

Greetings from the UConn Health Graduate School!

We hope to regularly share information and news across our many and varied programs, which include the Biomedical Science PhD and Certificate; combined MD/PhD and DMD/PhD; Clinical and Translational Research Masters and Certificate; Dental Science Masters; Public Health PhD, Masters, and Certificate; and the Young Innovative Investigator Program (YIIP).

Academic Calendar

Fri., 2/9	<i>Last day to add course w/o permission</i>
Fri., 3/1	<i>Deadline to apply for commencement</i>
3/10-3/16	<i>Spring Break- no classes</i>
Mon., 4/8	<i>Last day to withdraw from courses</i>
Mon., 4/29	<i>Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to degreeaudity@uconn.edu for conferral of Spring '24 degree</i>
Fri., 4/26	<i>Last day of Spring classes</i>
4/29-5/3	<i>Final Exams for Spring semester</i>
Sun., 5/5	<i>Conferral date: SP'24 degrees; final exams for Plan B Masters & 6th-year Certif. Stu. must be completed</i>
Mon., 5/6	<i>UCHC Commencement Jorgenson Center for Performing Arts, Storrs</i>
Tues., 5/7	<i>Semester grades due by 4 PM</i>
Fri., 8/9	<i>Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to degreeaudity@uconn.edu for conferral of Summer '24 degree</i>
Fri., 8/23	<i>Conferral date: Summer '24 degrees</i>

International Office Walk-In Hours

The International Office at UConn Health holds weekly walk-in advising for international students & scholars in the main building on **Thursdays from 2-3 p.m. in Walker Conference Room (AG-070)**. Walk-in advising is meant for **quick questions** (5-10 minutes) such as travel advice, I-20/DS-2019 signatures, document drop-off, etc. If you have an issue requiring a more in-depth discussion, please contact Kaitlin Dornenburg to make an appointment (dornenburg@uchc.edu; 860-679-4472).

Student Behavioral Health Service

For info. & confidential assistance, visit SBHS [here](#).

COVID Call Center Reminder

COVID questions, symptoms, or positive test? Call **860-679-3199** for guidance.

~2024 Commencement Important Reminders~

UConn Health Commencement is scheduled for **Monday, May 6, 2024 from 1:00-2:30 pm** in the **Jorgenson Auditorium at Storrs**. If you are planning to graduate in May OR August 2024 and plan to participate in the commencement ceremony, **you must be sure to complete the following no later than Fri., March 1:**

>>**APPLY** for graduation via the Student Admin portal.

Instructions on [applying for graduation may be found here](#).

Dual Degree students **MUST** complete this step for **EACH** degree program (e.g., DMD & PhD, MD & MPH, etc.); Please note: After applying, the instructions ask you to submit a final plan of study in Student Admin: *this does not apply for the M.D., D.M.D. or graduate degrees*.

When you apply for graduation, **you will enter your degree (diploma) name** in Student Admin. This entry will be used for ordering your diploma and also in commencement publications. Degree names should be entered *exactly how you want them to appear* on your diploma including upper and lowercase letters and punctuation. If you had or will have a legal name change prior to graduation, you must complete the [Biographical Update Request Form](#) and submit it with your documentation provided on the form's website in addition to entering your Degree name.

>>**ORDER** your cap and gown through the ***UConn Health* Bookstore** using this link: <https://health.uconn.edu/student-affairs/commencement/caps-and-gowns/>

IMPT: Do NOT order from the main campus at Storrs, as you will receive the *wrong color* for your regalia!

>>**VIEW** UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT in Student Admin. All students are advised to review their unofficial transcript in PeopleSoft/Student Admin. You can [find instructions here on how to view your unofficial transcript](#). Any missing grades, documents, or discrepancies can result in a delay of degree conferral.

>>**FIND** additional information on the ceremony here: <https://health.uconn.edu/student-affairs/commencement/>

Please note that you are also encouraged to update a permanent email address to ensure future correspondence is received.

-Diversity Corner-

UConn Grad School *Timely Topics* for Faculty and Staff:

Do you know about the Graduate School's Timely Topics series?

Timely Topics is a series of opportunities to engage with subject matter experts on topics relevant to those who support and advise graduate students and programs. All sessions are held via Webex; meeting links are sent to participants once they have registered for the session.

Visit the Timely Topics resource page [here](#) for details on **upcoming Spring seminars**, including:

Thursday, February 22, 11:00 AM-Noon

Graduate Student Trends and Patterns: Insights from the Ombuds Office

Join Jim Wohl and Cinnamon Adams from the Ombuds Office as they share insights from their work with graduate students and trends and patterns regarding the graduate student experience as it relates to graduate faculty.

Thursday, March 28th, 11:00 AM-Noon

How Are You Doing?...And Other Scary Questions

In this session we will cover the types of questions that you CAN ask and what questions you SHOULD ask when you sense that your student might need some assistance or support. These conversations or situations may include mental health matters, seeking accommodations, taking a leave of absence, or simply engaging a graduate student who may be struggling.

Archived seminars (found on the *Timely Topics* resource page) including previous seminars such as:

- >>Advising and Mentoring Historically Excluded or Racially Oppressed Graduate Students
- >>Neurodiversity and the Advisor/Advisee Relationship
- >>Provost Lejuez on graduate Student Mental Health and the Role of the Advisor
- >>Racial Microaggressions and the Cumulative and Deleterious Effects on Historically Excluded and Racially Oppressed Faculty, Staff, and Students
- >>Supporting Graduate Students with Disabilities

Winter/Spring Heritage Celebrations, Observances & Holidays

February

Black History Month

10th- [Lunar New Year](#)

20th: [World Day of Social Justice](#)

March

National Women's History Month

March 10-April 8: [Ramadan](#)

March 13-April 13: National Deaf History Month

8th: [International Women's Day](#)

31st: [Cesar Chavez Day](#)

31st: [Easter](#)

April

National Arab American Heritage Month

5th-13th [Passover](#)

9th: [Eid al-Fitr](#)

May

Asian Pacific Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

Haitian Heritage Month

Older Americans Month

Mental Health Awareness Month

5th: [Cinco de Mayo](#)

Grad School DEI Committee

The UConn Health Graduate School DEI Committee was formed in 2021 from a group of like-minded students, postdocs, faculty, & staff. Our Diversity website, <https://health.uconn.edu/graduate-school/graduate-school-diversity/>, contains info on DEI news, resources, funding, research, & education.

Interested in joining the GS DEI Committee? We welcome participants from all UConn Health graduate programs. For more info & to learn how you can participate, contact Committee Chair Dr. Leslie Caromile: Caromile@uchc.edu

Student Kudos!

Student Grant and Fellowship Awards

>**Kristina Delgado** (Biomedical Science Ph.D., Immunology AoC, PIs: Kelly Hawley and Justin Radolf) was awarded an NIH Diversity Supplement grant through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) entitled, “*A Global Syphilis Vaccine Targeting Outer Membrane Proteins of Treponema pallidum.*”

>**Titas Grabauskas** (M.D./Ph.D. student, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Duygu Ucar) was awarded an American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship Award for his project “*Transcriptional & Epigenetic Signatures of Treatment Responsiveness in Pediatric Systemic Lupus Erythematosus.*”



Student Awards and Achievements

>On January 26th, **Stephanie Wong** (Biomedical Science Ph.D., Skeletal Biology & Regeneration AoC, PI: Alix Deymier) successfully defended her thesis: *Elucidating the Effect of Carbonate Location, Cationic Substitutions, and Apatite Maturation on the Dissolution and Recrystallization Mechanisms of Apatites.* She will be starting a Postdoc at Oakridge National Lab in Tennessee in February. Pictured left, Stephanie (*center*) celebrated her successful defense with Biomedical Science and Biomedical Engineering graduate students and postdocs.

Student Conferences and Presentations

>In January, **Kristina Delgado** (Biomedical Science Ph.D., Immunology AoC, PIs: Kelly Hawley & Justin Radolf) attended the 2024 Gordon Research Seminar: Biology of Spirochetes in Ventura, California. Kristina gave both an oral and poster presentation entitled “Drawing Insights from the Rabbit Model of Syphilis: Identifying Syphilis Vaccine Candidates and Investigating Protective Antibody Functionality against *Treponema pallidum.*” Pictured right, Kristina found a moment between sessions to take a walk along the shore.



D.M.D./Ph.D. student Patricia Hare and her husband Brian O'Keefe recently welcomed a new member to their family. From Trish:

“I’m thrilled to share that my daughter, Piper, was born on November 29, 2023. She took us by surprise by arriving 5 weeks early as a 5 lb. 4 oz. peanut, but she’s now 2 months old and growing every day! Thank you to my wonderful mentor, Dr. Wendy Mok, and my lab mates for all of their support as I navigate parenthood and graduate school!”

Biomedical Science Program Plaques

While the Biomedical Science Ph.D. program presents several awards annually (announced at the annual Biomedical Science Graduate Student Research Day), many of the awards had recognition plaques that were nearly full and out of date and some had no plaques at all. Last year, the program was able to replace existing plaques with new, larger versions, as well as obtain plaques for more recently established awards. On display outside the Graduate School Office suite between AG049 and AG050, they include student awardees for the Lepow, Henderson, and Biomedical Science Student Leadership & Mentoring Awards, as well as the Osborn Award for Excellence in Biomedical Science Graduate Teaching.



Public Health Winter Donation Drive a Huge Success!

Thanks to everyone's incredible generosity, on January 30th the Program in Applied Public Health handed over collected donations to Officer Barrett and journalist Abby Moore (founder of Footwear with Care) who will ensure the donations reach those in need.

In addition to collecting \$195.00 in cash contributions for bus passes, their donation this winter included **783 items**:

Clothing Items: 401
Blankets: 124
Handwarmers: 40
Food & Beverage Items: 164
Hygiene Products: 54

Together, they made our community brighter and cozier this winter!

Top photo caption:

(from left) Alyse Visconti, Abby Moore, Narayani Ballambat, Shomrita Barua, Jin Davis, Officer Barrett, Denise Parris.

Photos courtesy of Tharun Palla, Applied Public Health Programs



First Year Rotation Talks

Entering 2023 Biomedical Science Ph.D. students recently completed their first rotation under the new First Year Graduate Experience in Biomedical Science structure. They presented their rotation talks on December 19th before the Winter break. Here are just a few of the students in action during their 4-minute Flash Talks.

Photos courtesy of GSO.



New faces...

Recent Graduate School faculty appointments at UConn Health include:

Dr. Emil Coman, Public Health

Dr. Sasan Jalili, JAX, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Immunology AoC

Dr. Adam Kim, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Immunology AoC

Dr. Shuzhao Li, JAX, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Systems Biology AoC

Dr. Erin Mead-Morse, Public Health

Dr. Silke Paust, JAX, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Immunology AoC

Dr. Danielle Rux, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Skeletal Biology & Regeneration AoC

Dr. Benjamin Sinder, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Skeletal Biology & Regeneration AoC

Dr. Frederick Varn, JAX, Biomedical Science Ph.D. program, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC



Recent Faculty Honors

Dr. Helen Wu, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, was recently honored at the Urban League of Greater Hartford's Equal Opportunity Day Dinner and Gala in December where she received the Community Champion Award in recognition of her community outreach work in nutrition and physical activity. Dr. Wu is an active mentor of graduate students in UConn Health Public Health programs. She is affiliated with the Department of Population Health Sciences, UConn School of Medicine, and The Cato T. Laurencin Institute of Regenerative Medicine.

Photo: Dr. Helen Wu (center) at the gala with student in UConn Health's Young Innovative Investigators Program (YIIP): Yvette Oppong, Taraje Whifield, Marc Merriman, and Kennedy Drake.

Postdoc News

Rafael Ricci de Azevedo recently received a \$66,000 Careers in Immunology Fellowship from the American Association of Immunologists to support his work on the mechanism of Shiga toxin-mediated cell death.

Puja Kumari has a new first author publication in Nature Cell Biology. In her study, she observes that extracellular vesicles can capture bacterial lipopolysaccharides leading to activation of inflammasome mediated cell death.



UConn Health Off-Campus Housing Website

Did you know the new off-campus housing resource for the UConn Health campus launched last year? This site can be used by **any UConn Health community member, including students, postdocs, staff, and faculty**, to search for housing, post rentals and available apartments, or look for roommates. The Roommate Finder feature is **password protected** using your NetID and password.

<<Use the QR code to the left or the URL to check it out! At <https://offcampushousing.uconn.edu/>, campus specific features include a map-based housing search, sublet options, and renter need-to-know resources.

IMPT: This housing site is supported by Off-Campus & Commuter Student Services.

Please **do not use** the old Google Group for housing, as *this is not a secure resource!*



UConn

OFF-CAMPUS AND
COMMUTER STUDENT
SERVICES

And now for something completely different...

If you build it...

Grad students welcomed winter (and a little friendly competition) at the December GSO Social Hour sponsored by UConn Health Grad School Student Affairs. Cozied up with hot cocoa & some tasty treats, students put their architectural skills to work for bragging rights & holiday themed prizes. Winners of the big house build (*below, left*) were Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. students Evelyn Mollocana Lara, Mikayla Moody, & Lindsay Barnum. Mini house winners (*right*) were Biomedical Science Ph.D. students Allison Andrade & Natan Busel. (*photos courtesy of GSO*)



Thoughts? Comments? Contributions for consideration in future newsletters?

Email Stephanie Rauch, UConn Health Grad School Newsletter Editor, at PhdBiomed@uchc.edu