

2024

*Presidential
Excellence*

AWARDS

UT Health
San Antonio



UT Health
San Antonio

Presidential Excellence Awards

April 17, 2024

Welcome

Acting President Hromas

Presentation of Awards

Staff Excellence in Service

Team Excellence

Teaching Excellence

Clinical Excellence

Distinguished Research Scholar Award

Closing



A Message from the Acting President

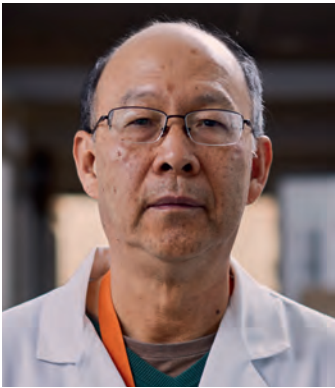
Today I am especially proud to recognize you for making our university one of the nation's finest academic health science centers and for doing everything it takes to make lives better.

Sincerely,

Robert Hromas, MD, FACP
Acting President



The Presidential Employee Staff Excellence in Service Award honors UT Health San Antonio staff who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the university. They have made noteworthy and distinctive contributions to UT Health San Antonio by modeling our core values and serving our missions of education, research, patient care and community engagement. In developing new processes or improving existing ones, these individuals have significantly improved productivity and cost savings for the university.



Guiming Li, PhD

Research Scientist, Department of Biochemistry and Structural Biology, Long School of Medicine

Dr. Li frequently thinks out of the box to find solutions to overcome research project challenges. His hard work has resulted in many new drug discoveries, enabling UT Health San Antonio investigators to apply for new research grants and publish in high-impact journals. In 2023, when the Center for Innovative Drug Discovery relocated across campus, he led a team to coordinate the packing and moving to ensure minimal downtime and no damaged instruments. He also made a great effort to repair a liquid dispenser and save the university about \$100,000.

– Daohong Zhou, MD, Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Structural Biology; Director, Target Identification Facility (TIF) at Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute (GCCRI); Director, Center for Innovative Drug Discovery; Associate Director, Drug Development, Mays Cancer Center



Brandie L. Otten

Associate Director, Institutional Review Board, Office of Clinical Research

I cannot say enough about the impact Brandie has made on research at UT Health San Antonio and South Texas Veterans Health Care System. She has served this community faithfully and enthusiastically for many years, and 2023 has seen perhaps her strongest performance yet. She oversees the IRB team responsible for ensuring all regulatory and institutional requirements are met for our industry-funded clinical trials, and in fiscal year 2023, these studies resulted in clinical trial revenues of more than \$9 million.

– Sunil K. Ahuja, MD; Professor, Department of Medicine, Microbiology/Immunology and Biochemistry; President's Council/Dielmann Chair for Excellence in Medical Research; Director, VA HIV/AIDS Center, South Texas Veterans Health Care System; Director, Center for Personalized Medicine, South Texas Veterans Health Care System; Director, Research Enhancement Programs, VPR Office, UT Health San Antonio



Courtney McElhaney Peebles, MPH

*Director, Research Operations, Office of the Dean,
School of Public Health*

Ms. Peebles has played a pivotal role in shaping and operationalizing our new School of Public Health from the ground up. Her dedication and tireless efforts over the past year have been instrumental in translating our vision for laying the administrative foundation of our school. Despite the tremendous amount of work needed, Ms. Peebles consistently finds ways to help her co-workers and assist new hires with the onboarding processes. Her constant commitment to the school's mission has enabled us to have a great start as we build forward.

– Vasan S. Ramachandran, MD, Dean, School of Public Health



Carol Sherman, LCSW

Senior Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Mays Cancer Center

Carol Sherman is the primary social worker for radiation oncology at the Mays Cancer Center. When she learned about an outpatient in danger of being evicted, which would have subsequently stopped treatment for her head and neck cancer, Ms. Sherman dropped everything to help this patient and her family. She spent more than an hour on the phone going over the next steps and determining how she could help. Showing comfort and empathy, she contacted everyone involved in the eviction process to address housing and legal issues while making sure treatment continued.

*– Leslie Villarreal, RN, Nurse Navigator/Case Manager,
Mays Cancer Center*



Angela M. Watts, PhD

*Director, Academic Enhancement, Office of the Dean,
School of Nursing*

I have had the pleasure of supervising Dr. Watts for the past two years as the director for Student Success in the School of Nursing. She has been an exceptional addition to the team and has led many initiatives to help the school become the premier nursing school in South Texas. Her dedication to inclusive leadership and advocacy for historically underrepresented students is evident in her scholarly pursuits and in her support for students. She embodies empathy, patience and kindness in her interactions with students, faculty and staff.

*– Vanessa B. Meling, EdD, MBA, Associate Dean for Admissions
and Student Success, Assistant Professor, Research, UT Health
San Antonio School of Nursing*



Within the Staff Excellence in Service category, the Presidential Team Excellence Award provides an opportunity to recognize an entire team of faculty, staff and students for exemplary contributions and outstanding collaboration that have resulted in accomplishments that fully honor the mission, core values and vision of UT Health San Antonio.



Orthopaedic Trauma

Team Leader:

Boris A. Zelle, MD, Professor

Team Members:

Animesh Agarwal, MD, Professor of Orthopaedics

Jennifer Aguilar, RN, Clinical Research Nurse

Christina Brady, MD, Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics

Anna Conti, Administrative Assistant – Senior

Douglas Cromack, MD, Professor of Orthopaedics and Plastic Surgery

Christopher Delallo, MPAS, PA-C, Physician Assistant

Anil Dutta, MD, Associate Professor of Orthopaedics

Priscilla Gomez-Ramos, DMSc, MPAS, PA-C, Physician Assistant

Thomas Hand, MD, Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics

Jannah Jorge, MPAS, PA-C, Physician Assistant

Ravi Karia, MD, Professor of Orthopaedics, Executive Vice-Chair

John Kodosky, DHSc, MPAS, PA-C, Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics

Case Martin, MD, Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics

Monica Ramirez, CPC, Surgical Care Coordinator



The members of the orthopaedic trauma division provide world-class surgical care to patients from all over South Texas who present with the most challenging and complex orthopaedic problems. The orthopaedic trauma division has repeatedly demonstrated immediate availability and prompt response under the most difficult circumstances, including the horrific Sutherland Springs shooting in 2017, the pandemic, the Texas power crisis in 2021, and the shootings at Uvalde Robb Elementary. During these tragic events, our orthopaedic trauma team demonstrated an astonishing level of dedication, unselfishness and servitude to help the victims and their families.

–Fred G. Corley, MD, Professor, Division of Orthopaedic Trauma at UT Health San Antonio



The Presidential Teaching Excellence Award is presented to outstanding full-time faculty members who exhibit the finest principles in education. They possess extensive knowledge of their subject material, maintain an awareness of current developments and incorporate examples from recent literature or clinical experience in the classroom. These faculty members have distinguished themselves not only through teaching methods in the classroom, but also by serving as role models and mentors to students outside class. They have made a significant contribution to the education and development of future health care professionals.



Jack Badawy, MD

*Assistant Professor/Clinical, Division of Hospital Medicine,
Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Badawy is an exemplary clinician educator whose tireless efforts, leadership and innovative contributions significantly enrich medical education at our institution. He consistently demonstrates a commitment to professional development, as evidenced by his involvement in the Teach program and the Chest and Society of Hospital Medicine while pursuing a Master of Medical Education. Dr. Badawy has helped shape the educational landscape within the medical school as co-director of the clinical skills program and on the curriculum committee. He is also co-director for faculty development and new Hospital Medicine Fellowship program.

*– Christine Andre, MD, Vice Chair for Faculty Development,
Professor of Medicine*



Lea El-Hachem, DDS, MS, FICD

*Associate Professor, Department of Periodontics, School of
Dentistry*

Since arriving at the School of Dentistry in 2020, Dr. El-Hachem has established herself as a well-rounded and accomplished leader and academician. She developed her leadership and communication skills by attending the school's Emerging Leaders program in 2021 and was recently named to the board of directors for the American Association of Women Dentists. She revamped the Periodontics curriculum to engage student participation and learning and has successfully designed, developed and established a new pre-doctoral clinic for third-year students and a dental hygiene rotation to foster student collaboration.

*– David L. Cochran, DDS, MS, PhD, MMS, Professor and Chair,
Department of Periodontics*



Paul B. Allen Sr., DSc, MPAS, PA-C, FAAPA
Associate Professor, Chair, Department of Physician Assistant Studies, School of Health Professions

Dr. Allen is an engaged and highly regarded member of the faculty in the School of Health Professions. After a distinguished military career, he has chaired the Department of Physician Assistant Studies since 2015. He consistently demonstrates excellence not only in teaching and service but also in research and scholarship. He specializes in operational medicine, emergency medicine physician assistant studies, trauma resuscitation and surgery and clinical research. Contributing significantly to both coursework and curriculum development, he also holds an appointment in the School of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine.

– *David C. Shelledy, PhD, RRT, FAARC, FASAHP, Dean and Professor, School of Health Professions*



Christine A. Andre, MD

Professor/Clinical, Division of Hospital Medicine, Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine

In 17 years as director of Veritas, the medical school's career advising and mentoring program, Dr. Andre holds a pivotal role in shaping medical education. A published article about our unique mentoring system catapulted her initiatives to be showcased at the Association of American Medical Colleges and used as a model at other institutions. She requires students to participate in mock interviews and orientation retreats and to present research posters. As vice chair for Faculty Development, she supports the career trajectory of junior faculty and fosters professional growth among colleagues.

– *Ankur Segon, MD, Division Chief of Hospital Medicine; Professor, Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine*



Deborah L. Conway, MD

Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vice Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education, Long School of Medicine

Dr. Conway has taught many of us how to lead, both as interim chair of the OB-GYN department and in multiple top-tier roles in Undergraduate Medical Education. She showed me how to listen to overlooked voices and how to show humility. She is an excellent clinician who exhibits calm and intelligence in Labor and Delivery, so it is no coincidence that she delivered babies of numerous faculty and residents. I love to see the “lightbulb moment” when students realize significant literature on diabetes in pregnancy comes from this institution and “our own” Dr. Conway.

– *Luke Newton, MD, Professor and Director, Division of Specialists in Obstetrics and Gynecology*



Nikita Bharat Ruparel, DDS, PhD, MS

*Associate Professor, Department of Endodontics,
School of Dentistry*

Dr. Ruparel is a truly gifted teacher in the clinic, classroom and laboratory who has a profound, sustained impact on the training of general dentists, endodontists and scientists nationally and internationally. She also excels in research and is an ad hoc reviewer for the Neurobiology of Pain and Itch study at the National Institutes of Health. As professor and director of the Residency Program in Endodontics, Dr. Ruparel received the coveted Educator Fellowship Award from the American Association of Endodontists, which is only given to one educator per year.

*– Anibal Diogenes DDS, MS, PhD, Professor and
Interim Chair, Department of Endodontics, Minnie Stevens
Piper Professor*



Nilam J. Soni, MD, MS, FHM, FACP

*Professor/Clinical, Division of Pulmonary Medicine and
Critical Care Medicine, Department of Medicine,
Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Soni's expertise in point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) has profoundly impacted my professional career as an academic hospitalist. I was first exposed to the value of bedside diagnostic ultrasound in 2014 and subsequently read his award-winning book about the procedure. Dr. Soni is a role model through his excellence in both teaching and service. In 2015, he helped establish the Center for Clinical Ultrasound Education, a unique state-of-the-art facility that has been instrumental in teaching countless numbers of students, residents, fellows and faculty in diagnostic and procedural POCUS.

*– Robert Nathanson, MD, FACP, Associate Professor of
Medicine, Division of Hospital Medicine, UT Health
San Antonio, South Texas Veterans Health Care System*



The Presidential Clinical Excellence Award honors full-time faculty of UT Health San Antonio who provide clinical services as part of their appointments. These clinicians have distinguished themselves through exemplary and sustained expertise, and they represent the very finest in quality patient care. By building relationships with patients, family members, professional colleagues, residents, students and staff, these awardees demonstrate collaborative teamwork, independent leadership and compassionate care.

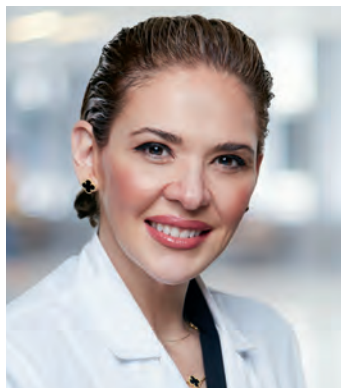


Edward R. Kost, MD

*Professor/Clinical, Division of Gynecologic Oncology,
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology,
Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Kost is incredibly knowledgeable, passionate and engaged in his specialty. He is known for his desire to support and provide guidance whenever he is able to patients, students, residents, fellows and colleagues. His attention to detail, ability to educate his patients and their families and genuine concern for their well-being are evident and worth emulating. In addition, he was the driving force behind the establishment of a fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology in 2020. In short, Dr. Kost's ability to teach others translates well in his practice.

*- Randal D. Robinson, MD, MBA, Professor and Chair,
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Humana Foundation
Distinguished Chair, Frank Harrison Chair in Reproductive
Endocrinology*



Carolina Solis-Herrera, MD

*Associate Professor/Clinical, Chief of Division of Endocrinology,
Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Solis-Herrera is the most exceptional diabetes expert and clinician I have met and undoubtedly one of the best in the country. Her dedication to patients consistently surpasses expectations as she approaches each case with genuine care, empathy and a resolute sense of responsibility. As Endocrinology Division Chief, she is a strong advocate for the delivery of high-quality patient care and has worked with colleagues to develop new programs, including an advanced technology diabetes clinic, Obesity and Bariatric Surgery Center, thyroid clinic, transplant clinic and a "sight saving" program to diagnose early diabetic retinopathy.

*- Maria A. Escobar Vasco, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine,
Associate Program Director, Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism
and Obesity Clinical Training Programs, Department of Medicine,
Division of Endocrinology*



The Presidential Distinguished Research Scholar Award represents the very best in academic achievement. This award honors an individual who exhibits superior scholarship and maintains the highest standards of professionalism. This award also recognizes significant contributions to theory, research and practice, a national or international reputation, a sustained record of extramural support, and major additions to scientific literature and health advancement.



Kumar Sharma, MD, FAHA, FASN

L. David Hillis MD Endowed Distinguished Chair of Medicine, Chief of Division of Nephrology and Vice Chair for Research, Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine



As Distinguished Chair of Medicine in the Division of Nephrology, Vice Chair for Research and Director of the Center for Renal Precision Medicine, Dr. Sharma is best known for his seminal work on the pathophysiology of diabetic kidney disease, the most common cause of end-stage kidney failure around the world. He makes significant contributions to the literature, advances our understanding of the biological basis and potential treatment of kidney disease, gains an international reputation for his work, and promotes the research mission at UT Health San Antonio. Dr. Sharma has authored more than 210 peer-reviewed publications, and his work has more than 30,000 citations. He is well-funded by state and federal agencies – including the UT Stars, DOD, VA, NIH, NSF and NASA – and has received numerous awards and recognition, including invitations to serve on NIH, State of Texas and professional society advisory committees, bringing distinction to our institution. A strong advocate of team science, he plays leading roles in several large initiatives for kidney disease, such as the Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort, the Kidney Precision Medicine Project to understand individual factors driving kidney disease and the CKDBioCon consortium to discover new biomarkers for progressive kidney disease. His involvement in this breadth of research speaks to his collaborative nature and the esteem he holds within the scientific community. It also provides our junior faculty with added opportunities to participate in national research efforts.

–W. Brian Reeves, MD, FACP, FASN, Marvin Forland, MD, MACP, Endowed Distinguished Chair of Medicine, Dan F. Parman Distinguished Chair of Medicine, Professor and Chair, Department of Medicine

With appreciation

PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Carlos Landaeta Quinones, DDS
Megan Lippe, PhD, MSN, RN, ANEF, FAAN
Selina Morgan, DPT, PT, NCS
Temple Ratcliffe, MD, MS-HPEd
P. Renee Yew, PhD

**PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH SCHOLAR EXCELLENCE
AWARD COMMITTEE**

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Adelita Cantu, PhD, RN, FAAN
Charles France, PhD
Nathaniel Jeske, PhD
Timothy Reistetter, PhD, OTR, FAOTA
David Weiss, PhD

PRESIDENTIAL CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Angela Kennedy, SLP-D, CCC-SLP
Gabriel Medrano Valle, MD, FACOG
Angela Palaiologou-Gallis, DDS, MS
Kathryn Parke, DNP, APRN, CPNP
George Willis, MD

**PRESIDENTIAL STAFF EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE
AND TEAM AWARDS COMMITTEE**

Danielle McDavid, PHR
(non-voting chair)
Nychole Krause
(non-voting assistant)
Robert (Jason) Bandy
Adriana Barrón, MPA
Melissa Byers, MBA
Jack Frost, MBA, PMP

Jessica Gutierrez-Rodriguez
Michelle Lopez
Cynthia Machado, MSN, RN
Natalina Martinez
Lety Laurel Matos, MA
Michelle Montoya-Mendoza
Sarah Rapach
Thomas Repino