Community health electives give learners insight into factors influencing patient care and available resources.
## From the Dean . . .

During this season of gratitude, we are thankful for loyal and generous philanthropists who believe in the work of UICOMP and who entrust us with their financial support in carrying out our mission. On pages 4-5, we highlight recent endowments which will further elevate the Peoria regional campus. We are thankful for our alumni who are providing care and making significant contributions in their communities. We are thankful for our faculty and staff who are training and supporting future physicians, providing outstanding clinical care to our patients, and engaging in innovation and discovery through research. We are thankful for our learners who make great sacrifices during these years of medical education and training in their quest to become outstanding doctors. Together, these entities create the fabric of UICOMP and allow us to be our best.

This issue highlights community health which is foundational to the education, clinical care and research components of our mission. For more than 25 years, UICOMP has presented its annual Community Health Awards, and on page 15, we highlight this year's winners and pay tribute to the historical winners of the award.

The ILLInet RECOVER Long COVID research project is well underway in Peoria. You can read more about this National Institutes of Health-funded research on page 8 and the opportunities it brings patients and the community. On page 12, we showcase the community health electives that offer our learners greater exposure to the community-based organizations that focus on specific needs of the resident population. These electives provide future physicians great insight into the multitude of factors that may affect a patient’s health and access to care.

Córdoba Clinic is a shining example of providing care to those in need, and it’s all thanks to the generosity of the healthcare professionals and other volunteers who give so generously of their time to provide free care to the uninsured or underinsured. Read more about how UICOMP students gain valuable experience and support community health at Córdoba on page 2.

Within our curriculum, faculty are using the latest technology and applying the principles of innovation to supplement the learning experience for our students. On page 16, read about how apps and Virtual Reality developed by UICOMP’s own faculty are helping medical students learn.

The Peoria regional campus is planning for the future as we undergo an extensive Strategic Planning process. Read more on the process and 10 Strategic Priorities for our campus (page 17). This is indeed an exciting time for UICOMP as we look to the future, and we are grateful for the continued support of alumni, donors and friends who join us in advancing our mission.

Sincerely,

Meenakshy Aiyer, MD
Regional Dean
Peoria Welcomes Class of 2026

UICOMP officially welcomed members of the Class of 2026 during the White Coat Ceremony on August 12. Of the 61 incoming medical students, 44 of them are from Illinois.

The ceremony was held at Jump Trading Simulation & Education Center where friends and family joined in the celebration. Each student received their White Coat as a gift from the UICOMP Alumni Council. Inside the pocket of each white coat, students found pocket cards with a handwritten note from a UICOMP alumnus.
Córdoba Clinic Immerses Students in Community Health

While Córdoba Clinic offers free health-care to Peoria-area patients, the clinic also provides valuable experiences for UICOMP medical students to learn and serve on their journeys to becoming doctors.

Katherine Floess (UICOMP Class of 2023) is a member of the student leadership team for Córdoba and started volunteering at the clinic her first year in medical school. While Floess has always been interested in community health and working with underserved patients, she says her work at Córdoba has also benefited her by giving her clinical experience and more interaction with fellow medical students.

“Córdoba has always grounded me and reminded me why I wanted to go to medical school in the first place.”

— Katherine Floess
MD Candidate, UICOMP Class of 2023

“M1 and M2 years can be very strenuous as you spend all day studying and watching videos and doing flash cards,” she says. “Córdoba has always grounded me and reminded me why I wanted to go to medical school in the first place. Even during my clinical years when the clinical setting was no longer novel, volunteering at Córdoba has helped me during the times I felt exhausted and burned out by reminding me of the kinds of work I want to do as a physician and why I chose this career path.”

Floess says immigrants comprise much of the patient population at Córdoba, and this often calls for bridging a gap between health care in their home country and here. She shared that a recent patient was diagnosed with diabetes in his home country where he had been given two medications. He came to Córdoba for his first visit when the Córdoba team discovered one of the medications carried high risks for complications and was not recommended. “We had to address this, look into access to an alternative agent that he and his family could afford, and figure out dosing and follow-up,” she says. “This was an example of the ways in which working with patients from different backgrounds can be fascinating and challenging. You’re thinking about different risk factors, differentials, and access to medications and medical care.”

“Córdoba is unique because of the level at which students are allowed to participate in all aspects of care… it is also truly unique because it is a subspecialty clinic,” Floess adds. “Rarely do patients who have little or no health insurance have access to subspecialists, and this makes the physicians who volunteer at Córdoba truly amazing for recognizing that underlying health need.”

Floess recalls a particularly busy Sunday when a UICOMP student leader at the clinic asked her, then an M1, “We have a patient here who’s in for blood pressure follow up. Would you feel comfortable seeing them on your own?” Up until that point, she had always shadowed upper-classmen who would talk her through the process of seeing patients. She says, “I remember being terrified but saying, ‘Yes, absolutely, but if I have questions, I’ll come to you.’ Honestly, having that confidence to say ‘yes’ translated well to my experiences in clinical rotations.”

A Bradley University student volunteers at the front desk to check patients in upon arrival.

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN PORTER
Justin Porter (UICOMP Class of 2024) has seen patients with physicians of many different specialties in the two years he has volunteered with Córdoba. Like other students, his role and responsibilities have evolved with time, including performing a quality improvement project aimed at increasing patient and student numbers in the clinic, leading an effort to increase community awareness of Córdoba's services by distributing pamphlets locally, and helping the clinic get a reliable EKG machine.

“Volunteering at Córdoba has allowed me to apply concepts that I have learned in the classroom to real life patients...”

– Justin Porter
MD Candidate, UICOMP Class of 2024

Porter says volunteering his limited free time at Córdoba is a no-brainer. “Being involved in patient care for a population that needs care but cannot afford it is a privilege,” he says. “During the first two years of medical school, medical students spend most of our time in a classroom setting, so this was a way for me to take the information I was learning and apply it so I can help patients in a controlled environment. At times, volunteering at Córdoba gave me perspective in my studies. When I had been studying for several hours and knew I had to study for several more, it was easy to lose motivation, but working with these patients reminded me of why I am doing all of this work.”

Porter says one of his favorite lessons learned is that preventative care is more important than most people realize. “Discussing health outcomes with patients early on can save them a whole lot of trouble,” he says. “Volunteering at Córdoba has allowed me to apply concepts that I have learned in the classroom to real life patients and has reinforced a lot of information. Because of volunteering at Córdoba Clinic, I was able to start clerkships running because I was already comfortable talking with patients, writing notes, and presenting patients to attendings.”

His experience at Córdoba makes him more mindful of medically underserved patients and has raised his awareness of community resources that will help him better serve a vulnerable population wherever he ends up practicing medicine.

Rahmat Na’Allah, MD, professor of clinical family medicine, is a professional provider at Córdoba Clinic who says Justin Porter (UICOMP Class of 2024) has seen patients with physicians of many different specialties in the two years he has volunteered with Córdoba. Like other students, his role and responsibilities have evolved with time, including performing a quality improvement project aimed at increasing patient and student numbers in the clinic, leading an effort to increase community awareness of Córdoba’s services by distributing pamphlets locally, and helping the clinic get a reliable EKG machine.

“It is a privilege to care for those who otherwise do not have access to the barest minimum care...”

– Rahmat Na’Allah, MD
Professor of Clinical Family Medicine

gratifying is the honor of teaching the next generation of physicians the value of serving their community, reducing health disparity, humanism and advocacy.”

Córdoba Clinic Medical Director Amanullah Jamaluddin, MD, credits UICOMP medical students with prioritizing patient care. “All medical students frequently stay well beyond the 4 pm closing time if there are still patients to be seen and cared for. They are not looking at their watches, but are looking out for patient care,” he says.

Volunteer Specialists Welcome

Córdoba Clinic seeks volunteer specialists in all fields.
To inquire, contact Rahmat Na’Allah, MD, at maal01s@uic.edu.

2021-22 UICOMP Students at Córdoba Clinic
123 student volunteers*
640 volunteer hours*
UICOMP averages 6 student volunteers each week.

*Volunteers/volunteer hours do not include UICOMP student leaders who serve Córdoba Clinic.
New Endowments Advance Peoria Regional Campus

By providing resources to enhance faculty opportunities, endowments enable gifted faculty to excel in their scholarly activities, expand their research footprint and elevate the work of UICOMP. These generous donors have established pivotal gifts to elevate the work of faculty and magnify the impact they make within the fields of education, research and clinical care.

John P. Henderson, MD, Family Professorship in Neuroscience Research will honor the career and legacy of Dr. Henderson by supporting a faculty member in the Department of Cancer Biology and Pharmacology with the specific purpose of advancing research in neuroscience with preference given to spinal cord injury research. As a practicing neurosurgeon with Illinois Neurological Institute, Dr. Henderson’s role with UICOMP originated with the beginning of the regional campus. The Henderson family’s contribution to this endowment honors and celebrates his 53 years of professional practice and research while further building his legacy of support for research, medical education, scholarship and patient care.

Eliza J. and Pedro A. de Alarcon Professorship in the Department of Pediatrics supports a faculty member dedicated to advancing health outcomes research in pediatrics. This endowment honors the career and legacy of Dr. de Alarcon, who served as the William H. Albers Professor and Head of the Department of Pediatrics at UICOMP from 2007 until his retirement in 2021. He joined UICOMP from St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and devoted his career to the field of pediatric hematology/oncology.

Norman C. Estes, MD, Professorship in the Department of Surgery honors the leadership and legacy of Dr. Estes in the Department of Surgery, where he served as chair from 1998 until 2015. A skilled surgeon, Dr. Estes was a prolific scholar of surgical oncology. As an educator actively involved in educating and training the next generation of physicians, he won numerous teaching awards and was known as an advocate for students and residents. Dr. Estes exemplifies the true spirit of a servant leader.

Paul S. Kramer OSF Professorship in the Department of Pediatrics honors the vision and legacy of Paul Kramer. He solidified and elevated the collaboration between OSF HealthCare Children’s Hospital of Illinois and UICOMP with the goal of an academic medical center working collaboratively for the betterment of children. This endowment supports faculty in the Department of Pediatrics to expand both the scope and volume of pediatric services, as well as support the academic and research components.

Carl W. Soderstrom, MD, Professorship in Dermatology was established to support a named professorship in the Department of Dermatology. This endowment was established to honor Dr. Soderstrom, an esteemed faculty member who taught students from the inception of the regional campus and over the course of three decades. A published scholar, he demonstrated dedication to training and providing excellent clinical care through his dermatology practice in Peoria, where he has provided care to countless patients.

Each gift to the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria helps to advance its mission. Contact UICOMP’s advancement office at 309-671-3405.
As I embark on a new challenge as your Senior Director of Development at UICOMP, my goal is to inspire philanthropy and impactful relationships with the College. I am so excited to do my part in helping UICOMP grow, learn, innovate, care, and serve our communities... and to get to know each of you in the process!

Our learners pursue academic excellence, engage in experiential learning, and find time to make our community a better place. They hold tremendous promise for a better tomorrow, being equipped with the wisdom and insight to lead. This is in part due to the research, scholarship, education, mentoring and encouragement given generously by the UICOMP family – which includes you!

Together we are fostering discovery, sparking innovation and nurturing culture to strengthen the future of healthcare with the leaders of tomorrow. I offer my gratitude to you as you continue to make a difference through your personal efforts that inspire the next generation of catalysts for change.

Gifts to the Medical Alumni Fund at the College of Medicine in Peoria pay for the kinds of things learners need to become the next generation of leaders, thinkers and doers. And best of all, they fit any sized budget and support students right here in Peoria. Our goal is to raise $25,000 to enhance the fund this year, and with your help, we can make it a reality.

Consider making your gift to the Medical Alumni Fund today. Contact me, and I can help.

You are appreciated!
Warmest regards,
Kelli Evans
Senior Director of Development
309-671-3405 kevans14@uic.edu

Dr. Alfonse and Mrs. Nancy Masi to Donate $1.2 Million to UICOMP

Dr. Alfonse and Mrs. Nancy Masi, Peoria, will donate $1.2 million to kick-off a fund leading to the establishment of an endowed chair in the Department of Medicine at UICOMP. The Dr. Alfonse and Nancy Masi Endowed Chair of Medicine will support a nationally renowned physician scientist who will enhance the department’s research enterprise while promoting a culture of innovation, scholarship and discovery.

UICOMP Regional Dean Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, said the gift will make a lasting impact on not only the department, but will also elevate academic medicine overall in Peoria. “Dr. Masi knows firsthand the importance of research and scholastic activity in attracting and retaining the best and brightest faculty physicians. In turn, these faculty educate and train future physicians who go on to treat and provide care for innumerable patients,” Aiyer said. “We call that the ripple effect, and the Masi gift will touch the career path of many physicians while impacting the care of countless future patients.”

Sara Rusch, MD, regional dean emeritus, said, “Dr. Masi was an outstanding mentor playing an important role in many young physicians’ lives. His patients loved him. He also was very knowledgeable and thoughtful, filled with curiosity about why certain people were affected by particular diseases. This curiosity led to a very successful research career.”

Dr. Masi was recruited to Peoria in 1978 to serve as the first Head of the Department of Medicine at UICOMP, a position he held until 1985. He was recruited to lead the Department of Medicine and to advance recognized scholarship and research of the Peoria medical school, still in its formative years. As an accomplished researcher and gifted scholar, Dr. Masi has authored more than 220 articles published and cited in PubMed in his productive career. A beloved faculty member, he has served as a mentor and trusted colleague of countless young faculty, residents and medical students. As a practicing rheumatologist, he has touched the lives of many patients.

He completed his undergraduate studies at The City University of New York and earned his MD from Columbia University. He also earned an advanced degree from The Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health. He completed residency training at Johns Hopkins Hospital and UCLA Medical Center. Dr. Masi also completed a research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health.

His career in academic medicine has focused within his specialty of epidemiology and rheumatology, and he has held university appointments at Johns Hopkins, University of Tennessee, University of Illinois Chicago and UICOMP where he currently serves as professor emeritus.

Dr. Masi is the recipient of numerous academic honors and awards, including a fellow with the American College of Physicians, a fellow with the American College of Epidemiology and a master with the American College of Rheumatology. Additionally, he was named the Russell E. Cecil Fellow of the Arthritis Foundation and recipient of the Osler House Latchkey Award from Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Support for establishing the endowment included not only Dr. Masi and his wife, Nancy, but also their children – Dr. Christopher Masi, Dr. Anthony Masi, Amy Masi Shauwecker and Maria Masi-Kammerer.

Those interested in making a gift in support of the Masi Endowed Chair, may contact UICOMP Senior Director of Development Kelli Evans at kevans14@uic.edu or go online https://peoria.medicine.uic.edu/giving/funds and select the Masi fund.
Celebrating UICOMP Women in Medicine and Science

In conjunction with September’s “Women in Medicine Month” created by the American Medical Association (AMA), the UICOMP Women in Medicine and Science Council solicited nominations of faculty members who work to support gender equality and the advancement of women in medicine. The Council recognizes these women:

Lisa Barker, MD – Emergency Medicine
Dr. Barker is an exemplary Emergency Medicine practitioner who advocates for women in medicine through her excellence in a variety of leadership positions, clinical care, and service activities including role modeling, educating, and mentoring. She constantly innovates and strives to improve education, research, and patient care through her role as the chief medical director at the Jump Trading Simulation & Education Center and the multitude of physician communication and leadership initiatives she pursues and delivers.

Michele Beekman, MD – Pediatrics
Dr. Beekman is an outstanding leader and superstar in multiple facets of medicine. As the Pediatrics Residency associate program director, she positively influences the career paths of countless medical students, residents, and faculty and is heavily involved with recruitment efforts. In her roles as the director of pediatric inpatient education and the pediatric sedation medicine rotation, she revised, implemented, and oversaw the educational curriculum, mentorship, and feedback for residents in these rotations. All the while leading with grace and poise despite what obstacles come her way. Dr. Beekman is a faculty person who “walks the walk” when it comes to working hard and balancing her career with prioritizing family and personal care.

Amber D’Souza, MD – Pediatric Oncology
Dr. D’Souza is amongst only a handful of pediatric oncologists serving the clinical needs of the Central Illinois community. Impressively, she simultaneously holds the leadership role of principal investigator of several clinical research trials in affiliation with St. Jude, making scientific contributions beyond her clinical care. She values ongoing quality improvement and has contributed to several projects including the development of Standardized Oncology Practice Guidelines and SMART Communication for St. Jude. Dr. D’Souza is recognized for her outstanding contributions to pediatric cancer clinical care and pediatric oncology research.

Harleena Kendhari, MD – Pediatrics
In addition to her roles as pediatric hospitalist and the Pediatric Hospital Medicine (PHM) Fellowship director, Dr. Kendhari serves on the executive board as the co-chair of the PHM sub-committee focusing on women in PHM and recently received a national award for her contribution. She leads the mentorship manors and provides professional and personal support for women physicians across the country. She has been an outstanding leader in her field.

Annia Martial, MD – Internal Medicine
Dr. Martial has demonstrated her commitment to education and training time and time again. She is actively involved with medical student and resident education and recruitment, and was the recipient of the 2022 UICOMP Outstanding Diversity Equity and Inclusion Faculty Award. She also serves as a national educator through her work with the American College of Physicians. Dr. Martial is well respected and recognized for her excellent clinical and procedural care as well as for her practice of inclusivity and respect in all of her interactions.

Jenna Regan, PhD – Health Sciences Education and Pathology
Dr. Regan plays an integral leadership role within the preclinical Phase 1 curriculum as the college-wide Medical Genetics discipline lead and Digestion and Homeostasis Course Director. She participates regularly in University DEI initiatives which includes supporting equity within the campus and the curriculum. She mentors students through her roles as the faculty liaison for the Hematology and Oncology Student Interest Group, faculty advisor for academic advising and student research, and is an exemplary role model for others pursuing their goals.

Elsa Vazquez-Melendez, MD - Internal Medicine/MedPeds, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
In addition to providing outstanding clinical care and education as a faculty member in the Internal Medicine Department, Dr. Vazquez-Melendez serves as the assistant dean for diversity and inclusion. In this role, she has dedicated countless hours to the development of new curriculum, faculty trainings, and committees. She is relentless in her pursuit to educate herself and her colleagues on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She is thoughtful, respectful, kind and humble in every interaction – personal and professional – making her the perfect woman for the job. She ensures every voice is heard and that their words and thoughts matter. Her passion for education is second only to providing excellent clinical care.
UICOMP Welcomes New Faculty

**Dr. Mehwish Sheikh** joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Sheikh received her doctoral degree from Liaquat University of Health Sciences in 2003 and completed her residency at Oklahoma University Health Sciences Center in 2011. Dr. Sheikh is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Sheikh’s expertise is in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine.

**Dr. Farhat Ashai-Khan** joined the Department of Pediatrics as a visiting associate professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Ashai-Khan received her MBBS degree from Fatima Jinnah Medical University in 1979 and completed her residency at Children’s Hospital Medical Center (Cincinnati, OH) in 1993. Dr. Ashai-Khan is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Pediatric Gastroenterology. Dr. Ashai-Khan’s expertise is in Pediatric Gastroenterology.

**Dr. Rujuta Gore** joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Gore received her MBBS degree from Maharashtra University of Health Sciences in 2011 and completed her residency at Laxmi Eye Institute in 2015. Dr. Gore’s expertise is in Pediatric Ophthalmology.

**Dr. Patricia Tran** joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Tran received her doctoral degree from Mercer University School of Medicine in 2016 and completed her residency at Mercer University-Navicent Health in 2020. Dr. Tran is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics.

**Dr. Barbara Stewart** joined the Department of Pediatrics as a visiting associate professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Stewart received her doctoral degree from University of Texas Health Science Center in 1989 and completed her residency at University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio in 1992. Dr. Stewart is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Stewart’s expertise is in Pediatric Pulmonology.

---

**MISSION**

To advance health for everyone through outstanding education, research, clinical care, social responsibility and collaboration.
Being a part of the study may also give Peoria the potential to be considered for clinical trials related to long COVID. Monica Hendrickson, public health administrator with Peoria City/County Health Department, says the RECOVER grant allows the Peoria community to be part of a larger conversation regarding the impact of COVID-19. “It also allows us to begin planning for the future regarding potential consequences COVID will have on the long-term health of our community,” she says. “By understanding how COVID can reduce the quality of health as a community, it allows for us to start having conversations about healthcare and supportive needs our residents may require in the future.”

Community partners, including Peoria Friendship House, Central Illinois Friends, and Tri-County Urban League, have been key in sharing information on the study, particularly among groups who are often underrepresented. Donohue says, “They have been working with us to act as trusted messengers of this study and to help us increase the representation of populations that are often underrepresented in biomedical research.”

Hendrickson is hopeful this collaborative research can open the door to future opportunities. “NIH grants are not common, and to have a community of our size demonstrate our ability to coordinate and collaborate on this scale is impressive,” she says.

For more information on the ILLInet RECOVER study and the research at the Peoria location, go to https://peoria.medicine.uic.edu/long-covid-research-enrollment/.

For information on the RECOVER study and the research at the Peoria location, go to https://peoria.medicine.uic.edu/long-covid-research-enrollment.
Benavides Contributes to Research

Valeria Benavides, MD, associate professor in the UICOMP Department of Pediatrics, was co-author and member of a team of US researchers involved in a multi-site study of medical records that documented a steep rise in type 2 diabetes among children during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a report of findings in the Aug. 17 Journal of Pediatrics, the investigators noted it was unclear if the COVID-19 virus itself was a factor in the rise and noted the switch to virtual learning and shutdown of sports and school activities as “environmental factors” that likely increased the risk.

Share Your News

We love to follow the careers and successes of our graduates! Alumni of UICOMP (med school, residencies and fellowships) are invited to submit their news. Submit news of new positions, honors, awards, and publications to adv-peoria@listserv.uic.edu or send it to: Advancement & Community Relations, UICOMP, One Illini Drive, Peoria, IL 61605. Or, call us at (309) 680-8613.

Pediatric Resource Center Marks 29 Years of Service

The Pediatric Resource Center celebrated 29 years of service on June 29, 2022. PRC is committed to improving the health, safety and advocacy for abused and neglected children throughout the region. Since it opened its doors in June 1993, PRC has provided more than 9,600 specialized medical evaluations and social services to children from over 60 counties in Illinois. With the growing demand for services this year, PRC staff provided a record number of evaluations (507) in fiscal year 2022 alone. Those patients came from 35 Illinois counties.

In addition to direct services to abused and neglected children, the Pediatric Resource Center is a statewide leader in education to child protection professionals, law enforcement, medical professionals, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, attorneys, and other child advocates. Congratulations to the PRC staff and board members (past and present) for their contributions in reaching this milestone.

LaFontaine Joins UICOMP as Assistant Dean of Preclinical Curriculum and Evaluation

Michael LaFontaine, PhD, joins UICOMP as assistant dean of preclinical curriculum and evaluation. He joins the Peoria regional campus from Marian University (Indiana) College of Osteopathic Medicine where was director of biomedical sciences and professor of medical biochemistry. His career experience includes academic teaching at the undergraduate level as well as graduate pharmacology and medical schools. Dr. LaFontaine is experienced in curricular design, assessment and program evaluation.

He completed his undergraduate course work at the University of Michigan – Flint and his PhD in biological chemistry at the University of Kentucky. Dr. LaFontaine’s research interests include biochemical markers of neurodegeneration and oxidative stress, pharmacokinetics of paramagnetic spin-traps, and tissue remodeling in chronic inflammatory disorders.

Cross Publishes in iScience

Adam Cross, MD, assistant professor in the UICOMP Department of Pediatrics, co-authored “Med ML: Fusing medical knowledge and machine learning models for early pediatric COVID-19 hospitalization and severity prediction” published Aug. 17 and included in the Sept. 16 issue of iScience. Med ML is a machine learning model the authors proposed to conduct hospitalization and severity prediction for the pediatric population using electronic health records. MedML is a new machine learning framework to incorporate clinical domain knowledge and is more predictive than current data-driven methods.

Froehling Joins OSF Galesburg

Andrei Froehling, MD, (UICOMP Class of 2017) joined OSF HealthCare as a surgeon at its OSF Galesburg Clinic. Dr. Froehling completed his general surgery residency at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Moin Co-Authors on Use of Eculizumab

Hanks Named Interim Head of Department of Health Sciences Education and Pathology

Jessica Hanks, MD, has been appointed interim head, Department of Health Sciences Education and Pathology at UICOMP. Dr. Hanks is an associate professor of clinical medicine and pediatrics and has served as college-wide course director of the longitudinal synthesis course in Phase 1 curriculum as well as assistant dean of preclinical curriculum and evaluation. She is formerly associate program director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program at UICOMP and course director AIM supervisor at Heartland Health Services. Dr. Hanks serves as associate dean for academic affairs, a role she will continue.

Dr. Hanks is a UICOMP graduate and completed her residency training in Medicine-Pediatrics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she served as pediatric chief resident. Here at UICOMP, she has received numerous teaching and service awards, including Introduction to Clinical Medicine Preceptor of the Year, Ambulatory Faculty Teaching Award in Internal Medicine, and a three-time recipient of the Internal Medicine Pediatrics Residency Program Teaching Award.

Hussain Joins Riverside in Kankakee

Syed Hussain, MD, joined Riverside Healthcare, Kankakee, Illinois, as a cardiothoracic and vascular surgical specialist. He completed his general surgery residency at UICOMP and is board certified in vascular surgery by the American Board of Surgery.

Kaur Wins Research Award

Harveen Kaur (MD Candidate, Class of 2024) won third place at OSF Research Day for the research project titled “Comparing intubation rates and discharge outcomes in neonates resuscitated with different interfaces.” For this project, she collaborated with UICOMP Department of Pediatrics faculty members Gretchen Kopec, MD; Naa-Lamle Lamptey, MD; and Ashley Fischer, MD.

Perlman Source for AAMC Article on Skin Cancer in Patients of Color

Katherine Perlman (MD Candidate, UICOMP Class of 2023) is quoted in the article “Why are so many Black patients dying of skin cancer?” posted by AAMC. The article is on the late detection of skin cancer in patients of color because the cancer goes unrecognized by both providers and patients. Medical school faculty and students are trying to change that.

Christison Receives Special Achievement Award

Amy Christison, MD, associate professor, Department of Pediatrics, was awarded the Special Achievement Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics. This award recognizes outstanding work of individuals as well as chapter achievements. She was recognized during the Virtual Chapter Awards Ceremony.

Ugwu Named Assistant Dean for Faculty Development

Lydia Ugwu, PhD, joins UICOMP as assistant dean for faculty development. Dr. Ugwu earned a BA in culture, media and communications from the University of Surrey, UK. She earned her MS in human resource education from Louisiana State University. She completed a PhD in curriculum and instruction with a focus on learning design and technology at the University of Houston. Lydia’s research interests include faculty development, organizational development, and instructional design for diverse learners. Previously, she taught at the university level. She also worked in training and development. Before joining UICOMP, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Houston.

Downing-Larick Research Published in Osteopathic Journal

Carrie Downing-Larick, DO, resident in Family and Community Medicine, co-authored research in the Osteopathic Family Physician Journal in the May/June 2022 issue. The study looked at training to educate medical students on domestic violence. Specifically, the Student Training on Preventing Domestic Violence (STOP-DV) was researched to see if it was an effective method to increase the knowledge of domestic violence among medical students.

New Student Interest Group

The South Asian Student Association is a new Student Interest Group (SIG) at UICOMP with the purpose of creating awareness about the cultural, social and economic aspects of South Asia as well as to celebrate and share the joy of the rich and diverse South Asian heritage and to facilitate active student engagement within the Peoria community.
“We Belong” Hosts UIUCOMP Alum Pierre Johnson, MD

"Embrace Your Power: Words of Wisdom from Pierre Johnson, MD" was hosted by the We Belong Student Interest Group at UIUCOMP. We Belong is dedicated to building community among URiM and/or historically marginalized minority medical learners in a relaxed setting while encouraging medical students to network within an understanding community.

Dr. Johnson (UIUCOMP Class of 2008) spoke on being a Black male physician and validated experiences in healthcare by those underrepresented in medicine. He also discussed how the lack of access to quality healthcare disproportionally impacts underserved communities. Dr. Johnson completed a general surgery internship at Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC, and an Ob-Gyn residency in 2013 from Southern Illinois University.

**Student Wellness Holds Kitten Yoga**

The Student Wellness Committee held a Kitten Yoga and Adoption event at Mended Hearts Stable in Metamora, Illinois, for students to relax and enjoy time with kittens as well as interact with other animals including horses and fawns. Peoria County Animal Protection Services provided the adoptable kittens for the event.

**Congrats to Emerging Peoria Leaders**

Four UIUCOMP recipients were honored as 40 Leaders Under 40 during a reception held in October 2022. Honorees included: Surya Chaturvedula, MD, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Medicine; Manuel Cintron (UIUCOMP Class of 2024); Keith Hanson, MD, PhD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics; and Brinda Mehta, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics. This annual Peoria area celebration honors emerging leaders selected through nominations submitted by the community and hosted by Peoria Magazine.

**Surgery Escape Room**

UIUCOMP’s Surgery Student Interest Group hosted a surgical escape room in Jump Trading Simulation and Education Center’s virtual operating room. Teams worked together to solve various puzzles, including performing a simulated laparoscopic abdominal surgery, reading karyotypes, and decoding ciphers. The team’s goal was to figure out what procedure their patient needed before the time ran out. Teams were competing against each other for the fastest time.
When Learning and Training Overlap with Community Health

Community health outreach is about improving health and quality of life for a community’s population with consideration to the socioeconomic, political and cultural determinants of health. When learners experience care outside the clinical setting, they realize the varying factors that impact health outcomes and mitigating factors can affect a care plan. Community organizations play big roles in eliminating barriers to care and filling gaps.

In recent years, UICOMP has developed community health electives to provide both medical students and residents with the opportunity to gain understanding and appreciation for community health and to nurture the symbiotic relationship between healthcare providers and community-based organizations in improving the health of the populations they serve.

Clerkship Elective for Medical Students

Nationally, medical education has placed a deliberate emphasis on incorporating social determinants of health within the curriculum, explains Angela O’Bryant, MSN, RN, director of academic programs and co-director of the community health elective for medical students at UICOMP. “However, when they see a patient in an acute care setting, like the emergency room, for the third time that month, they now have a better understanding of reasons that the patient may have difficulty managing their chronic disease. They have learned to ask questions about things like access to healthy food, a pharmacy, and safe and secure housing,” she says.

But O’Bryant says asking the questions is not enough. “ Physicians also need to be able to connect patients with local services that can help them meet these needs. Understanding community health and being connected to the community in which they serve allow physicians to help their patients in ways far beyond the diagnostics of medicine.”

The Community Health Clerkship Elective is a two-week elective for M3 and M4 students who can choose between spending time at two community-based organizations – Central Illinois Friends and OSF Faith Community Nurses. In the Central Illinois Friends track, students participate in community outreach events as well as care for patients in the organization’s clinic. The focus is on sexual health and HIV care. With the OSF Faith Community Nurses option, students experience a wide variety of experiences...
that are often tailored to their interests. Opportunities exist at Senior World, The Riverplex (working with medical and cardiac rehabilitation), school nurses, street medicine alongside JOLT Foundation, and the OSF Care-A-Van. This track gives students an overview of community health in Peoria, highlighting services available to patients that they may later see in the hospital or clinical setting.

“This elective gave me a new approach to sexual health questions with patients in a way that is comfortable, non-judgmental, gender-inclusive and professional. This experience has already influenced the way I practice medicine as I now aim to use gender-inclusive language that de-stigmatizes the topics of sexual health. This has resulted in patients opening up much more and building a good rapport with them to promote their long-term health.”

- Rubi Rodriguez Bobadilla
  MD Candidate,
  UICOMP Class of 2024

“We with more than 30 students having completed this elective since it was started four years ago, I consistently hear from students that they wish they would have been able to take this elective earlier in their medical school career,” says O’Bryant. Students often see patients in the hospital or clinical setting that need the help of social and community service agencies, but don’t know the services available or organizations to help. Many times the attending and resident physicians working with the students don’t know either. She says this elective provides an up-close look at patients’ lives and puts the classroom topics of healthcare disparities and social determinants of health right in front of them.

“They witness patients having to choose between paying their rent or filling a prescription. They serve food and provide healthcare on the streets of Peoria to people who are experiencing homelessness. They drive through neighborhoods and assess sidewalks, green spaces, grocery stores (or lack thereof) and come to understand why their patients can’t get to their appointments, or why patients have difficulty obtaining healthy food to better manage their chronic disease,” O’Bryant says. “It allows them to take off the white coat and get out of the safe and sterile environment to meet patients where they are.”

**Graduate Medical Education**

UICOMP residents may enroll in the Graduate Medical Education (GME) program’s Community Health Elective, an immersive, two-week community engagement experience. The elective improves residents’ understanding of the population they serve, priority health issues, health and health care disparities, and factors affecting the health of the population, including social determinants of health.

The main focus of this elective is to connect the physicians with the community organizations that serve a variety of populations, provide clinical and/or social services and serve as advocates on a range of issues. During the two-week experience, the residents visit each collaborating community organization including:

- Peoria City/County Health Department
- Faith Community Nursing (Care-A-Van and Senior World)
- Central Illinois Friends
- Hult Center for Healthy Living
- EP!C Foundation of Central Illinois
- Peoria Proud
- Children’s Home Association of Central Illinois
- Heart of Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters
- House of Hope Peoria, Inc.

The rotation at Peoria City/County Health Department covers a broad focus and allows residents to learn more on the priority health needs in the community, women-infant-child services, and emergency preparedness. Organizations like Peoria Proud focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice issues through advocacy, education, and outreach. Through OSF Faith Community Nursing Care-A-Van, residents observe and provide care to socially disadvantaged populations, and Senior World visits give insight into geriatric health. Central Illinois Friends rotation equips residents with sexual health and HIV/AIDS information, education, services, and advocacy.

The experience at EPIC allows residents to gain deeper understanding of the issues faced by the individuals and families living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. House of Hope rotation provides insight on trauma informed care, HOI Big Brothers Big Sisters focuses on nurturing children and strengthening families and communities. The Children’s Home Association of Illinois provides support and resources to children and

---

Working with staff and patients at Central Illinois Friends gives medical students insight into patient needs, available resources and barriers to care.

---

continued
Rotation at these sites foster physician engagement and participation within the community as well as their involvement in broader public health issues. These organizations serve as a valuable resource for the community. Through these collaborations, the physicians are able to connect their patients with the available resources, effectively addressing the social determinants affecting their patient population.

Shevatekar says while learning is key, just as important is the collaboration and future possibilities. “Another goal of the elective is to build long-term collaboration among providers and the community organizations to improve community health. This can be possible through health education and health promotion as well as opening the doors for collaborative research.”

While this elective is broad-based, UICOMP GME programs also offer other community-based health electives with a more focused scope. Examples include electives in Community Health and Advocacy, Community-Based Research, and Global Rural Simulation.

GME Community Health Elective Reflections
Written by Resident Participants

“As a health service provider, I learned that there is a lot more to my patient population than I had previously thought because we only see a very select part of the population of Peoria while they are sick at our hospital.”

“I learned quite a bit about Peoria and the homeless crisis occurring here. I learned about the services trying to provide housing and coats and food and soup kitchens. I have been learning about the large dichotomy in Peoria residents, some being very well-off and very high-level earners while being in one of the poorest zip codes in all of Illinois.”

“I knew that a large percentage of our population had issues with poverty and insurance, trouble making an appointment, no cars, low education, adjustment after immigration issues, but I found myself forgetting that even here in Peoria and the Midwest, we have people experiencing food deserts, significant poverty, drug addictions and high STI rates.”
Since 1996, UICOMP has presented its Community Health Awards to honor those who promote community health in Central Illinois. A healthy community requires a high quality medical system along with programs to confront and manage concerns such as livable neighborhoods, family support, job opportunities, improved educational opportunities, hunger, homelessness; and adequate systems of transportation and public safety.

Congratulations to these past and current UICOMP Community Health Award recipients who have contributed to healthier local communities.

**Individuals**

- Joseph Solovy, MD 1996
- David Gorenz, MD 1997
- Sister M. Canisha Gerlach 1998
- Fred White, MD 1999
- Patti Bash 2000
- Barbara Walvoord 2001
- Susan Bishop, DMD 2002
- David Wang, DO 2003
- Andrew Rand 2004
- Ken Hinton 2005
- David Springer, MD 2006
- Joan Krupa 2007
- Rep David R. Leitch 2008
- Steve Thompson 2009
- William Albers, MD 2010
- Gregg Stoner, MD 2011
- John Halvorsen, MD 2012
- Andrew Morgan, MD 2013
- Jack Gilligan, PhD 2014
- Arun Pinto, MD 2015
- Patrick Elwood, MD 2016
- Camilla & Dr. Ronald Rabjohns 2017
- Tamara Olt, MD 2018
- Tim Miller, MD 2019
- David Trachtenberg, MD 2020
- Monica Hendrickson, MPH 2021
- Mary Stapel, MD 2022
- Francesca Armmer, BSN, MSN, PhD 2022

**Organizations/Programs**

- OSF Saint Francis Medical Center 1997
- Healthy Balance Program of Caterpillar 1998
- In-School HealthCare Program 1999
- Hull Health Education Center 2000
- Senior World 2001
- Central IL Chapter of the American Red Cross 2002
- Center for Prevention of Abuse 2003
- Peoria Area Labor Management Council 2004
- Alzheimer’s Association, Central IL Chapter 2005
- Joining Forces for Children 2006
- Mental Health Association of IL Valley 2007
- Pediatric Resource Center 2008
- Susan G. Komen Foundation 2009
- Illinois Valley Striders 2010
- Heartland Community Health Clinic 2011
- Quality Quest 2012
- First United Methodist Church Loaves & Fish 2013
- Peoria District Dental Society 2014
- Human Service Center 2015
- Midwest Food Bank 2016
- Children’s Home of Central Illinois 2017
- Goodwill Stand Down for Homeless Veterans 2018
- Methodist College 2019
- Neighborhood House 2020
- Phoenix Dev, Services Community Outreach Prog. 2021
- Home for All Continuum of Care 2022

Francesca Armmer, PhD, was the 2022 Community Health Award Winner in the individual category. She was honored during the UICOMP Celebration of Excellence in November. Presenting the award is Steve Thompson representing the UICOMP Community Health Award Committee.
Medical education continues to evolve, and UICOMP faculty are using advanced technologies to bring teaching into the hands of learners, provide opportunities for self-directed learning and build skills that advance excellence in patient care. Developing a successful mobile app or creating an effective immersive learning experience in virtual reality takes a team approach, and faculty at UICOMP have embraced this work with the support and valuable contributions from partners at Jump Simulation Center and companies who create the platforms to make it possible. This article highlights the work of a few of our UICOMP faculty and residents who have released mobile apps and developed courses in virtual reality for use in the medical student curriculum.

**Digi-DDx by OSF Healthcare System & UICOMP**

Digi-DDx is a clinical reasoning application developed by Lisa Barker, MD, and David Pinson, DVM, PhD. Jump Simulation Center’s Medical Visualization team, Kyle Formella, John Farmer, and Jakob Plotts led programming and user interface design. The app is available in both iOS and Android platforms, and is free to the public from the OSF Healthcare Innovations website. The Digi-DDx mobile application gives medical students the chance to practice diagnosing a patient by working through a case from start to finish, choosing the right tests to get to the right diagnosis, and tracking the costs and outcomes of decisions the students make. With this information, these novice learners can make mistakes safely, learn how to prioritize treatment choices once they have the correct diagnosis, and have opportunities for self-directed learning. Students are using Digi-DDx in several blocks of the curriculum, including using it for a neurology case with exercises on lesion localization. Since student feedback has been positive, the goal is to expand the use of Digi-DDx cases throughout the curriculum.

**HistoLogic by OSF Healthcare System & UICOMP**

HistoLogic is an app designed to supplement student learning of histology. Jonathon Fisher, PhD, noticed students tend to struggle with this discipline, as only one-third of medical students have studied histology before entering medical school, but histology knowledge is necessary to identify pathology of changes due to disease. Dr. Fisher worked with graphics design and programming professionals at Jump Simulation to build the app, which can be used on mobile devices or tablet computers. Learners can use the app to review gastrointestinal and blood/lymphoid tissues, and Dr. Fisher is continuing to add more organ systems. The app has a mode called “explore” where learners can view tissues at different magnifications and read about specialized structures, and a “game” mode for learners to test their knowledge at beginner, intermediate and expert levels.

**Virtual Reality**

**Faculty Fellows Program on Technology in Medical Education (TiME)**

In August 2021, UICOMP launched a new faculty development opportunity surrounding content development using virtual reality (VR) to support student learning. The TiME Faculty Fellows Program on Technology in Medical Education (TiME) encourages faculty to explore, create, research and teach with technologies in undergraduate or graduate medical education. TiME Faculty Fellows received a full program of workshops, consultations, hands-on training and peer support over a period of six months to develop immersive learning experiences in VR.

The Fall 2021 cohort included four faculty fellows who were new to VR content development. Participants in the 2021-22 TiME Faculty Fellows Program included: Jenna Regan, PhD, clinical assistant professor; Tracy Soltesz, PhD: visiting clinical professor; and UICOMP residents Justin Steele, MD, and Ayesha Hasan, MD.

The cohort focused on creating content in Enduvo, an immersive learning platform in use at UICOMP. Enduvo provided exclusive access to platform developers and trainers on a regular basis through their 60-day onboarding workshop called the Enduvo Velocity Program. Faculty also benefited from close collaboration with Jump Simulation Center, the Medical Visualization Group, and Bramlet VR Lab, which provided mentoring, consultations, models, and additional training.

TiME Faculty Fellows created four courses. At the end of the program, an Enduvo-based immersive learning module on Mapping the Nephron designed by Jenna Regan, PhD, was used by students in the Block 5 curriculum as a supplemental activity in the UICOMP Anatomy Technology Lab’s Virtual Reality space.
Launched in 2020, the UICOMP strategic planning effort has involved faculty, students, residents and fellows, staff, strategic partners and community organizations. The resulting feedback from focus groups and town hall discussions has shaped this plan. The Strategic Plan is an evolving document that reflects Peoria regional campus’s strategic priorities for the future and is the result of countless hours of discussion, reflection and futuristic thinking.

**Mission**

To advance health for everyone through outstanding education, research, clinical care, social responsibility and collaboration.

**Vision**

The University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria will strengthen the health of our communities through transformative innovation, education, discovery and patient-centered care. Through collaborative efforts, UICOMP will improve health equity to promote well-being for all.

**UICOMP Strategic Priorities**

1. Enhance and grow medical education programs through transformative innovation, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement.
2. Foster a positive, inclusive work and learning experience for UICOMP employees and learners.
3. Advance research and scientific discovery in key areas like cancer, neurosciences, population/clinical effectiveness research, and educational research.
4. Create a sustainable funding model for supporting research in areas such as health equity and health disparities research.
5. Build new community partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to promote health equity and health of the community we serve.
6. Develop interdisciplinary and inter-organizational programs to provide high-quality care to patients in specific niche areas.
7. Recruit and retain diverse faculty, staff and learners to UICOMP.
8. Develop and promote a distinct brand for UICOM Peoria in the region.
9. Create a streamlined and efficient operating structure.
10. Build a strong foundation and alumni outreach for philanthropic growth and development.

**Values**

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Compassion
- Service

**Critical Success Factors**

- Strategic Collaboration
- Adaptability and Growth
- Building and Unleashing Human Potential
- Operational Effectiveness
- Sustainability

More details and information on the UICOMP Strategic Priorities can be found at peoria.medicine.uic.edu and click on the “UICOMP Strategic Planning Overview” toward the bottom of the home page.
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. 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 Kelli Evans at kevans14@uic.edu or (309) 671-3405.

Community Health Partners Luncheon

Representatives of Peoria community-based organizations gathered at UICOMP for a Community Health Awards luncheon. The event was held to express gratitude for the support and experiences that these organizations provide to students and residents through a variety of community health electives and other collaborations. These organizations were represented: Heart of Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters; Children’s Home Association of Illinois; OSF Faith Community Nursing (Care-A-Van and Senior World); EPIC Foundation of Central Illinois; Central Illinois Friends; Peoria City/County Health Department; House of Hope Peoria, Inc.; Hult Center for Healthy Living; Peoria Proud; and Apostolic Christian Lifepoints at Timber Ridge.

**Follow us on social media**
Join the UICOMP social media communities by liking, following, and tagging UICOMP!
If you are in the LinkedIn community, we welcome alumni and faculty to be sure to include UICOMP as part of their profile.