



IN THE LOUPE

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

This June, as we welcome a new class of interns, we find ourselves once again in a moment of transition—not just within our training programs, but across our department, our health system, and the broader world we serve. These are not easy times. The pace of change in medicine is unrelenting. Financial pressures, workforce shortages, ethical tensions around AI, and widening disparities in care all weigh heavily on how we do our work—and how we lead. There are forces around us that feel chaotic, even ominous. And yet, we must continue forward.

As organizational psychologist and bestselling author **Adam Grant** reminds us, *“When you are surrounded by change, it’s not your job to predict the future. It’s your job to be adaptive, to learn quickly, and to help others do the same.”*

To our new interns: you are entering a profession that requires technical skill, yes—but also reflection, flexibility, and courage. We’re very glad you’re here. You are stepping into a community that will challenge you, support you, and grow with you. **To the rest of us:** this season demands honesty, patience, and discipline. We must be flexible in how we work, willing to evolve our structures and expectations, and generous with grace—toward one another, and toward those trying to lead through real-time uncertainty. Not all answers will come quickly. Compromise will be necessary. Leadership in flux is not weakness—it’s a sign of care and responsibility. There will be discomfort. But we can navigate it together if we stayed rooted in our values.

Let’s recommit to open communication, shared accountability, and an unwavering focus on our mission—to care, to train, to innovate, and to lead. Change is not the enemy. But how we meet it together will determine who we become.

Special Announcement: June 26 Faculty Meeting

refreshments served from 4:30-5

Pleased to share that **Dean Talmadge E. King** will be joining us for our upcoming faculty meeting on **Thursday, June 26 at 5:00 PM**. This will be a valuable opportunity for open dialogue. We’re planning a **fireside chat-style conversation** featuring several of our department leaders in conversation with the Dean and me. We hope you’ll join us for what promises to be a thoughtful and engaging discussion.



On June 9th, the School of Medicine announced this year’s **2025 STAR Achievement Award recipients!**

I’m proud to share that **18** individuals from our department were recognized for their exceptional contributions:

Emma Canepa, Madison Cavallaro, Doris Chan, Heidi Crist, Gilberto Da Gente, Emily Diamonon, Monica Diaz, Frenni Enriquez, Eleanor Fiege, Rachelle Lau, Alexandre Lee, Mandy Li, Sabrina Lum, Stacey Ma, Jason Powers, Hugh Swarts, Renee Sweeney, and Christine Kar Yan Yung



DR. JULIA CHANDLER
X DR. JULIE ANN SOSA



FELLOWSHIP

Julie Ann

OVER THE LAST 6 MONTHS

Over the past six months, our department has been a hub of incredible energy, growth (**11 new hires on next page**), and recognition—marked by a wave of personal and professional achievements from national awards and prestigious fellowships to leadership appointments and groundbreaking research. **39 UCSF Department of Surgery physicians** were recently featured in **San Francisco Magazine** as part of their **2025 Top Doctors spotlight**. The list ([Link to issue for reference](#)), originally published by Castle Connolly earlier this year, was re-featured in the magazine's latest issue, reaffirming the excellence and continued recognition of our faculty across the Bay Area and beyond.

Dr. Lucy Kornblith, UCSF and Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center Trauma Surgeon, was named the **inaugural Elsbach-Richards Endowed Chair I in Surgery at UCSF**. A national leader in trauma care and research, Dr. Kornblith's appointment recognizes her exceptional contributions to science, clinical excellence, and her steadfast commitment to advancing gender equity in academic surgery.

Trauma Surgeon **Dr. Andre Campbell** was selected by the **UCSF School of Medicine Class of 2025** for the **Osler Distinguished Teaching Award**, honoring his exceptional impact as a teacher, mentor, and compassionate physician. This recognition comes in addition to his recent selection as the **Distinguished Master Educator** by the **Association for Surgical Education**—underscoring his national and institutional leadership in surgical education.

UCSF Vascular Surgeon **Dr. Jade Hiramoto** was honored with the **UCSF Health Exceptional Physician Award**—a prestigious recognition of her unwavering dedication to patient care, mastery in vascular surgery, and lasting impact on the field. A true leader in every sense, Dr. Hiramoto continues to set the standard for excellence.

Dr. Jasleen Kukreja esteemed Cardiothoracic Surgeon and Director of the Lung Transplant Program at UCSF Medical Center, was recognized with the **UCSF Health Exceptional Physician Award**—a tribute to her surgical excellence, leadership, and unwavering commitment to advancing lung transplantation.

Dr. Jessica Gosnell has been appointed the next **Clerkship Director for the UCSF Department of Surgery**, effective July 1, 2025. A leader in endocrine surgery, Dr. Gosnell will oversee Surgery 110, 140, CIE, and the longitudinal clerkship programs—advancing curriculum development, career advising, and student wellness across the medical education continuum.

Mid-April, the Department of Surgery announced the appointment of **Dr. Jason Smith** as **Division Chief of Adult Cardiac Surgery and Lung Transplantation**, effective June 1, 2025. Trained at Loyola and Stanford, Dr. Smith brings deep expertise in transplant care and immune function research, and is poised to lead the division into its next chapter of clinical and scientific excellence.

Pediatric Surgeon **Dr. Amar Nijagal** will step into a new leadership role as **Associate Program Director of Professional Development and Wellness** within the **UCSF General Surgery Residency Program**. In this position, he will help guide resident growth, well-being, and career development—further strengthening the program's commitment to training and supporting future surgical leaders.

Dr. Tammy Chang was named **Chair of the 2025–26 UCSF Surgery Resident Research Symposium**. In this role, she will lead the planning and curation of Research Day, showcasing the innovative and impactful work of our surgical trainees.

Dr. Jeffrey Velotta received the **Society of Asian Academic Surgeons (SAAS) 2025 Mid-Career Faculty Award**, which supported his participation in the Society of University Surgeons (SUS) Mid-Career Academic Surgery Course held ahead of the Academic Surgical Congress (ASC) 2025. The award highlights his continued advancement and contributions in academic surgery.



Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon **Dr. Merisa Piper** was honored with the **2024–25 Long-Term Mentor Award**, following a nomination from her mentee **Aileen Gozali**. The award highlights Dr. Piper's exceptional commitment to mentorship.

After dedicating his life to pediatric surgery and firefighting **Dr. James Betts** has been awarded an **honorary PhD** from the **University of Vermont**. A renowned surgeon, mentor, philanthropist, and leader, Dr. Betts embodies a life of service.

Dr. Melissa Coleman, a Cardiothoracic Surgeon in the department has been appointed **Associate Program Director of Curriculum** for the **UCSF General Surgery Residency Program**. In this role, she will lead efforts to strengthen and innovate the educational experience for our surgical trainees.

Endocrine Surgeon **Dr. Sanziana Roman** was appointed **Co-Interim Associate Dean for Curriculum, Foundations 2 & Career Launch**. In this role, she is leading several key initiatives, including Career Launch, PI Weeks, and the Anti-Oppression Curriculum Initiative—strengthening the bridge between clinical education and equity-focused medical training.

Dr. Jasmine Wong was selected as a **2024 PISCES Teaching Awardee**. This recognition honors her exceptional commitment to clinical excellence, mentorship, and compassionate teaching. Dr. Wong was celebrated at the annual **PISCES Hail and Farewell Celebration**, where students and colleagues recognized her lasting impact on medical education at UCSF.

Toward the end of March, the Department announced **Dr. Peter G. Stock** as the **inaugural Vice Chair for Professionalism**. Dr. Stock will support the faculty code of conduct and professionalism and advance the values of integrity, accountability, respect, and collaboration within our Department.

In early June, we proudly announced that Cardiac Surgeon **Dr. Amy G. Fiedler** will step into the role of **Surgical Director of Heart Transplantation and Mechanical Circulatory Support**, effective July 1, 2025. A national leader in transplant innovation and heart failure care, Dr. Fiedler brings bold vision and transformative expertise to this critical position.

NEW HIRES

WELCOME TO UCSF SURGERY

Dr. Aaron Berger



Pediatric
Plastic Surgeon

Dr. Smita Mascharak



Trauma Critical Care
Surgeon - East Bay

Dr. Kimberly Badal



Assistant Adjunct Professor of Surgery in
the section of Breast Surgery in the
division of Surgical Oncology

Dr. Hillary Braun



Transplant Surgeon

Dr. Amrita Basu



Associate Professor in the In-Residence Series
within the Division of Surgical Oncology

Dr. Naveen Balan



Trauma, Emergency General Surgery, and
Surgical Critical Care Specialist

Dr. Nichole Starr



Trauma & Critical Care Surgeon

Dr. Ahmed Naem



Vascular Surgeon

Dr. Matthew Skougard



Thoracic Surgeon

Dr. Bianca Bromberger



Adult Cardiothoracic
Surgeon

Dr. Gabriella Grisotti



Pediatric Surgeon

EDUCATION

Graduating Chief Residents

UCSF General Surgery



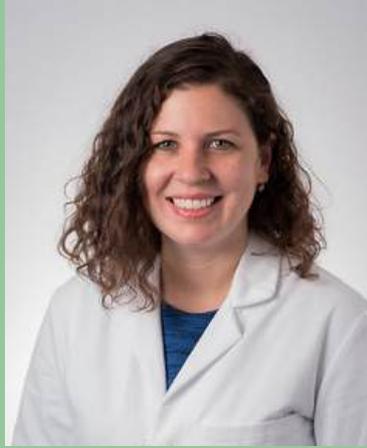
Dr. Nathan Brand
Faculty (General Surgery),
University of New Mexico

UCSF General Surgery



Dr. Audrey Brown
Transplant Surgery Fellowship,
UCSF

UCSF General Surgery



Dr. Amandine Godier-Furnemont
Surgical Critical Care Fellowship,
UCSF

UCSF General Surgery



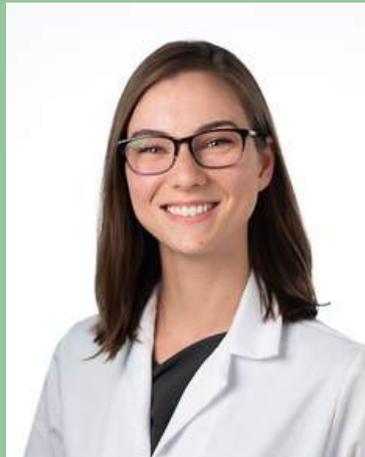
Dr. Daniel Hoffman
Surgical Oncology Fellowship,
City of Hope

UCSF General Surgery



Dr. Caroline Melhado
Pediatric Surgery Fellowship,
Boston Children's

UCSF General Surgery



Dr. Katherine Sanders
Endocrine Surgery Fellowship,
UCSF

UCSF General Surgery



Dr. Ava Yap
Pediatric Surgery Fellowship,
UT Houston

UCSF General Surgery



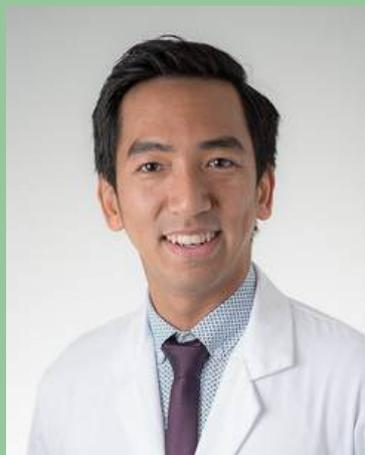
Dr. Mignote Yilma
Transplant Surgery Fellowship,
UCSF

UCSF Plastic Surgery



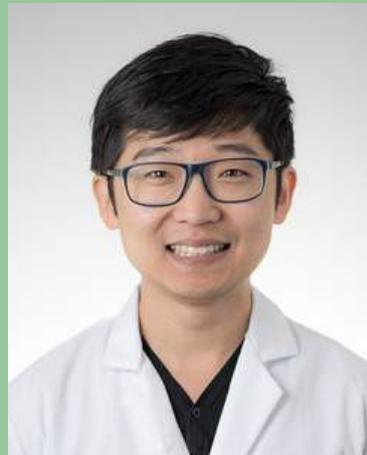
Dr. Laura Barnes
Microsurgery Fellowship,
University of Pennsylvania

UCSF Plastic Surgery



Dr. Justin Cheng
Aesthetic fellowship,
Plastic Surgery Associates Aesthetic
Surgery Dr. Furnas and Canales

UCSF Plastic Surgery



Dr. Solomon Lee
Craniofacial Fellowship,
University of Washington

EDUCATION

Incoming General Surgery Categorical Interns



Muta Abiff, MD, PhD
Case Western



Katherine Barnes, MD
UCSF



Christine Carico, MD, PhD
Univ. of Alabama



Pujita Munnangi, MD, MS
Texas A&M



Adaeze Obinelo, MD, MPH
USC



Kayla Switalla, MD
Univ. of Minnesota



Lucas Wachsmuth, MD, PhD
Duke



Lamario Williams, MD, PhD
Univ. of Alabama

Incoming Plastic Surgery Categorical Interns



Israel Falade, MD
UCSF



Aileen Gozali, MD, MM
UCSF



Joseph Mocharnuk, MD, MS
University of Pittsburgh



Shannon Su, MD
Emory

Incoming General Surgery Preliminary Interns



Claire Buxton, MD
Univ. of Washington



Tolashe Ebulomo, MD, MBA
Emory



Julio Flores, MD, PhD
Albert Einstein



Joliana Lecointe, MD
Meharry Medical College



Adriana Pero, MD, MSc
Mount Sinai



Rachel Russell, MD, MS, MPH
Univ. of Arizona Phoenix



Zhuoran Yao, MD
UT Southwestern



Nawal Yessuf, MD
UCSF



Queen Abure, MD
Medical College of Georgia at
Augusta University

Vascular Surgery Integrated Categorical Intern

Education in Action – Here’s a snapshot of how our curriculum—and the way we teach—continues to raise the bar. From immersive training to real-world application, we’re not just preparing future surgeons; we’re shaping bold, thoughtful leaders whose impact is felt far beyond the operating room. Every rotation, workshop, and mentorship moment is designed to elevate our learners—and the lives they’ll go on to change. The roundup below shows that in action.

Vascular Surgery PGY-4 Clinical Year Resident **Dr. Colleen Flanagan** had two new studies published this month in the *Journal of Vascular Surgery*:

- **“Large language models can accurately populate Vascular Quality Initiative procedural databases using narrative operative reports”** (PI: Dr. Allan Conway)
- **“Low rates of aortic surveillance imaging and clinical follow-up in patients with acute aortic dissection”** (PI: Dr. Jade Hiramoto)

PGY-5 **General Surgery** Senior Chief Resident **Dr. Kirithiga (Kirthi)**

Ramalingam recently published two major papers:

- In *JAMA Oncology*, she reports results from a Phase I clinical trial investigating intra-tumoral immunotherapy for high-risk ductal carcinoma in situ, conducted under the mentorship of Dr. Laura Esserman. The study shows promising clinical responses and a potential future alternative to surgery.
- In *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, she examines the impact of Medicaid expansion on survival outcomes in patients with lower GI cancers undergoing cytoreductive surgery and HIPEC, using national cancer database data.

General Surgery Research Year 1 Resident **Dr. Lucia Calthorpe** has been selected for the highly competitive **ACS Resident Research Scholarship**—an honor awarded to only a select group of trainees nationwide. The two-year, \$60,000 award (2025–2027 cycle) will fuel her research endeavors and further her trajectory as a rising leader in academic surgery.

General Surgery PGY-5 Senior Chief Resident **Dr. Jane Wang** continues to push the boundaries of hepatobiliary surgery with two recent accomplishments. She published **“Development and Validation of a Machine Learning Prediction Model for Textbook Outcome in Liver Surgery: Results from a Multicenter, International Cohort”** in *Annals of Surgery Open*, highlighting the role of AI in predicting surgical outcomes. She also presented her project **“Outcomes of Minimally Invasive Hepatectomy in Severely Obese Patients: Insights from the AMILES Registry”** at the **2025 AHPBA Annual Meeting** in Miami, FL—contributing valuable insight into the challenges and outcomes of surgery in high-BMI populations.

Recent Graduate **Dr. Mignote Yilma**, now a Transplant Fellow Year 1, was honored with a **2024 UCSF Health Exceptional Physician Award**—one of the institution’s highest clinical recognitions. The award was presented during UCSF’s Doctor’s Day celebration on March 27, spotlighting her exemplary dedication to patient care and clinical excellence.

Dr. Kara Faktor, a UCSF **General Surgery** Research Year 2 Resident was selected for the **2025–2026 Surgical Education Research Fellowship (SERF) Program**—a prestigious national fellowship recognizing emerging leaders committed to advancing the field of surgical education.

General Surgery PGY-2 Resident **Dr. Thomas Li** is off to a standout start with two publications pushing the boundaries of soft tissue healing and inflammation science. In *Journal of Orthopaedic Research*, he led a first-author study titled **“Tendon Inversion Improves Tendon-to-Bone Healing in a Rat Bicep Tenodesis Model”**, introducing a novel surgical approach that enhances tendon-to-bone integration. The findings have broad implications for mechanotransduction and can reshape how surgeons think about soft tissue healing. In *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, he co-authored **“Evaluation of Novel Therapeutic Agents for Modulation of the Inflammatory Response in Rotator Cuff Tendinopathy”**, using a mouse model to explore how novel small molecules can enhance mesenchymal stromal cell “stemness” and resolve chronic inflammation—an exciting step in improving post-operative wounds.

As part of his placement at the FDA, **General Surgery** PGY-4 Research Resident **Dr. Ali Abbasi** spearheaded a major cross-agency initiative within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** to establish a unified framework for health data use. For the first time, nine HHS agencies agreed to adopt a shared technological approach to extracting health data—advancing efforts in public health, research, and healthcare policy. The resulting strategy, a product of complex negotiations, was published in *JAMA* during the final days of the Biden-Harris administration.

Dr. Alison Baskin Research Resident Year 2 landed two major honors in cancer surgery and clinical mentorship. She was awarded the **AAS/AASF Clinical Outcomes & Health Services Research Award**—a competitive \$30,000 grant to support her investigation into the real-world impact of the Commission on Cancer Operative Standards. Her work will analyze how these guidelines are shaping surgical practice and outcomes across institutions during the 2025–2026 academic year. On the clinical side, Dr. Baskin earned the **Women in Thoracic Surgery Brigid Scanlan Traveling Mentorship Award**, securing a coveted one-month clinical immersion at **Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center**. The experience offers rare, direct access to leaders in thoracic oncology and reflects her rising profile in the field.

UCSF medical student **Kelsey Ogomori**, starting Categorical Intern at UCSD, was awarded the **2025 Poster of Distinction at the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Annual Simulation Summit**. The honor recognizes outstanding contributions to innovation and scholarship in surgical education and simulation-based training.

General Surgery PGY-4 Clinical Year Resident **Dr. Simon Chu** was awarded **1st place at the 5th Annual Thomas R. Russell Surgical Trainee Research Award Competition** for his presentation, **“Aire-Expressing Cells are Novel Mediators of Allograft Tolerance in a Murine Heterotopic Heart Transplant Model”**, conducted in the lab of **Dr. James Gardner**. He also co-authored **“Large Language Model Agents Can Use Tools to Perform Clinical Calculations”** in *Nature Portfolio Digital Medicine* alongside Stanford collaborators, where the team identified critical AI shortcomings in clinical math and introduced OpenMedCalc, a tool that increased model accuracy by 1300%. In *Cell Reports*, he published **“Dual α -globin-truncated Erythropoietin Receptor Knockin Restores Hemoglobin Production in α -thalassemia-derived Erythroid Cells”**, in collaboration with **Drs. Bruce Conklin, James Gardner, Tippi MacKenzie, and Kyle Cromer**—using CRISPR-based genome editing to restore hemoglobin production in cells from patients with α -thalassemia. Additionally, Dr. Chu co-authored **“Engineering Synthetic Signaling Receptors to Enable Erythropoietin-free Erythropoiesis”** in *Nature Communications*, a study with Stanford collaborators that reprogrammed stem cells to develop into red blood cells without recombinant EPO.

General Surgery PGY-4 clinical year Resident **Dr. Hannah Decker** has been selected as a **2025 JAMA Editorial Fellow**—one of only ten early-career clinicians and researchers chosen from a national pool of over 300 applicants. The prestigious fellowship offers a front-row seat to the editorial process of one of medicine’s most influential journals, with mentorship from JAMA’s senior editors and training in scientific publishing, peer review, and scholarly communication.

Frenni Acuesta, **Medical Student Education Coordinator**, was honored with the **Academic Program Administrator Certification in Surgery (APACS)** by the **Association for Surgical Education (ASE)**, recognizing her excellence in managing surgical education programs. She received the award at the **ASE Annual Meeting** in Seattle on May 9, 2025. During the meeting, Frenni also presented her work on using an intrapersonal approach to practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion in surgical education—adding to the national dialogue on equity-centered academic practices.

Dr. Alisha Heximer, a Research Year 1 Resident in the **UCSF East Bay General Surgery Program**, was selected for the **2025–2026 Surgical Education Research Fellowship (SERF) Program**. This highly competitive fellowship supports the development of innovative, impactful research in surgical education and training.

2025 RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM AWARDS

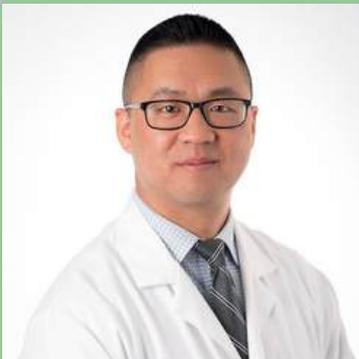


Dr. Jessica Santos-Parker, a second-year research resident in General Surgery at UCSF, received the award for **Outstanding Presentation in Clinical Research** for her work titled, "Patient and Hospital Factors Associated with Transfer of Emergency General Surgery Patients to a Tertiary/Quaternary Hospital."



Dr. Alison Baskin, a second-year research resident in General Surgery at UCSF, received the award for **Outstanding Presentation in Clinical Research** for her project titled, "Early Compliance with Lung Cancer Lymph Node Standard 5.8: An Analysis of 2022 and 2023 Commission on Cancer Site Reviews."

Dr. Simon Chu, a fourth-year clinical resident in General Surgery at UCSF, was awarded **Outstanding Presentation in Basic & Translational Science Research** for his project titled, "Novel Vitrification Solutions Enable Whole-Organ Cryopreservation and Reanimation via Normothermic Machine Perfusion."



Dr. Ali Abbasi, a fourth-year clinical resident in General Surgery at UCSF, received the award for **Outstanding Presentation in Basic & Translational Science Research** for his project titled, "Mechanistic Insights Underlying the Beneficial Impact of CCR5 Blockade After Kidney Transplantation in HIV+ Recipients."



Dr. Alan Zambeli-Ljepović, a fourth-year clinical resident in General Surgery at UCSF, was recognized with the award for **Outstanding Presentation in Global/Education/Innovation Research** for his project titled, "Population-Level Evidence for Expanding Kidney Transplantation Programs Worldwide."



Dr. Greta Davis, a second-year plastic surgery research resident at UCSF, received the award for **Outstanding Presentation in Global/Education/Innovation Research** for her project titled, "Using Surgical Indicators to Prioritize Investment in Surgical Systems Strengthening by a Global Non-governmental Organization: Geospatial Access."

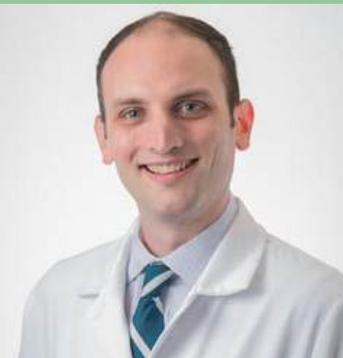
Gerardo Gamino, a medical student at UCSF, was honored with the award for **Outstanding Medical Student Presentation** for his project titled, "Empowering Sustainability During Kidney Transplants Using a Patient Safety Framework."



Mandeep Kaur, a medical student at UCSF, received the award for **Outstanding Medical Student Presentation** for her project titled, "Trial in Progress: Bariatric Breast Results in Testing Experience (BBRITE)."



Dr. Ali Abbasi, a fourth-year clinical resident in General Surgery at UCSF, was also awarded the **Naffziger Surgical Society Resident Research Travel Award** for his project titled, "Mechanistic Insights Underlying the Beneficial Impact of CCR5 Blockade After Kidney Transplantation in HIV+ Recipients."



Dr. Kirkpatrick Fergus, a fourth-year clinical resident in General Surgery at UCSF, was awarded the **Naffziger Surgical Society Resident Research Travel Award** for his project titled, "Genetic Landscape Differentiates Primary Aldosteronism from Non-Functional, Benign Adrenal Tumors."

Dr. Merisa Piper, a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon at UCSF, was honored with the **Faculty Mentorship Award** in recognition of her outstanding dedication to mentoring trainees and fostering growth across research, education, and professional development within the Department of Surgery.



Dr. Laura Esserman, a Breast Cancer Surgeon at UCSF Health, was honored with the **Faculty Mentorship Award** in recognition of her exceptional commitment to guiding the next generation of surgeons through impactful mentorship, research leadership, and career development.



RESEARCH

FUNDING OUR WORK

Our research is the engine behind everything we do—from advancing surgical innovation to transforming patient outcomes. It's where curiosity meets purpose, and bold ideas become real-world solutions. Across every division, our faculty, trainees, and collaborators are pushing boundaries, publishing groundbreaking work, and setting new standards in care.

This page is your hub to explore the discoveries that define us, the partnerships that strengthen us, and the future we're building through science.

IMPORTANT: CHANGE TO NIH'S PUBLIC ACCESS POLICY AS OF JULY 1 FOR ANY MANUSCRIPTS RELATED TO FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH

The updated 2024 NIH Public Access Policy is now effective for manuscripts accepted for publication on or after **July 1, 2025**. Starting July 1, publications must be submitted to PubMed Central for public availability without embargo upon the Official Date of Publication. **Until July 1, NIH's current (2008) Public Access Policy remains in effect.**

KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

The **12-month embargo** on public access to federally funded research mandated by the NIH Public Access Policy will be lifted. The full text of manuscripts that result from NIH funding in whole or in part must be made available immediately upon the Official Date of Publication in PubMed Central. An embargo period of any length will no longer be allowed.

Authors **must include an acknowledgment of federal funding in the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) and Final Published Article.** Some suggested language from NIH to be included in the Submitted Manuscript and the accepted AAM: "This manuscript is the result of funding in whole or in part by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It is subject to the NIH Public Access Policy. Through acceptance of this federal funding, NIH has been given a right to make this manuscript publicly available in PubMed Central upon the Official Date of Publication, as defined by NIH."

Guidance for communicating rights in author manuscripts: NIH highly encourages authors to be transparent during the journal submission process by indicating to the journal or publisher that the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM), should the Submitted **Manuscript**¹ be accepted, is subject to the NIH Public Access Policy. This means that NIH, as the funding agency, has the right to make the AAM publicly available in PubMed Central upon the Official Date of Publication. NIH does not require that authors demonstrate to NIH what was communicated to publishers.



\$670k

Dr. Chris Hsiung has received a **K01 Career Development Award** from the **National Institutes of Health**, totaling **\$670,486**. His funded project, "**High-Throughput Engineering of Combinatorial Chromatin Signals and Epigenetic Cellular Memory**," aims to explore how chromatin modifications can be precisely manipulated to control gene expression and cellular behavior over time.



\$450k

Dr. Rita Mukhtar received a **\$450,000** research grant from **METAvisor Research and Support, Inc.** Her project, "**The PLUMB Study: A Prospective Study of Lobular Metastatic Breast Cancer Using Serial Circulating Tumor DNA to Measure Disease Response**," aims to advance non-invasive methods for tracking disease progression and treatment efficacy in patients with metastatic lobular breast cancer.



\$170k

Dr. Kyle Cromer has been awarded the **2025 Mary Anne Koda-Kimble Seed Award** for Innovation by the **Center for Collaborative Innovation (CCI)**. The **\$21,000** award will support his project, "**Deploying CRISPR Screens to Enhance Ex Vivo Red Blood Cell Manufacturing**," which aims to advance therapeutic applications of gene editing technology.

In addition, Dr. Cromer received a **\$149,960** research grant from the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** for his work, "**Advancing Non-Invasive Detection of Doping via In Vivo Genome Editing**."

Mary Kate Hayward, PhD, a specialist in Dr. Valerie Weaver's lab, has been awarded a research fellowship from the **Elsa U. Pardee Foundation**, totaling **\$146,285**.

Her project, "**Targeting Oxidized Phospholipids to Reprogram the Metastatic Environment**," explores novel strategies to disrupt the tumor microenvironment and limit cancer spread.



\$300k

Kashish Jain, PhD, a PostDoc in Dr. Valerie Weaver's lab, has been awarded a prestigious fellowship from the **Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation**, totaling **\$300,000**.

Dr. Jain's research project, "**Spatial Mechanical Regulation of Oncogenic Signaling in Tumor Progression and Metastasis**," investigates how mechanical forces and spatial organization within tumors influence cancer signaling and spread.

\$146K



MEET YOUR Colleagues



Isabella Sanchez

Clinical Research Coordinator

As a Clinical Research Coordinator in **General Surgery** and **Surgical Oncology**, I support clinical trials aimed at improving patient outcomes. I manage study start-up, informed consent, regulatory compliance, and data collection.

I collaborate with investigators, sponsors, and clinical teams to ensure smooth operations and adherence to protocols. I value contributing to meaningful research and being part of a team dedicated to advancing surgical care through innovation and collaboration.



Erika Ramos

Administrative Analyst

As an Administrative Analyst in the **UCSF East Bay Surgery Department**, I support faculty and trainees while serving as the GME Coordinator for our surgical subspecialty programs. I coordinate Morbidity and Mortality (M&M) Conferences and manage logistics to ensure seamless execution.

I also serve as Executive Administrative Assistant for the Disaster Response Team, contributing to emergency preparedness. My role requires precision, organization, and collaboration across clinical, academic, and operational areas.



Taryn Frierson

Project Analyst | Executive Assistant

As a Project Analyst and Executive Assistant in the **Division of Surgical Oncology**, I provide day-to-day support for four faculty members, ensuring operations run smoothly across clinical, academic, and administrative activities. I manage all PISCES and SPAN student scheduling and correspondence, coordinate travel and reimbursements, and maintain complex calendars.

Additionally, I am also recently supporting the Plastic Surgery department during a staffing transition, helping maintain continuity while new team members are onboarded.



Alexandra Lee

Administrative Officer III

As Administrative Officer III for the **Division of Vascular Surgery**, I serve as Executive Assistant to Dr. Michael Conte, Professor and Chief of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery and Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

My duties include supporting Dr. Conte and the division by managing complex calendars, coordinating travel, planning key events, and handling a wide range of administrative tasks. I work closely with our admin team to ensure smooth, efficient daily operations across the division.

In an effort to strengthen our team's engagement and foster camaraderie, we have initiated a new project aimed at highlighting the contributions of eight staff members representing diverse divisions within the Department of Surgery. We are enthusiastic about launching this exciting endeavor, allowing you to become better acquainted with your colleagues. If you find something intriguing about one of your fellow team members, don't hesitate to email them.

We will be maintaining this page for the time being, and as we progress, we hope to eventually feature every member of our staff. To all the staff members currently reading this message, please know that you are making a significant impact and contributing to the collaborative spirit that defines our work environment. Thank you for being an integral part of our team.



Anisha Kakarlamudi

Clinical Research Coordinator

As a Clinical Research Coordinator in the **Division of Transplant Surgery**, I support the full scope of clinical study operations. Responsibilities include identifying, screening, and enrolling participants, as well as obtaining informed consent in alignment with study protocols. Study visits are scheduled and conducted with oversight of required procedures, and all data is collected and entered into databases in a timely manner.

I maintain strong rapport with patients and staff to ensure clear communication and efficient coordination. Research activities are conducted in full compliance with regulatory standards, including specimen collection, processing, and safe transport.



Chardriana Jean

Administrative Lead

As Administrative Lead for the **Divisions of Adult Cardiac Surgery & Lung Transplantation and Thoracic Surgery**, I provide high-level executive, academic, and analytical support to faculty while overseeing core administrative functions across both divisions. I offer first-tier guidance and oversight to AO/Finance Analyst II colleagues, helping resolve day-to-day questions and ensuring timely completion of tasks and projects.

My role spans financial operations, HR, education, and project management, with a strong focus on staff development. I collaborate with leadership to establish SOPs, evaluate workloads, address knowledge gaps, and lead cross-training efforts. I'm especially passionate about mentoring and training administrative professionals to help them grow and succeed.



Pardis Fattahi

Policy Project Analyst II

As a Policy Project Analyst II in the **Division of Surgery's Immunogenetics and Transplantation Laboratory**, I support regulatory compliance, quality systems, and executive operations. Responsibilities include maintaining documentation, assisting with inspections and licensing, and organizing records. I also manage SOPs and service agreements, while providing executive support to the Laboratory Director.

In collaboration with lab leadership, I help drive policy development, process improvement, and cross-departmental coordination.



Elbert Brooks

Administrative Assistant III

As an Administrative Assistant III supporting Trauma Surgeons **Dr. Caitlin Collins** and **Dr. Rebecca Plevin**, I provide essential administrative support, including coordination of SICU, ACS, and Trauma call schedules, as well as their standing clinical calendars. I manage complex calendaring, recurring meetings, and detailed expense reimbursement reports.

My role involves applying departmental and institutional policies to execute projects and tasks of mild to moderate complexity, ensuring seamless support for both surgeons and day-to-day operations.



SKILLS LAB

The Surgical Skills Center continues to be a hub of innovation, mentorship, and community engagement. Our Surgical Skills Center Fellows and staff recently attended the **ACS Surgical Simulation Summit** in Chicago, IL, where fellows presented their research on advancing surgical simulation techniques.

Congratulations to the following residents who successfully completed the **General Surgery Robotic Curriculum** and earned their **Robotic Equivalency Certificates**:

- Dr. Nathan Brand
- Dr. Riley Brian
- Dr. Dominique Tucker
- Dr. Ava Yap
- Dr. Mignote Yilma

These certificates mark a significant milestone in robotic surgery training and reflect the growing integration of advanced technology in surgical education. Our team remains committed to preparing residents with the skills needed for the future of surgery.

The center also welcomed high school students from the **Oasis for Girls Envision Career Exploration Program**—a community outreach initiative aimed at inspiring young women in San Francisco

to explore careers in medicine. Through hands-on demonstrations and one-on-one mentorship, students gained valuable exposure to the surgical field. Thank you to our residents who led an engaging and educational workshop! In a spirited display of creativity and competition, our Surgical Skills Center Fellows went head-to-head in a Shark Tank-style pitch session, presenting their innovative ideas to a panel of cross-institutional surgical experts—the sharks. The event encouraged bold thinking, sharpened communication skills, and underscored the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in driving surgical innovation. We're proud of the energy and ingenuity our fellows continue to bring to every challenge.



IN OUR COMMUNITY

Recognition, Connection, and Celebration

From major awards and leadership appointments to everyday moments of connection, our Department continues to thrive—not just in the clinic or lab, but as a vibrant community. This section highlights recent accomplishments, staff milestones, and moments where our teams came together to celebrate, support, and enjoy one another. Whether it's a research grant, a leadership program, or a shared meal, these stories reflect the heart of who we are: collaborative, committed, and connected.



Congratulations to **Frenni Acuesta** (Medical Student Education Coordinator - Surgery Clerkship, SURG 140, SURG 130, SIG) and **Shanna Grier** (Surgery Administration Manager - UCSF-East Bay, two exceptional participants in the **2024–25 School of Medicine Leadership Development Program (LDP)**—a prestigious nine-month initiative designed to elevate emerging leaders across UCSF. With dedicated mentorship from **Dr. Matthew Lin** and **Mike Panion**, both contributed case studies that tackled timely challenges and offered innovative, solutions-driven approaches to improving the UCSF environment.

Frenni's group kicked off the presentations with a proposal titled **"COLLAB" Hub**, a visionary concept aimed at creating a centralized, inclusive space for collaboration among administrative staff across departments. Drawing inspiration from **UCSF Surgery's Grand Rounds**, their team introduced the idea of **Administrative Grand Rounds**—a recurring forum to foster connection, visibility, and cross-functional learning among non-clinical leaders. Their proposal emphasized intentional communication, shared learning, and recognition as foundational tools for culture change. **Shanna's** group presented **"Managing Difficult Relationships with Supervisors and Faculty Members,"** a case study focused on identifying root causes of tension in the staff-faculty dynamic and offering practical solutions for improvement. The team leveraged **Dr. Catherine Lucey's MIT 4 CAPS Leadership Abilities** framework, centering their strategy around **Sensemaking**—the ability to understand complex dynamics and develop clarity amid ambiguity. Their recommendations included structured check-ins, mediation resources, and leadership coaching as

pathways to healthier, more respectful workplace relationships. Both **Frenni** and **Shanna** infused their presentations with insights from program speakers such as **Dean Talmadge King**, **Lesley Snyder**, **Paul Axelrod**, **Sara Clemons**, **Maye Chrisman**, **Laurae Pearson**, **Corey Jackson**, **Katharine Tull**, **Dr. Alejandra Rincon**, **Dr. Catherine Lucey**, and more.

UCSF Medical Students Present at the 20th Academic Surgical Congress - Congrats to UCSF medical students **Manami Diaz Tsuzuki** and **Kelsey Ogomori**, recipients of the **2024–2025 UCSF C-SHORE Scholarship Grant**, who presented their research at the **20th Academic Surgical Congress**. **Manami** presented **"Assessing Patient Acceptability of Screening for Intimate Partner Violence Following Trauma,"** and **Kelsey** presented **"Communication After Emergent Surgery by English Proficiency: An Explorative Qualitative Study."**



IN OUR COMMUNITY II

In the first half of 2025, the UCSF Department of Surgery had the privilege of hosting several distinguished visiting professors. We welcomed our 33rd Binkley Visiting Professor, Dr. Alik Farber, Surgeon-in-Chief at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine and Chair of Boston Medical Center. Dr. Farber (pictured right) delivered an inspiring UCSF Surgery Grand Rounds lecture titled *"Management of CLTI in 2025: Lessons from the BEST-CLI Trial."*

During our 38th Annual Department of Surgery Research Symposium on May 14, we were honored to host our 2025 Dunphy Visiting Professor, Dr. Sudha Jayaraman, University of Utah Health and The University of Utah School of Medicine.

Other esteemed visiting speakers this year included:

Rishwain Visiting Speaker: Dr. Dieter Broering, Professor at Alfaisal University and Executive Director, Organ Transplant Centre of Excellence.

Plastic Surgery Visiting Speaker: Dr. Paul S. Cederna, Chief, Section of Plastic Surgery, University of Michigan

West Coast Collaborative Visiting Speaker: Dr. Miquell Miller, Colorectal Surgeon, University of California, Davis

Renowned Educator: Dr. Olle ten Cate, UMC Utrecht International



UCSF Surgery 2025 Castle Connolly Top Doctors

