

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

Mon., 8/10- Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to the university-supported repository and submit related paperwork to degreeaudit@uconn.edu for Summer 2026 degree conferral

Mon., 8/24- Conferral date for Summer 2026 degrees

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.

Fri., 9/25- Deadline to apply for graduation and to submit Final Plan of Study (Master's/Certif. students *only*) for Fall 2026 degree conferral

Tues., 9/29- Dean's signature required to add courses

Mon., 10/26- Spring 2027 registration opens in Student Admin.

Mon., 11/16- Last day to withdraw from courses

Fri., 11/20- Last day for doctoral students to defend dissertation for Fall 2026 conferral; *public defense must be announced 2 weeks prior to defending*

11/23-11/27- Thanksgiving Break

Fri., 12/4- Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation to the university-supported repository and submit related paperwork to degreeaudit@uconn.edu for Fall 2026 degree conferral

Mon., 12/14- Finals week begins

Sun., 12/20- Conferral date for Fall 2026 degrees

Wed., 12/23- Grades due for Fall semester

Spring 2027

Tues., 1/19- Spring 2027 semester classes begin

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 Graduate School Commencement Speaker:

Michael Raizin



The 2026 UConn Health Graduate School student commencement speaker was Master of Public Health graduate **Michael Raizin**. As an undergraduate at UConn, Michael took an elective in public health, and after learning about the One Health initiative, he joined a learning community at UConn Storrs called the Public Health House. There, he learned about the MPH Fast-Track Program, and joined, placing him on the path to graduate school in the Program in Applied Public Health Sciences in the Department of Public Health Sciences at UConn Health. After graduation, Michael plans to serve in the Peace Corps in the Philippines, working in youth development.

"We've worked tirelessly and with commitment to reach this academic milestone in our lives," Michael said during his commencement speech. "Even if you aren't wearing a pink cape and tassel today [referring to the salmon color worn by Public Health graduates], you are part of the interprofessional collaboration that powers public health...as we step into this next chapter, remember don't work in silos, build bridges, and be life-long learners."



ICYMI, you can watch his full remarks in [the ceremony recording](#) (beginning with Graduate School Remarks and Student Reflections at around 50:25). Read more about Michael in his [Commencement Speaker Spotlight](#).

-Diversity Corner-

Spotlight on: Cena y Ciencias Student Group

Cena y Ciencias brings Hartford Public School families together with UConn scientists to engage in hands-on science activities and spark conversations about science between family members at home. Each event features information in Spanish and English because a majority of the students identify as Hispanic/Latino.



The group had a great Family Fun Night at Mária Sánchez Elementary this spring! We taught students and their families about capillary action and plant stems using paper flower models and real color-changing carnations!



<< Before experimenting with the carnations, students had to predict what would happen if the stem was split between two cups of colored water.



The actual result! >>

We love to highlight our Latine scientists, but everyone's welcome to volunteer with us!

You do not need to know Spanish to volunteer.

Interested in joining? Email cenaycienciasct@gmail.com to get involved!

And follow us on Instagram: [@cenaycienciasct](https://www.instagram.com/cenaycienciasct)

Upcoming Heritage Celebrations, Observances & Holidays

May

Asian Pacific Heritage Month
Jewish American Heritage Month
Haitian Heritage Month
Older Americans Month
Mental Health Awareness Month
5th [Cinco de Mayo](#)
26th [Eid al-Adha](#)

June

LGBTQIA+ Pride Month
Caribbean American Heritage Month
Immigrant Heritage Month
12th [Loving Day](#)
19th [Juneteenth](#)
20th [World Refugee Day](#)

August

Diversity Awareness Month
9th [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#)

September

Suicide Prevention Month
Sept. 15th-Oct. 15th: National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month
4th [Krishna Janmashtami](#)
11th [Rosh Hashanah](#)
16th [Trail of Tears](#) Remembrance Day
20th [Yom Kippur](#)

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.



SAVE the Date!

Thursday, August 6th

Mark your calendars for the return of
U Belong @ UConn!

Wrap up summer at this afternoon social gathering of the Grad School sponsored by the UConn Health Graduate School DEI Committee and UConn Health Graduate School Office

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.

A fresh menu of seminars will be available in the Fall!

In the meantime, please visit [Timely Topics](#) to view Archived seminars of past semester's topics from both learning tracks.

UConn GRADCHAT

GRADCHAT is a relatively new forum for graduate students to discuss topics that impact the graduate school experience. The purpose of GRADCHAT is to foster community and connection among graduate students, especially students representing marginalized groups. All sessions are held virtually via Webex and are open to UConn students on all campuses. GRADCHAT is one way we can have open dialog about issues that matter.

Visit the [GRADCHAT](#) site to stay informed and view the Fall semester sessions when they are posted.

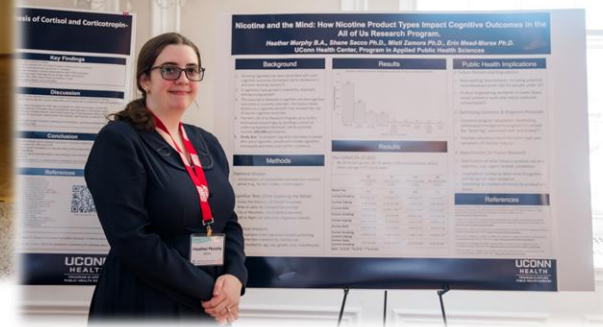
Student Kudos!

Student Conferences & Presentations

Public Health students were presenting their research around the state in March!

<<Master of Public Health students **Lisbeth Lucas-Moran** (picture top left) and **Om Ghetia** (pictured bottom left) discuss their posters with attendees of the 2026 Health Equity Research Symposium and Poster Session held at the UConn Storrs campus on March 26th. The theme of this year's symposium, sponsored by the University of Connecticut Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights, was "Rooted in Connection: Co-Creating Equity Through Collaboration; Amplifying Voices and Designing Change Together."

>>At the University of Saint Joseph, 10 Public Health students presented 14 posters at the Connecticut Public Health Association Conference on March 10th, including **Chelsea Erem** (pictured below, top) and **Heather Murphy** (pictured below, bottom). The theme of this year's conference was "Public Health Matters: People. Purpose. Progress."



OUCH Orchestra Spring Concert

OUCH! (*The Orchestra of University of Connecticut Health*), comprised of faculty, staff, and student musicians, performed their final concert of the academic year on May 14th in Keller Auditorium.

Conducted by faculty member Dr. Howard Gutstein, Graduate School student orchestra members participating in the Spring concert included cellist **Clement Ojo** (M.D./Ph.D. student), **Cara Bartlett** (Biomed. Sci. Ph.D. student) on the flute, **Sophia Bizink** (Biomed. Sci. Ph.D. student) and **Stephen Li** (M.D./Ph.D. student) on the clarinet, and **Nicole Grullon** (Master of Dental Science student) on the bass clarinet. Missed the concert? UConn Health community members can find the concert recording on [The Hub](#).



What's (Been) Goin' On?

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



^^ On March 21, the **Department of Public Health Sciences** sponsored & hosted a table at the Black Family Wellness Expo, a community event focused on advancing health equity & improving wellness resources. Faculty & staff shared educational materials & distributed their departmental cookbook filled with healthy recipes.



The GSO sponsored several student activities in February, March & April for current graduate students in all Grad School programs at UConn Health, including karaoke at Parkville Market, game nite & dinner at Dave & Busters and bowling and mini-golf at Lessard Lanes.



Grad Student Appreciation Week 2026

During the 1st week of April, UConn Health celebrated national Graduate Student Appreciation Week with a variety of activities, including a Grad School merch raffle, an all-day coffee break, and chair massages.

Back by popular demand was the *Your Guess Is As Good As Mine* candy jar contest featuring a jar filled with sweet treats of various shapes and sizes to challenge the guessing skills of our students.

Biomedical Science Ph.D. student **Lucy Papile** had the closest guess OVER the correct amount. Her guess of 186 was juuuust over, earning her some sweet treats and a \$15 gift card, while fellow student **Sakhi Rajendran's** guess of 185 was EXACTLY right, winning her a \$25 gift card AND the candy jar.



Faculty News

>> Public Health faculty **Dr. Stacey Brown** and **Dr. Mayte Restrepo-Ruiz**, along with Public Health Ph.D. program alumna **Dr. Samia Hussein** presented a featured panel titled “Foundations of Health Equity: From Frameworks to Practice” at the 2026 Health Equity Research Symposium and Poster Session at UConn Storrs in March.



<<**Dr. Peter Setlow** (Molecular Biology and Biochemistry AoC) and family establish the Barbara C. Setlow Health Research Program, providing funding for undergraduate student researchers, in honor of his wife and research partner, **Dr. Barbara Setlow**. Read more about the fund and their journey from the very start of UConn Health [here](#).

>>**Dr. Jean-Denis Beaudoin** (Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC; pictured *right*) has been selected as the first-ever winner of the Tao Rising Stars Award, recognizing a junior faculty member who has outstanding potential to be the next nationally recognized research star from UConn Health. The award provides funding for a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in the winner's laboratory to help advance their research program. Dr. Beaudoin's laboratory specializes in RNA structure-function and translational control.



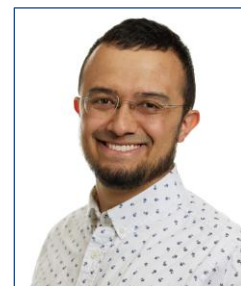
Postdoc Spotlight



<<Two UConn post-doctoral researchers have received prestigious and very competitive 2026 NIH Pathway to Independence Awards (K99/R00) to advance their innovative research along with their careers as early-career scientists.

Dr. Pengyu Zong (postdoc, PI: Lixia Yue) received his award from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) for his project "Role of TRPM7-Mediated Signaling in Vascular Remodeling in Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm" and **Dr. Jessica Flori** (postdoc, PI: Kristyn Zajac) received her award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for her project "Mechanisms of Action of Peer Recovery Support for People Receiving Opioid Use Disorder Treatment" Read more about them and their achievement [here](#).

>>**Dr. Daniel Penarete** (postdoc, PI: Sasan Jalili) has been awarded the Robert E. Leet and Clara Guthrie Patterson Trust Mentored Research Award for two years, beginning on January 31, 2026. The Trust was established in 1980 to support “research relating to human diseases, their causes and relief thereof.” In alignment with this mission, the program supports pilot studies and innovative research conducted by early-stage mentored investigators and promotes their transition toward independence. Daniel's project title is “Age-Dependent Epithelial Susceptibility to Microbial Genotoxins in Colorectal Cancer Patients.”



Postdocs! Be part of our special **10th Anniversary UConn Health/JAX Postdoc Research Day** on September 17, 2026. Spots still available for postdoc poster presenters- [sign up here](#) and indicate that you would like to present a poster.

UConn Health Off-Campus Housing Website

Did you know the new off-campus housing resource for the UConn Health campus has launched? 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!*



And now for something completely different...



Congrats, Grads!!

UConn Health's Graduate School programs Class of 2026 included 90 scientists and public health students receiving a variety of degrees, including the Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Science; Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health; Master of Dental Science; Master of Public Health; Master of Science in Biomedical Science; and Master of science in Clinical and Translational Research. Congrats to you all; we can't wait to see what you do next!

(photos courtesy of Thomas Hurlbut Photography, UConn Health Communications, & Grad School faculty, staff, & students)

Thoughts? Comments? Contributions for consideration in future newsletters?

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