“What we're achieving is an improved mental image in the surgeon's mind, so that the surgeon can encounter the unexpected before they go to the OR.”

– Matthew Bramlet, MD
"Necessity is the mother of invention" is a favorite quote I’ve referenced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. When mitigation measures in March 2020 forced us to quickly transition every aspect of our work (teaching/learning, clinical care, and research), UICOMP responded in typical fashion. Our faculty, staff and learners rolled up their sleeves, used their creativity and the principles of innovation and persevered to continue our important work in the best ways possible.

In this issue, we highlight a few examples of how the best and brightest UICOMP minds are innovating to overcome obstacles and provide solutions to new problems. Our cover story showcases how faculty are using Virtual Reality (VR) to improve surgery planning and patient care. Fascinating faculty research projects addressing problems related specifically to COVID-19 through the Jump ARCHES program are featured on page 4, and research projects to support medical education through the Dean's Award are summarized on page 6. It is both exciting and inspiring to read about the creativity and meaningful solutions our faculty are pursuing.

Certainly, the global pandemic has placed unimaginable demands and stressors on our systems and processes, but it has also allowed us to accomplish things that seemed unimaginable just one or two years ago. Health disparities have been brought to light during the pandemic, and UICOMP has collaborated with community organizations to address vaccine hesitancy locally and serve as a reliable resource to our community members (page 3).

While this work is largely occurring here in Peoria, UICOMP alumni continue to make an impact regionally, nationally, and even globally. We are honored to present our 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award to Alan Bridges, MD, (UICOMP Class of 1983). Read more about his efforts in the pandemic response as well as his contributions to the care of our nation's veterans on page 16. On page 1, we highlight Parker Thompson, MD, (UICOMP Class of 2017) who led the COVID-19 vaccination strategy for the U.S. Army's Fort Leonard Wood.

Indeed the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons, but it has also provided us with opportunities to address gaps and create solutions never previously imagined. May each of us use the lessons learned from the pandemic to shape a brighter future for ourselves, our students, our patients and our communities.

Sincerely,

Meenakshy Aiyer, MD
Interim Regional Dean

If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.

– A. Einstein
Parker Thompson, MD, (UICOMP Class of 2017) contributed to fighting the global pandemic by leading the COVID-19 vaccination response at the U.S. Army’s Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. In December 2020, he was tapped by the Deputy Commander for Clinical Services at General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital to serve as the Officer In Charge (OIC) for the base’s COVID-19 Vaccine Mission.

His efforts concentrated on administering vaccine during the months of January and February in accordance with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and U.S. Department of Defense’s military guidelines. Following the prioritization protocol, from healthcare workers and first responders to active duty military and their family members to civilians and contractors, thousands of vaccines were administered.

When the mission ramped up in January, as many as 450 people per day were vaccinated on the sixth floor of the hospital. The base hosted a mass vaccination event in early February during which 10 vaccination lanes operated for a 12-hour day. In addition to a check-in/screening worker, each lane had a person designated to give the vaccine and another assigned as a “shot assistant” to handle the documentation, the longest part of the process, Thompson said. He was proud that the event was the first in the nation to offer vaccines to patients in Phase 2, the healthy, general population.

The effort relied on volunteers, both military and civilian. The highest ranking volunteer at the vaccination site, a nurse, livened up the setting by bringing music to play. The mass vaccination effort received praise for its efficiency, including feedback stating, “Very well organized. Almost like a Chick Fil A of vaccines.” Mindful of vaccine hesitancy, Thompson encouraged those who were vaccinated to tell others as part of the outreach effort.

“The opportunity to lead this charge was the highest privilege of my professional career,” Thompson says. Indeed, Thompson is early in his professional career, having completed his pediatric residency in 2020 at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Now, he is a pediatrician at the base hospital where the bulk of his service is outpatient clinic and mother-baby care with additional service as a hospitalist. The hospital sees about 30 babies born monthly, and around five pediatric admissions each month. In addition, he covers ER, urgent care and is on-call for the outpatient clinic.

He vividly recalls the moment he knew pediatrics was the specialty he would pursue. “It was my fourth rotation during my junior year, and I was in outpatient at University Pediatrics with Dr. McLauchlan. I knew that first week that I wanted to be a pediatrician,” Thompson says. “I love how different medicine is in pediatrics. I love the more optimistic and pro-active approach with the focus on preventative medicine.”

“We are with our patients and families through peaks and valleys, like ushering in new life with a newborn baby. But we are also with them through deep valleys, like when a baby dies or a child is diagnosed with cancer,” Thompson says. “It is a privilege to support them through the valleys.”

Natives of central Illinois, he and his wife, Alyssa, are the parents of Esther, 4; Streator, 2; and Eleanor, 3 months. He says being a father makes him a better pediatrician since he can relate to the experiences facing new parents.
In May, UICOMP celebrated the Class of 2021, the College’s first cohort to complete all four years of its medical education in Peoria.

Previous classes completed their first year of medical school in Urbana before coming to Peoria to complete the final three years. While medical school carries its own pressures and challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic added layers of uncertainty and ambiguity for this class. As the pandemic was rolling out in March 2020, many in the class were preparing for Step exams. Those exams were abruptly postponed. The students’ clinical rotations were put on hold. The residency interview process went fully virtual. Through it all, students in the Class of 2021 persevered.

UICOMP celebrated its 50 newest graduates in a two-part celebration. First was the conferring of their Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees during a virtual convocation ceremony followed by an in-person hooding ceremony following COVID-19 mitigation guidelines.

Interim Regional Dean Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, encouraged the graduates to tap into the lessons learned from the global pandemic and apply them to their personal and professional lives.

“Take time to appreciate life and enjoy what you have . . . Remember the work life balance. There will be occasions when you will have to miss a soccer game or two to take care of a patient but that should not be the norm . . . When new circumstances prevent us from performing old habits and strategies, we have no other choice than to adapt and innovate,” she said. Dean Aiyer told the graduates that survivors of a crisis are often surprised at how well they handled a situation and achieve a boost of self-confidence and efficacy to move forward and face future challenges.

Matthew Mischler, MD, professor of clinical internal medicine and pediatrics, was chosen by the class to present the faculty address. He shared with graduates about the gift entrusted to them to care for others. “Your power is in your hands and in your head and in your heart to make a difference in the lives of each of those people who come to see you,” he said. "The point is that in your work you can recognize that each person that comes to see you is a fellow human being and they have a story that you are now a part of.”

The UICOMP Class of 2021 will continue their training in 16 different specialties in 18 different states. Of those 50 new MDs, 27 are headed into primary care, and 23 students will remain in Illinois with nine matching to residency programs in Peoria. The top three specialties medical students chose to pursue this year were Internal Medicine (12), Surgery (8), and Family Medicine (7).

Match Day was celebrated virtually for the Class of 2021. Students gathered via Zoom and shared photos of match results.

Jessica Hanks, MD, associate dean for academic affairs, leads the procession for the in-person hooding ceremony honoring.

Innovation is anything, but business as usual.

— Anonymous
UICOMP faculty are joining with representatives from a variety of community agencies and health organizations to provide reliable information, serve as a resource and help unify the message surrounding COVID-19 vaccination in central Illinois. The collaboration includes representation from OSF HealthCare, UnityPoint Health, Methodist College, Heartland Health Services, the Peoria City/County Health Department (PCCHD), the Community Foundation of Central Illinois and other community-based organizations.

Consolidating the efforts of these groups shows the power of uniting around a common cause, says Nicole Robertson, UICOMP associate director of the Innovation in Rural Global Medicine program, who chairs the community collaboration. “Through this coalition, we are able to align our messaging across multiple local organizations, support community outreach events, and leverage the expertise and knowledge of our diverse group of faculty, residents, and students to reach our shared goal of increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates across the central Illinois region, especially in our most marginalized populations,” Robertson says.

Together, this group has supported a media campaign to encourage COVID-19 vaccination as well as assisted with data collection and surveys to gather local thoughts and attitudes surrounding vaccination. Faculty collaborated with PCCHD for data analysis and to publish a public report on the survey findings.

Faculty are participating in a community Speakers’ Bureau to serve as a clinical resource for community groups and outreach organizations seeking reliable information on COVID-19 and vaccination. Community survey responses indicated that healthcare professionals are the most trusted source of information surrounding vaccines.

Additionally, UICOMP students worked under the direction of PCCHD and canvassed neighborhoods in which vaccination rates were low. UICOMP and Methodist College are collaborating to develop interdisciplinary training sessions on motivational interviewing techniques for use by students, residents and community health workers to increase vaccine acceptance.

Class of 2021 James Scholars Present Their Research

The James Scholar Program is a University-wide program established to encourage scholarly research, independent study, and to offer students the opportunity to work with renowned faculty. The James Scholar designation is given to students formally identified by their colleges as honor students. James Scholars meet stringent entrance criteria and demonstrate increased academic rigor.

Designation by the University as a James Scholar recognizes students of extraordinary ability and achievement. The honors research program entitles students to certain academic privileges and charges them with the responsibility for seeking sustained intellectual achievement throughout their undergraduate medical program.

Following their selection into the program, UICOMP James Scholars pick a topic of study which becomes the focus of their research during their medical education. This culminates with a research presentation before they graduate medical school. The James Scholar Program for Independent Study at the University of Illinois College Of Medicine Peoria began in 1973.

The UICOMP James Scholars from the Class of 2021 include:

**Aditya Ravindra**
*Cancer stem cell mitochondrial retrograde signaling*
Faculty Mentor
Sergey Malchenko, MD, PhD, Research Assistant Professor

**Adam Awaad**
*Health literacy, processing capacity, illness knowledge and actionable memory for medication taking in type 2 diabetes: cross-sectional analysis*
Faculty Mentor
James Graumlich, MD, Professor

**George Tsourdinis**
*Role of miR-34a in Modulating Amyloid-β Protein and Behavioral Function in an Alzheimer’s Disease Murine Model*
Faculty Mentor
Ken-ichiro Fukuchi, MD, PhD, Professor
A number of UICOMP faculty were among the investigators chosen as recipients of the spring 2021 grants from the Jump Applied Research for Community Health through Engineering and Simulation (ARCHES) program. Seven research projects are sharing more than $400,000 in funding aimed at addressing the challenges health care faces in the development of policies and procedures for mass vaccination, health care delivery, and quality and patient safety improvements.

The Jump ARCHES program is a partnership among UICOMP, OSF HealthCare and The Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (U of I).

The funding supports research involving clinicians, engineers and social scientists to rapidly develop technologies and devices that could revolutionize medical training and health care delivery. A requirement of the grant applications was for solutions that could be deployed quickly, within four to six weeks. Investigators were also encouraged to consider how to best mitigate the impact of age, location, and social barriers in delivering quality health care to vulnerable populations.

John Vozenilek, MD, chief medical officer for innovation and digital health at OSF HealthCare, notes the importance of timely research and collaboration. “With the UK variant now the predominant virus in the U.S., it is critical that we leverage the talent at Jump Trading Simulation + Education Center in Peoria and the brilliant minds within engineering, technology and social science at the U of I. This will help us quickly find much-needed solutions to address the challenges health care faces in developing policies and procedures for mass vaccination, health care delivery, quality and patient safety improvements.”

Jump ARCHES Coordinator Seth Stutzman adds, “The outcomes of these projects will help with issues arising from the current pandemic and help physicians apply lessons learned in the post-COVID health care landscape.”

The funded projects with their investigators are listed below.

**Every shot counts: development of a novel predictive model and toolkit to predict and decrease vaccine-preventable rural covid-19 deaths**

Jimen Sung, PhD
Scott Barrows, MA, FAMI*
Adam Cross, MD*
Ann Willemse-Dunlap, CRNA, PhD*
Mary Stapel, MD*

Currently, 50% of the U.S. population has received at least one COVID-19 vaccine, which is below the projected 70-90% required to achieve herd immunity to the virus. This project aims to develop a predictive model to forecast vaccine-preventable deaths in each county in the U.S. and the most likely reasons for vaccine hesitancy among populations. A toolkit will help guide rural populations in their decision-making about accepting the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Human factors in the use of telepresence robots after the covid-19 pandemic**

Inki Kim, PhD
Jon Michel, MD*
Shandra Jamison, MA, RRT

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak resulted in an increase in telemedicine visits to prevent the spread of the virus. The goal of this concept is to establish, justify and optimize a set of existing or new use cases for telepresence robot use in telemedicine to reduce the risk of in-hospital transmission of COVID-19 as well as for continued quality of care delivery in the post-COVID-19 era.
Covid-19 infection levels in central Illinois communities without access to frequent testing: a sewage monitoring and epidemiological modeling study

Thanh Helen Nguyen, PhD
Ahmed Elbana
Art Schmidt
Joanna Shisler
John Farrell, MD*

New COVID-19 variants spread faster and have evaded some of the vaccine-induced protective immune response in the UK and other countries. To determine whether these factors will influence the level of infection and diversity of variants in areas that lack frequent testing, this project will collect and monitor the levels and genotypes of the virus in sewage collected at selected neighborhoods. The goal is to help public health officials prepare for increased burdens on health care facilities and workers.

Voice vitals: a new approach for anxiety and depression screening in the era of covid-19

Mary Pietrowicz, PhD
Ryan Finkenbine, MD*
Sarah Donohue, PhD*

Existing systems fall short in identifying and treating individuals with anxiety disorders and major depressive disorders due to a variety of issues including people not seeking medical attention, attitudinal barriers like stigma and structural barriers such as a lack of providers. This proposal aims to develop a prototype of machine models that can listen to speech and language and automatically screen for anxiety and depression disorders.

How to design and operate end-to-end vaccine deployment using social media, addressing supply chain allocations constraints and utilizing telemedicine

Anton Ivanov, PhD
Subhonmesh Bose, PhD
Albert England III, MD*
Aşen Eren Mehmet, PhD
Ujjal Mukherjee, PhD
Sridhar Seshadri
Sebastian Soubirys, Postdoctoral Fellow
Yuqian Xu, PhD

This idea aims to provide a comprehensive vaccine deployment strategy using data analytic frameworks. These frameworks will (1) shape population attitudes towards vaccination by reducing their uncertainty via social media channels, (2) provide a dynamic inventory management tool for perishable or sensitive goods, and (3) develop telemedicine-based solutions for convenient and sufficient post-vaccination patient support.

Building a motivational, interviewing conversational agent (mintbot) for promoting covid-19 vaccination among people with multiple sclerosis

Jessie Chin, PhD
Suma Bhat, PhD
Chung-Yi Chiu, PhD
Jared Rogers, MD*
Brian Laird, PharmD

Individuals with multiple sclerosis are likely to be hesitant to getting the COVID-19 vaccine due to their compromised health condition. This concept aims to develop an accessible, generalizable and efficient digital health solution for promoting COVID-19 vaccination among vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities.

* denotes a UICOMP investigator

Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen, and thinking what nobody has thought.

– Albert Szent-Gyorgyi
Dean’s Award for Innovative Medical Student Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

At UICOMP, the Dean's Award was established to innovatively create and assess medical student curriculum through the use of simulation and related technologies. The Dean's Award fund was established through generous philanthropic support. The award cycle for 2021 sought applications specific to proposals that fostered innovative use of technology and simulation to address challenges to medical education due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“These proposals represent creativity, problem-solving and innovation at its finest. UICOMP faculty are not just outstanding teachers and care providers, but their ability to continually look at learning and identify new and innovative ways to overcome challenges and provide our learners with the best possible experience is a feature that makes UICOMP a special place,” says Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, UICOMP interim regional dean.

Matthew Bramlet, MD  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics  
Digitally Re-Envisioning Exposure to Critical Sub-Internship Clerkship Experiences  
Design interactive digital media content (VR or online) within the Enduvo© platform that covers sub-internship curricula impacted by COVID-19. Modules are designed by the clerkship directors or their delegates for the following rotations: Pediatrics and Medicine sub-I’s as well as the Emergency Medicine advanced elective. A plan is developed for use within clerkship rotations and aligned to curriculum.  

Goals of this project include: Attempt to offset resource heavy burden of current sub-I OSCEs by replacing some skill assessment in digital format rather than “in person” observation. (This goal is particularly relevant with “in person” OSCE limitations put in place due to the COVID-19 restrictions.) Establish med-ed relevant LMS integration. Enable clerkship director control over dissemination of content to specific learners and provide visibility on individual learner performance. Establish LMS integration of Enduvo platform into UICOMP system (CAE and/or Blackboard). Expand exposure and increase access to the VR-based clinical skills training through this tele-simulation format.

Nicole Delinski, DNP  
Director of Educational Operations, OSF Healthcare/Jump Trading Simulation and Education Center  
Faculty Guide to Rapidly Build Virtual Reality  
Create a faculty guide that not only supports faculty to autonomously build quality anatomical simulations in the virtual environment, but also creates a cost-efficient, and time sensitive rapid process that supports the recommendations of the ACHA. The technology used is Enduvo’s virtual reality platform.

Lisa Barker, MD  
Clinical Associate Professor  
Choose Your Own Adventure: App-Based Training for Clinical Decision Making  
JUMP Simulation has developed an Android and iOS mobile app that allows users to progress through procedural process, conversations, or decision-trees one segment at a time. Each segment includes a variety of components including text, photo, video, web-links, and multichoice buttons, allowing for a visually rich experience that steps users through a process or challenges them to make decisions that impact the progression. The branching pathways are programmed based on clinical decision trees or algorithms created by Subject Matter Experts.

We all learn best from the mistakes we make – the ‘CYOA’ app allows medical students early in their training to start making clinical judgments around refining a differential diagnosis. It is our hope that the app will provide a safe space for students to try decision-making while at the same time reinforcing key clinical concepts.

– Lisa Barker, MD
**John Fonge, MD**  
*Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine and Pediatrics*

**Mixed Reality Simulations for Team Management of Acute Care Conditions**

A curriculum using the mixed-reality 360 video platform [Sankaran et al 2019] which provides a whole room view via HMD or computer monitor and allows learners to interact with embedded objects within the scene. For each clinical case, a series of short video clips will be created by filming a simulated clinical encounter, then dividing it to create the different patient “states” that occur similar to the “states” of mannequins used in physical simulations. Embedded digital assets are overlaid as indicated by case-specific learning objectives to provide opportunities for students to take action with the scenario. Pairing the reproducibility of the 360-degree mixed reality vignette with the real-time of engagement of multiple participants and faculty for post-simulation debriefing provides greater opportunity to develop the PPD1 competency (Develop the ability to use self-awareness of knowledge, skills, and emotional limitations to engage in appropriate help-seeking behaviors) than other asynchronous platforms.

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**Teresa Lynch, MD**  
*Professor of Clinical Medicine*

**Use of Telepresence Robots to Improve Bedside Education in the Post-COVID-19 Era**

This project will utilize telepresence robots to increase volume and educational value of patient encounters on rounds. This includes virtually attending bedside rounds when numbers of learners at the bedside are limited. It also allows learners to be added to patient encounters not commonly attended by the entire team, such as family meetings, informed consents, and during procedures. Use of telepresence robots allows maintenance of a safe learning environment for learners by limiting in-person exposure to patients with infectious/contagious disease like COVID-19. Telepresence robots also allow for direct, in-vivo feedback of learners performing a clinical encounter through direct video observation that provides experiential learning that reaches beyond simulated activities, while reducing resources required for entering an isolation suite.

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**Ann Willemsen-Dunlap, PhD**  
*Clinical Associate Professor*

**As You Like It: Interprofessional Education Two Ways for Early Phase Medical Students**

Phase One and Phase Two medical students will collaborate as members of an interprofessional team of student health professionals in an on-line environment. This project focuses on the Core Entrustable Professional Activities (EPA) for entering residency. Specifically, Core EPA 9 is “Collaborate as a member of Interprofessional Team.”

Current progress through EPA 9 requires medical students to identify other team members’ roles and responsibilities and seek help from other members of the team; to include other team members in discussion and communicate attentively with them; and to establish and maintain a climate of mutual respect, dignity, integrity and trust. These specific behaviors are not routinely fostered in Phase One and Phase Two classrooms.

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**Anthony Dwyer, MS, AHFP**  
*Clinical Assistant Professor*

**Telesimulation Educational Initiative**

Telesimulation is a novel medical education modality that connects healthcare professionals around the world. This project aims to investigate and streamline the training and outcomes for healthcare professionals practicing telemedicine to improve patient safety, reduce error, and enhance clinical outcomes.

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The use of telepresence robots further enhances physician-patient communication and family contact (with patient and with physician team) especially during times of visitor and travel restriction.

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Telepresence robots will allow our learners to experience patient encounters without entering the room. With this capability, we can protect learners from highly contagious diseases as well as preserve PPE. They also allow students to observe sensitive conversations firsthand without being physically present in the rooms.

– Teresa Lynch, MD
CREATE: A “Vaccine” for Burnout
Equipping Medical Students with Resiliency and Compassion

Compassion and emotional awareness training will offer medical students the skills and ability to practice compassion (for themselves and others), avoid burnout and stay connected with the altruistic aspiration that drove them to pursue a career in medicine in the first place. That belief led to the creation of CREATE, an intensive two-week elective being piloted for medical students at the University of Illinois College of Medicine.

CREATE is an acronym that stands for Compassion Resilience and Emotional Awareness Training and Education.

The CREATE curriculum was developed by Bento Soares, PhD, Professor and Chair of Cancer Biology and Pharmacology at UICOMP, based on three evidence-based programs that he teaches – CBCT® (Cognitively-Based Compassion Training), CEB (Cultivating Emotional Balance), MSC (Mindful Self-Compassion) and its adaptation for healthcare professionals, SCHC (Self-Compassion for Healthcare Communities) – in addition to incorporating current literature on wellbeing, resilience, trauma and neuroscience research.

Soares describes CREATE as a vaccine against physician burnout. Medical literature and the media have brought attention to physician burnout in recent years. Medscape’s 2021 Physician Burnout Report indicated 42 percent of physicians reported feeling burned out last year.

The survey included 12,339 physicians in 29 specialties from August 30 through November 5, 2020.

“Compassion and well-being are discussed in scientific literature as skills that can be developed because they are governed by neurological processes that can be shaped with training,” he says. Humans, are biologically endowed with affective empathy, but the ability to transition from affective empathy to empathic concern and compassion needs to be developed with training. Compassion encompasses two stages: a felt experience – affective empathy – and a loving response, Soares explains. “We often get stuck in the felt experience, which may be conducive to empathic distress and ultimately to burn out,” he says. “The vicarious experience of pain can easily become unbearable, and that may result in the three hallmarks of burnout: emotional and physical exhaustion, feelings of inadequacy, failure, separateness, and depersonalization. Compassion enables us to shift from the felt experience to a loving response, which activates motivation and reward centers in the brain.”

Humans have compassion for those whom they are close to. “We have naturally occurring compassion for people we like and for those who are close to us. Through CREATE, we are cultivating the skills to become ever more inclusive in our care and concern. Through practice, we can deepen our sense of common humanity and gratitude for others. The resulting warm-heartedness constitutes the foundation upon which compassion may naturally arise. It is important to focus on intention and purpose, not on an outcome that we so often cannot control. There are times when an action may not be possible, but even then the compassionate aspiration may arise.

CREATE will continue to be offered by Dr. Soares online to students from Chicago, Rockford and Peoria.

CBCT Teacher Training Supported by Reeves Fund

Faculty from Peoria, Rockford, and Chicago campuses of the University of Illinois College of Medicine were recently certified as instructors of CBCT. CBCT is an evidence-based program developed at the Emory University Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics that until recently was only offered at UICOMP. Now, thanks to a grant award from the Reeves Medical Student Wellness Fund, it is available on an ongoing basis to students at all three campuses. This fund was established by the College of Medicine from the Tom C. Reeves Memorial Fund, honoring an undergraduate alumnus of UIUC and a medical student at the College of Medicine in Chicago who was tragically killed in an accident. His mother, Margaret Reeves, was a member of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees.

Faculty who have recently become certified CBCT Instructors through this initiative include:

**Chicago Campus**
Memoona Hasnain, MD, MHPE, PhD
Leelach Rothschild, MD
Maureen Gecht, OTD, MPH, OTR/L

**Rockford Campus**
Carol Krohm, MD
Geri Fox, MD, MHPE

**Peoria Campus**
Anton Grasch, MD
Eleanora Zakharian, PhD
Christina Constantinidou

Check out the course "Resilience and Wellbeing in (spite of) Healthcare" offered by UICOMP’s Center for Wellbeing. Details and registration information are on page 16. This course is exclusively for physicians and healthcare workers.
What’s the difference?

Empathy
Affective or emotional empathy is an emotional response that involves experiencing the feelings of another person. If others suffer, you suffer too. This experience actually activates pain centers in the brain. If you’re a physician, it is important that you empathize with the feelings, pain and hardship of your patients. However, just resonating with the suffering of others serves no purpose unless it becomes the motivation for a compassionate response. Otherwise it is like living with a chronic debilitating pain.

Compassion
A response in which one experiences empathy, but then becomes other-oriented and shifts gears to do something to alleviate the suffering of others. The focus shifts from the felt experience of pain (affective empathy), to the aspiration to identify opportunities to act, if at all possible, in ways that may alleviate the suffering of another. By shifting gears to compassion, helping others can create a sense of motivation and feelings of reward. The focus is on others. Research has proven this shift to compassion (from empathy) is a skill that can be developed.

Dr. Deshpande Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award in Pediatric Care
Girish Deshpande, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, was presented the Ron W. Lee Pediatric Care Lifetime Achievement Award during an official presentation in May. He was one of three physicians from the State of Illinois honored by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) program. The awards annually recognize outstanding contributions to pediatric emergency and critical care medicine.

Dr. Deshpande was recognized for providing the highest level of pediatric patient care through his work at Children’s Hospital of Illinois as well as his strong clinical teaching and mentorship for all levels of medical education through the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria. In addition, he has made significant contributions to clinical research in the areas of emergency and critical care pediatric patients through a multitude of peer reviewed publications and book chapters. Dr. Deshpande holds several patents for innovative devices he has designed for enhanced care of the critical pediatric patient.

His nomination stated, “His skill in effectiveness at caring for these critically ill children is only matched by his empathy and communication skills that he displays with patients’ families. His passion for the care of emergency and critical care children often spills over to those team members around him.”

UICOMP Welcomes New Faculty
Dr. Danielle Deines joined the Department of Pediatrics as an Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics. Dr. Deines received her doctoral degree from Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2012 and completed her residency at University of New Mexico in 2015. Dr. Deines is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics.

Dr. Rahul Sinha joined the Department of Pediatrics as an Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics. Dr. Sinha received his doctoral degree from Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy in 2009 and completed his residency at Flushing Hospital Medical Center in 2014 and Duke University Medical Center in 2015. Dr. Sinha is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology with special qualifications in Child Neurology. Dr. Sinha’s expertise is in Child Neurology.
Virtual Reality: Cutting-Edge Technology Impacts Surgery Planning, Patient Care

EXCERPT FROM
“3D Modeling: The Next Medical Imaging Modality”
by Mathew Bramlet, MD, January 20, 2021

“We have a complex surgical case scheduled for the next day and the surgeon contacts me to come through the virtual reality (VR) lab to preview the case. I load the case into VR, get him set up and give him the controls. He proceeds to grab the heart, increases the size to that of a laundry basket, rotates it around to his anticipated perspective during surgery and then opens a window into the chambers. We briefly discuss the findings from ultrasound and CT. The case is unusual and requires a unique solution.

“Our dialogue stops, and he spends the next hour in silence walking around the heart, rotating it and reviewing it from different perspectives. “I hope this is what I find tomorrow,” breaks the silence as he repeats this statement multiple times before leaving. I texted him the following day after surgery to see how everything went . . .

UICOMP faculty are using MRI and CT data to generate an exact replica of anatomy. This can be used to create a three-dimensional model of the anatomy that physicians can use to better understand individual cases. It is especially helpful in surgery planning and allows surgeons to see “up close and personal,” albeit virtual. Peoria is a worldwide leader in using this technology. With the use of this cutting-edge VR technology, physicians can examine and manipulate the images to get a precise 3D view that current MRI and CT data in and of itself cannot provide.

The concept/technology was developed in the laboratory at Jump Simulation (a collaboration between OSF HealthCare and UICOMP), but is now being applied to complex cases which gives physicians and surgeons a remarkable advantage in planning and ultimately provides better care for patients.

For years, physicians have used tools like x-ray, ultrasound, MRI and CT in an attempt to visualize inside the human anatomy. The use of this technology allows physicians to see what is going on. Leading the creation and application of this technology in Peoria is Matthew Bramlet, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics, who explains the evolution of this capability began with the introduction of consumer-based 3D printing in 2014. The wide availability of 3D printing provided easier access to a technology that demonstrated the benefit of interacting with complex anatomy derived from MRI and CT images.

“The work of generating 3D models involves translating what the radiologists see when they look at each 2D image and assigning a value to the image. As each image, with segmented values assigned to the different tissues, we can then stack those together to create a 3D model of the patient-specific anatomy. This process objectifies in digital form, the 3D model as seen in the “minds-eye” of the radiologist,” Bramlet explains.

Excerpts for a text conversation between Randall Fortuna, MD, and Matthew Bramlet, MD. Fortuna is a congenital heart surgeon and assistant clinical professor of surgery at University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix.
"The real value came when we took the existing CT and MRI data sets that had the 3D information hiding in it, and in our lab, we generate a digital twin of the patient," Bramlet says. "This allows the surgeon, initially in 3D print form, but now in a more advanced VR form, to assess that internal anatomy much as they will see it in the OR. What we’re achieving is an improved mental image in the surgeon’s mind, especially on these complex cases, so that the surgeon can encounter the unexpected before they go to the OR."

Surgeon Sonia Orcutt, MD, assistant professor of clinical surgery, echoes the advantages of VR. "I think what VR helps with is giving us, as surgeons, the ability to see the anatomy before we’re actually in the OR," Orcutt says. With two-dimensional images like CT scans or MRIs which are the current standard, we have to build a model in 3D in our mind, which is good but not perfect. With VR sometimes we can see relationships with other structures better than if we were imagining it, which can help plan surgeries better."

Not only does this help avoid surprises, but it can also assist with overall planning and approach to surgery. Application of the technology started with congenital heart patients but has evolved to include cancer care, both pediatric and adult. Bramlet says nearly 50 percent of complex cases that use this technology for surgery planning find the surgeon changing something about their approach.

Orcutt shares that VR has influenced her surgery plans. "I have in the past changed my incision for surgeries or changed the approach itself, in terms of how much I’ve removed in the OR," she says. Even if a surgeon doesn’t necessarily change her plan, knowing what to expect offers clear advantages. "Having already 'seen' the anatomy before helps to know how and where to watch out for critical structures," she adds.

"In terms of ultimate impact on patient care, overall I think this is safer for us as surgeons and helps us be better prepared. It may also reduce our operative times, which will help patients," Orcutt says. "I’m very glad we have access to this amazing technology here in Peoria."

Marc Knepp, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics and medicine (UICOMP Class of 2004), has applied the technology firsthand with his patients with congenital heart defects, heart problems present at birth. "In congenital heart, there’s a myriad of lesions and every child is a different size, shape, form, and so trying to do a standard approach for every child on the operation or procedure can be challenging," Knepp explains. "When we’ve taken these cases and put them in a virtual reality or a 3D model, we can actually make a difference and individualize the care so the procedure goes faster, it’s smoother, and complications are already predicted even before they happen."

The 3D modeling and VR technology also provide a great tool for teaching and educating patients and families as well as students and residents. "They get the opportunity to learn from three-dimensional modeling that no one else has or very few centers have," he says. "And that has been eye-opening for me. I remember my first patient who got to see her heart in virtual reality, walk through her heart. There were tears running down her face, and she said, ‘I’ve never understood my heart like this.’ And she had been our patient for years and years, but that virtual reality made such a difference."

"This has been quite revolutionizing for our patients. They have access to something that is on the cutting edge here in Peoria," Knepp says. Bramlet echoes the rarity of the technology. "Currently, this technology is not a standard capability in medicine even today. Between UICOMP and OSF HealthCare, we’ve really combined to bring incredible cancer care to the forefront here in this area that patients can’t go elsewhere and find."

Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity – not a threat.

– Steve Jobs
Pachigolla Selected Fulbright Winner

Suvi Pachigolla (UICOMP Class of 2023) is recipient of a Fulbright award to Switzerland for the 2021-22 academic year. The award was selected by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Suvi will spend her Fulbright year in Switzerland at the Paul Scherrer Institute in Villigen where her research will focus on radiation therapy for pediatric brain cancer. She is currently conducting a research year at Washington University through a grant from the National Institutes of Health. Through this program, she is studying radiation therapy for cervical cancer while earning her Masters of Science in Clinical Investigation (MSCI).■

Rana Wins Grad Slam “People’s Choice”!

Iemaan Rana (UICOMP Class of 2024) was one of seven students to participate in the Berkeley Grad Slam Competition, an annual competitive speaking event that showcases graduate student research in 3-minute talks to a general audience. She competed during a livestream event April 14 and was selected as the “People’s Choice” winner!

Her presentation was entitled – “From Chemicals to Chronic Disease: How Formaldehyde Exposure Can Lead to Neurodegenerative Disease and Brain Cancer.” Iemaan is a first-year PhD student in Environmental Health Sciences at University of California - Berkeley, while concurrently attending UICOMP. ■

Saving Named Medical Services Director at Children’s Hospital

Dr. Kay Saving has been named director, medical services at Children’s Hospital of Illinois. This is a new role that replaces the Children’s Hospital medical director role previously held by Dr. Saving. Dr. Saving continues in her role at UICOMP as associate head of the Department of Pediatrics and professor of pediatrics. ■

Huckleby Named Martin Luther King Jr. Scholar

Jeremy Huckleby (UICOMP Class of 2021) was named a UIC Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship recipient. This award program was established in 1985 to recognize underrepresented students who have demonstrated high academic achievement and have shown a commitment to civil rights and social justice through community service. The full list of recipients can be found at go.uic.edu/MLK2021. ■

De Alarcon Receives Dean’s Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Pedro de Alarcon was presented the Dean’s Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his outstanding leadership and service to the College in his role as UICOMP’s Head of the Department of Pediatrics. The honor was presented during the College of Medicine’s 2021 Virtual Commencement Ceremony by Executive Dean Mark I. Rosenblatt, MD, PhD, MBA. ■

Winner of ISMS Poster Contest 2021

A team of four M3 students in the UICOMP Innovation in Rural Global Medicine (IRGmed) program won top honors in the 2021 Illinois State Medical Society’s Poster/Presentation Contest. Their presentation was entitled “Using Virtual Reality to Enhance Education for Vulnerable Populations.” The students are: Andy Meister, Saad Kothawala, Brett Austin, and Jamie Blue. The objective of the team’s prototype innovation was to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing VR technology for diabetic education. IRGmed is a four-year longitudinal elective that teaches students how to apply the tools and techniques of innovation to solve for health disparities in under-resourced populations. Students gain the skills and knowledge needed to be future physician leaders and advance health equity innovation throughout their careers. ■

Oliver Named Site Director at Heartland in Peoria

Bradley Oliver, MD, (UICOMP Class of 2014 and graduate of UICOMP Med Peds residency) has been appointed residency site medical director at Heartland Health Services. He will support ambulatory education for UICOMP residents in Medicine, Peds, Med-Peds and Obstetrics-Gynecology, and will work to ensure that the needs of the clinic directors and program directors are met. ■
Sara Kelly Joins UICOMP Research Services

UICOMP welcomes Sara Warfield Kelly, PhD, to its Research Services team where she will play a key role in health disparities research and will closely collaborate with the Peoria City/County Health Department. She is research assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics/Administration.

Dr. Kelly received her BA and MPH from East Tennessee State University (ETSU). She went on to earn a PhD at West Virginia University (WVU), located in the epicenter of the opioid overdose crisis. At WVU, she worked on various quantitative and qualitative projects focused on better understanding the impact of the overdose epidemic that loomed over the Appalachian region. After completing her PhD, she fulfilled a rotating post-doctoral fellowship at Brown University, ETSU, and WVU. Dr. Kelly has advanced training in public health and extensive experience using epidemiologic methods with large population-based and health services datasets. Over the past several years, she has utilized national electronic medical records to examine the intersection of substance use, suicide risk and rehabilitation among highly vulnerable populations, including veterans who use VHA services. Dr. Kelly has analyzed complex datasets (e.g. prescription drug monitoring databases) to elucidate opioid overdose indicators as part of her work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She has also analyzed data from population-based surveys, clinical trials, and published on the effects of population health interventions on behavior change (e.g., treatment seeking) among veterans.

Theresa Tracy Trot Donates $45K to UICOMP

The Theresa Tracy Trot presented UICOMP a check just over $45,000 to support pancreatic cancer research. Their 2020 run/walk typically held on the East Peoria Riverfront was held virtually, and their organizers and supporters were creative and worked hard to continue their efforts to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer and funds to support research.

Sood Joins UICOMP as Head of Pediatrics

Manu Raj Sood, MD, joined UICOMP March 1 as the head of the Department of Pediatrics at UICOMP. He previously served as professor and chief of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at the Medical College of Wisconsin where he also was medical director of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. Dr. Sood also served as the center director for the American Neurogastroenterology and Motility Society national pediatric fellowship training program.

He is an accomplished clinical investigator with years of experience in academic medicine. Author of dozens of refereed journal publications, as well as books, chapters, reviews and abstracts, he is editor of the textbook Essentials of Gastrointestinal Functional and Motility Disorders (Tree Life Media). Dr. Sood is a highly sought-after lecturer on the topics of pediatric gastroenterology and motility disorders and has provided lectures and workshops throughout the world.

He completed his medical school training at Indira Gandhi Medical College in India. He received his MRCP from the Royal College of Physicians in London, UK, and MD from the University of Manchester (UK). Additional academic credentials include FRCPCH from the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health and MS in Healthcare Leadership and Management from the University of Texas – Dallas.

Gyarmati Research Award for Project Targeting Bloodstream Infection in Leukemia

Peter Gyarmati, PhD, assistant professor of Cancer Biology and Pharmacology, received a $25,000 UIC Chancellor’s Translational Research Initiative Award through the UIC Innovation Fund. The award is in support of his project “Point of care detection of bloodstream infection in leukemia.”

Bloodstream infection (BSI) is a common and often fatal complication in the treatment of leukemia due to underlying conditions and therapy-induced neutropenia. Rapid detection of BSI is essential as prognosis worsens by the hour; however, the current gold standard (blood culture) may take days to perform. While a filter paper-based technology to visualize DNA by the naked eye has been previously developed, this project aims to further develop this method to a standalone device to provide a sample-to-result diagnosis of BSI within three hours.

UICOMP GME Matches 83

The Graduate Medical Education (GME) Department celebrated a successful Match Day in March. All of our UICOMP residency programs filled in the MATCH during an unprecedented virtual interview season. A total of 83 slots were filled for new MD graduates who will be completing their residency training in Peoria.
Anderson Named Chair of Surgery at UICOMP

Richard Anderson, MD, was named chair of the Department of Surgery at UICOMP effective June 1, following a national search. Dr. Anderson has been on the UICOMP faculty in the Department of Surgery for more than 20 years. During his tenure, he has earned an extensive list of awards and honors, including numerous Golden Apple Awards, Teacher of the Year Awards, and Resident Teacher of the Year. He is also a two-time recipient of the UICOMP Faculty of the Year Award. In addition to his recognition as an educator, he is a skilled clinician and surgeon who has been recognized multiple times by America’s Top Surgeons and Top Doctors, including numerous top tier outcomes after pulmonary resection as recognized by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

He graduated from Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine and completed his general surgery residency at UICOMP as well as a thoracic surgery residency at Washington University Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. Here at UICOMP, he is professor of Clinical Surgery and also serves as section chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery for the department as well as surgery clerkship director. Dr. Anderson has fully contributed to UICOMP through his committee work, including extensive service on both the curriculum and executive committees, to name a few.

In addition to his clinical skills and experience, Dr. Anderson also brings a commitment and compassion for education and recognition of the instrumental role faculty play to teach, train and mentor the next generation of physicians and surgeons.

Whitty Bradley Joins Physician Network

Lisa Whitty Bradley, MD, has joined Franciscan Physician Network Hammond Clinic (Indiana) as a board certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon. She completed her residency in general surgery in 2005 at UICOMP.

UICOMP Faculty Publish Celiac Research

Three UICOMP faculty members in UICOMP Department of Medicine authored research findings with the article “Celiac Disease in an Adult Presenting as Behavioral Disturbances” in the December 24, 2020, issue of *American Journal of Case Reports*. Authoring the article were: Andrew Murphy, MD, (UICOMP Class of 2020) graduate assistant; Joseph A. Norton, DO, clinical associate; and Benjamin Pfleiderer, MD, (UICOMP Class of 1985), associate professor of clinical medicine.

UICOMP’s Own Honored as 2021 Champions of Humanistic Care

Three UICOMP faculty/staff members were honored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation as a 2021 Champion of Humanistic Care. Douglas Kasper, MD; Pam Briggs, MSW, QMHP; and Jessica Kammeyer, BSN, RN, were among 200 champions honored nationwide on June 10 during the Gold Foundation’s virtual gala. Recipients were nominated by their healthcare institutions for compassion and courage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Gold Foundation champions keeping healthcare human by emphasizing the human connection in modern medicine and the premise that humanistic medical care combines compassion with the best of medicine.

UICOMP Receives City of Peoria Proclamation

At the May 25 meeting of the Peoria City Council, Mayor Rita Ali issued a proclamation honoring the 50th anniversary of the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria. Mayor Ali recognized Peoria’s medical school for its 2,000-plus alumni physicians, residency training programs, the patient care and cutting edge research since its founding in 1970.

Kelvin Wynn, MD, (left) chair of Family and Community Medicine, and UICOMP Interim Regional Dean Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, were present to receive the award.
Kothari Heads American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)

Congratulations to Shanu Kothari, MD, (UICOMP Class of 1995) on his election as the 2021-22 president of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). He is the vice chair of medical staff affairs, Department of Surgery, at Prisma Health in Greenville, SC, and associate fellowship director and associate professor of surgery at the University of South Carolina, Greenville.

Research Examines Relationship Between Health Literacy and Self-Care

UICOMP faculty with the Department of Medicine are co-authors of a paper entitled “Health Literacy, Processing Capacity, Illness Knowledge, and Actionable Memory for Medication Taking in Type 2 Diabetes: Cross-Sectional Analysis” which was published in February 2021 in the Journal of General Internal Medicine. The UICOMP co-authors include: Huaping Wang, MD and James F. Graumlich, MD.

Faculty Publish on “Immune Thrombocytopenia” After COVID-19 Vaccine

Three UICOMP faculty published an April 2021 peer reviewed article in Dovepress on “Severe, Refractory Immune Thrombocytopenia Occurring After SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine.” UICOMP contributors include: Jonathan C. Roberts, MD; Kap Sum Foong, MD; and Michael D. Tarantino, MD.

Yadav Serving on ACP Governor’s Council

Manjayoti Yadav, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine, was elected to serve on the Governor's Council of the American College of Physicians (ACP) Illinois Southern Chapter.

Wynn Named “Physician of the Year”

Kelvin Wynn, MD, was named Physician of the Year by UnityPoint Health. The award was presented in April 2021 at UPH – Methodist in Peoria.

Navarro Named Director of Clinical Affairs at Newly Formed Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine

Ronald Navarro, MD, (UICOMP Class of 1988) was named Director of Clinical Affairs at the Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine. In this role, he will oversee the logistics of student clinical education. Dr. Navarro has been regional assistant medical director for business management for retail strategy for the Southern California Permanente Medical Group (SCPMG) since 2019. He joined Kaiser Permanente as an orthopaedist and sports medicine specialist in 1997 and in 2000 obtaining partnership became chief of orthopaedic surgery at South Bay Medical Center. He became regional orthopedic surgery chief in 2013 where he oversaw all orthopedic services in Southern California, including working with over 200 orthopedic surgeons in 13 medical centers.

Dr. Navarro has co-authored several peer-reviewed publications in orthopedics and related diseases and symptoms. He previously served as physician specialist helping to train Harbor UCLA Medical Center orthopaedic residents, and as a clinical instructor of athletic training, family practice, and internal medicine with Harbor UCLA. Dr. Navarro received his MD degree from UICOMP with ortho training at Harbor UCLA and a shoulder and sports medicine fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Navarro is a Hispanic American born to immigrant parents and was raised in Wilmington, California.

The Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine is a new medical school in southern California, located in Pasadena. The first students matriculated in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Asche Featured in “Diagnosing Healthcare,” Documentary

An award-winning film documentary entitled, “Diagnosing Healthcare,” was released in 2020 and features UICOMP’s Carl Asche, Ph.D., research professor – internal medicine. The film is a social-impact documentary that centers on health care reform and searches for solutions for the most problematic areas of the mainstream health care system. In the film, Asche discusses the economics of health care. The documentary has received 14 awards and 6 additional nominations to date. It is broadly available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV as well as other streaming providers.

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Alan Bridges Selected 2021 UICOMP Distinguished Alum

Alan Bridges, MD, was selected the 2021 recipient of the UICOMP Distinguished Alumni Award. Bridges is chief of staff at the Madison Veterans Administration Hospital and professor of medicine at the University of Wisconsin College of Medicine.

A member of the UICOMP Class of 1983, Bridges received the Veterans Health Administration John D. Chase Award for Executive Excellence in Healthcare in November 2020. He has held numerous VHA leadership roles throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including serving on the national COVID-19 care transition planning team, the Madison VA Hospital’s incident command team, and as the medical incident commander for the VA Great Lakes Health Care System.

Bridges led the Madison VA as one of the national “Moving Forward” pilot sites, implementing dashboards, checklists and huddle reports to safely increase in-person patient visits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bridges authored the national “Moving Forward” toolkit.

In addition, under Bridges’ leadership, the Madison VA has become a high-performing facility within the VA Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) performance metrics. This work has earned the Madison VA a first place national ranking in both patient and employee satisfaction.

Dr. Bridges received an undergraduate degree from Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. After receiving his medical degree from UICOMP, he completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics in Madison where he was chief resident in internal medicine and completed a rheumatology fellowship. Following his fellowship, he was on the faculty of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine. He returned to Madison in 1992 and has been on staff at UW and the VA since that time.

Dr. Bridges’ research has focused on antibody testing for rheumatic diseases and new treatments for rheumatoid arthritis and connective tissue disease. He has published more than 65 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

“This year we are honored to recognize the outstanding efforts of Dr. Bridges not only for his response during the COVID-19 pandemic but also in his commitment to excellence as he meets the needs of our nation’s veterans,” says Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, UICOMP interim regional dean. “His work is a wonderful example of the impact UICOMP alumni are having, not only within their respective disciplines, but also within their organizations as leaders who truly contribute to make meaningful differences within our healthcare systems and communities.”

The UICOMP Distinguished Alumni Award is presented annually by the Peoria Medical Alumni Council. It honors those who are highly distinguished in their chosen field and who, in deed or in action, reflect the importance of their education at UICOMP.

Nomination criteria and forms may be found online at https://peoria.medicine.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/05/distinguished-alumni.pdf

Resilience and Wellbeing in (spite of) Healthcare

An online course for physicians and other healthcare workers

September 1 - December 1, 2021
Every-other Wednesday
6 – 7:30 pm (Central Time)
$30/session OR $175/series
Free to UICOMP employees

To register or for more information: Tiara Thomas at (309) 495-1683 or CenterForWellbeing@uic.edu

This online course provides research-based tools and techniques for thriving as a healthcare professional. National studies indicate that 44% of US physicians experience symptoms of burnout, and there is an inverse relationship between compassion and burnout, and that compassion is a skill that can be enhanced with training.

Presented by Debra Disney, MSeD, LCPC, director of the Center for Wellbeing in the Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Department at UICOMP and Marcelo Bento Soares, PhD, head of the Department of Cancer Biology and Pharmacology and senior associate dean for research at UICOMP. Dr. Soares has been working to bring emotional awareness and compassion training to medical education, to healthcare providers, to educators and to cancer survivors (see related article on page 8).

Participants will learn:
- Steps for turning toward difficult experiences, with compassion
- Practical strategies for regulating thoughts, emotions, and behavior
- Understanding stress and managing it effectively
- Sustaining compassion for self and others, even during difficult circumstances
- Enhancing wellbeing, lowering levels of anxiety and depression
- Fostering more satisfying, interpersonal and professional relationships
Dear UICOMP Alumni:

Greetings from the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria Alumni Council! I want to extend a warm greeting and invitation to each and every one of you to become actively involved in the UICOMP Alumni Council.

We are revamping our alumni group and are interested in growing our membership and representation. We are interested in including alumni representing a variety of age demographics, disciplines, specialties, and geographical locations. With a larger base of members, we seek to offer more opportunities for engagement with current UICOMP students, including a mentorship program. There are opportunities for everyone to be involved with a commitment that can fit your schedule.

The UICOMP Alumni Council currently supports our students by sponsoring the White Coat ceremony each August and purchasing the first White Coat for each of our first-year students. In addition, we purchase the First Aid books for the USMLE Step 1 Exam preparation and provide financial support for student travel to attend conferences.

Meetings are now available via remote video conferencing so living and working in close proximity to UICOMP is no longer a requirement for meeting attendance. We meet every-other month so meeting attendance is not a significant time commitment. However, I know you join me in the belief that all time spent supporting, mentoring and creating opportunities for our medical students is time well spent. I hope you’ll join us for our next meeting.

If you are interested in learning more about joining the UICOMP Alumni Council and/or attending our next meeting, contact Jennifer Gibbs, senior director of development, at jggibbs@uic.edu or phone (309) 258-2619.

Robert Sparrow, MD
President, UICOMP Alumni Council
UICOMP Class of 1979

Peoria Medical Alumni Council
Has A New Name

University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria Alumni Council

The Peoria Medical Alumni Council (PMAC) is changing its name to University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria (UICOMP) Alumni Council. The change was made to reinforce the alumni affiliation with UICOMP.

The name change is also an attempt to clarify that UICOMP alumni, regardless of their geographical location, either residence or practice, are welcome and encouraged to actively participate in opportunities to engage with UICOMP, its students, faculty and fellow alumni.
Alumni: Stay Connected to UICOMP

1 Current address and email!
Be sure we have your current name, address, and phone number! If your name has changed due to marriage or you’ve recently moved, be sure to send us your current information. You’ll also want to make sure we have your email address! We have just started sharing UICOMP updates by email, including a brief highlight video from graduation. These are short messages and a fun way to see the latest happenings at UICOMP.

2 Follow us on social media!
Our social media channels are easy ways to follow what’s happening on campus and get the latest news and updates. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

3 What’s your news?
New position or move? Won an honor or award? Connected recently with a fellow alum? We’d love to hear about it. Email your news or information to sgrebner@uic.edu or phone (309) 671-8404. Your photo submissions are welcome as well.

4 Join the UICOMP Alumni Council!
Simply reach out to Jennifer Gibbs at jgibbs@uic.edu or phone (309) 258-2619.

“The Last Lecture” is a UICOMP annual tradition in which the M4s vote for the faculty member to present their final lecture of medical school. This year’s lecturer was Dr. Jessica Hanks who spoke to the class on transitions – transitions for patients, transitions in healthcare, and transitions as the class advances from medical school to residency. Hanks is associate dean for academic affairs and assistant professor of clinical internal medicine and pediatrics.