



Faculty Awards Ceremony

Medical College of Georgia Faculty Senate

5 p.m., Thursday, May 27, 2021



Dear Colleagues:

The MCG Faculty Senate's Faculty Awards Ceremony recognizes exceptional achievement by faculty and residents in the areas of teaching, research, clinical care and service.

Today's honorees have contributed their significant skills and passion to attaining excellence and have set a high standard for us all. We gather today to thank them for their contributions to our medical school and to the dynamic present and future of medicine.

We thank as well the members of the MCG Faculty Senate Faculty Recognition Committee for their diligent efforts to make this celebration possible.

Thank you for all you do.

Most respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David C. Hess".

David C. Hess, MD
*Dean, Medical College of Georgia
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs
and Integration, Augusta University
Presidential Distinguished Chair
Professor, Department of Neurology*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vincent Robinson".

Vincent Robinson, MD
*President, MCG Faculty Senate
Glen E. Garrison, MD, Distinguished
Chair in Cardiovascular Medicine
Professor, Department of Medicine,
Division of Cardiology*

Program

Welcome.....Vincent Robinson, MD
President, MCG Faculty Senate
Glen E. Garrison, MD, Distinguished Chair in Cardiovascular Medicine
Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiology

Remarks.....David Hess, MD
Dean, Medical College of Georgia
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and Integration, Augusta University
Presidential Distinguished Chair
Professor, Department of Neurology

Educator of the Year Awards.....Class Presidents

Outstanding Basic Science Teaching Award.....Class Presidents

Outstanding Clinical Science Teaching Award.....Class Presidents

Resident of the Year Award.....Michael Hocker, MD
Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education and Designated Institutional Official
J. Harold Harrison, MD, Distinguished University Chair in Emergency Medicine
Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine

Mentoring Excellence Award.....Lara Stepleman, PhD
Director, MCG Office for Faculty Success
Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Health Behavior

Distinguished Faculty Awards.....Julie Dahl-Smith, DO
Member, Faculty Recognition Committee
President-Elect, MCG Faculty Senate
Professor, Department of Family Medicine

Eric Lewkowiez, MD
Member, Faculty Recognition Committee
Senator, MCG Faculty Senate
Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior

Champion of Diversity Award.....Dr. Lewkowiez

Institutional Service Award.....Dr. Dahl-Smith

Outstanding Faculty Award..... Vishal Arora, MD
Chair, Faculty Recognition Committee
Secretary, MCG Faculty Senate
Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiology

Lifetime Achievement Award.....Dr. Arora

Spirit of MCG Award.....Dr. Arora

Recognition of Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Senate President.....Dr. Hess

Closing Remarks.....Dr. Robinson

Honorees:

Educators of the Year

Eric Ring, MD

Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics

Selected By: Class of 2021, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Christian Cullen, President, Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Ellen House, MD

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior

Selected By: Class of 2021, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Presented By: Christian Cullen, President, Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Lisa Leggio, MD

Professor, Department of Pediatrics

Selected By: Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Christian Cullen, President, Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Katherine Moore, MD

Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery

Selected By: Class of 2022, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Presented By: Christian Cullen, President, Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Nicole Winston, PharmD

Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Selected By: Class of 2023, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Zachary Adams, President, Class of 2023, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Thomas Howdieshell, MD

Professor, Department of Surgery

Selected By: Class of 2023, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Presented By: Zachary Adams, President, Class of 2023, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Gerard Guillot, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy

Selected By: Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Sholeh Rezaee, President, Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Robert Mackin, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy

Selected By: Class of 2024, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Presented By: Sholeh Rezaee, President, Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Outstanding Basic Science Teaching Award

Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Selected By: Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Sholeh Rezaee, President, Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Outstanding Clinical Science Teaching Award

Department of Pediatrics

Selected By: Class of 2021, Main Campus, Augusta

Presented By: Christian Cullen, President, Class of 2022, Main Campus, Augusta

Mentoring Excellence Award

Satish Rao, MD, PhD



Dr. Satish Rao is the J. Harold Harrison, MD, Distinguished University Chair in Gastroenterology. He came to the Medical College of Georgia in 2011 and is founding director of the Augusta University Health System Digestive Health Center.

Dr. Rao is a professor of medicine, whose clinical research interests are focused on motility, anorectal disorders, colonic manometry, biofeedback therapy and digestive health disorders. He is principal investigator on a \$4.2 million NIH grant looking at translumbosacral neuromodulation therapy and its potential to treat fecal incontinence.

He completed medical school at Osmania Medical College in India. He completed his residency at Newcastle, Sunderland and York Hospitals in the United Kingdom.

Distinguished Faculty Awards

Basic Science Teaching

Balakrishna Lokeshwar, PhD



Dr. Balakrishna Lokeshwar has been a tenured professor of medicine at the Medical College of Georgia and a member of the Georgia Cancer Center since 2015. He holds the J. Harold Harrison, MD, Distinguished University Chair in Basic Sciences and is a research health scientist at the Charlie Norwood Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Dr. Lokeshwar directs research in basic biomedical sciences on the role of inflammation, chemokines and cancer chemoprevention. He has established a mutual exchange program in cancer research and education for faculty and students between the Georgia Cancer Center and the Center for Cancer Research and Therapeutic Development at Clark Atlanta University. As the co-director of the Biochemistry and Cancer Biology Graduate Program, he has reorganized the curriculum to ensure the courses flow fluidly with minimal overlap of instruction.

He earned his master's in biological sciences from Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, and his doctoral degree in microbiology and cell biology from the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru, India.

Clinical Science Teaching

Ashley Saucier, MD



Dr. Ashley Saucier is an associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine. She serves as the department's associate director of medical student education and will take over as director this July.

As an honored and highly respected educator, Dr. Saucier has received an MCG Exemplary Teacher Award for Undergraduate Medical Education every year since 2015. She continually strives to enhance the educational experience of undergraduate and graduate medical learners at MCG. To demonstrate her commitment to grow as a medical educator, she completed the Medical Student Educators Development Institute Fellowship through the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine.

She obtained her medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia in 2011 and stayed on to complete her family medicine residency, before joining the faculty in 2014.

Basic Science Research

Yutao Liu, MD, PhD



Dr. Yutao Liu is an associate professor in the Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy and The Graduate School and a member of the Center for Biotechnology and Genomic Medicine. He also is an active member of the Culver Vision Discovery Institute and serves as the director of the Cellular Biology and Anatomy Graduate Program.

His primary research interests are in dissecting age-related genetic diseases like keratoconus and glaucoma, using systematic approaches, including human genetics/epigenetics, functional genomics and molecular/cellular biology. His national and international presence in research was demonstrated recently by his role as an invited speaker at the 2020 Gordon Research Conference on Cornea and Ocular Surface Biology/Pathology in Lucca, Italy.

Dr. Liu completed medical school at Beijing University Health Science Center in Beijing, China, then went on to receive his master's degree in molecular biology from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri and his doctoral degree in genome science and technology, molecular genetics from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He received his postdoctoral training at Duke University Medical Center before transferring to MCG in 2014.

Clinical Science Research

Sharad Ghamande, MD



Dr. Sharad Ghamande, chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and chief of gynecologic oncology, holds the William H. Brooks, MD, Distinguished Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology. He also is associate director for clinical trials & research at the Georgia Cancer Center.

Since arriving at MCG in 2002, he has built a clinical research program in gynecologic oncology, engaging and partnering with other physicians and institutions across Georgia to establish a collective group, Georgia CORE, for cooperative group trial enrollment. He is principal investigator of the National Cancer Institute's Georgia Cares Minority Underserved Community Oncology Research Program, one of only 12 such sites in the U.S., with one of the highest enrollments on several of the NCI's Gynecologic Oncology Group clinical trials.

He earned his medical degree from Bombay University in India. He completed a residency in OB/GYN in India before traveling to the states for an additional residency and fellowship in gynecological oncology.

Patient Care

Jose Vazquez, MD



Dr. Jose Vazquez is a professor of medicine and serves as section chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases in the Department of Medicine. He is the chief of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Service at AU Health and chair of the Augusta University Institutional Review Board.

Dr. Vazquez was front and center when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Augusta. His experience allowed him to meet the challenges and constant changes to keep both patients and frontline workers safe.

He earned his medical degree from Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in Santiago, Dominican Republic. He completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of the Health Sciences/Chicago Medical School in North Chicago, Illinois, and his fellowship in infectious diseases at Wayne State

University in Detroit.

Outstanding Young Basic Science Faculty Award

Tianxiang Hu, PhD



Dr. Tianxiang Hu is an assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and is a member of the Georgia Cancer Center.

Dr. Hu's lab focuses on the investigation of molecular mechanisms regulating leukemia initiation and progression by deciphering the transcriptional regulatory network, including oncogenes, miRNAs and RNAs, during leukemogenesis driven by different chromosome translocations. In collaboration with universities in China, he developed and is known for his visiting scientist program, a program enabling Chinese universities to support advanced training for their top physicians and allowing them to gain valuable research experience under his guidance.

He received his doctoral degree in developmental biology from Wuhan University in China.

Outstanding Young Clinical Science Faculty Award

Alicia Vinyard, DO



Dr. Alicia Vinyard is an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery. After completing her general surgery residency at MCG, she completed a breast surgical oncology fellowship at the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine, before returning to the faculty.

Dr. Vinyard treats patients with benign and malignant breast disease and assists in other surgical oncologic needs. She decided to specialize in breast surgical oncology to help other breast cancer survivors like herself. She has been a driving force behind the Georgia Cancer Center's accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC) and she has started a breast cancer survivor monthly social event.

She earned her medical degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathy.

Champion of Diversity

Linda James, MSc



Ms. Linda James is the assistant dean for student diversity and inclusion in the MCG Office of Academic Affairs and is an instructor in the Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy. She also serves as the Director of the Student Educational Enrichment Program, a pipeline program for underrepresented students.

Ms. James has over 35 years of experience implementing and directing diversity pipeline programs for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. She provides ongoing leadership and engages in outreach initiatives related to increasing student diversity in the medical school.

Some of her noteworthy contributions include serving as the director of MCG's Igniting the Dream of Medicine conference since its inception in 2011. She has also served as a co-advisor for the MCG Chapter of the Student National Medical Association since 2005, and co-advisor for the MCG Chapter of the Latino Medical Student Association since 2014.

She earned her bachelor's degree in Biology from Savannah State College in Savannah and her master's degree in Microbiology from a joint program between Alabama A&M University and University of Alabama.

Institutional Service Award

Renuka Mehta, MBBS



Dr. Renuka Mehta is a professor in the Department of Pediatrics. She has served as an associate program director of the department's residency program since 2012 and is the education director for the pediatrics residency's PICU rotation.

Dr. Mehta is committed to mentoring undergraduate students, residents, fellows and faculty with their career and/or research efforts. She serves on numerous committees in support of the department and MCG, and her contributions span across the Children's Hospital of Georgia as well as the Augusta University Health System.

She earned her medical degree from Rajendra Medical School in Ranchi, India. She completed her residency at the University of Kentucky in Lexington and her fellowship in pediatric critical care medicine at MCG.

Outstanding Faculty Award

Ruth Harris, PhD



Dr. Ruth Harris is a tenured Regents' Professor in the MCG Department of Physiology.

Dr. Harris is renown in the field of ingestive behavior, with a particular emphasis on the role of leptin actions in the brain. She holds two R01 research awards, lists 132 original publications, 21 editorials and reviews, and has edited four books. In the past five years alone she has published 16 original manuscripts, three invited reviews and edited a book.

Dr. Harris has served on multiple editorial boards and NIH and other grant review groups and has delivered 11 invited lectures/meeting presentations since 2015.

Dr. Harris chairs the Augusta University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and has been a member of that committee for 10 years. She served as interim chair of the Department of Physiology from 2018-19, after serving as the associate chair from 2012-18.

She earned her doctoral degree from the University of Leeds in England and completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Georgia.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Kapil Sethi, MD



Dr. Kapil Sethi joined the Medical College of Georgia in 1985 as an assistant professor in the Department of Neurology, and retired in 2019 as professor emeritus after more than 30 years of service to the department and the institution.

Dr. Sethi is internationally recognized as an expert in movement disorders and is considered by many to be among the best movement disorders clinicians in the world. He is also recognized as one of the top handful of bedside diagnosticians of unusual movement disorders. As the director of the MCG Movement Disorder Fellowship, he trained over 10 fellows, many of whom have academic appointments around the country. After retirement, he continued to remain active on a biweekly basis, seeing patients and teaching neurology fellows, residents and students for an additional two years.

He earned his medical degree from Christian Medical College Ludhiana in Punjab, India. He completed most of his postgraduate and fellowship training in India. He was a research fellow at Charing Cross Group of Hospitals and Medical School in London and completed additional neurology training at the Sub-Regional Unit of Neurology for Welsh National School of Medicine and Morrision Hospital in the United Kingdom before coming to MCG for his final two years of residency.

Spirit of MCG Award

Martha Tingen, PhD, MSN



Dr. Martha Tingen is a tenured professor in the Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics, as well as The Graduate School and the College of Nursing. She is a member of the Georgia Prevention Institute and holds the Charles W. Linder, MD, Endowed Chair in Pediatrics. She also is associate director of the Georgia Cancer Center's Cancer Prevention, Control & Population Health Program.

Dr. Tingen's research interests are in prevention and enabling people to make healthy lifestyle choices — including preventing tobacco use and passive smoke exposure in children and families, developing skills for healthy behavior choices in parents and children to prevent obesity, suicide prevention and cancer prevention and education, particularly in underserved communities.

She earned her master's of science in nursing from Augusta University and her doctoral degree in nursing science from the University of South Carolina.

Retiree Recognition

Clare Bergson, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Qing Zhong, PhD

Principle Research Scientist, Department of Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine

Lesleyann Hawthorn, PhD

Professor, Department of Pathology

Georgia Cancer Center

Jaspal Gujral, MD

Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine

MCG Faculty Senate Executive Committee 2020 – 2021

Vincent Robinson, MD, President
Julie Dahl-Smith, DO, President-Elect
Vishal Arora, MD, Secretary
Renuka Mehta, MBBS, Immediate Past President

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Wendy Bollag, PhD
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Rodger MacArthur, MD
Lina Millan, MD
Laura Mulloy, DO
Cassandre Perard, DO
Rebecca Pierce, MD
Brett Szymik, PhD
Almira Vazdarjanova, PhD

MCG Faculty Senate Faculty Recognition Committee

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Julie Dahl-Smith, DO
Eric Lewkowiez, MD
Yisang Yoon, PhD
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