

*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

#### Spring 2025

**Fri., 2/14-** Deadline to apply for graduation & submit Final Plan of Study (Master's/Certif. students only) for Spring '25

**Sat., 3/1-** Deadline to apply for Summer 2025 graduation & be included in the 2025 Commencement Book

**Fri., 3/7-** Deadline for graduating students/faculty to order regalia from [UConn HEALTH Bookstore](#)

**3/16-3/22-** Spring Recess

**Mon., 3/24-** Fall 2025 Registration opens in Student Admin

**Fri., 4/11-** Last day for doctoral students to defend dissertation for Spring 2025 conferral; public defense must be announced 2 weeks prior to defending

**Mon., 4/14-** Last day to withdraw from courses

**Fri., 4/25-** Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to [degreeaudit@uconn.edu](mailto:degreeaudit@uconn.edu) for Spring 2025 degree conferral

**Fri., 5/2-** Last day of Spring classes

**5/5-5/10-** Final Exams for Spring semester

**Mon., 5/12-** [UConn Health Commencement](#)

**Tues., 5/13-** Semester grades due by 4 PM

#### Fall 2025

**8/18-8/22-** Orientation Week (check w/ individual programs for details)

**Mon., 8/25-** Fall 2025 semester classes begin

### 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 pm 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](mailto: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.

### ~2025 Commencement Important Reminders~

UConn Health Commencement is scheduled for **Monday, May 12, 2025 from 1:00-2:30 pm** in the **Jorgenson Auditorium at Storrs**. If you are planning to graduate in May OR August 2025 and plan to participate in the commencement ceremony, **you must be sure to complete the following steps:**

>>**APPLY** for graduation via the Student Admin portal **no later than Saturday, March 1** 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.

>>**COMPLETE** the UConn Health info form found [here](#).

>>**ORDER** your cap and gown through the **\*UConn Health\*** [Bookstore](#) using this link: <https://health.uconn.edu/student-affairs/commencement/caps-and-gowns/> **no later than Friday, March 7** 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-

### Greetings from the Office for Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).

We've received many inquiries from the UConn Health community about the current state of DEI efforts across UConn & beyond. Please know we share your concerns and are working to answer questions to the best of our ability, given how quickly new information is being released. We are focusing on two lanes of consideration, which are not mutually exclusive from each other but are helping to inform the stakeholders we are engaging & reflect the main themes of the queries we are hearing.

First is the question of what we can & cannot do in the DEI space, so we are looking at the DEI infrastructure across UConn, including information on websites, curriculum, trainings, grants/research, positions/offices/committees, & student life & enrollment. Second, and most importantly, is the harm experienced by the students, staff, & faculty most directly impacted by recent directives, including, but not limited to, undocumented/mixed status/international/immigrant communities, trans/non-binary communities, faculty, students & staff of color, & Native American & Indigenous communities.

As the landscape of DEI is evolving rapidly, we encourage you to contact ODI directly ([diversity@uconn.edu](mailto:diversity@uconn.edu); 860.486.2422) with specific questions/concerns, so we can discuss the nuances & particulars of each situation. We also want to communicate that DEI efforts across UConn can & are continuing, unless & until we are required to pivot. We do suggest that departments do an inventory of the programs that could be potentially impacted so we can make informed pivots should that be necessary. In the meantime, here are some ways that ODI supports the UConn Health community, organized into three areas of focus: education, advocacy, and sense of belonging:

>>We offer workshops, trainings, & one-on-one consultations for individuals & depts., as well as programs open to the UCH community at large, developed with collaborators across UConn & designed to meet the requestors' & participants' specific goals.

>>Our advocacy work happens at the individual and institutional levels. We provide direct support to individuals who are experiencing bias, harassment, and/or discrimination, and work to ensure our institutional responses & organizational climate reflect our commitments to access & equity across all units & to diversity as crucial to our mission to enhance the health & well-being of every citizen of the State of Connecticut.

>>Finally, we create spaces where people can find community while feeling welcomed & positioned to thrive & where we affirm the value of an inclusive environment & the diversity within our workforce. We invite you to join us at our **ODI Coffee Breaks every other Thursday at noon**. For more information, please contact [holgerson@uchc.edu](mailto:holgerson@uchc.edu)

During these challenging and divisive times, we hope you will find time to tend to your own care and to check in with your colleagues.  
Please do not hesitate to reach out to our office for assistance.

## Winter/Spring Heritage Celebrations, Observances & Holidays

### February

Black History Month

[Ramadan](#): Feb. 28-Mar. 29

20<sup>th</sup> [World Day of Social Justice](#)

### March

National Women's History Month

National Deaf History Month:

Mar. 13-Apr. 13

8<sup>th</sup> [International Women's Day](#)

30<sup>th</sup> [Eid al-Fitr](#)

31<sup>st</sup> [Cesar Chavez Day](#)

### April

National Arab American Heritage Month

12<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> [Passover](#)

20<sup>th</sup> [Easter](#)

16<sup>th</sup> [National Religious Freedom Day](#)

### May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

Haitian American Heritage Month

Older Americans Month

Mental Health Awareness Month

5<sup>th</sup> [Cinco de Mayo](#)

## Grad School DEI Committee

Visit the [Graduate School DEI website](#), for info on DEI news, resources, funding, research, & education. For more info on our committee, contact Committee Chair Dr. Jenna Bartley, [jbartley@uchc.edu](mailto:jbartley@uchc.edu).

## Timely Topics Seminars

UConn Grad School's *Timely Topics* series offers learning opportunities for students, faculty & staff to engage with subject matter experts on topics relevant to graduate education. All sessions are held via Webex; seminars are free but you must [register](#) to join.

>Upcoming **FACULTY/STAFF** seminars

Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 11AM: *Having That Difficult Conversation with Your Graduate Advisee*

Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 11AM: *Strength-based Advising for Neurodiverse Graduate Students*

Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 11AM: *Inclusive Career Conversations: Reducing Implicit Bias in our Formal and Informal Conversations*

Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 11AM: *Part 2: AI is Here to Stay...Now What? A Conversation*

>Upcoming **STUDENT** seminars:

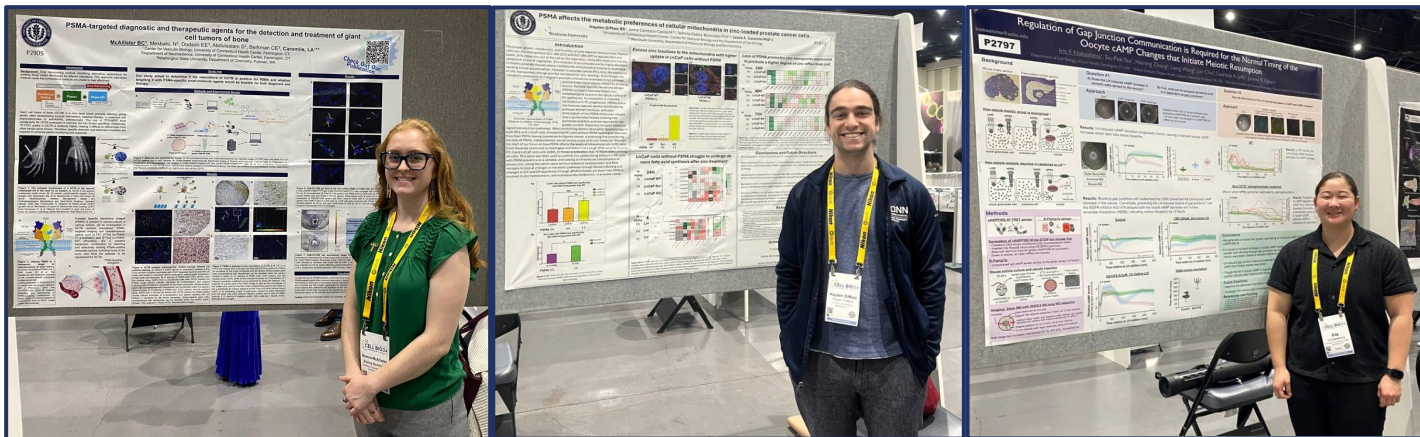
Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 11AM: *Promoting Mental Health*

Wednesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11AM: *Building Financial Credit and Dealing with Debt*



# Student Kudos!

## Student Conferences and Presentations



Pictured above: Brenna McAllister (left), Hayden DiMaio (center), and Iris Nakashima (right)

Biomedical Science Ph.D. students **Brenna McAllister** (AoC, Cell Biology; PI: Leslie Caromile), **Hayden DiMaio** (1<sup>st</sup> year student), and **Iris Nakashima** (AoC, Cell Biology; PI: Laurinda Jaffe) presented posters at the 2024 meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) December 14-18 in San Diego, California.

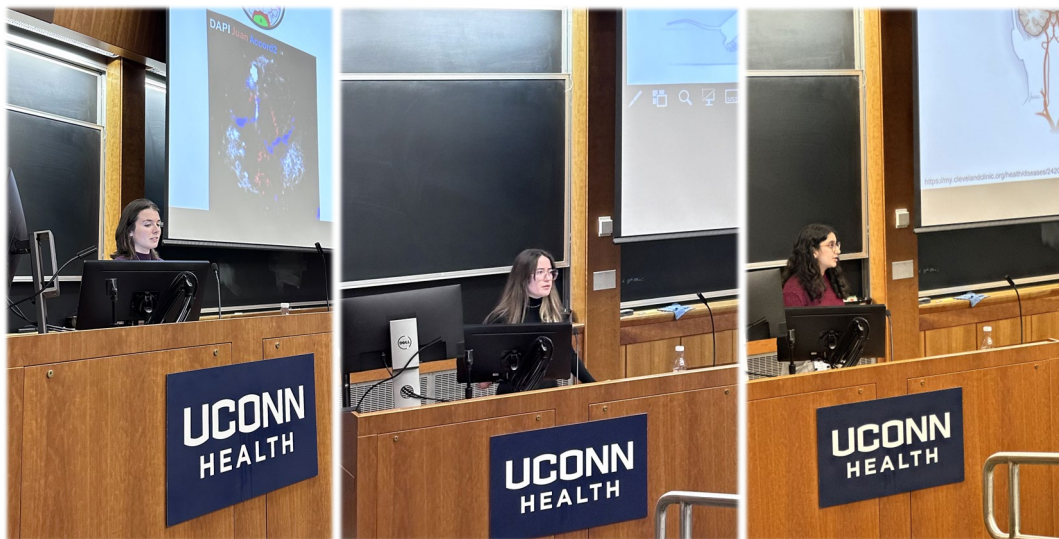


## Training & Continuing Education

Public Health's Fall 12<sup>th</sup> week program event included a Narcan training session, where students had the opportunity to learn hands-on skills for responding to opioid overdoses. This vital training session aimed to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools they need to make a real difference in public health.

## One Down...Two to Go!

In January, first year Biomedical Science Ph.D. students completed one of their first program milestones: finishing their first lab rotation and giving their rotation talk. Pictured below: right, Emma Beard; center, Ceren Akgul; and left, Arundhati Gore.





## What's (Been) Goin' On?

Students, faculty and staff have been out and about over the past few months! Here's a peek at some of the things they've been up to!



### CPHA Annual Conference

The Connecticut Public Health Association's (CPHA) Annual Conference took place on Monday, November 18th at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville, CT, this year's theme, "Building Healthier Communities Together: Centering on Community for Changemaking," highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts to improve public health outcomes.

Why This Year's Theme was Important:

Community engagement is the cornerstone of effective public health initiatives. By involving community members, organizational representatives, and researchers as equal partners, we can co-design impactful solutions, influence policies, and create programs that directly improve people's lives.

The Department of Public Health Sciences was a Platinum Sponsor for this year's event. Dr. Stacey Brown represented our department and share insights about community-engaged research and its role in creating meaningful change.



### GSO HOLIDAY PARTY

In December, the GSO celebrated the close of the Fall semester with a graduate student holiday party! The festivities included ornament making, holiday themed bingo, hot cocoa, and tasty treats.



## Recent Faculty/Staff News & Honors



Pictured above, left to right: Dr. Ruth Lucas; Dr. Cato Laurencin (center) with Dr. Kathy Lu, President of Sigma Xi (left) and Dr. J.C. Zhao, Dean of the College of Engineering at UConn; Dr. George Kuchel; and Dr. Eric Levine.

>>On November 13, 2024, **Dr. Ruth Lucas** was recognized by the Connecticut Nurses Association's (CNA) Diamond Jubilee Awards as the Virginia Henderson Award for Dedication to Nursing Research. These distinguished awards, named after some of the most impactful nurses in Connecticut's history, recognize nurses who have given outstanding contributions to the profession through research, policy, and to the Association. Dr. Lucas serves as a member of the Executive Committee for the Master of Science in Clinical and Translational Research program.

>>**Dr. Cato T. Laurencin**, University Professor and Albert and Wilda Van Dusen Distinguished Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, received the Gold Key Award from the Sigma Xi Scientific Research Honor Society. In addition, Laurencin was the keynote speaker for the International Forum on Research Excellence, Sigma Xi's annual conference. The Gold Key Award is the Society's highest honor, presented to a member who has made extraordinary contributions to their profession and fostered critical innovations to enhance the health of the research enterprise, to cultivate integrity in research, or to promote the public understanding of science for the purpose of improving the human condition. Read more about his award in the UConn Today article [here](#).

>>**Dr. George Kuchel**, Professor of Medicine, Director of the UConn Center on Aging and the NIA UConn Older Americans Independence Pepper Center at UConn Health, has been invited by Xavier Becerra, The Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to serve on the National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA) for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2025. NACA advises the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Director of NIH and the Director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA) on its mission. The Council meets three times a year to consider applications for research and training grants. Read more about his appointment [here](#).

>>**Dr. Eric Levine's** innovative autism research was one of 22 cutting-edge autism research projects selected by the Eagles Autism Foundation to receive a slice of \$8.1 million in grant funding raised by fans. Read more about his award [here](#).

>>UConn **Department of Public Health Sciences** faculty attended the 2024 Hispanic Health Council Annual Gala, championing equity and addressing health disparities for Hispanic, Latino, and other vulnerable communities. The evening celebrated the vibrant tapestry of Hispanic culture with Latin dance, culinary delights, and a shared commitment to health equity through research and advocacy.



### Postdoc Spotlight

**Rogie Royce Carandang**, a postdoctoral fellow in Cunningham Lab, has been named a 2024 Outstanding Author by the Journal of Public Health and Emergency (JPHE). He is recognized for making outstanding contributions to the journal and immense efforts in research. Carandang's research focuses on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Gerontology. His accomplishment is highlighted in UConn Today: <https://today.uconn.edu/2025/01/outstanding-author/>

### 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...

## Dr. Irina Bezsonova featured in UCH Employee Art Exhibit

From January 21<sup>st</sup> through February 6<sup>th</sup>, **Dr. Irina Bezsonova** (Molecular Biology & Biochemistry AoC) was the featured artist in UConn Health's latest employee art exhibit.

Her pen & ink works were on display in the gallery hallway connecting the CT & University Towers.



## **Holiday Donation to the Prudence Crandall Center**

This holiday season, the Department of Public Health Services demonstrated the power of community by hosting a donation drive to support survivors of domestic violence at the Prudence Crandall Center. From November 13 to December 17, faculty, staff, students, and community members joined forces to provide essential items to bring comfort and hope to individuals and families in need.

The donations included gift cards for groceries and household items, new bedding and towels, personal care products, diapers, cleaning supplies, and toys for children.

"Thank you all so much for the INCREDIBLE impact you made for our clients - I was truly blown away!", Caylee Chenkus Development Manager, Communications at the Prudence Crandall Center.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in this drive. Your generosity has made a lasting impact, proving that even small contributions can lead to significant change. Together, we've shown that the UConn Public Health community truly embodies the spirit of service and compassion.



## **X-Ray**

by Danielle Legros Georges

What is important for people to know?  
That I'm human.  
That I'm becoming more transparent.  
An x-ray  
Makes clear what resides in the body.  
It is a question  
That opens an answer. It is an order  
Of understanding.  
Beneath a microscope, among  
The most beautiful things  
You can see: Yellow protein crystal.  
How it spikes and turns,  
Spirals like a curly girl's hair.  
I work in pursuit  
Of evidence suggesting X.  
The music of data.  
The feeling of it. Being  
A scientist  
Is 90% Failure. Is Trial.  
Is Error. Is  
The remarkable 10%.  
My life has been  
A mirror. A confrontation  
With the Unknown.  
A growing proof  
Of what is Known.

*Danielle Legros Georges was a Haitian-born American poet, essayist and academic. This poem, part of The Poetry of Science project (<https://www.poetryofscience.org/>) was written after two interviews with Sheena Vasquez, scientist & biology doctoral candidate, MIT.*

**Thoughts? Comments? Contributions for consideration in future newsletters?**

Email Stephanie Rauch, UConn Health Grad School Newsletter Editor, at [PhdBiomed@uchc.edu](mailto:PhdBiomed@uchc.edu)