Understanding Diversity & Disparities

The Allure of Louisiana

Answering the Call
OUR Mission

Louisiana State University School of Medicine – New Orleans educates medical students, residents, and other learners in an environment that nurtures intellectual curiosity, and that reflects the diversity of its community. The School of Medicine, striving for excellence in medical education, clinically relevant research, and healthcare delivery, partners with other LSUHSC schools, local health care systems, and community organizations, to provide a strong and supportive environment for learners and their faculty.

Medical Education Mission Objectives
The undergraduate medical curriculum enables our graduates to become knowledgeable, culturally competent, caring physicians, who can function in evolving healthcare systems, engage in life-long learning, and appreciate and evaluate medical research. Graduate Medical Education programs enable residents to become skilled and knowledgeable in their chosen discipline, and to respectfully assume the responsibilities of a practicing physician in an increasingly diverse community and nation. We prepare students and residents to prioritize patient safety, to value interprofessional teamwork, and to improve healthcare quality for all.

Research Mission Objectives
As medical education and research are tightly inter-related, commitment to clinically relevant research within the School of Medicine heightens the intellectual atmosphere, develops new knowledge, and transmits current information for the benefit of all constituencies. The School of Medicine and the LSUHSC campus provides sophisticated infrastructure for scientific investigation undertaken by our faculty and learners, including state-of-the-art instrumentation, space, animal care facilities, and computer services. Vitality of the research enterprise is sustained by the vigorous pursuit of external research funding and supported by strategic long term planning.

Service Mission Objectives
The School of Medicine promotes excellence in healthcare delivery through relationships with our clinical partners and our community. Clinical practice values and maintains the cultural competency and technical skills of faculty, and expands opportunities for undergraduate and graduate teaching and research. The school is responsive to rapidly evolving healthcare delivery models. Additionally, the school is committed to programs that enhance our relationships within the community, provide educational and service opportunities, and enhance the quality of life for constituents of our state and local communities.

REGIONAL CAMPUSES

Lafayette
LSUHSC sponsors graduate medical education programs at University Hospital & Clinics (UHC) and Lafayette General Medical Center (LGMC). Home-based programs include Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, a Sports Medicine fellowship program and a Geriatrics fellowship program. On rotation from the New Orleans School of Medicine, LSUHSC trains residents in General Surgery, Orthopedics, Ophthalmology, Urology, Otolaryngology, Obstetrics & Gynecology and Cardiology.

Lafayette also hosts the Rural Scholars Track for medical students from New Orleans who spend one day a week with a preceptor in the surrounding community for the entire two years they are in Lafayette. They also rotate on all of the required and elective rotations at either UHC or LGMC.

Baton Rouge
The LSU School of Medicine-New Orleans Baton Rouge Branch Campus is home to residency training programs in Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology. The campus also serves as a major clinical site for various LSU New Orleans-based residency programs.

LSU School of Medicine-New Orleans students may complete all required clinical rotations at this campus. Core clinical rotations are completed at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Woman's Hospital and Our Lady of the Lake's Children's Hospital. Our public-private partnerships with Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Woman's Hospital afford both medical students and residents high clinical volume within the educational environment of an academic medical center.
UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY & DISPARITIES IN LOUISIANA
LSU researchers are using technology to understand what is the same and what must be different in order to ensure the best medical outcomes for all Louisianans.

THE ALLURE OF LOUISIANA
Louisiana has a special way of attracting people, and the LSU School of Medicine is committed to bringing the best and brightest to our state.

ANSWERING THE CALL: LSU’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19
As leaders in education, treatment and research, we are uniquely positioned to lead the effort to protect the Greater New Orleans community.

PREPARING FUTURE GENERATIONS FOR CAREERS IN STEM
These programs have a specific focus on serving underrepresented and underserved backgrounds to increase diversity in the medical field. It’s all part of LSU Health’s mission.
The last several months have been unprecedented in the school’s history. We have transformed our educational programs, adapted to new models of outpatient care, and shifted institutional policies to keep everyone safe. Our education leaders, teachers, GME leaders and all of their support staff in New Orleans and at our regional campuses in Baton Rouge and Lafayette have demonstrated remarkable resilience and dedication to the missions of our school. Researchers have quickly seized the moment to design protocols with experimental medications and convalescent serum, to develop tests, to study COVID pathology and to learn about its pathogenesis. They all deserve our thanks. No one deserves more admiration and gratitude, however, than the clinicians who serve on the front lines of patient care in our partnering hospitals. These physicians put themselves and their families in harm’s way to provide exemplary care for our patients.

The sheer magnitude of our response to the COVID crisis was remarkable. The selflessness of our doctors has been humbling. In Camus’ The Plague, Dr. Bernard Rieux relentlessly cared for his sick and dying patients. He concluded that the only ways we can fight a plague are with human decency and by just doing our job. Our faculty combined their exceptional medical skill with humanism and decency. They put themselves at risk every day and did their job. We do not know what the future will bring. What we do know is that our doctors will meet whatever challenges we face.
Understanding Diversity & Disparities in Louisiana
Louisiana’s population is culturally, ethnically, and socially diverse. The 4.65 million people in the state represent a melting pot of French, Hispanic, African and even Canadian heritage. The result is a mélange of cultures for which we are extremely proud. This diversity is reflected in our creative styles of cooking, music, architecture and language. While this comes with many positives, it also means the existence of health disparities among these different groups.

Fortunately, LSU medical researchers are creative in their own way. These scientists are finding new ways to understand these health differences, catalog them and use the information to create better ways to treat the same diseases across a diverse population. From a network of cancer clinical trials to the creation of the most in-depth biobank of osteoarthritis patients in the Gulf South, our researchers are using technology to understand what is the same and what must be different in order to ensure the best medical outcomes for all Louisianans.

**Bringing Clinical Trials into Communities**

Long before the COVID-19 crisis, before remote learning, social distancing and sheltering in place, Dr. Augusto Ochoa, Director of the Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center, understood that the existing model for clinical trials needed to change. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, it became clear to Dr. Ochoa that the model previously used for clinical trials would no longer work for his cancer trials in Louisiana.

“Clinical trials were centralized, all patients had to go to one site. Katrina changed the philosophy because we could no longer bring patients to us. We had to bring clinical trials to patients in the community,” said Dr. Ochoa. And so, The Gulf South Clinical Trials Network was born.

Comprised of 44 sites across the state, the Network thrives on collaborations with medical partners across the state including University Medical Center in New Orleans, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Baton Rouge, Ochsner Cancer Center in New Orleans and the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center in Shreveport. These partnerships have allowed the network to grow very quickly. In 2006, the network enrolled only four patients. In 2019, the network had grown to 1,500 patients – a 375-fold increase in 13 years.

The Gulf South Clinical Trials Network has become known for its ability to penetrate deep into a population and access individuals previously overlooked by clinical trials. The National Cancer Institute recognized that clinical trials often fail to reflect national diversity and the evidence generated falls short of representing all people. Dr. Ochoa’s network was tapped to remedy this problem. The NCI and the members of the NCI Community Oncology Research Program have come to rely on the Gulf South Clinical Trials Network enrollment to ensure there is an appropriate representation...
of minority and underserved patients enrolled in cancer trials nationwide.

It’s good for research and it’s great for cancer patients, as patients previously overlooked are now given access to cutting-edge treatment opportunities.

The demand has never been greater. As of August 2020, the Gulf South Clinical Trials Network has enrolled 760 patients in a groundbreaking new breast cancer study. The Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial is a randomized breast screening trial that will help researchers learn about the best ways to find breast cancer in women who have no symptoms. The TMISt trial compares the use of 2-D and 3-D mammography and also uses blood and mouth swab samples to add depth to the data. Researchers hope that the information from these tissue samples will help personalize the way we screen for breast cancer in the future by taking a person’s genetics and other personal risk factors into account.

Now patients in Louisiana have access to the most cutting-edge screening techniques while participating in clinical trials that help researchers improve cancer prevention and cancer care delivery. What’s more, Dr. Ochoa has ensured that cancer research will be more representative and, therefore, more relevant for all segments of the population.

Improving Surgical Outcomes for All Patients

The LSU Integrated Musculoskeletal Biobank (LIMB) has one goal – improving outcomes. To that end, the biobank is a resource for scientists hoping to recognize contributors to disparities in outcomes for total knee replacements. Comorbidity, the presence of one or more additional conditions co-occurring with a primary condition, can be physiological, psychological or a result of socioeconomic status.

Dr. Vinod Dasa, the Irv Cahen Chair of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research and Co-Director of the LSU Musculoskeletal Research Consortium, saw a need for the biobank when he noticed stark differences between recovery in African American and white patients after knee replacements. It was clear that the creation of this resource could uncover biological mediators and social factors that cause these differences.

The biobank contains roughly 250 sets of tissues, fluid, and blood all matched with information about the patient’s demographics, and how he or she felt before and after surgery. “To minimize variability, we execute a standardized sample harvest protocol on each patient. Sample sets from each patient are assayed, analyzed, and results integrated to massive amounts of clinical data,” says Dr. Luis Marrero, Assistant Professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Co-Director of the biobank. The ability to compare patients in this way could allow for the development of precision treatment and recovery regimens that result in better outcomes for patients of any race and socioeconomic status.

The future of the biobank relies on collaborations with the labs of Dr. Jennifer Simkin, Dr. Martin Ronis, Dr. Claudia Leonardi, Dr. Malwina Czarny-Ratajczak, and Dr. Kimberlee Mix. These talented researchers ask questions to understand the significance of these disparities and their relationship with comorbidities.

And they are succeeding. The biobank has already helped researchers uncover race-linked differences in synovial fibrosis in patients with osteoarthritis (OA). This is a significant advancement because, apart from joint replacement, there is no cure for OA. Osteoarthritis is the most common joint disease and a significant cause of disability in the elderly. This discovery, and others like it, can help doctors take demographics into account when they discuss treatment options for patients.

Decreasing Racial Disparities in Diabetes Control

Fewer than 100 years ago, type 1 diabetes was a rapidly fatal disease. With the discovery and widespread use of insulin in 1922, diabetes became a chronic disease which could be controlled but not without serious complications such as blindness, kidney failure, nerve loss, cardiovascular disease and stroke. We now know that complications can be prevented or reduced by management
which keeps glucose levels as close to normal as possible.

As the centennial anniversary of the first insulin use approaches, a new study by the LSU Pediatric Endocrinology/Diabetes team will evaluate new approaches to diabetes management for African-American youth with type 1 diabetes, who as a group often have higher blood glucose levels and are more likely to develop serious complications.

This NIH funded interventional study led by Dr. Stuart Chalew, Head of Pediatric Endocrinology and the Richard Fowler Professor of Pediatrics at LSU Health New Orleans, examines whether the use of advanced technologies can improve diabetes control in high risk African-American youth.

Patients in the study will use a state-of-the-art Advanced Hybrid Closed Loop insulin pump as well as frequent in-home support from a diabetes nurse educator via a telehealth app. The insulin pump can automatically keep a diabetic patient’s glucose level in a safe range with almost no input from the patient. Video conferencing with the diabetes nurse educator may help the patients and their parents improve diabetes management and guide use of the pump technology at home without the need for frequent clinic visits.

Dr. Chalew states that this project is the only one of its kind in the United States to evaluate the effectiveness of these new technologies to improve diabetes control in children at high-risk for diabetes complications. This new approach to diabetes management may not only eliminate or reduce serious complications of diabetes but also may improve quality of life for their young patients.

Eliminating Barriers to Gynecologic Oncology in Underserved Populations

Despite some of the highest rates of cancers of the ovary, cervix and uterus, early detection and high-quality treatments mean more women are surviving gynecological cancers today than ever before. Dr. Amelia Jernigan and Dr. Navya Nair, the team behind LSU Health New Orleans’ division of Gynecologic Oncology, have set their sights on ensuring this is true for all women despite their background, zip code or socioeconomic status.

“At the end of the day, if our patients have a better chance at survival or a cure, then I’m satisfied.” - Dr. Amelia Jernigan

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that African American, rural, under-insured and low socioeconomic status patients have higher rates of gynecologic cancer, lower quality care, more morbidity and are at higher risk for death than other women. Dr. Jernigan and Dr. Nair are focusing on eliminating the two biggest barriers to access: transportation and lodging.

Many of LSU HSC’s patients must travel several hours for care – often despite having no car of their own nor ready access to transportation. Their response includes the development of a system of bus transportation vouchers available from regional hubs, including Lake Charles, Lafayette and Baton Rouge, and in-town transportation vouchers for multi-care site visits.

However, getting there is only half the battle. Treatment often requires a time commitment of several days. The complementing focus is lodging. Drs. Jernigan and Nair are dedicated to creating a system of support for patients who must stay far from home to receive healthcare. Food stipends and financial assistance with standard “daily living” activities can help alleviate additional obstacles to receiving quality care.

Facilitating this type of change in addition to seeing patients and performing surgery is a lot of work. But Dr. Jernigan says, “At the end of the day, if our patients have a better chance at survival or a cure, then I’m satisfied.” The success of this on-going project will enhance the equity and quality of women’s cancer care for underserved patients in the region and could serve as a model for the entire state and the nation.
The LSU School of Medicine is committed to bringing the best and brightest to Louisiana. We are teaching the next generation of doctors to treat all patients regardless of their means and diagnosis. Many talented physicians come from outside the state. They see the allure of Louisiana and the possibility to serve the community in a profound way. With each addition to our staff, a new Louisianan is made. A new advocate for our citizens is created. Because Louisiana has a way of sticking with a person. Maybe it’s the food or the music or the warm weather. That’s part of it, certainly. But it’s more likely that, here in Louisiana, people feel the warmth that comes from other people. Connections go back generations. Here, individuals find themselves part of something greater – something worth fighting for.
People travel from all over the world to work with LSU Health, but it’s safe to say that none have come farther or faster than Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor. She was 200 miles above the Earth, traveling at 17,500 mph aboard the International Space Station when her husband first brought up an opportunity with LSU.

Trained in aerospace medicine, Dr. Auñón-Chancellor has spent her career preparing current and future astronauts for space exploration. Extended periods of weightlessness take a toll on the human body and her specialty was facilitating the transition from Earth to space. When it came time for the doctor to make her own transition, she reports finding her colleagues very “down to Earth.” It was a visit with LSU residents at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge that reassured her. “You’re not always sure when you first walk into a place. But it was clear – the people were awesome. I felt supported from the beginning by Dean Nelson and everyone in Baton Rouge,” she said.

Dr. Auñón-Chancellor’s first months at LSU have consisted of answering the call on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a role for which her training has prepared her well. “The way we practiced medicine when COVID hit was with very little information and very few resources. This is exactly what happens onboard the space station.” Thanks to her experience, she is able to give patients quality care despite limited communication and endless unknowns.

Dr. Auñón-Chancellor has big plans, including bringing aerospace medicine to Louisiana. Her research interest is solving the issues that humans face on missions to space, like blood pressure changes, bone breakdown, muscle loss and DNA damage caused by the effects of space radiation. She also remains a member of NASA’s Astronaut Corps where she provides support to those in training and helps prepare to launch and land future missions safely.

“You’re not always sure when you first walk into a place. But it was clear – the people were awesome. I felt supported from the beginning.”
When she left for college, New Orleans native Dr. Shawn McKinney thought she would never return. “Growing up here you don’t realize how special New Orleans is because you’re around it all the time and it seems very normal to you,” says Dr. McKinney, Professor of Clinical Surgery, Breast Oncology and Director of Breast Services at University Medical Center New Orleans. “I’ll never forget when I first went to Atlanta I thought, ‘Where are your corner bands?’” It wasn’t just the music that she missed, it was the camaraderie and the sense that we are in this together as a community. It’s something she calls “the rhythm of the city.”

Now she is back in New Orleans to establish a breast cancer surgery practice at University Medical Center where she is eager to add to that rhythm. “What draws me to LSU is the amount of commitment that they have to the community. That’s important to me ... that our hospital system and our clinicians really feel as though we serve the community – that [they] entrust us with their care.”

It’s about delivering knowledge and, by extension, power. This clinic will be a place to receive medical treatment, but it will also be a place to learn. It will be a place where women can get reliable answers to tough questions.

Dr. McKinney has been involved in academic medicine her whole career. It is a setting which allows her to focus on the patient receiving the best care they can get regardless of background or socioeconomic status. She hopes to establish her clinic as a comprehensive place where women in the community can receive the finest care available. But there is more to it than delivering care. The knowledge flows both ways. When patients understand more, they communicate more clearly when doctors and researchers ask them questions.

Dr. McKinney says, “We’re doing the best we can to ensure that the whole community succeeds and that has to do with regular clinical services all the way to research.”
Dr. Mary Maluccio has spent her career serving marginalized patient populations who lack access to healthcare due to poverty or rurality of their communities. She was drawn to LSU when she recognized the Southern Region and the Gulf Coast as a medical desert for neuroendocrine patients.

Dr. Maluccio is the new medical director of the NOLA Neuroendocrine Tumor Specialists (NOLANETS) clinic. She takes over from Dr. Eugene Woltering who recently retired after 30 years building a program nationally recognized for management of these complex neuroendocrine cancer patients.

This disease is often deadly because it doesn’t respond to chemotherapy and many of the tumors are too small to locate. Over the years, Dr. Woltering led the NOLANETS team to discover alternative treatments and the clinic now boasts the best short- and long-term outcomes of any NETs clinic in the world.

Now, Dr. Maluccio is looking to build on Dr. Woltering’s success by expanding to serve the entire Southern region.

Her vision is to establish partnerships across the South – in Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Providers in each state would act as “hubs,” making care accessible to patients across the region.

Dr. Maluccio is building the first multi-state, multi-practice, multi-institutional program in the nation. In so doing, she is casting a safety net across the South, helping patients prevent, diagnose and treat this terrible disease.
Fifty states. Seventy marathons. That’s a multitude of miles under Dr. Thomas Kimball’s well-worn shoe soles. For someone who has run at least one marathon in every state around the country, why would he choose Louisiana to stop and call it home?

Dr. Kimball was enticed by the clinical mission of LSU Health and Children’s Hospital. “What spoke to me is not the physical structure, it was the people.”

Having spent thirty-four years as a Pediatric Cardiologist at one of the top children’s hospitals in the nation, with medical school and residency in New York and Los Angeles, Dr. Kimball has seen a variety of pint-sized patients in his practice. His patients are babies with congenital heart disease who are born critically ill. Often, they need surgery immediately after birth due to holes in their hearts or problems with their valves or chambers. Dr. Kimball’s future projects include working to increase prenatal screening rates to help doctors detect heart disease prior to birth. He also has great interest in the cardiovascular effects of pediatric obesity and heart health in sickle cell patients.

Dr. Kimball’s total marathon mileage, by the way? Over 1,834 miles and he is still going. His favorite races are the Walt Disney World Marathon, the Boston and New York Marathons, the Deadwood Mickelson Trail Marathon in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and his most recent (non-virtual) marathon in Missoula, Montana. He says, “People call it ‘The Bucket List Marathon’ because it is just such beautiful country to run through. I have to agree with them.”

“What spoke to me is not the physical structure, it was the people. You can make a difference in a meaningful way here.”

Said Dr. Kimball, Nelson K Ordway Professor of Pediatrics at LSU Health and Director of the Heart Center and Division Chief of Cardiology at Children’s Hospital New Orleans, “you can make a difference in a meaningful way here.” Before his arrival, the high rurality and poverty in Louisiana meant many potential patients weren’t getting the care they needed. He and his team have increased the use of telemedicine and have established satellites in Lake Charles, Lafayette, Alexandria and Shreveport to ensure this is no longer the case.
Believe it or not, at any given time Nashville, Tennessee is actually a few hundred miles farther from New Orleans than the International Space Station. One is two hundred miles straight up, the other is five hundred miles North. Although Dr. Dedrick Moulton follows Virginia Galactic’s space race with Blue Origin and SpaceX with keen interest, his professional interests are decidedly more grounded.

Dr. Moulton is the new Head of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology at Children’s Hospital. He came to LSU from Vanderbilt University in late 2019. “I’m one of those people who was pretty comfortable where I was,” said Dr. Moulton. “But the truth is, when I came to visit I realized they are really doing some amazing things at LSU and at Children’s Hospital.”

Dr. Moulton has spent his career as Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and as a Fellow at Washington University in St. Louis treating children with severe inflammatory bowel disease like Crohn’s Disease and Ulcerative Colitis.

Working in a multidisciplinary, comprehensive care environment, he focuses on how to help his patients live normal lives despite their chronic condition. “My biggest interest is trying to figure out how to let these kids be kids.”

In terms of professional development, Dr. Moulton values the opportunity to mentor the faculty in his department. He sees a number of young people with diverse interests and boundless energy, noting that “they form a core of potential energy within the health system.” He is excited to tap into this pool of talent to expand the number of great providers in Louisiana. Dr. Moulton is also particularly interested in contributing to the initiatives around diversity being spearheaded by the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement.

“I’m one of those people who was pretty comfortable where I was. But the truth is, when I came to visit, I realized they are really doing some amazing things at LSU.”
You can’t call Dr. Jessica Rivera lazy. She has served 11 years of active duty military service, deploying twice in support of Operation Enduring Freedom/Inherent Resolve and Operation Spartan Shield and once to Tegucigalpa, Honduras for a pediatric orthopaedic medical training exercise.

So why is the new Clinical Associate Professor of Orthopaedics trying so hard to work less? And why does she think she can accomplish that here, in Louisiana? Some might think of Mardi Gras or Jazz Fest as the perfect excuse not to work. But Dr. Rivera has something else in mind. She is doing research that may, if she’s successful, put her surgery practice out of business.

Following her honorable discharge from the military in 2018, she sought additional training as a pediatric orthopaedic fellow at the Rubin Institute for Advanced Orthopaedics and International Center for Limb Lengthening in Baltimore, Maryland. She saw an opportunity at LSU to bring new techniques to a population with great need. “I want to service the area in a field that has not been represented before” said Dr. Rivera, “and to complement that on the research side to improve the outcomes for patients with challenging orthopedic problems.”

In her first few months in Louisiana, Dr. Rivera has already used her unique training to perform an implant never done in the state of Louisiana before. “That was an internal bone transport nail,” explains Dr. Rivera, “essentially this patient had already gone through several surgeries for bone loss from a gunshot wound that had gotten infected.” Fortunately for the patient, Dr. Rivera was able to insert this internal device which helps the bone regrow and fill in the gap from bone loss.

Dr. Rivera’s research on the body’s immune response in trauma focuses on making many of the procedures she does obsolete. There is a delicate balance of survival and repair the body must strike in order to heal correctly after surgery. When she is called in to rework a surgery, it is because of an imbalance. She attempts to restore this balance with help from the body’s own healing process. Finding that critical balance in the lab and learning how to apply that knowledge in the field would mean fewer returns after surgery and fewer patients in her clinic.

If she is successful, you might just see her at Jazz Fest. Look for the cross-bones flag with the pin in it at the big stage.
Tricia and Tom Paulson recently made a financial commitment supporting LSU Health scholarships.

Why give? The spirit of giving runs in the family. Raised in a family with a love of learning, a great interest in the practical application of science and research, and a heart for community service, Tricia has carried this practice forward. Tom is a retired anesthesiologist and medical administrator. It’s no wonder that their three children are engaged in medical careers.

Why LSU Health? The Drs. Paulsen currently live in California, far from Louisiana, but Tricia’s academic history with LSU Health spans three generations: her father was a faculty member, her siblings went to LSU School of Medicine, she herself graduated from LSU School of Medicine in 1982 and their youngest son, Rod, is currently a student. They value the education and the experience that only LSU can provide.

Why scholarships? The couple doesn’t have enough fingers to count the number of medical school applications they have completed. “We have seen how arduous the application process is and the costs of a medical school education never stop,” says Tom. “We need more medical students,” says Tricia. “There are so many kids who want to go… We need to give them that extra support.”

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LSU Health New Orleans School of Medicine 2020
The disease caused by the novel coronavirus began as “2019-nCoV.” In February, the World Health Organization named it “COVID-19.” As the months have passed and the public has grown more and more familiar with it, now it’s just known as “the pandemic.” Call it what you want, SARS-CoV-2 has dramatically altered life for our students, faculty, and patients. And the pandemic itself will likely last for months with after-effects lasting for years.

In times of crisis there are always frontline workers – women and men who take on the responsibility to protect the rest of us. This crisis is no different.

As leaders in education, treatment and research, we are uniquely positioned to lead the effort to protect the Greater New Orleans community.

LSU Health is taking the responsibility seriously. We are pivoting to attack the problem head-on, focusing our resources and expertise on the coronavirus pandemic.

Our efforts focus on three areas: testing, research and treatment. The education leaders, teachers, GME leaders and all of their support staff at the School of Medicine have demonstrated remarkable dedication to the missions of the school throughout this troubling time. Researchers have quickly seized the moment to design protocols with experimental medications and convalescent serum, to develop tests, to study COVID pathology and to learn about its pathogenesis.

But none of this is effective without the financial support of the LSU Health Foundation and our network of corporate and individual supporters. To support these critical projects, the LSU Health Foundation has introduced the Coronavirus Response Effort. Traditional funding sources can be slow and accelerating the financial support
for this pandemic is crucial. As you read through our accomplishments to-date and the many more in the works, take a moment to thank those who support the Foundation and please consider adding yourself to the list of contributors. None of this would be possible without them.

**TESTING**

Establishing The First Next Generation Sequencing Testing Facility

The LSU School of Medicine Clinical Genomics Laboratory was initially created to support the basic research infrastructure of the medical school. It has since developed into a state-of-the-art facility capable of developing next generation sequencing (NGS) protocols including whole transcriptome, RNA-Seq, whole exome sequencing and SNP analysis, and transcriptional profiling.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Lucio Miele and his team pivot. They transformed the laboratory into the first-of-its-kind COVID testing facility in Louisiana.

LSU Health New Orleans partnered with Illumina, the manufacturer of the first high-throughput nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, and mid-turbinate nasal swab test for COVID-19, to speed up the processing of these amplicon-based NGS tests designed to detect RNA from the SARS-CoV-2 virus in patients with suspected symptoms of COVID-19.

The fast application of LSU Health facility and FDA Emergency Use Authorization for the COVIDSeq Test greatly increased testing numbers and reduced testing turnaround time. The facility is designed to perform up to 768 tests per day.

The creation of this lab allows the School of Medicine to achieve its goal of expanding access and acceptability of COVID-19 testing to underserved communities in New Orleans.

**RESEARCH**

LSU Health School of Medicine has initiated efforts to better equip researchers to undergo studies to understand and treat COVID-19. Dr. Steve Nelson, Dean of the School of Medicine, established multiple COVID research programs that begin with the funding of pilot research grants. When these programs are funded, the research will help end this pandemic and may help avoid future epidemics of all sizes.

**LEAD COVID-19 Trial**

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Frank Lau, Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery, and his team are applying their experience and expertise in the fight. The team quickly recognized
that COVID-associated coagulopathy (the official name for excessive clotting in COVID patients) was an important driver of this disease’s morbidity and mortality.

But many questions remained: Why do many patients have no symptoms at all, while others require ICU care? Why do dark-skinned persons, people with high blood pressure, and the elderly get sicker? Why do smokers and homeless patients seem to be protected from symptoms? Why do sick COVID-19 patients form blood clots so aggressively? And why do certain countries, such as those in Scandinavia and Australia/New Zealand have lower mortality rates?

The team considered the risk factors for COVID death: hypertension, obesity, diabetes, age and dark-skinned individuals. An intense search of the medical literature revealed that low vitamin D levels are strongly linked to every COVID-19 risk factor. But which came first?

Enter the scientific method. Researchers tested vitamin D levels in two New Orleans ICUs that were filled with COVID-19 patients. The results were jaw-dropping: 93.5% of COVID-19 patients in the ICU had low vitamin D. Many were nearly undetectable.

The team is determined to see if vitamin D offers mechanistic insights into excessive clotting and if aspirin and vitamin D can spearhead our fight against SARS-CoV-2. Financial support is currently being gathered to fund the trial. This is a gold-standard trial that will enroll 1,080 patients across seven participating hospitals around the country.

COVID-19 Research Lab

As a response to the COVID-19 crisis, LSU Health School of Medicine has established the COVID Biorepository. Dr. Steve Nelson realized at the outset that LSU Health needed a centralized resource to collect biospecimens from COVID-19 patients as well as uninfected control samples for study. These biosamples will include plasma, serum, peripheral blood mononuclear cells, nasal swabs, nasopharyngeal swabs, saliva, and stool. The COVID-19 biorepository functions under standard operating procedures (SOPs), quality control for sample collection, and a common database to track consent, samples, and manage requests to dispense biological samples and data.

The establishment of the biorepository is important to foster a broad array of research projects, and will be used not only for acute but also for longer-term studies and to create an infrastructure to help LSU Health better prepare to respond to the next epidemic or pandemic.

TREATMENT

The MMR Vaccine as a Preventive

Out of the box thinking. That’s one approach our researchers are taking in their efforts to treat COVID-19. The idea, spearheaded by Paul Fidel, Ph.D. and Michael Hagensee, MD, is to relieve the effects of coronavirus on patients who demonstrate severe symptoms such as progressive lung inflammation. Perhaps, thought Drs. Fidel and Hagensee, treatments similar to those used to fight other viruses might serve to treat the coronavirus.

Most influenza vaccine products are available as trivalent inactivated
vaccine (TIV). These vaccine products contain three inactive strains of flu virus, but no live virus. In contrast, there are influenza vaccines that contain live virus that have been attenuated or weakened. Reports from the CDC and the AAP for the use of influenza vaccine do not always state a preference for trivalent inactivated vaccine or live-attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) for efficacy. But other successful vaccines such as MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) are exclusively live and attenuated. Our team postulates that a live-attenuated vaccine for an unrelated virus may serve to trigger the body’s response mechanisms, relieving symptoms that mirror those of coronavirus.

Dr. Fidel and Dr. Hagensee are leading the charge to secure funding to study the administration of an unrelated live attenuated vaccine and how it could serve as a preventive measure against the worst conditions of coronavirus. There is mounting evidence that live attenuated vaccines may protect against subsequent lethal infections, such as progressive lung inflammation and eventual sepsis. A clinical trial with MMR in high-risk populations may serve as a “low-risk/high-reward” preventive measure in saving lives during this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

**Mental Health Hotline**

The overwhelming impact of COVID-19 will affect first responders and frontline health and security personnel for a substantial period of time. By addressing these issues of exposure now, we can successfully mitigate aspects of the pandemic on Louisiana’s emergency workforce, improve job satisfaction and accessibility to others. The LSU Health Department of Psychiatry provides essential training and treatment services through rural and urban parishes and responds to critical needs of the state following catastrophic events. In other words, that's what we are here for.

First responders are the backbone of rescue and recovery during difficult times. Firefighters, EMTs, and law officers protect the public often at a grave personal cost. Without addressing the extreme impact of COVID-19 and other catastrophic events, we may risk jeopardizing our first responder workforce retention as well as the personal well-being of individual workers. In response to this concern, the LSU Health Department of Psychiatry has created a Mental Health Support Hotline, providing first responders and other crisis support personnel with helpful counseling and behavioral health professional interventions.

A recent survey of over 4,000 first responders reported that many programs provide nominal services rather than high-quality counseling and treatment resources. The Department of Psychiatry has developed a significant response to address the impact of COVID-19 on multiple aspects of the behavioral health of our communities in Louisiana. These high-quality interventions and supports can help address PTSD symptoms, depression, extreme levels of stress, and substance use disorders that have historically affected those on the front lines of a crisis. At LSU Health, we are acting now while looking ahead to protect the health of our staff, our students, our faculty and our patients.

**Recovery and Community Resilience Fund**

It is part of our mission to protect and advance the well-being of the region and beyond. We aim to make mental health treatment accessible to the residents of New Orleans and southern Louisiana regardless of their social or financial situations.

**Dr. Benjamin Springgate**, Chief of the Section of Community and Population Medicine in the Department of Medicine, believes that the coronavirus pandemic represents more than a public health crisis. He asserts that COVID-19 is giving rise to a significant mental health crisis. LSU Health is moving to target this growing concern with evidence-based solutions. Funding from a new Recovery and Community Resilience Fund will go to making high-quality treatment accessible to at-risk populations.

As we look forward to life after the pandemic, we understand that these efforts will pay dividends for years to come. We are building a healthcare system that is better prepared to face challenges like hurricanes or pandemics in the future for our patients, our students, faculty and everyone in our community to live a healthy life.
Shakira Harding is full of contradictions. The 5’7” former college basketball star is strong but with a relaxed air. She is soft-spoken but talks in rapid-fire when she’s excited about a topic. She claims that she can’t dance, yet she finds herself dancing onstage regularly for charity with DiaBeats, the School of Medicine’s dance team. She says school is hard, but life shouldn’t be.

Perhaps it is her outgoing attitude that helped her get elected as the first-year medical school class president, last year. It is definitely her down-to-business work ethic that got her reelected this year. Shakira says that there are “three big things” that the first-year class president has to do. First, organize a ceremony to honor cadaver donors and their sacrifices to medical education. Second, coordinate the nomination for the Allen A. Copping Excellence in Teaching Award. Third, organize orientation for the next first-year class. This last task proved to be the most difficult. Shakira says, “With COVID I basically had to reinvent how everything was done.” Planning orientation during a pandemic required a dedicated, organized person with a creative edge – all of which happen to be her specialties.

Shakira talks a lot about paying it back. “I always knew I wanted to do something medical because I really like Science and helping people.” She has chosen to concentrate on obstetrics and gynecology. “I feel like if you’re an OBGYN you really get to talk to your patients about not just what’s going on with them physically, but mentally as well. There’s a lot that goes into being a woman in today’s society, in addition to going through pregnancy. I think that would be a really cool way for me to connect with other women and guide them into that process.”

Shakira Harding plans to help anxious first-time mothers give birth right here in Louisiana. Her calm demeanor and infectious joy for life is exactly what we need more of in the medical community. “I want to work in my hometown of Houma or maybe Lafayette. I never wanted to work in a big city. I just want to come back to the community that I grew up in and be a doctor.”
## FALL 2020 ENTERING CLASS STATS

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SU Health New Orleans hosts a variety of “pipeline programs” aimed at increasing awareness of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) in students of all ages.

Starting with elementary school, LSU Health sponsors programs that introduce youth to the exciting world of STEM. These future doctors, teachers and researchers are exposed to ideas and settings that stimulate their curiosity. Best of all, we introduce children to researchers, physicians and technicians who spend time with these kids, creating a level of human contact that demystifies science. For college-aged students, we equip them with the tools to succeed in the many career paths available to them.

“One of the most vital tools in our efforts to advance diversity in our physician workforce is active engagement with pipeline/pathway programs which provide exposure and mentorship to aspiring young students. Effective health professions pipeline programs provide aspiring students a self-realizing awareness that will hopefully empower their ability to consider and pursue a career in healthcare,” says Dr. Robert Maupin, Associate Dean for

These pipelines have a specific focus on serving students from underrepresented and underserved backgrounds to increase diversity in these fields. It’s all part of LSU Health’s mission.
Diversity and Community Engagement and the Warren C. Plauché Professor of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Dr. Maupin goes on to say, “Effective pipeline programs engage students early and maintain that engagement with a continuity that creates a home for young students within our health professions training programs. We have to be intentional and committed to this area of engagement if we are going to effect a future which fully realizes health equity and eliminates health disparities.”

**Elementary School | Middle School | High School**

The Science Youth Initiative introduces students to basic science labs. For fourth-graders, LSU medical students visit classes around New Orleans once a month to immerse children in hands-on science projects. Middle and high school students take a field trip to spend a full day on LSUHSC campus and experience human simulation lab tours and hands-on experiments in various labs, serving as an introduction to the many career paths their interests can take.

The Office for Diversity and Community Engagement sponsors the Summer Science Program, inviting high school students around the state to experience an academically enriching environment and to participate in educational and motivational activities at LSUHSC. Students are exposed to biomedical research and get firsthand experience in medicine, nursing, dentistry, allied health and other health fields.

**High School | Undergraduate | Graduate and Medical School**

There is a tremendous need for primary care physicians in Louisiana where only 83 out of every 100,000 physicians practice primary care, well below the national median. Thanks to a grant from the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation, the School of Medicine has created 4P: The Patrick F. Taylor Primary Care Prep Program to foster interest in primary care as a career choice. High school students participate in a number of programs including “Day with a Doc” where they spend a day on campus shadowing a LSU student. They also have the opportunity to be paired with a Physician Mentor within their local community to be exposed to the primary care setting.

4P also seeks to reduce debt for those pursuing a primary care career with the Patrick F. Taylor Primary Care Scholarship. This program provides scholarships in exchange for an agreement to practice primary care in Louisiana for two years per every year of the award.

Established by Dr. Nicolas Bazan in 1994, the Neuroscience Center of Excellence’s Summer Undergraduate Neuroscience (SUN) program is the longest-operating pipeline program at LSU Health New Orleans. This program is designed for older students who have shown an interest in science. Undergraduate and medical students from other schools attend formal lectures at the School of Medicine in such areas as human genetics and molecular and developmental neurobiology. SUN participants also “take over” the LSU Health research facility as they participate in hands-on experiences in laboratory research and education in the neurosciences. This is a unique opportunity for eager students to research alongside a faculty mentor in the Neuroscience Center of Excellence.

The program is intended to stimulate their interest in medicine, neuroscience, and research as a career. Over 500 undergraduate and medical students from countries across the globe have attended this program. The majority have subsequently entered medical techniques, writing manuscripts as well as the soft skills necessary to succeed in a STEM career.

Although the summer program looked different this year due to COVID-19, students and their faculty mentors adapted to virtual learning, which was a success.

**Undergraduate**

Established by Dr. Nicolas Bazan in 1994, the Neuroscience Center of Excellence’s Summer Undergraduate Neuroscience (SUN) program is the longest-operating pipeline program at LSU Health New Orleans. This program is designed for older students who have shown an interest in science. Undergraduate and medical students from other schools attend formal lectures at the School of Medicine in such areas as human genetics and molecular and developmental neurobiology. SUN participants also “take over” the LSU Health research facility as they participate in hands-on experiences in laboratory research and education in the neurosciences. This is a unique opportunity for eager students to research alongside a faculty mentor in the Neuroscience Center of Excellence.

The program is intended to stimulate their interest in medicine, neuroscience, and research as a career. Over 500 undergraduate and medical students from countries across the globe have attended this program. The majority have subsequently entered medical
and graduate programs and are now successful physicians and researchers.

Undergraduate

The Enhancing Neuroscience Diversity through Undergraduate Research Education Experiences (ENDURE) program aims to bring greater diversity to the neuroscience research community. This program reaches far and wide to recruit college-level students from around the world, selecting talented undergraduate students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

During this year-long program, each student pairs with an LSU HSC mentor and a mentor at their home institution, based on their research interests. Each participant spends a summer at LSU Health honing their laboratory skills and attending lectures on neuroscience. By the end of the summer, each student has designed a project to take back to their home institution, putting them on a healthy research path for the remaining semesters.

Undergraduate

Supported by the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, Tigers Scholars is a five-week program for Louisiana undergrads interested in pursuing medical school to increase diversity amongst Louisiana’s future doctors. These students participate in summer enrichment “mini-courses” in Biochemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Genetics, and Public Health meant to supplement their pre-med curriculum.

Undergraduate | Graduate and Medical School

For current and potential medical school students interested in pursuing the field of cancer health disparities research, LSU HSC offers the Southeast Partnership for Improving Research and Training in Cancer Health Disparities (SPIRIT) program.

SPIRIT, a partnership with the Moffitt Cancer Center in Florida, is a summer program where students participate in basic science, clinical, or public health projects which focus on lessening health disparities amongst cancer patients. In addition to their projects, students are exposed to a curriculum and training on biobanking and precision medicine as they relate to health disparities.

Post-baccalaureate

The Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) offers a year of preparation for students who have their undergraduate degrees and are interested in pursuing graduate-level education in biomedical sciences. The program aims to enhance the diversity of the biomedical research workforce by preparing PREP Scholars for the rigors and challenges of a biomedical doctoral degree program.

PREP students spend 75% of their time in the lab but also take graduate-level classes, attend training on manuscript and poster generation, and practice for the GRE.
Born from a lack of inclusion of African Americans in the American Medical Association, the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) acts as a place where underrepresented minorities at LSU can feel a sense of belonging while working in their community to increase diversity in medicine and mentor younger generations.

In the community, SNMA members perform health screenings and participate in Tiger Scholars, where they visit local 8th grade classes to tutor students and educate them on opportunities in the medical field. Annually, members organize a food drive for the homeless and host panels at undergraduate institutions to give students advice on how to pursue medicine. “SNMA encourages me to share the challenges and struggles that I went through to get into medical school. Being a leader in SNMA and a minority in medicine, I feel empowered to share my experience and encourage others in their journey,” said Jaudé K. Petrie, co-president of LSU’s chapter.

SNMA supports its members by hosting mock exams to prepare them for rigorous medical school tests. These members turn to SNMA as a place where they never feel alone in their experiences – academic or otherwise. Keionne Green, co-president of the chapter says, “SNMA is an opportunity to feel confident and encouraged. It is a good space to find mentors and reach out to the community.”
Q&A WITH DR. ANGELA McLEAN
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ADMISSIONS

With more than 20 years of experience in medical education and recruitment, Dr. Angela McLean knows the qualities and characteristics that you really need to be a good physician.

Q: What is the Associate Dean for Admissions responsible for?

A: Let’s call the Dean, Dr. Nelson, the “Head Coach” of the Medical School team. That makes me the “Assistant Coach for Admissions”. From the “first touch” of recruitment through application and interviews, I coordinate the entire matriculation process. I’m also responsible for oversight of the committee who votes on the applicants.

Q: In this analogy, are the medical students the footballs?

A: (Laughs) Yes, I guess so. We are here to carry them from one end of the field to the other and protect them along the way. I guess you can say that we score a goal every time we admit a new student into the program.

Q: Tell us more about the “first touch.” How do you find new students?

A: I am tasked with recruiting and admitting medical students to provide the physicians for the entire state of Louisiana. We do a lot of recruiting on undergraduate campuses throughout the state. That’s our first step in meeting potential medical students. We end up being the face of the school for some students since we’re the first people that candidates meet even before the Dean.

Q: What was the road that led you to Associate Dean for Admissions?

A: I’ve been involved in medical student education since 1995 when I became a faculty member at LSU. I was always interested in education and have worked with students at all levels. After spending 20 years working on the Admissions and Resident Evaluation Committees, I learned to recognize the qualities and
characteristics that undergraduates need to become good physicians. One of the most exciting aspects of Academic Medicine is teaching the physicians of the future – the very doctors who will ultimately take care of me – so that really brought me to admissions.

Throughout that time I was also involved in recruiting and really enjoyed that aspect. I learned what’s important in recruitment is having role models. As a woman and the first African American Associate Dean for Admissions at LSU, I certainly feel like I am a role model for applicants. In addition, I assisted the Office of Undergraduate Medical Education in developing the curriculum in regards to cultural humility and health disparities. And in my work in the Diversity Office I participated in outreach, mentorship and sponsorship.

**Q: Obviously you have a passion for training the next generation. Why else were you interested in pursuing this role?**

*A: As Associate Dean for Admissions I can impact the selection of our future physicians: selecting those who have brilliant minds and empathic souls. We want students who want to serve the population of Louisiana.*

I hope to bring some 21st-century technology to the admissions process and we’re working on that now. COVID forced us to move a lot to Zoom this year and we’re reviewing more of the capabilities of that. It’s particularly helpful with interviews.

The cost of flight and travel can be limiting for our recruitment. Now we have greater access to potential students than ever before. Certainly, we like candidates to come on campus so they can feel the warmth of LSU. But in terms of being able to have a broader range of candidates, I think it’s good to have a virtual option.

**Q: What else do you have planned to modernize the admissions process?**

*A: Applications have been submitted electronically through AMCAS® for quite some time; so that part we’ve already done. But there are opportunities for technology in terms of our committee. I want them to be able to view applications online through a secure portal. This could even include submitting interview scores and calculating and things like that.*

**Q: You have big plans! What would you like the LSU Health New Orleans student body to look like in 10 years?**

*A: I want to bring a new perspective to the admissions process. Our whole goal here at LSU is to provide physicians for our state. Naturally, they should reflect the patient population of our state. There are certainly challenges, particularly when it comes to underrepresented minorities. Just the cost of applying can be prohibitive as well as navigating the whole system. In the diversity office, that is why we do outreach at a variety of institutions and why we have created pipelines to get students thinking about a career in medicine early.*

We emphasize that it is a long process but it’s definitely worth it. There aren’t too many careers where everybody just really wants to help other people. Ultimately it will impact our health inequities if we give everyone an opportunity to be that role model for future students and for patients. That’s our goal: to have a physician population that will mimic our patient population here in Louisiana.*

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**A New Orleans native, Dr. Chris Marrero, Associate Professor of Clinical Orthopaedic Surgery, has been named the first School of Medicine Faculty Diversity Officer. The son of the first African American orthopedic surgeon in Louisiana, Dr. Marrero deeply understands the importance of diverse mentors and the disconnect between diversity in the patient population and amongst medical professionals.**

As Faculty Diversity Officer, Dr. Marrero oversees the development of programming ranging from enhancing diversity in the residency program to fostering professional development tools and resources for faculty. He is also responsible for ensuring that the School of Medicine fulfills its requirements with regards to accreditation standards with LCME and ACGME, which both have focused standards and requirements for supporting diversity inclusion within our educational mission.
Marcia Beer was born in Birmingham, Alabama as the only child of hardworking parents. They were not able to pay for Marcia’s college education, so she worked five jobs to put herself through college. She began work as a clerk in a small stock brokerage firm and eventually became the first female Licensed Registered Principal in Alabama. She retired as an Executive Vice President of a major bank in the New Orleans area.

Marcia and her late husband Billy have always believed that the best students should have the best opportunities. It was Billy’s idea to set up a scholarship fund. In 1956, he was just 25 when he arrived at Charity Hospital/LSU in the acute stage of polio. The excellent treatment Billy received there inspired him and Marcia to name the LSU Health Foundation as a beneficiary of their estate, establishing the Marcia and Billy Beer Endowed Scholarship Fund to support four-year scholarships to the School of Medicine. The scholarships come with one request: that upon beginning medical practice, each recipient repay this gift by offering one free day of medical care each month for those patients unable to afford medical care.

Marcia has started making those awards by using her RMDs (required minimum distributions) from her IRAs to fund their annual scholarships, affording these students the opportunity to pursue their dream and pave their path in making a difference, much like Marcia has. She says, “I am very proud that my career has allowed me to be able to blaze a trail for others to [endow 4-yr. scholarships]. I would love to know that someone could read our story and then say, ‘Well, I could do that too.’”
The LSU Health Foundation, New Orleans, is deeply grateful to our LSUHSC School of Medicine alumni, faculty, staff and friends who have generously given $1,000 or more in the fiscal year 2020. The donors recognized on the following pages have donated cash gifts or documented estate gifts supporting the School of Medicine through the Foundation during this fiscal year. Your generosity upholds and advances our fourfold mission of patient care, education, research, and community outreach. It is an honor to partner with you to continually improve healthcare, treatments and breakthrough cures.

**$1 MILLION +**

Drs. Tricia Ingraham Paulsen* and Tom Paulsen†
Jesse E. Roberts, Jr., M.D.* and Kim Roberts
Helen Key Van Fossen, M.D.*

**$500,000-$999,999**

Anonymous

**$250,000 - $499,999**

Richard P. Dickey, M.D., Ph.D.*
and Wilma K. Dickey
Charles H. Packman†
Alice M. Weber*†

**$100,000 - $249,999**

Hannelore H. Giles, M.D.*
Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation
Patrick F. Taylor Foundation
Patton Family Associates, LLC

**$50,000-$99,999**

Charles and Elizabeth Wetmore Fund
Direct Biologics, LLC
Edward F. and Louise B. Martin Family Fund
David G. Kline, M.D.*
and Helen Levey Kline†
Alan D. Lacoste, M.D., F.A.C.S.*
Kay and Bruce Leipzig†

**$25,000 - $49,999**

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Marcia H. Beer
Kathleen G. Favrot
Warren L. Gottsegen, M.D.*
and Rebecca Gottsegen
The Greater New Orleans Foundation
Lisa M. Jaubert, M.D.*
and Daniel G. Casey, Sr.
Karen T. Stall Research + Breast Institute
Louis Levy Kaufman
Duna Penn, M.D.
Carl J. Pope, M.D.*
Ush One See, Inc.

**$10,000 - $24,999**

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and Mary Chastant
Jennifer B. Collins
Decibel Therapeutics
Paul M. Hendrix, M.D.*
Sally A. Kinley
Dr. and Mrs. Neil Maki*
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Michael A. Seichsnaydre, M.D.*
and Aimee S. Seichsnaydre
Kenneth B. Sherman, M.D.
Sonavex, Inc.
Stryker Orthopaedics
Renick P. Webb, M.D.* and Pamela Webb
Reverend Sherrolyn G. Weed
Dr. Jim Wittliff and Mitzie Wittliff

† Estate Gift  * Member of the Medical Alumni Association’s Committee of 100
The Committee of 100 was established in 1983 with Bernard Samuels '57 and Cy Vaughn '58 as its co-founders. Members of the Committee make a pledge of $10,000 or more to support chairs and professorships. Any donations made to the LSU Medical Alumni Association go directly to support student activities, recruitment, scholarships, chairs/professorships, research and more. The committee is 727 members strong.

For more information on the Committee and a complete list of members, please view their Medicinews publication which can be found at www.med-school.lsuhsc.edu/alumni_affairs.
The LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans admitted our first students in 1931. Since that time, we have trained over 7,000 physicians, most of whom have practiced in Louisiana. The School currently enrolls about 200 medical students per year and all children of alumni, whether in state or out of state are eligible to apply.

All alumni are entitled to receive Medicinews (the alumni news magazine) and the Honor Roll (our yearly publication acknowledging donors). If you are not receiving these publications, please send your contact information to ROAR@lsuhsc.edu.

Save the Date

June 10, 2021 – Committee of 100 Dinner
June 11-12, 2021 – Reunion Weekend
November 13, 2021 – Annual Purple & Gold Gala
Leveraging Multidisciplinary Teams from Bench to Bedside

(Photo above: Patricia Molina, MD, PhD, center, and the ALIVE-Ex team)

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has funded a multidisciplinary team at LSU Health to study the ability of aerobic exercise to improve glycemic control in people living with HIV. The ALIVE-Ex Study, led by Dr. Patricia Molina, Director of the Alcohol HIV/AIDS Research Center, leverages expertise in basic science, public health, radiology and exercise science to translate observations in non-human primates into clinical interventions for subjects.

Advancements in anti-retroviral therapy have allowed HIV infection to emerge as a chronic rather than deadly disease. Therefore, researchers have shifted their focus to better understand why these subjects are at higher risk for metabolic comorbidities such as insulin resistance and prediabetes.

Dr. Molina and her team have designed an aerobic exercise intervention which they believe will greatly increase glycemic control for these subjects. This study is an excellent example of the opportunities that are unlocked for School of Medicine faculty because they are part of a larger LSU University System.

Preventing Blindness in Acadiana

Dr. Jennifer Lentz, Associate Professor of Otorhinolaryngology & Biocommunications and Neuroscience, focuses her research on a specific founder mutation in a single gene. This mutation is the primary cause of Usher Syndrome, the leading genetic cause of blindness and deafness in the world. This syndrome is prevalent in the Acadiana population of Southwest Louisiana.

Isolating this gene is key to a therapy Dr. Lentz is developing which could prevent inevitable blindness for these patients. The antisense oligonucleotide, short pieces of DNA or RNA, are designed to target the mutation and...
alter it to force the normal expression of the gene.

Dr. Lentz has been awarded a 5 year $345,880 National Institute of Health grant to optimize this therapy to prepare for clinical trials.

In parallel, Dr. Lentz and her collaborators are enrolling Louisianans with Usher Syndrome in a natural history study, which aims to learn more about the experience of these patients, including their symptoms and how their disease progresses. Participants receive free genetic testing, which will give researchers insight into the molecular epidemiology of Usher in Louisiana and how it compares to the rest of the world.

Understanding How Alcohol Inhibits Bone Formation

Alcohol abuse during early adulthood results in impaired bone growth, and in the United States approximately 20% of women aged 18-30 binge drink.

Although it is well known that women are more susceptible to the toxic effects of alcohol than men, less is known about the molecular mechanisms underlying alcohol toxicity in women, especially as relates to bone. One of only 30 merit award holders from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Dr. Martin Ronis has received a 5 year extension to his grant dedicated to better understanding this mechanism.

Dr. Ronis and his team are working on narrowing down the dietary antioxidants which prevent alcohol-induced bone loss. Since this bone loss shares features in common with bone loss during menopause and aging, the outcome of this work may provide fundamental insights into treating this devastating disease.

Treating Pain without Addiction or Toxicity

By Leslie Capo, Director of Information Services

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the burden of pain in the United States is astounding. More than 100 million Americans have pain that persists for weeks to years. Dr. Nicolas Bazan, Director of the LSU Health New Orleans Neuroscience Center of Excellence, and his company South Rampart Pharma have been awarded a $1.9 million Fast-Track Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant to further develop a new class of non-opioid pain-relievers discovered and licensed at LSU Health New Orleans.

Current medications for pain are either highly addictive or cause harm to the liver or kidney with overuse. “This startup company represents the clinical translational application of LSU Health New Orleans’ discoveries, and this grant funding will help us advance the development of one of our lead drugs that as a non-narcotic, has no abuse potential, and lacks the liver and kidney toxicity associated with over-the-counter analgesics,” said Nicolas Bazan, MD, PhD, scientific co-founder of South Rampart Pharma, and Director of LSU Health New Orleans Neuroscience Center of Excellence.

Using Chest X-Rays for Rapid Diagnosis of COVID-19

By Leslie Capo, Director of Information Services

A team of LSU Health New Orleans radiologists investigated the usefulness of chest x-rays in COVID-19 and found they could aid in a rapid diagnosis of the disease, especially in areas with limited testing capacity or delayed test results. Their findings are published in Radiology: Cardiothoracic Imaging.

“The presence of patchy and/or confluent, band-like ground glass opacity or consolidation in a peripheral and mid-to-lower lung zone distribution on a chest radiograph is highly suggestive of SARS-CoV-2 infection,” says Bradley Spieler, MD, Associate Professor of Diagnostic Radiology and Vice Chairman of Research in the Department of Radiology. “We believe this work has great potential to aid all health care providers in the fight against COVID-19.”

Collaborators also include John-Paul Grenier, MD, an LSU Health New Orleans Radiology Resident and Catherine Batte, MS, from the Department of Physics and Astronomy at LSU Main Campus.
**AWARDS**

*Photo above: Dr. Steve Nelson with School of Medicine students*

Dr. Steve Nelson, Dean of the School of Medicine, received the Spirit of Charity Award. The Spirit of Charity Foundation, dedicated to continuing the mission of Charity Hospital, created this annual award for a physician whose career began in Charity Hospital, and who has made a significant contribution to medicine.

Dr. Hector Ferral, Professor of Clinical Radiology, presented a poster entitled “Portal Vein Stents in Patients with Hepatobiliary Malignancies” at the Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe meeting, the largest Interventional Radiology meeting in the world.

Dr. Joy Osofsky, Professor of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Public Health and Head of the Division of Pediatric Mental Health, received the 2020 Translational Research Award from the International Congress on Infant Studies.

Dr. Jason Gardner, Professor of Physiology, was awarded the Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research journal Annual Reviewer’s Award.

Dr. Jayne S. Weiss, Professor and Department Head of Ophthalmology, received the 2020 Castroviejo Award. Since 1975, only two other women have received this award.

**LEADERSHIP**

Dr. Patricia Molina, Professor and Department Head of Physiology, was elected Member of the Academy of Sciences of Latin America and inducted as President of the Research Society on Alcoholism.

Dr. Augusto Ochoa, Director of the Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center, was named to the National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials and Translational Research Advisory Committee.

Dr. Amie Jernigan, Associate Professor of Clinical Obstetrics & Gynecology and Division Director for Gynecologic Oncology, was named to the National Cancer Institute Gynecological Cancer Steering Committee.

Dr. Jesse Gills, Assistant Professor of Clinical Urology, was named to the National Cancer Institute Bladder Task Force.

Dr. Scott Delacroix, Associate Professor of Clinical Urology and Director of Urologic Oncology, was named to the National Cancer Institute Genitourinary Steering Committee.

Dr. Cathy Lazarus, Associate Dean for Student Affairs & Records, was elected to a four-year term on the Board of Directors of the National Resident Matching Program, the organization responsible for matching medical students with their future residency programs.

Dr. Ann Tilton, Professor of Clinical Neurology, was elected Vice-President of the American Academy of Neurology.

Dr. David Lefer, Director of the Cardiovascular Center of Excellence, was elected President of the International Society for Heart Research – North American Section.

Dr. Nicholas Gilpin, Professor of Physiology and Associate Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center of Excellence, was elected Chair of the Gordon Research Conference on Alcohol and the Central Nervous System.

Dr. Ram Paragi, Director of Accreditation Compliance and Strategic Outcomes, was named a member of the Louisiana Health Works Commission.
Dr. Peter Winsauer, Professor of Pharmacology, was named Assistant Dean of Research for the School of Medicine.

Dr. Joy Osofsky, Professor of Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Public Health and Head of the Division of Pediatric Mental Health was appointed to the Board of Director of the national organization Zero to Three, which works to ensure that babies and toddlers benefit from the early connections that are critical to their well-being and development.

Dr. Lucio Miele, Professor and Department Head of Genetics, was named Assistant Dean of Translational Research for the School of Medicine.

Dr. Angela McLean, Professor of Clinical Medicine, was named Assistant Dean of Admissions for the School of Medicine.

Dr. Brett Arron, Associate Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology, was named President of the American Society of Anesthesiologists COVID-19 Advisory Council.

RESEARCH

Dr. Wayne Backes, Dr. Kurt Varner, Dr. James Robert Reed, and Dr. Huijing Xia along with collaborators at the LSU Main Campus were awarded an $11,793,640 grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to study environmentally persistent free radicals.

Dr. Guoshun Wang, Professor of Microbiology, Immunology, Genetics and Medicine, was awarded an R01 grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to study the mechanism behind lung inflammation caused by Cystic Fibrosis.

Dr. Ashok Aiyar, Professor of Microbiology, Immunology and Parasitology, was awarded an R21 grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to explore novel pharmacological approaches against chlamydial infection.

Dr. Nicholas Gilpin, Professor of Physiology and Associate Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center of Excellence, renewed his R01 grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism focused on understanding the effects of PTSD on Alcohol Use Disorder.

Research led by Dr. Eric Lazartigues, Professor of Pharmacology & Neuroscience, has demonstrated the role of a protein in promoting increased nerve activity and vasoconstriction leading to hypertension. These findings were published in Hypertension.

Research led by Dr. Rinku Majumder, Associate Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, has found how hypoxia (a low concentration of oxygen) decreases Protein S, a natural anticoagulant, resulting in an increased risk for the development of potentially life-threatening blood clots (thrombosis). Dr. Majumder published these findings in Blood, the flagship journal of hematology.

As a new faculty member at LSU Health, Dr. Elyse Stevens became fully credentialed in the Integrated Health Clinic the week before Hurricane Laura struck the Gulf Coast in August 2020. As the devastation began to escalate in the Lake Charles region and thousands of evacuees started to arrive in New Orleans, Dr. Stevens joined a relief organization as a health services volunteer. She started working on nights and weekends at various hotel “shelters” helping evacuees get their medications and durable medical equipment, linking them to local resources for existing health conditions, and assisting with copays and transportation to medical appointments.

With support from LSU Health New Orleans and University Medical Center New Orleans, Dr. Stevens helped to facilitate the development of an Evacuee Clinic. She says, “Volunteering at the shelters during my free time allows me to essentially do ‘house calls’ to identify sick or struggling evacuees, follow up on issues we address in clinic, and maybe most importantly, show patients that their health is important and we are here to help.”

Dr. Stevens is currently working in addiction medicine and primary care at UMC. She is also active in local community outreach, addressing health disparities, and health education.
Breaking Ground

In partnership with LSUHSC-NO, we are thrilled to announce that we are building a state-of-the-art student housing complex downtown to serve all six schools, including the School of Medicine. We have identified naming opportunities within our Student Living Center which will allow for meaningful philanthropy that will directly support our students, faculty, and community. Visit www.lsuhealthfoundation.org/new-student-housing to learn more.

Catch these throws!

The Foundation is launching a Second Line Bead Campaign to recognize our premier leadership annual giving society. This initiative will honor our generous alumni and friends through a stunning, cascading bead centerpiece and digital recognition display in common areas of the new Student Living Center.

Education Empowers

With 70 percent of our students in financial need, we are committed to growing scholarship opportunities for years to come. We hope to enroll more students with diverse perspectives, particularly from lower and middle-income families. We invite you to join us in embracing this mission to offer the best educational experience to our students by getting involved. Learn more by visiting give.lsuhealthfoundation.org/educationempowers.

Tiger Ball

Join us for our Inaugural Tiger Ball (date to be announced), a fundraiser to benefit cancer research and treatment at LSU Health New Orleans. The Foundation and the Al Copeland Foundation invite you to join us in making this a successful night to fight cancer and find a cure. We are in need of committee members and volunteers.

To learn more about these keys initiatives, please reach out to Katherine O’Hagan, Director of Development – School of Medicine at KOHagan@LSUHealthFoundation.org or (504) 568-2430.