

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 2026

Sat., 2/28- Deadline for graduating **students** to order regalia from [UConn HEALTH Bookstore](#)

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

Mon., 3/2- Deadline for **faculty** to order regalia from [UConn HEALTH Bookstore](#)

3/15-3/21- Spring Recess

Mon., 3/23- Fall 2026 Registration opens in Student Admin

Mon., 4/13- Last day to withdraw from courses

Fri., 4/24- Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to degreecaudit@uconn.edu for Spring 2026 degree conferral

Fri., 5/1- Last day of Spring classes

5/4-5/8- Final Exams for Spring semester

Mon., 5/11- [UConn Health Commencement](#)

Tues., 5/12- Semester grades due by 4 PM

Mon., 8/10- Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to degreecaudit@uconn.edu for *Summer* 2026 degree conferral

Fall 2026

8/24-8/28-- Orientation Week (check w/ individual programs for details)

Mon., 8/31- Fall 2026 semester classes begin

Mon., 9/14- Tenth day of classes. Courses dropped after this date will have a "W" for withdrawal recorded on the academic record. Last day to add or drop courses without additional signatures.

International Office Walk-In Hours

The UConn Health International Office holds weekly walk-in advising for intl. students/scholars in the main bldg. on **Thursdays from 2-3 pm in Walker Conf. Rm. (AG-070)**. Walk-in advising is 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](#).

~2026 Commencement Important Reminders~

UConn Health Commencement is scheduled for **Monday, May 11, 2026 from 1:00-2:30 pm** in the **Jorgenson Auditorium at Storrs**. If you are planning to graduate in May OR August 2026 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, February 28** 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 Saturday, February 28**

****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-



Did You Know?

February 17, 2026 was a big day for global celebrations! In addition to the start of Ramadan for those of Muslim faith and Mardi Gras/Shrove Tuesday/Fat Tuesday for those of Christian faith, the 17th marked the start of Lunar New Year/Spring Festival.

According to the National Museum of Asian Art, the festival marks the first new moon of the lunisolar calendar, signifying the arrival of spring. Primarily celebrated in Asian cultures, it is a time for family reunions, honoring ancestors, and welcoming fortune with red decorations, feasts, and fireworks.

Each new year is named for one of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, with each animal repeating along a 12-year cycle. National Geographic explains that the animals are believed to have traits that are reflected in those born during that year. The zodiac also rotates every two years between five traditional Chinese elements: earth, wind, fire, metal, and water, meaning that each element-animal combination only happens every 60 years. 2026 is the year of the Fire Horse (Bing-Wu). Horse traits of power, stamina, independence, loyalty, and prosperity are believed to be amplified by the volatile element of fire. The year is said to reflect opportunities for growth and demand bold action and risk taking.

What's your Chinese zodiac sign?

[This site](#) offers a lookup tool to learn more!

The UConn Health Graduate School DEI Committee serves students, postdocs, faculty and staff in graduate degree programs on the UConn Health campus. For more info, contact committee Chair, **Dr. Jenna Bartley**, jbartley@uchc.edu.

Upcoming Heritage Celebrations, Observances, & Holidays

February

Black History Month

17th [Lunar New Year](#)

Ramadan: Feb. 17th- Mar. 19th

18th Ash Wednesday

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

March

National Women's History Month

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

19th [Eid al-Fitr](#)

31st [Cesar Chavez Day](#)

April

National Arab American Heritage Month

National Deaf History Month

1st-9th [Passover](#)

5th [Easter](#)

May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

Haitian American Heritage Month

Older Americans Month

Mental Health Awareness Month

5th [Cinco de Mayo](#)

Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights (OICR)

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) have merged to form [the unified Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights \(OICR\)](#). The merger brings together subject matter experts from both units, fostering deeper alignment across initiatives, programs, and services.

OICR Monthly Coffee Breaks: 12:15-1:00 PM Thursdays in Onyuke Dining Room & Virtual
(adjacent to the cafeteria, near the registers)

Remaining Spring Dates: March 18, April 1, & May 6

Coffee breaks are open to all members of the UConn Health community, including faculty, staff, postdocs, and students. Whether you'd like to talk through how stressors are affecting you, celebrate each other's wins, or simply enjoy good company, you are welcome. Come as you are; stay for a bit or the whole hour.

Questions? Require accommodations? Please email diversity@uconn.edu for assistance.

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.

Visit [Timely Topics](#) for this the full Faculty/Staff and Student offerings, as well as Archived seminars of past semester's topics from both learning tracks.

>Upcoming **FACULTY/STAFF** seminars

Thursday, February 26th, 11 AM: *Strategies for Navigating Sensitive Topics In and Out of the Classroom*

Thursday, March 12th, 1 PM: *Graduate Student Data Resources*

>Upcoming **STUDENT** seminars:

Wednesday, February 25th, 11 AM: *You're Not an Imposter! (We Promise)*

Wednesday, March 11th, 11 AM: *Accessible Scholarship: Building Inclusive Theses and Dissertations*

Wednesday, April 22nd, 11 AM: *From Student to Postdoc: Navigating a Successful Transition*

Student Kudos!

Student Awards and Achievements



Pictured: Fatemeh Hosseini (above) and Justin King (right)



Skeletal Biology and Regeneration Area of Concentration students participated in the 20th Annual Skeletal, Craniofacial and Oral Biology training program symposium in December 2025.

Fatemeh Hosseini (Biomedical Science Ph.D. student; PI: Cato Laurencin) received the Eric N. James Scholar Award, honoring James' scientific achievements and reflecting his deep commitment to helping others through teaching and mentorship. Consistent with James' mission to promote education and training of diverse individuals, the award emphasizes service to underrepresented groups, as well as scholarly and research achievement, especially by members of underrepresented groups.

Justin King (M.D./Ph.D. student; PI: Archana Sanjay) received the William B. Upholt Achievement Award, which was established to honor former SBR director Dr. William Upholt's impact on research and graduate education, as well as his lifelong personal commitment to human rights, civic activism, and to the environment. Upholt's wife, Mary Lee, gave King the award.

Read more about the day [here](#).

Student Grant, Fellowship, and Travel Awards

>>M.D./Ph.D. student **Isha Walawalkar** (Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC; PI: Olga Anczukow-Camarda) was awarded an F30 fellowship from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences for her work titled "*Investigating how splicing factor homeostasis shapes transcriptomes in pluripotency and differentiation.*"

>>**Rei Bui** (M.D./Ph.D. student, Neuroscience AoC; PI: Frederick Varn) received a JAX Cancer Center Travel Award for her talk at the JAX Cancer Center Symposium titled "*Microglia lipid metabolism as a bridge between brain aging and glioblastoma progression.*"



Master of Public Health student **Ella Stanwood** (pictured left) has been selected for the CT Department of Public Health's Public Health Fellowship Program (PHFP). This program is made possible with CDC Public Health Infrastructure Grant funding and is coordinated by the Yale School of Public Health's Office of Community & Practice. PHFP is a competitive fellowship that connects emerging public health professionals with hands-on experience in state and local public health agencies — offering real-world opportunities to make a tangible difference in our communities. During her fellowship, she will be placed with a Connecticut public health agency where she will work alongside experienced professionals, engage in meaningful projects, and help advance essential public health services that keep communities safe and healthy. This fellowship not only provides invaluable professional experience but also strengthens the bridge between academic training and public health practice.

GSO Holiday Cards for Kids



As part of their winter festivities, students at the GSO holiday party helped spread some cheer by creating holiday cards to send to CFHK (Cards For Hospitalized Kids). The nonprofit organization "spreads hope, joy, and magic to hospitalized kids across America through uplifting, handmade cards distributed to children in all 50 states.



Applied Public Health Sciences Public Health 101 sessions
Held at UConn Waterbury and Hartford, upcoming at Storrs:
Thursday, Feb 26 12:30-1:45 PM, SU 104

Public Health 101 is designed to show how your skills and interests can make a real-world impact. Each session features a panel of faculty, researchers, students, and public health professionals who bring different perspectives to the conversation. Panelists will share what led them to public health, what their work looks like day-to-day, and how their research or practice empowers communities. For more information, [click here](#).



What's (Been) Goin' On?

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



The **GSO** took some time to kick back and relax during their winter student social events, including Bingo Nite and Minute to Win It!



OUCH! (The Orchestra of University of Connecticut Health) melted hearts at their winter concert on Thursday, February 13, just in time for the Valentine's weekend. Conducted by faculty member Dr. Howard Gutstein, the orchestra (*pictured left*) is comprised of faculty, staff, and student musicians at UConn Health.

Graduate School student orchestra members included **Clement Ojo** (M.D./Ph.D. student) and **Sarah Rizvi** (Biomed. Sci. Ph.D. student) on the cello, **Jinhong Dong** (M.D./Ph.D. student) on the violin, **Cara Bartlett** (Biomed. Sci. Ph.D. student) on the flute, and **Sophia Bizink** (Biomed. Sci. Ph.D. student) and **Stephen Li** (M.D./Ph.D. student) on the clarinet.

Missed the performance? UConn Health members with intranet access can watch the performance on the UConn Health Intranet, The Hub here: <https://hub.uconnhealth.org/news-search/news/2026/02/ouch-returns-with-winter-concert>

~Recent Faculty Honors~



Pictured above: Pedro Mendes, Guangfu Li, Patrick Murphy, and Xiaoyan Guo

UConn Health recently announced the awarding of several endowed professorships or chairmanships, which are generously supported by philanthropic donations to UConn's medical school through the UConn Foundation. Awardees include:

>**Dr. Pedro J. Mendes** (Systems Biology and Cell Biology AoCs) has been appointed the Boehringer Ingelheim Professor in Cell Sciences. Mendes is professor of Cell Biology and director of the Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling at the UConn School of Medicine.

>**Dr. Guangfu Li** (Immunology AoC) is the newly appointed Carole and Ray Neag Innovation Professor. Li joined the School of Medicine in April 2024 in the Department of Surgery with a joint appointment in Immunology.

>**Dr. Patrick A. Murphy** (Cell Biology and Neuroscience AOCs) has been newly named the Marlene L. Cohen and Jerome H. Fleisch Chair in Vascular Biology.

>**Dr. Xiaoyan Guo's** (Genetics & Developmental Biology and Cell Biology AoCs) philanthropically supported research efforts are also recognized alongside these positions.

Learn more about these faculty and their research in their [UConn Today article](#).



Dr. Ian Michelow (professor, Master of Clinical and Translational Research program; *pictured left*) is Principal Investigator of the Pediatric and Youth HIV program at CT Children's and UConn Health. He and his colleagues have been awarded a new three-year Ryan White grant titled "*HIV/AIDS Program and Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI)*" for \$190k. The program consists of remarkably dedicated physicians, social workers, community health workers, specialized RNs, and quality managers, among others. They provide critical services and comprehensive medical care, support services, and medical navigation for children and youth living with HIV in Connecticut. The program is part of an initiative that funds care for low-income, uninsured, and underserved patients.

Postdoc News

Postdoctoral fellow and recent UConn Health Biomedical Science Ph.D. program graduate **Dr. Emilie Korchak** (Molecular Biology and Biochemistry AoC, PI: Irina Bezsonova) is among 10 rare disease researchers in the country who will receive a \$20,000 research grant from Uplifting Athletes, a nonprofit organization that unites student-athletes nationwide and professional athlete ambassadors with their local rare disease communities. The program has awarded more than \$1.2 million in since its inception in 2007. Dr. Korchak accepted the grant at the Uplifting Athletes' Young Investigator Draft on Jan. 31 at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. Read more about Dr. Korchak's award in her [UConn Today article](#).



Postdocs! Be part of our special **10th Anniversary UConn Health/JAX Postdoc Research Day** on September 17, 2026.

[Register to Present Here Today!](#)

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...



Public Health Cookbook

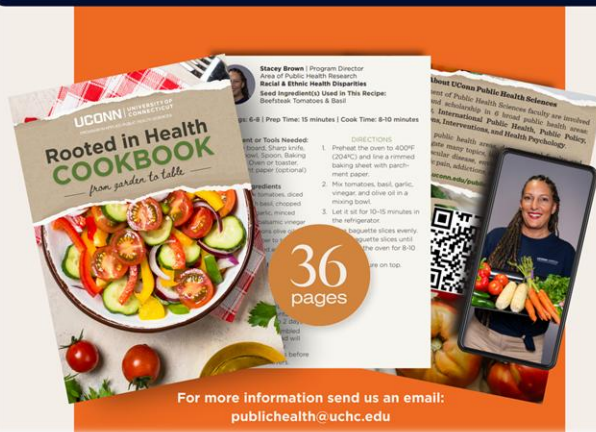
The Program in Applied Public Health Sciences has created a garden-to-table collection featuring recipes from their faculty each inspired by the seeds they have been distributing at events and the work they do every day to build healthier communities. Their recipes include seed packet ingredients featuring cucumbers, various peppers, tomatoes, and herbs.

Public Health Benefits of Home Gardening

Home gardening is more than a hobby, it's a public health practice. Gardening encourages physical activity, reduces stress, and provides access to fresh, affordable produce. It also fosters resilience in communities by improving food security and giving people more control over their nutrition. Growing food at home supports both physical and mental well-being while strengthening connections between individuals, families, and their environment.

If you would like to receive a printed recipe booklet, be sure to stop at their tabling events or their office for a copy. For more information email publichealth@uchc.edu.

New Department Cookbook!



New Videos Highlight Biomedical Science Ph.D. Program



Pictured above: Cindy Li, Emmanuel Boafu, and Arshmeet Chawla

Biomedical Science Program Coordinator **Lana Angelo** has been working over the past several months with Carolyn Pennington and her team in Multimedia Services to create promotional videos for the Biomedical Science Ph.D. program here at UConn Health.

The results include a [‘sizzle reel’](#) that provides an overview of the program itself, as well as three brief videos highlighting individual students currently in the program. The students include 4th year student [Cindy Li](#) (Cell Biology AoC; PI: Lixia Yue), 2nd year student [Emmanuel Boafu](#) (Immunology AoC; PI: Adam Kim), and 5th year student and [Arshmeet Chawla](#) (Immunology AoC, PI: Pramod Srivastava).

Thoughts? Comments? Contributions for consideration in future newsletters?
Email Stephanie Rauch, UConn Health Grad School Newsletter Editor, at PhDBiomed@uchc.edu