Affairs at VCU Health, where she has built a reputation as a dedicated and skilled leader in graduate medical education (GME) administration over the past six years. With a Bachelor of Arts in History and an Early Education concentration from VCU, along with 24 graduate credit hours in Teaching-Early Education, Cesley's educational foundation is rooted in a deep commitment to learning and development. She has also earned certifications in Human Resources Management and Organizational Effectiveness from Villanova University Online. In 2024, she completed the Advanced Program Administrator Training Program through the National Society of Academic Medical Administrators, further honing her expertise in GME. Before transitioning into healthcare administration, Cesley worked in early childhood education, human resources, and program management. Some of her experience includes serving as a licensing inspector, area manager for before and after school programs, and assistant director of a childcare facility on a military base —positions that have significantly influenced her approach to supporting medical learners.

Since joining VCU Health in 2014, Cesley has consistently demonstrated her ability to manage complex programs within the GME environment. She currently provides comprehensive administrative support to several Internal Medicine fellowship programs, including Gastroenterology, Transplant Hepatology, Inflammatory Bowel Disease & Nutrition, and Allergy & Immunology. She

oversees application processes; organizes interview days; facilitates trainee orientation, ensuring ACGME compliance; and provides ongoing support to program directors and fellows. Cesley's organizational skills and ability to build strong relationships have made her a key asset to the department. Known for her proactive problem-solving, she played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic, assisting an understaffed GME office while managing her full workload. In recognition of her exceptional leadership, Cesley was promoted to Senior Fellowship Program Coordinator in 2023. She was also appointed Fellowship Senior Coordinator Team Lead, where she now mentors new program coordinators and has helped expand the fellowship coordinator team from two to eight members. As a mentor, Cesley emphasizes professional development and ensures coordinators are well-prepared for long-term success in GME. Cesley remains committed to continuous professional growth, actively participating in GME regional and national conferences, as well as specialty-specific virtual events. She is a member of the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine and the National Society of Academic Medical Administrators, where she serves on the Education Committee. Additionally, she contributes to several institutional GME committees and regularly volunteers at GME events.

Notable nomination portfolio quotes: Dr. C. Barrett (Associate Chair for Education) ~ "Despite the demands of coordinating multiple programs, her program coordinators comment specifically that they always feel as if they were the only program she manages, this speaks volumes of the personal attention Cesley affords whomever she is serving in the moment and the careful, accountable task completion and follow through she brings. When the GME office was critically understaffed, Cesley did not hesitate to offer her assistance to the GME office staff even though we were also critically understaffed." Anonymous Fellow Survey Response (shared by Dr. Ravi Vachhani) ~ "SHE IS AMAZING! WE LOVE HER." Dr. Ravi Vachhani (Gastroenterology Fellowship Director) ~ "For the past six years, she has significantly improved fellows' support structure and, in the process, their ability to focus on education without distraction. She has done so in an era whose span included the peak of COVID-19, severe personnel shortages and an untold list of trainee crises."

*Outstanding Departmental Teacher Award in
Health Sciences Education*

Timothy P. York, Ph.D.

Department of Cellular, Molecular and Genetic Medicine

Rosellen Roche, M.D., Ph.D.

Department of Family Medicine and Population Health

Kimberly K. Jefferson, Ph.D.

Department of Microbiology and Immunology

Sandra J. Colello, Ph.D.

Department of Neuroscience and Anatomy

S. Stevens Negus, Ph.D.

Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Selection of the outstanding departmental teacher is determined by a process developed by each basic sciences department.

*Outstanding Teacher Awards in
Undergraduate Medical Education*

Best Teacher in the Course and Clerkship Awards

Class of 2028 Scientific Foundations of Medicine

Marie Do, M.D.	Foundations of Disease
Kimberly Jefferson, Ph.D.	Immunity and Infection
Carmen Sato-Bigbee, Ph.D.	Molecular Basis of Health and Disease
Joel Schlosburg, Ph.D.	Principles of Autonomics and Pharmacology
Jose Eltit, Ph.D.	Principles of Physiology

Class of 2028 Applied Medical Sciences A

Grace Prince, M.D.	Endocrine
Milan Patel, M.D.	GI
Melissa McGinn Greer, Ph.D.	Movement
Sarah Milton, M.D.	Reproduction

Class of 2027 Applied Medical Sciences B

Jeffrey Dupree, Ph.D.	Anatomy
Bushra Shah, M.D.	Behavioral Sciences
Krishnasree Rao, M.D.	Cardiovascular
Pearce Korb, M.D.	Neuroscience
Sammy Pedram, M.D.	Pulmonary
Sarah Street, M.D., Ph.D.	Renal

Longitudinal Curriculum

Elizabeth Sonntag, M.D.	Longitudinal Curriculum
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Class of 2027 and 2028 Practice of Clinical Medicine

Jessica Tsukanov, D.O.	Class of 2027 PCM Preceptor (Family Medicine)
Danielle Johnson, M.D.	Class of 2027 PCM Preceptor
Brad McQuilkin, M.D.	Class of 2027 Small Group Leader
Erin Dunbar, M.D.	Class of 2028 PCM Small Group Leader
Patrick McLaughlin, M.D.	Class of 2028 PCM Small Group Leader

Class of 2026 M3 Clerkships

Arline Bohannon, M.D.	Ambulatory
John Marsh, M.D. & Janelle Weaver, M.D.	Family Medicine (Middlebrook Family Medicine)
Abhi Nandan, M.D.	Internal Medicine
Stephanie Bissonnette, D.O.	Neurology
Katherine Czyszczon, M.D.	Ob-Gyn
Jennifer Johnson, D.O.	Ob-Gyn - Riverside
Sean McKenna, M.D.	Pediatrics
Lauren Nutile, M.D.	Psychiatry
Patrick Melmer, M.D.	Surgery

*Outstanding Teacher Awards in
Undergraduate Medical Education*
Faculty with High Evaluation Awards

Class of 2026 M3 Clerkships

Daniel Komorowski, M.D.	Ambulatory
Jon Kaminer, M.D.	Family Medicine
Katherine Griffin, D.O.	Family Medicine
Kennerly (Clint) Patrick, D.O.	Internal Medicine
Jurga Adomaityte, M.D.	Internal Medicine -VAMC
Jennifer Haynes, M.D.	Neurology
Har Doshi, M.D.	Neurology
Aaron Goldberg, M.D.	Ob-Gyn
Jawwad Khan, M.D.	Ob-Gyn - Riverside
Meredith Mitchell, M.D.	Pediatrics
Jawed Iqbal, M.D.	Pediatrics
Alex Ambrose, D.O.	Psychiatry
Charles Kramer, M.D.	Psychiatry
Adam Khader, M.D.	Surgery
Kelley Dodson, M.D.	Surgery

Charting New Directions Award

**Megan Donohue, M.D. &
Brian Cassel, Ph.D.**

Co-Course Directors, M1/M2 Population Health &
Evidence-Based Medicine

Distinguished Service Award



Linda Costanzo, Ph.D.
Department of Cellular, Molecular and Genetic Medicine

The Distinguished Service Award is presented to Dr. Costanzo in recognition of 45 years of extraordinary dedication to medical students through her unwavering commitment to teaching, mentorship, and the advancement of medical education

Excellence in Learning Environment Response Team

Mitigating Mistreatment and Promoting Excellence

At VCU School of Medicine, we strive to foster an equitable, inclusive environment that is free from bias, discrimination and harassment, where our students can safely learn and thrive. We hold our students, trainees and faculty to high standards, and expect professionalism and mutual respect among all learners and educators. The Learning Environment Exemplar process allows students to recognize outstanding people who have positively contributed to the VCU SOM learning environment being an exemplary place to learn and work. The following faculty members have been recognized as the 2024-2025 Professionalism Exemplar Awardees via medical student nominations:

Michael Amendola, M.D. Surgery

Mathula Thangarajh, M.D. Neurology

Christopher Henry, M.D. Neurology

Tashima Lambert-Giles, M.D. OB/GYN

Saima Shikari-Dossaji, D.O. Internal Medicine

*Congratulations Faculty Inductees to
the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society*
"Worthy to Serve the Suffering"

Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) is the only medical school honor society in the world. It recognizes and perpetuates excellence in the medical profession by promoting scholarship and research in medical schools; encouraging a high standard of character and conduct among medical students and graduates; and recognizing high attainment in medical science, practice and related fields. The VCU Chapter is the Brown Sequard Chapter. Nominations are made by members and voted on once a year in the spring.

2025 Inductees

Lisa L. Ellis, M.D., M.S., Internal Medicine
Priyanka Majety, M.D., Internal Medicine

*Congratulations Faculty Graduates on Completing
the Certificate in Medical Education*

The Graduate Certificate in Medical Education program continues to be instrumental in enhancing the preparedness of SOM faculty to promote active and engaged learning in classroom and clinical settings. As of June 2025, 80 faculty have completed this certificate program.

Fall 2024 Graduate

Denny Henson, Practice of Clinical Medicine

Spring 2025 Graduates

Nayef Chahin, M.D., Pediatrics
Michael Jones, M.D., Emergency Medicine
Kevin Leal, D.O., Pediatrics
Michael L'Heureux, M.D., Internal Medicine

Congratulations Advanced Research Mentoring Level Two Badge Earners

The Advanced Research Mentoring (ARM) program is a multi-level interactive mentoring training program for faculty engaged in research. With support from the Center for Health Advancement, the Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Science and the School of Medicine Graduate Education Office, the School of Medicine Office of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development (SOMOFAFD) has cultivated a cadre of fourteen facilitators since the program inception. These facilitators span scientific disciplines and clinical specialties from pediatrics, kinesiology, immunology, cancer cell signaling, pharmacology, and others. The program utilizes the Entering Mentoring for Biomedical Researchers curriculum, developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for the Improved Mentoring Experiences in Research (CIMER). The evidence-based curriculum focuses on the aspects of mentoring that are essential to all innovative research including aligning expectations, fostering independence, and addressing meaningful engagement in research. ARM Level One is a two-hour, in-person session where faculty engage in reflections and discussions on their mentoring philosophies, expectations, and communication styles. ARM Level Two is an additional eight-hour commitment where faculty who have completed Level One work through the remainder of the Entering Mentoring curriculum. We wish to recognize the individuals who have attained the ARM Level Two verified microcredential signifying their deep commitment to research mentoring.

Hamid Akbarali, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Matthew "Matt" Banks, Ph.D., Pharm.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Jill Bettinger, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Linda Burkett, M.D. Ob/Gyn

Imad Damaj, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Debbie DiazGranados, Ph.D. Psychiatry

Hannah Fulenwider, Ph.D. Neuroscience & Anatomy

Dina Garcia, Ph.D. Health Behavior & Policy

Jakob Green, Ph.D. Neuroscience & Anatomy

Kelsey Hagan, Ph.D. Psychiatry

Kurt Hauser, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Lankupalle Jayanthi, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Jennifer Jordan, Ph.D. Biomedical Engineering

Amy Lasek, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Aron Lichtman, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Joyce Lloyd, Ph.D. Cellular, Molecular & Genetic Medicine

Rebecca Martin, Ph.D. Microbiology & Immunology

Laura Mathies, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Asmaa Namoos, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D. Surgery

Patrick Nana-Sinkam, M.D. Internal Medicine

S. Stevens "Steve" Negus, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Gretchen Neigh, Ph.D., MBA Neuroscience & Anatomy

Amber Paulus, Ph.D. Internal Medicine

Sammanda Ramamoorthy, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Fadi Salloum, Ph.D. Internal Medicine

Joel Schlosburg, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Rebecca Segal, Ph.D. Mathematics & Applied Math

Rita Shiang, Ph.D. Cellular, Molecular & Genetic Medicine

Lisa Shock, Ph.D. Microbiology & Immunology

India Sisler, M.D. Pediatrics

Arnethea Sutton, Ph.D. Kinesiology

Dewey Taylor, Ph.D. Mathematics & Applied Math

Maria Teves, Ph.D. Obstetrics & Gynecology

Cory Trankle, M.D. Internal Medicine

Stacey Wahl, Ph.D. OFAFD

Brian "Binks" Wattenberg, Ph.D. Cellular, Molecular & Genetic Medicine

Paul Whiteaker, Ph.D. Pharmacology & Toxicology

Huiping Zhou, Ph.D. Microbiology & Immunology

2025 Teaching Excellence Awards Nominees

Peter M. Moffett, M.D., Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine

Laura Paletta-Hobbs, M.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine

Lindsay A. Taylor, M.D., Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine

John T. Vernon, M.D., Associate Professor of Psychiatry

Christina M. Vitto, M.D., Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine

Brian W. Wattenberg, Ph.D., Professor of Cellular, Molecular & Genetic Medicine

Congratulations to our Nominees!

Clerkship Leadership Teams

Bennett Lee, Megan Lemay, Hayley Mathews Ambulatory Medicine

Denee Moore, Briana Lowery Family Medicine

Nate Warner, Patrick Fadden, Thomas Bryan Internal Medicine

Neel Dixit Neurology

Fidelma Rigby, Marta Vicente, Megan Lo Obstetrics and Gynecology

Cliff Lee, Kyle Trowbridge, Risham Qureshi Pediatrics

Kathryn Jones, Ryan Chiarella, Crystal Adamcheck Psychiatry

Eric Nelson, Autumn Griffin Surgery

Special Thanks

to all who contributed to the Faculty Excellence Awards

Jean Bailey, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Faculty Development
Bakir Brown, Executive Assistant
Jody Hedstrom, Senior Program Specialist
Kathy Kreutzer, M.Ed., Special Projects
Joel Moll, M.D., Interim Assistant Dean of Faculty Affairs
Kenneth Foster Warren, Ed.D., Senior Instructional Technologist

Office of Medical Education

Lelia Brinegar, Ed.D.
Lisa Domico, Ph.D.
Sarah Hobgood, M.D.

Photographers

Kenneth Foster Warren, Ed.D., Teaching Excellence Award Portraits
Cindy Blanchard, Cynthia Newmark Photography, Faculty Excellence Awards Program
Arda Athman, Social Media Specialist, VCU School of Medicine

Previous Teaching Award Winners

Enrique Gerszten, M.D. Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

Linda S. Costanzo, Ph.D., 1999
James L. Levenson, M.D., 2000
R. Paul Fairman, M.D., 2001
Isaac Keith Wood, M.D., 2002
Robert L. Balster, Ph.D., 2003
Richard M. Costanzo, Ph.D., 2003
Suzanne E. Barbour, Ph.D., 2004
Robert F. Diegelmann, Ph.D., 2005
David F. Gardner, M.D., 2006
Leslie S. Satin, Ph.D., 2007
Enrique Gerszten, M.D., 2008
Tomasz Kordula, Ph.D., 2009
Raphael J. Witorsch, Ph.D., 2009
Alan Dow, M.D., M.S.H.A., 2010
Craig E. Cheifetz, M.D., 2011
Margaret M. Grimes, M.D., M.Ed., 2012
Clive M. Baumgarten, Ph.D., 2013
Fidelma B. Rigby, M.D., 2013
Susan D. Roseff, M.D., 2014
Diane M. Biskobing, M.D., 2015
Beth K. Rubinstein, M.D., 2016
Kimberly W. Sanford, M.D., 2017
Stephanie Call, M.D., M.S.P.H., 2018
Virginia Pallante, M.S., 2018
Frank Fulco, M.D., RPh, 2019
John W. Bigbee, Ph.D., 2020
J. Christian Barrett, M.D., 2021
Barry V. Kilpatrick, M.D., FAAP, 2021
Mark Parker, M.D., FACR, 2022
Sarah Hobgood, M.D., 2023
Edmond P. Wickham III, M.D., M.P.H. 2024

Itby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching

David R. Salter, M.D., 1999
Joel A. Blum, M.D., 2000
Cesar I. Kanamori, M.D., 2001
Robert K. Schneider, M.D., 2003
Robert A. Adler, M.D., 2004
Alpha (Berry) A. Fowler, III, M.D., 2005
Brian J. Kaplan, M.D., 2006
Stephanie A. Call, M.D., M.S.P.H., 2007
John G. Pierce, Jr., M.D., 2008
Douglas S. Franzen, M.D., M.Ed., 2009
Barry V. Kirkpatrick, M.D., 2010
Frank A. Fulco, M.D., 2011
Marjolein de Wit, M.D., M.S., 2012
Mary Ann Turner, M.D., 2013
Catherine E. Grossman, M.D., 2014
Rahul J. Anand, M.D., 2015
Clifton C. Lee, M.D., 2015
Paula A. Ferrada, M.D., 2016
James Levy, M.D., 2016
Duane C. Williams, M.D., 2017
Phoebe Ashley, M.D., 2018
Josephina Vossen, M.D., Ph.D., 2019
Jason M. Kidd, M.D., 2020
Michelle N. Brooks, M.D., 2021
Danielle Noreika, M.D., 2022
Lisa K. Brath, M.D., 2023
Amanda George, M.D., Ph.D., 2024

Previous Teaching Award Winners

Distinguished Mentor Award

John Bigbee, Ph.D., 1999
W. Hans Carter, Jr., Ph.D., 2000
Suzanne R. Lavoie, M.D., 2000
Daniel H. Conrad, Ph.D., 2001
Mary D. Nettleman, M.D., M.S., 2001
Cynthia M. Heldberg, Ph.D., 2002
Sandra P. Welch, Ph.D., 2002
Deborah L. Haller, Ph.D., 2003
George R. Leichnetz, Ph.D., 2004
Roland N. Pittman, Ph.D., 2005
David X. Cifu, M.D., 2005
Chris Gennings, Ph.D., 2006
John E. Nestler, M.D., 2006
James M. Messmer, M.D., M.Ed., 2007
John N. Clore, M.D., 2008
Clive M. Baumgarten, Ph.D., 2009
Richard G. Moran, Ph.D., 2009
Richard M. Costanzo, Ph.D., 2010
Paul H. Ratz, Ph.D., 2010
Daniel H. Conrad, Ph.D., 2011
Louis J. De Felice, Ph.D., M.S., 2012
Therese M. Duane, M.D., 2012
Aron J. Lichtman, Ph.D., 2013
Diomedes E. Logothetis, Ph.D., 2014
Hamid I. Akbarali, Ph.D., 2015
Antonio Abbate, M.D., Ph.D., 2016
Alpha A. (Berry) Fowler, III, M.D., 2017
S. Murthy Karnam, Ph.D., 2017
Sarah Spiegel, Ph.D., 2018
Steven Crossman, M.D., 2019
Michael Miles, M.D., Ph.D., 2019
Ananda B. Amstadter, Ph.D., 2020
Kenneth A. Ellenbogen, M.D., 2020
Amir A. Toor, M.D., 2021
S. Stevens Negus III, Ph.D., 2022
Tomasz Kordula, Ph.D., 2023
Huiping Zhou, Ph.D., 2024

Educational Innovation/Educational Research Award

Joann N. Bodurtha, M.D., M.P.H., 1999
Michelle Whitehurst-Cook, M.D., and Rita Willett,
M.D., 1999
Carol L. Hampton, M.M.S., 2000
Alice S. "Dolly" Pakurar, Ph.D., 2001
Thomas M. Kerkering, M.D., 2002
Charles O. Frazier, M.D., 2003
Edward J.N. Ishac, h.D., 2004
J. Dennis Hoban, Ed.D., 2005
Isaac K. Wood, M.D., 2006
Leanne M. Yanni, M.D., and Team, 2007
Alan Dow, M.D., M.S.H.A., and Team, 2008
Curtis N. Sessler, M.D., and Team, 2008
Thomas Palliative Care Program, VCU Massey Cancer
Center, 2009
Molecular Diagnostics Practicum Academic Unit, 2010
Pawan Suri, M.D., 2011
Lelia E. Brinegar, M.Ed., and Christopher M. Woleben,
M.D., 2012
Ellen L. Brock, M.D., M.P.H., and Staff of the Center
for Human Simulation and Patient Safety, 2013
John (Christian) Barrett, M.D.; Gonzalo, M. L.
Bearman, M.D., M.P.H.;
Michael P. Stevens, M.D., M.P.H., 2014
Peter A. Boling, M.D., Alan W. Dow, III, M.D.,
M.S.H.A., Joel D. Browning, B.S., Christopher L.
Stephens, M.S., and the Reynolds Interprofessional
Team, 2015
Michael S. Ryan, M.D., M.E.H.P., 2016
Michael Joyce, M.D., and Sammy Pedram, M.D., 2017
Steven Bishop, M.D., 2018
Peter Haar, M.D., Ph.D., Marvin "Alex" Meredith,
Ph.D.; Gross Anatomy Teaching Faculty; VCU
Radiology Residency Program; VCU CT
Technologists, 2019
Megan S. Lemay, M.D., Sara Wilson McKay, Ph.D.,
and John E. Nestler, M.D., MACP, 2021
Kimberly Pedram, M.D., 2022
Sarika Modi, M.D., 2023
Pete D. Meliagros, M.D., 2024

2025 Awards Selection Committees

Teaching Excellence Awards

Teaching Awards Selection Committee

Charles “Andy” Anderson, Ph.D., Cellular, Molecular & Genetic Medicine
Jean Bailey, Ph.D., Co-Chair, Associate Dean for Faculty Development (non-voting)
Amanda George, M.D., Ph.D., Internal Medicine
Sara Gerz, Graduate Student Representative
Jody Hedstrom, B.A., Senior Program Specialist (non-voting)
Sarah Hobgood, M.D., Internal Medicine
Lindsay Irwin, M4 Student Representative
Aron Lichtman, Ph.D., Pharmacology and Toxicology
Joel Moll, M.D., Co-Chair, Emergency Medicine
Kiana Rahimi, M4 Student Representative
Ashley Slaughter, M.D., Surgery
John Urbach, M.D., Psychiatry
Edmond P. Wickham III, M.D., MPH, Internal Medicine and Pediatrics
Nicole Winkelmann, M.D., Housestaff Representative

Outstanding Teacher Awards in Undergraduate Medical Education

Pre-Clinical Curriculum Committee

Lelia Brinegar, Ed.D., Office of Medical Education
Lindsay Irwin, Class of 2026 Curriculum Representative
Monica Jinsi, Class of 2026 Curriculum Representative
Avni Malik, Class of 2026 Curriculum Representative
Kiana Rahimi, Class of 2026 Curriculum Representative
Sarah Durisek, Class of 2027 Curriculum Representative
Sonya Feeser, Class of 2027 Curriculum Representative
Rachel Fry, Class of 2027 Curriculum Representative
Yumna Rahman, Class of 2027 Curriculum Representative

M3 Clinical Education

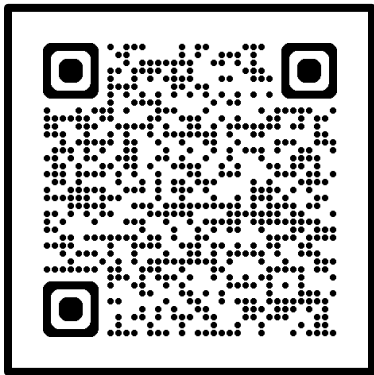
Ambulatory Clerkship Committee
Family Medicine Clerkship Committee
Internal Medicine Clerkship Committee
Neurology Clerkship Committee
Obstetrics and Gynecology Clerkship Committee
Pediatrics Clerkship Committee
Psychiatry Clerkship Committee
Surgery Clerkship Committee

VCU/VCUHS Leadership in Graduate Medical Education Award

Graduate Medical Education Committee

VCU School of Medicine, Office of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development

The Office of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development (OFAFD) serves two functions for the School of Medicine. It is the central location for oversight of School of Medicine faculty-related policies and guidelines governing appointments, promotions, and tenure. It is also responsible for the design, development, and delivery of activities that enhance the roles, work-life, and professional development of faculty at VCU School of Medicine. The Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs promotes a culture of faculty success and excellence and provides leadership and counsel to faculty in the School's 22 basic health science and clinical departments, as well as a multitude of affiliated institutes and centers on issues related to work goals, performance, recruitment, compensation, recognition, and advancement. The Associate Dean for Faculty Development leads efforts to ensure scientists, clinicians, and educators are engaged in opportunities that develop their skill sets in evidence-based teaching, scholarship and innovation, and career advancement. The office addresses professionalism, wellness, and CME. The Associate Dean also coordinates a 12-credit School of Education graduate certificate focusing on teaching and scholarship in medical education.



Our 2025-2026 Faculty Development Guide is a click away!

<https://assets.som.vcu.edu/medschool/docs/FAInteractivePDF.pdf>

SAVE THE DATE

2026 Health Sciences Education Symposium

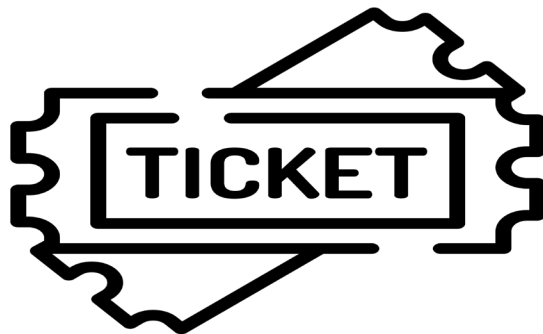
Thursday, March 26, 2026

McGlothlin Medical Education Center (MMEC) 7-200A/205B

This immersive day-long event will showcase educational research from the entire MCV campus. The proposal submission period kicks off in October. Keep your eye out for further details about the symposium and opportunities to participate.

The Office of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development **thanks you** for your participation in the awards program.

We look forward to seeing you
next year!



This page is also your ticket for lunch in the Lobby. Enjoy!