

# GRAND ROUNDS



**BLUEPRINTS**  
FOR BETTER HEALTH

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“Saint Louis University School of Medicine places value on community — not just the community outside of our doors, but the community that we all are together.”

— **Christine K. Jacobs, M.D., FAAFP**

Gerald A. Maguire, M.D. and Joanne S. Maguire *Cura Personalis* Dean,  
Vice President for Medical Affairs, Saint Louis University School of Medicine



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**Christine Winter**  
*Director of Communications*  
 Saint Louis University  
 School of Medicine

**Christine K. Jacobs, M.D., FAAFP**  
*Gerald A. Maguire, M.D. and Joanne S. Maguire Cura Personalis Dean, Vice President for Medical Affairs,*  
 Saint Louis University  
 School of Medicine

Schwitalla Hall M268  
 1402 South Grand Blvd.  
 St. Louis, MO 63104-1028

**Contributors**

**Editorial**  
 Paradigm New Media Group

**Graphic Design**  
 Paradigm New Media Group

**Photography**  
*Adriana M. Montano, Ph.D., peers through microscope in her lab.*  
 Sarah Conroy

Grand Rounds is mailed to alumni and friends of the School of Medicine.

If you have any content suggestions, please email us at:  
**christine.winter.1@health.slu.edu**

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



## Dear friends,

At the Saint Louis University School of Medicine, our mission calls us to pursue excellence in education, research, clinical care, and service to humanity. As we reflect on a year of shared achievements, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose — one firmly rooted in advancing the health and well-being of the region we are privileged to serve.

The theme of this issue of Grand Rounds, “Architects of Progress: Strengthening Health Across Our Region and Beyond,” highlights the many ways our faculty, students, and partners

shape meaningful change. Our collective work exemplifies how purposeful mission-grounded action can build stronger, healthier communities for future generations.

Year by year, we are growing the pipeline for clinicians and scientists within St. Louis and the broader region. Our deep collaboration with SSM Health has yielded stronger pathway programs and community engagement efforts — clearing the way for future leaders to learn, serve, and lead within local communities.

We have already witnessed meaningful results from this work. Though many School of Medicine graduates continue to serve communities across the country, the Class of 2026 will be the first graduating medical school class with significant Midwestern roots — a milestone in cultivating physicians invested in the health of our region. This achievement strengthens our efforts to improve regional health care, as many of these graduates choose to pursue postgraduate training at SLU.

Equally important is our continued investment in discovery and innovation. Our researchers and clinicians are uncovering knowledge with the potential to transform patient care. The establishment of our new Office of Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Affairs — led by Associate Dean Brittany Hollister, Ph.D. — underscores our dedication to supporting the next generation of scientists and physician-scholars.

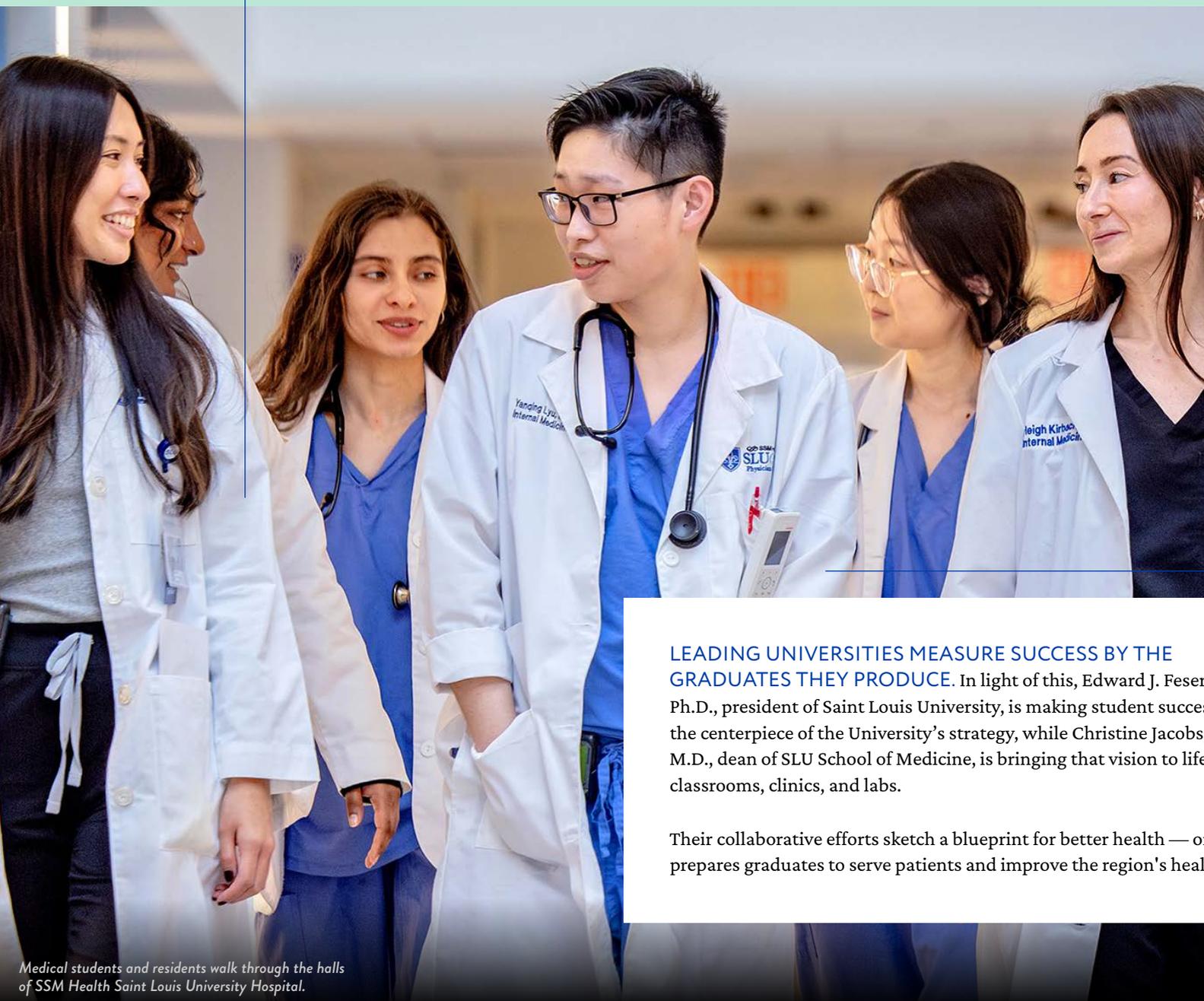
Ultimately, Saint Louis University School of Medicine’s efforts continually uplift St. Louis, the Midwest, and the world beyond — creating a brighter future for students, clinicians, and patients alike.

### **Christine K. Jacobs, M.D., FAAFP**

Gerald A. Maguire, M.D. and Joanne S. Maguire *Cura Personalis* Dean  
Vice President for Medical Affairs, Saint Louis University School of Medicine

# BLUEPRINTS

## FOR BETTER HEALTH



### LEADING UNIVERSITIES MEASURE SUCCESS BY THE GRADUATES THEY PRODUCE.

In light of this, Edward J. Feser, Ph.D., president of Saint Louis University, is making student success the centerpiece of the University's strategy, while Christine Jacobs, M.D., dean of SLU School of Medicine, is bringing that vision to life in classrooms, clinics, and labs.

Their collaborative efforts sketch a blueprint for better health — one that prepares graduates to serve patients and improve the region's health.

*Medical students and residents walk through the halls of SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital.*

## CREATING A CULTURE OF CONTINUITY

For over 200 years, Saint Louis University has been shaped by the people and communities it serves. Feser and Jacobs carry this legacy forward with a clear understanding of Midwest health care challenges — from physician shortages to the social determinants of health. Together, they share a conviction to meet challenges head-on.

“Our mission is to serve our community,” Jacobs said. “Presently, the communities of greatest need are in the Midwest.”

Building a healthier future for the region depends on access to health care. With that in mind, both leaders are prioritizing recruitment efforts within Missouri and Illinois. Their belief is that existing connections encourage exceptional students to seek medical training in the region. Once in medical school, community-based programming — such as the Community Health Distinction — reinforces their desire to live and practice in the region long term.

“Approximately half of our medical students now come from the Midwest or the greater St. Louis region,” Feser said. “Our continued efforts are pulling people together in support of regional development.”

## PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD OF MEDICINE

Both Feser and Jacobs believe that medical students must be trained not only in basic clinical care but also in emerging technologies and complex health care systems. This belief has inspired a robust curriculum designed to help graduates thrive in an ever-evolving world.

***“Student success is the core,” Feser said. “We deliver a curriculum of technology, innovation, and pedagogy that ensures medical students feel equipped to provide the highest quality care.”***

Under Jacobs’ leadership, SLU School of Medicine has made significant progress in updating its programming. Classrooms



Medical student and faculty examine a patient at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital.

21%

of medical students  
matched into SSM/  
SLU residencies

# “OUR MISSION IS TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY. *Presently, the communities of greatest need are in the Midwest.*”

have shifted from traditional lectures to experiential learning environments characterized by classroom discussions, high-fidelity simulations, and peer instruction. Pre-clinical studies have also been compressed from 24 to 18 months — allowing students to spend more time in clinical settings.

***“We’ve modernized our curriculum, made learning more interactive, and gotten students out into the clinics sooner,” Jacobs said.***

Looking ahead, both leaders believe that continued progress relies on interdisciplinary collaboration. Jacobs has fostered dialogue with faculty across the University through the inaugural Health Science Education Summit. Their collective insights inspired three emerging degree pathways in artificial intelligence, health informatics, and data analysis.

These advancements are shaping the University’s approach to educational delivery. What started as targeted curriculum modernization now informs scalable conversations of how academic programs can evolve, adapt, and deliver education across disciplines.

“If we can be successful and innovative in how we deliver education in the School of Medicine, that’s something the rest of the University can take advantage of,” Feser said.

## STRENGTHENING ST. LOUIS AND THE MIDWEST

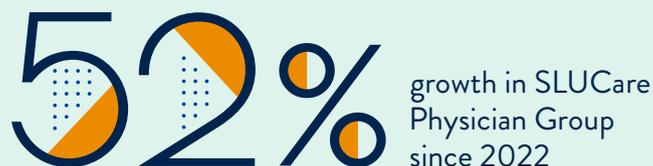
In 2025, Saint Louis University achieved a major milestone with its designation as an R1 research university. The designation signals national recognition for research excellence, but it also raises an important question: What comes next?

Feser views an R1 designation not as an endpoint but as a catalyst for impact — and encourages the SLU community to do the same. He noted the ripple effects of research, with advancement supporting student success and translating to vitality within the University, St. Louis, and the Midwest.

“We must have the courage to define our own version of a research-intensive university that integrates effectively with our mission and does not lose sight of the student,” Feser said.

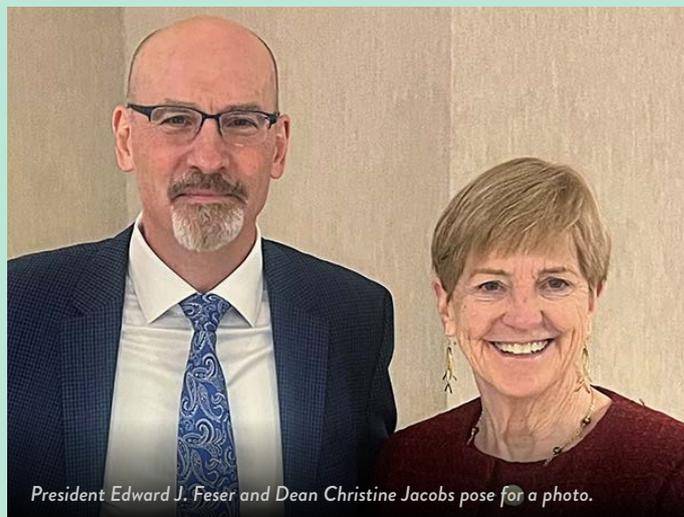
Jacobs follows a similar philosophy — seeing community partnerships as integral to student development. Through the SLU-SSM Health partnership, clinical capacity within the SLUCare Physician Group has expanded from 505 physicians in

2022 to 767 today. This growth within the SSM Health system has yielded clinical opportunities for students, reinforced feedback loops, and improved care for St. Louisans.



Jacobs has also cultivated a pipeline for early exposure to community-based medicine. Ongoing initiatives like the Mobile Health Clinic and Casa de Salud help medical students understand the importance of health equity and practice in the tradition of *cura personalis*.

“We are now putting community engagement, belonging, and cultural competence together via the Office of Ignatian Mission in Medicine rather than treating them separately,” Jacobs said.



President Edward J. Feser and Dean Christine Jacobs pose for a photo.

## PRESENTING A UNITED FRONT

Feser and Jacobs share a vision for the School of Medicine: attracting outstanding physicians, delivering real-world training, and reinforcing community connections. Together, they plan to continually implement new strategies that center on students, meet the region’s needs, and position the School as a driving force in health care innovation.

# Centralizing Understanding of Liver Disease

**The Saint Louis University Liver Center stands as a beacon for liver care, education, and research. But decades ago, it was simply a dream shared by two renowned hepatologists.**

Bruce R. Bacon, M.D., and Adrian M. Di Bisceglie, M.D., spent their initial years at SLU devising a center committed to excellence in patient care, basic and clinical research, and medical and public education in liver disease. Together, they launched the Liver Center in 1994, and unprecedented momentum followed.

The Liver Center quickly gained international acclaim for its research and treatment of patients with chronic liver diseases. By 2001, the Liver Center was designated as a Center of Excellence — uniting investigators and clinicians across disciplines.

Today, the center is composed of 50 specialists from 11 departments and divisions. Wing-Kin Syn, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology and co-director of the Liver Center, shared that they remain united in their passion for progress.

“We are committed to excellence,” Syn said. “Physicians and scientists are working side-by-side to acquire new knowledge of liver function, disease origins, and applicable treatments.”

“So far, four human clinical trials have arisen from our discoveries and pre-clinical animal studies.”

— Jeffrey Teckman, M.D.

Current projects within the Liver Center expand upon the foundation established by Bacon and Di Bisceglie. Jeffrey Teckman, M.D., professor of Pediatrics and Biochemistry and



Molecular Biology, noted that he sees their mission carried out through ongoing discovery.

“The Liver Center once played a key role in the cure of hepatitis C,” Teckman said. “Now, similar advances keep SLU at the forefront of internationally recognized developments.”

For the past 30 years, Teckman has researched novel therapeutic approaches for alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency (AATD) — a liver disease affecting 1 in 3,500 Americans.

Teckman’s progress has intensified in recent years. In 2022, his lab helped to establish Fazirsiran as the first viable treatment for this disease, apart from a liver transplant. In 2024, his team identified predictive biomarkers in high-risk infants for the first time. In 2025, Teckman observed that norUDCA also reduces harmful protein accumulation — suggesting the need for human trials in the future.

“My lab maintains a strong record of translational work of which we are proud,” Teckman said. “So far, four human clinical trials have arisen from our discoveries and pre-clinical animal studies.”

Meanwhile, Brent Neuschwander-Tetri, M.D., professor of internal medicine, has spent 20 years conducting research



Jeffrey Teckman, M.D., uses an electronic, multichannel pipette in his lab.

for the Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis Clinical Research Network (NASH CRN). With permission, Neuschwander-Tetri collected genetic sequences from thousands of patients, hoping to use this data to accelerate the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD).

Neuschwander-Tetri and his team finalized patient visits in summer 2025 — freeing them to parse through the data and, eventually, share their findings with the medical community. Syn emphasized that work conducted by Teckman, Neuschwander-Tetri, and other Liver Center specialists will accelerate progress in this evolving area of medicine.

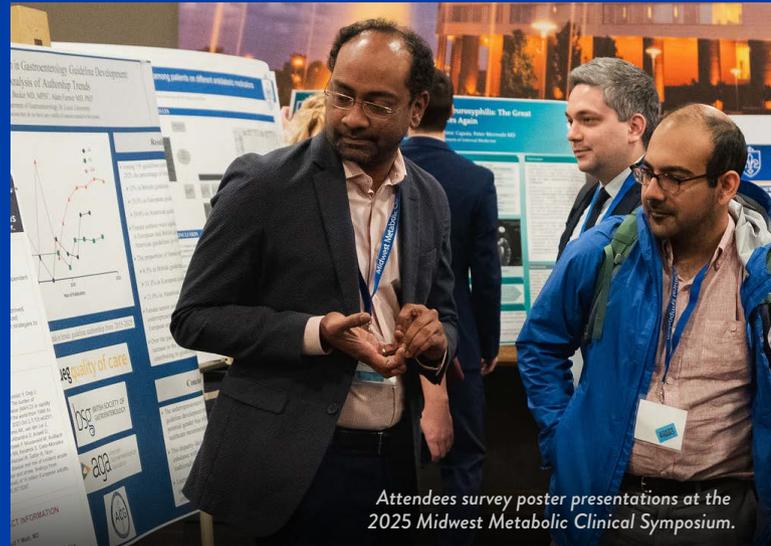
**“The incidence of liver disease is rising,” Syn said. “It is increasingly important to support research that will enable earlier diagnosis, yield effective treatments, and facilitate public education.”**

Looking ahead, Liver Center specialists will advance innovative research to grow understanding of liver disease. Syn plans to use artificial intelligence to investigate the genetic variants of cholestatic liver diseases, while Lewis Frey, Ph.D., professor of gastroenterology and hepatology, will use artificial intelligence to predict liver disease outcomes.

## Inspiring a Global Dialogue on Metabolic Disorders

In April 2025, the Midwest Metabolic Clinical Symposium expanded its reach as a global forum for metabolic innovation. The third annual event brought together nearly 100 clinicians, researchers, and students, with virtual participants joining from Europe, Asia, and South America. Together, they exchanged insights on the most complex challenges surrounding metabolic health.

Over the span of two days, leaders in medicine highlighted cutting-edge therapies, explored overlooked areas of metabolic disease, and identified collaborative pathways that may soon enhance patient outcomes worldwide.



Attendees survey poster presentations at the 2025 Midwest Metabolic Clinical Symposium.

The discussions underscored a universal reality in medicine: metabolic diseases are rising sharply due to changing diets, behaviors, and environments. Nearly every physician confronts a constellation of interrelated conditions — obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and beyond. As such, there is a growing need for solutions that cross borders, disciplines, and traditional clinical boundaries.

By hosting the Midwest Metabolic Clinical Symposium year over year, Saint Louis University facilitates scientific collaboration and accelerates meaningful progress in metabolic research and therapy. The event will continue, with the 2026 Midwest Metabolic Clinical Symposium planned for April 11-12, 2026, in the Education Union Building.

# BUILDING

# BLOCKS

A C T I V E P R O G R E S S

## Advancing the Fight Against MPS

**When the world measures impact in millions, the few may be forgotten. But some researchers refuse to let lives slip through the cracks. Instead, they take up the torch — searching diligently for cures for orphan diseases.**

Adriana M. Montaña, Ph.D., professor of pediatrics and vice dean for research in the School of Medicine, has dedicated her career to researching mucopolysaccharidoses (MPS). This group of rare genetic disorders actively threatens the lives of children and young people worldwide.

These patients experience an imbalance of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) and proteoglycans (PGs) in their blood vessels, which ultimately leads to cardiovascular diseases. Presently, no effective treatments are available — so Montaña was moved to find one.

*“Even though there are only a few hundred patients worldwide, these patients represent a critical area of unmet medical need,” Montaña said. “They are important to their families and communities, and pursuing this research aligns with the Jesuit mission to care for the*



*Adriana M. Montaña, Ph.D., peers through a microscope in her lab.*

*whole person, especially those facing complex or rare health challenges.”*

In 2025, Montaña received over \$4 million in NIH funding for a grant titled “Cardiovascular Structure and Function in the Mucopolysaccharidoses.” For the next five years, Montaña will serve as principal investigator on the project alongside Dr. Raymond Wang, from the Children’s Hospital of Orange County. Together, they will lead a multidisciplinary team of experts from Saint Louis University, the Children’s Hospital of Orange County, and the University of Minnesota.

Nearly 120 patients diagnosed with either MPS I (Hurler syndrome) or MPS IVA (Morquio A syndrome) will

participate in the study. Researchers aim to track cardiovascular changes, identify predictive blood markers, and test the efficacy of treatments that block GAG production.

If treatment development goals are realized, the next decade may bring dramatic quality-of-life improvements for MPS patients. However, Montaña also indicated that the study may yield discoveries that influence broader therapeutic approaches.

“The mechanisms we uncover will be highly relevant to common cardiovascular conditions,” Montaña said. “Our work could inform new biomarkers and therapeutic targets for broader cardiovascular medicine — ultimately benefiting millions of patients.”



Photo Courtesy of Ceribell\*

## Maintaining Momentum in Neurology

**Over the past few years, the Department of Neurology has grown stronger, more agile, and more innovative than ever before. Faculty expansions, ambitious research initiatives, and advanced technologies are now shaping every stage of care — inspiring breakthroughs that will define the next decade of neurological medicine.**

Departmental momentum is evident in the recruitment of 12 subspecialists whose expertise spans the full continuum of neurologic disease — from Alzheimer's to cerebrovascular disease. According to Diana Greene-Chandos, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Neurology, these additions have infused new energy into the department's culture.

"I see the shift in the new faculty who have come from all over the country," Greene-Chandos said. "They see the kindness here and subscribe to that sense of purpose, challenge, and pride of our mission."

This uptick in talent has also facilitated rapid growth in the department's research footprint. Multiple clinical trials have expanded, including studies

concerning epilepsy, ALS, myasthenia gravis, Parkinson's disease, strokes, and neurocritical care.

At the same time, SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital has adopted new tools for the benefit of patients and physicians alike. Ceribell, a point-of-care EEG device, will soon expedite the diagnosis of seizures in emergency rooms across the region — allowing EEG technologists to devote more time to complex cases.

*"Given the nationwide shortage of EEG technologists, Ceribell is becoming a necessary adjunct," Greene-Chandos said. "Hospitals using it have reduced the need to transfer patients to our tertiary care hospital."*

With a growing team and a sustained commitment to innovation, the Department of Neurology is increasingly positioned as a leader in compassionate, accessible care within St. Louis.

"We are a leader and a safety net for medical care in St. Louis," Greene-Chandos said. "We want to help those who are struggling and engage with other specialties to assist with our mission."

\*CAUTION: Device does not substitute for EEG review by a qualified clinician. Before use, review the manual for indications, contraindications, warnings, precautions, potential adverse events, and Instructions for Use. Sale requires the order of a physician.

**12** subspecialists joined the Department of Neurology (2023-2025)

## Pioneering Personalized Cancer Care

Medhat Osman, M.D., interim chair of the Department of Radiology and professor of nuclear medicine, is transforming SLU's approach to cancer diagnosis and treatment. Osman successfully applied theranostics to neuroendocrine tumors and metastatic prostate cancer — inspiring others to follow suit.

Clinical trials from SLU and SSM Health now utilize theranostics for melanoma, pancreatic, liver, lung, and other cancers. The trials have garnered national recognition, establishing SLU as a Comprehensive Radiopharmaceutical Therapy Center of Excellence and stirring hope for positive patient outcomes.



# Reinforcing the STUDENT EXPERIENCE

*Medical students and Student Affairs staff take a moment to connect on campus.*

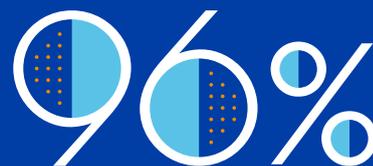
**Medical excellence stems from an ecosystem attuned to the student experience. Therefore, Saint Louis University School of Medicine has embraced a multidimensional approach to student development — cultivating robust support systems, meaningful opportunities, and a collective commitment to connection and well-being.**

## SUPPORT

Medical school opens a chapter of heightened expectations and constant adaptation. While many students navigate this transition with confidence, others find the sudden surge of intensity overwhelming.

The Office of Learning Services tracks academic performance and identifies individuals who may benefit from additional support. Previously, these students were invited to Merit — an invite-only program offering study sessions, supplemental instruction, and individual tutoring. However, many were hesitant to participate.

“Seeking out support can be intimidating,” Adam Merando, M.D., associate dean of student affairs, said. “Students may be uncomfortable with the idea of their peers finding out.”



of our class of 2025 students were satisfied with the quality of their medical education

To address this, Merit recently evolved into the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program. Unlike its predecessor, PAL is open to students of all academic performance levels. The shift has helped to reduce stigma and move mindsets toward proactivity.

“Many of our students have started to engage in PAL voluntarily, which is definitely a change,” Merando said. “Historically, many didn’t start engaging until they had experienced difficulties, which was too late.”

PAL is just one example of the steps the Office of Learning Services is taking to help students confront challenges and grow past them. The program’s evolution reinforces an institutional belief: when students feel supported, they thrive.

## OPPORTUNITY

Continuous growth is a cornerstone of exceptional medical training. To promote sustained academic and professional development, SLU School of Medicine intentionally creates opportunities for discovery that complement classroom learning.

Ashley Richard, MPH, student research and service-learning specialist, has spent the last year strengthening connections between medical students and research faculty mentors. The Office of Student Affairs has established a network of mentors throughout SLU School of Medicine and SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital. Now, when students express interest, Richard and her team quickly direct them to research opportunities.

Available projects span the spectrum of medicine, including basic science, clinical studies, scholarship,

and medical education. Richard believes that the critical thinking involved in research creates more well-rounded physicians.

“We want students to ask questions, discern responses and gain an understanding of how

research informs clinical reasoning and practice,” Richard said. “Access to research opportunities will give them a greater appreciation of evidence-based medicine.”

Students may also pursue an academic distinction: an optional pathway of electives aligned with professional interests.

Students choose from one of eight distinctions: Global Health, Health Care Ethics, Medical Education, Medical Spanish, Research, Community Health, Wellness, or Arts in Medicine.

Neal Weber, assistant dean of program evaluation and assessment, shared that each distinction maintains a theme of deep, focused engagement.

“Seeking out support can be intimidating. Students may be uncomfortable with the idea of their peers finding out.”

— Adam Merando, M.D.



A medical student visits Adam Merando, M.D. in the Office of Learning Services.

“The distinctions are not simply extracurricular,” Weber said. “They are mission-aligned, developmental experiences that provide longitudinal value to both the student and the broader learning community.”

## CONNECTION

Medical advancements rely on relationships — many of which take root during a student’s time in school. Thus, cultivating a culture of connection that amplifies achievement has become a central priority for SLU School of Medicine leadership.

Hollister responded by creating the first Graduate Student Gathering — an event designed to push students out of their silos. Attendees engaged with peers across years and disciplines, with some initiating interdisciplinary collaborations.

“Having spaces for graduate students to connect is so important,” Hollister said. “We want them to be a part of the School of Medicine rather than just an individual program.”

Between formal events, medical students also connect through the learning community program. The program facilitates small-scale social events with both students and faculty members. Luke Schwetschenau, a third-year medical student and student lead, shared that the support gained from the program has changed his outlook on the future.

“The learning community program has modeled the type of physician, colleague, and man I aspire to be: one who prioritizes lifelong learning, interpersonal growth, and teamwork,” Schwetschenau said.

## WELL-BEING

To provide compassionate care for others, students must first care for themselves. Yet, amid a medical student’s demanding schedule, moments of rest may feel impossible to justify. Effective wellness resources must be built into the rhythm of campus life — and SLU School of Medicine needed someone to lead the charge.

In April 2025, Monisha Hall joined the school as the Director of Student Well-Being. Since then, Hall has collaborated closely with the Offices of Admissions, Curricular Affairs, and Student Affairs to enhance wellness programming. Her goal is to build a more robust wellness architecture — one that supports not only mental health, but also physical, financial, and spiritual well-being.

“Our lives are not compartmentalized — one thing affects the other,” Hall said. “We must look at the



Students and faculty mentors from a Learning Community meet for dinner.

This past June, the School welcomed Brittany Hollister, Ph.D., associate dean for graduate studies and postdoctoral affairs. Hollister immediately observed a sense of community within individual programs — but recognized the need to bridge them.

“Graduate students get siloed sometimes,” Hollister said. “We want to help them maintain focus, but also ensure they feel like a part of our community.”

95%

of SLU medical students passed the US Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Step #1 on their first attempt, above the national pass rate of 91%



Medical students collaborate in the Wellness Space, located in the Caroline Building at the School of Medicine.

students, their different needs, and how they interconnect.”

Notably, Hall prioritizes student voices in her endeavors. Each month, she connects with representatives from each medical school class, known as Wellness Champions, to identify stressors and brainstorm initiatives. These direct interactions have helped her step into the mindset of medical students.

“Each student is unique, with their own set of cultural practices and philosophical perspectives,” Hall said. “You must take time to understand the individual in front of you to serve them well.”

## REALIZING IMPACT

Every aspect of the student experience combines to yield an environment where transformation comes naturally. At SLU School of Medicine, curious students grow into compassionate physicians who are highly capable of serving their communities.

“Our lives are not compartmentalized — one thing affects the other. We must look at the students, their different needs, and how they interconnect.”

— Monisha Hall



of SLU medical students passed USMLE Step #2 on their first attempt, above the national pass rate of 98%

“SLU has great researchers and clinicians — soak up what you can.”

— Raymond J. Kreienkamp, M.D., Ph.D.

ALUMNI

## Finding Opportunity in Curiosity



Long before he was a physician-scientist, Raymond J. Kreienkamp, M.D., Ph.D, (Med '19), was a student brimming with questions. Saint Louis University School of Medicine and the M.D./Ph.D. program became an outlet for curiosity — empowering him to explore ideas, think critically, and build a network of support.

Notably, Kreienkamp gained a mentor in Susana Gonzalo, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and molecular biology. Under her guidance, he learned to assess data and apply science to clinically meaningful questions.

“I am eternally grateful for those experiences,” Kreienkamp said. “Without a doubt, my time working with Susana taught me how to be a successful scientist.”

With a solid foundation in place, Kreienkamp has since established himself as a physician-scientist, working to understand the genetic drivers of diabetes and its complications. He now serves as a pediatric endocrinologist at Boston Children’s Hospital, an instructor at Harvard Medical School, and an affiliate faculty member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

In each role, one focus remains close to his heart: caring for children with diabetes and other endocrine disorders. For him, this work embodies Jesuit principles by increasing equitable care for children who are often overlooked.

“With the way our health care system is constructed, children’s health can sometimes be neglected,” Kreienkamp said. “I try my best to care and advocate for children of all socioeconomic statuses.”

For students, Kreienkamp offers a piece of advice: seize every chance to make the world a better, healthier place. That means asking the right questions, advocating for others, and learning from experts who will turn your curiosity into action.

“You will have the opportunity to work with some amazing people,” Kreienkamp said. “SLU has great researchers and clinicians — soak up what you can.”

## Planting Roots in Private Practice



**In 1989, Niki Saxena, M.D., (Med '93), traded the coastline for the heartland. Drawn by service, social justice, and high-quality clinical training, the California native journeyed to SLU School of Medicine to pursue her medical degree.**

Although the shift in scenery was initially daunting, Saxena was reassured by the warmth of the Midwest. Her classmates formed a tight-knit support system — inspiring her academic, professional, and personal growth.

“I found an incredible community that was instrumental in shaping who I am as a physician,” Saxena said. “Medical school had a profound impact on my professional identity.”

As her training progressed, Saxena uncovered a passion for general pediatrics. The joy of watching children grow and forming meaningful relationships with families ultimately cemented her trajectory in the field.

After graduation, Saxena completed a residency at Stanford University and joined a private practice on the West Coast — but she craved full autonomy in care delivery. That desire led her to found the Pediatric Wellness Group in Redwood City, California alongside Eileen Chan, M.D. More than a decade later, Saxena relishes her dual role as a pediatrician and business owner.

**“Private practice in this day and age can be a non-stop struggle, but I keep at it,” Saxena said. “This setting allows me to be the best physician I can be.”**

Today, Saxena feels that the pursuit of truth guides her actions. She amplifies physician voices through professional organizations, advocates for multi-dimensional wellness in her practice, and stays connected with her classmates — spearheading reunions for the Class of 1993. Reflecting on her journey, Saxena credits Saint Louis University for nurturing her holistic view of health care.

“Everything that I have been able to accomplish professionally started with getting my M.D. from Saint Louis University,” Saxena said.

## Stitching Together Health and Humanity



**While attending Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Robert N. Hurd, M.D., (Med '74), found his calling in the operating room. The Department of Surgery certainly refined his technical skills, but Hurd quickly discovered that empathy is what turns a good surgeon into a great one.**

“The most valuable lesson I learned was to be patient,” Hurd said. “If you listen carefully, a patient will usually tell you what’s wrong with them.”

Following graduation, Hurd took his talents to the Mountain West: a region in great need of well-trained surgeons. Hurd joined the Billings Clinic in Billings, Montana, where he performed 300 major procedures annually and found joy in the deep connections formed while practicing medicine.

**“The vantage point of a medical caregiver is special because intimate details of a person’s life come out,” Hurd said. “You get in-depth conversations beyond the weather and the time.”**

Hurd provided essential care to patients in Wyoming and Montana for 37 years, but his impact extended well past the operating room. Hurd helped redefine regional health care by serving as a founding member of the Montana Committee on Trauma and developing the state’s first ACS Level II Trauma Center in 1988. That same center achieved a Level I designation in 2023 — a milestone decades in the making.

By the time he retired, Hurd had witnessed the endless evolution of surgical practices and health care systems. Yet, his approach never wavered. SLU School of Medicine had left a lasting mark on Hurd, with the Jesuit value of *cura personalis* inspiring him to look beyond himself in clinical settings.

“SLU’s Jesuit mission entails living and working for others,” Hurd said. “Every day, it gave me great incentive to do things for other people, and not just myself.”



## Michael Regan Med '28

**Faith has always been an anchor for Michael Regan. During his undergraduate years, he spent countless hours at his church, where he found a deep sense of identity among its congregation.**

But when Regan headed to Saint Louis University School of Medicine, the rhythm of life changed. He embraced the new environments and academic challenges that came with medical school — dedicating the majority of his time to becoming a better physician.

However, Regan wanted to bring his faith back into focus. Inspired by positive stories, he elected to volunteer with the Sisters of Charity in St. Louis. One day at the soup kitchen grew into a weekly commitment spanning nearly two years.

Now, Regan spends each Saturday cleaning the facility, preparing meals, praying with guests, and helping in any other way he can. In turn, the sisters have shown him what it means to live with integrity, humility, and compassion.

**“There is something about the selfless and joyous way that the sisters live,” Regan said. “They have slowly chipped away at me and made me a better person.”**

These experiences have reinforced the kind of physician Regan hopes to become at SLU School of Medicine. He now sees medicine and ministry as sharing the same foundation — a call to care for others with heart.

**“Patients need a proficient physician — but they also deserve a kind, compassionate physician,” Regan said. “Service teaches us what putting others first looks like and reminds us that, in the midst of the struggle, there is beauty.”**

## Divya Patel Med '26

**Divya Patel’s service journey started simply. During her freshman year, she took on a service-learning project focused on outreach for a women’s health program. Patel arrived at LifeWise STL to fulfill her degree requirements — but something unexpected happened.**



The quiet triumphs of wellness programming moved her. Patel witnessed people from diverse backgrounds flourish when given the skills and tools to help themselves. Over time, she took pride in supporting others during their time of need.

# CONNECT CARE AND COMMUN

“Service teaches us what putting others first looks like and reminds us that, in the midst of the struggle, there is beauty.”

— Michael Regan, Med '28

“There is something so uniquely special about meeting people where they are,” Patel said. “It’s so meaningful to see people when they are vulnerable and be able to help them.”

What began as a short-term project evolved into a years-long commitment — one that continues to shape her perspective as a fourth-year medical student. Patel’s efforts at LifeWise have made her more cognizant of how external factors influence the course of medicine.

“I have become more mindful about how I approach patient care, knowing that the health of our community expands much further than the walls of our clinics,” Patel said.

LifeWise STL has provided Patel with a reliable platform to hone the communication, listening, and advocacy skills imparted by SLU School of Medicine. More importantly, the experience has opened moments of clarity amid the chaos of medical school.

“Service has been a grounding experience,” Patel said. “It reminds me of the world outside of medicine and why I am choosing this career: to help people.”

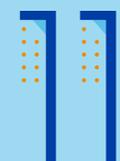
## Service Stands Tall at SLU

Service is integral to the SLU School of Medicine experience. While pursuing their education, medical students are encouraged to live out Jesuit principles by serving the needs of others in their community.

Some seek out regular partnerships with local nonprofits — others participate in one-time events organized by Interest Groups or the Medical Student Government (MSG).

 19 MSG Service Committee members

 67 students in the Community Health Distinction

 11 service-specific interest groups

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# Sparking Tomorrow's Medical Breakthroughs Today

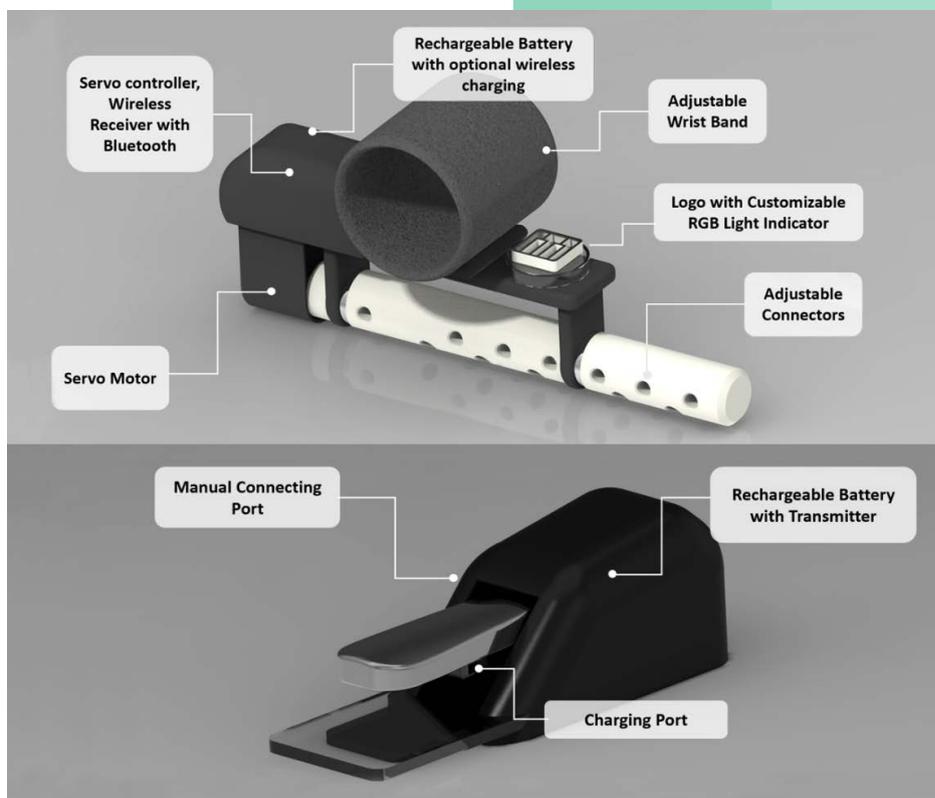
**Innovation doesn't need to wait for graduation. SLU School of Medicine encourages students to embrace entrepreneurial thinking early, facilitating product development projects intended to address real-world challenges.**

"SLULaunch gives students first-hand experience in going from problem to solution in a controlled environment," Hayley Johnston Edwards, program manager at the Chaifetz Center for Entrepreneurship, said.

Supported by the Chaifetz Center for Entrepreneurship, the program connects medical students with peers across disciplines to tackle geospatial and biomedical needs. Through student-led teams, participants navigate every step of the entrepreneurial process — from identifying a clinical challenge to pitching a tangible product.

SLULaunch has generated multiple successful student-driven initiatives, including PianoWrist — an accessibility device devised by medical students Aaron Swenson (M4), Will Kardasis (M4), and Edward Garner (M4), in collaboration with Michael Joseph Y. Nguyen Truong (Engineering '24). The device assists individuals who have lost the ability to play piano due to stroke or traumatic injury, helping them regain a critical avenue of personal wellness.

PianoWrist evolved from a simple prototype, initially made of a wooden dowel and a shoelace, into a functional device ready for market consideration. The final design attaches to the wrist, allowing users to move their arm to play notes at intervals commonly used in chords.



*The final mockup of PianoWrist, an accessibility device created by SLULaunch participants.*

Swenson shared that the product development process truly cemented the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and creative problem-solving.

"SLULaunch pushed us to think critically about challenges within medicine," Swenson said. "Projects like ours address the after-effects of a medical condition to help patients long term."

Projects like PianoWrist demonstrate how early entrepreneurship can shape the next generation of medical innovators. SLULaunch imparts the skills and perspectives that medical students need to challenge traditional medical boundaries, sparking interdisciplinary collaboration and patient-centered solutions.

**"Projects like ours address the after-effects of a medical condition to help patients long term."**

— Aaron Swenson

# Building Bridges to Medical Careers

**In 2025, U.S. News & World Report named the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience the #1 high school in Missouri. This honor not only recognizes the school's strong academic foundation but also its decade-long partnership with Saint Louis University School of Medicine.**

Each year, Collegiate seniors interested in medicine and committed to serving others are selected by the Office of Ignatian Mission in Medicine to intern at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital. Students shadow medical professionals in a real-world clinical setting and reflect on the compassionate aspects of care, inspired by Jesuit principles.

Early mentorship and exposure have proven instrumental for aspiring physicians, such as Abdul-Haq Alli. As a Collegiate intern, Alli assisted at the nurses' station and explored various specialties — discovering there is a place for every passion in medicine. The experience built his confidence and exposed him to moments that broadened his perspective.

During a clinical shift, Alli encountered someone recovering from an amputation. The patient requested their favorite soda and, when Alli delivered it, their face softened with relief. This singular moment showed him that even small acts of kindness profoundly impact a patient's well-being.

*“Feeling seen and cared for is just as important as any procedure or medication,” Alli said. “That experience shaped how I think about ‘compassionate care’ even now.”*

Alli has since entered SLU School of Medicine as a first-year medical student and believes that structured access to clinical settings encourages students like him to embrace careers in health care.

*“My senior internship transformed my idea of medicine from an abstract idea into something I could see, touch, and imagine myself doing,” Alli said. “I don't think I'd be on the same path today without that bridge between high school and medical school.”*



*Participants attend the Health Science Education Summit.*

## Mapping the Future of Health Science Education

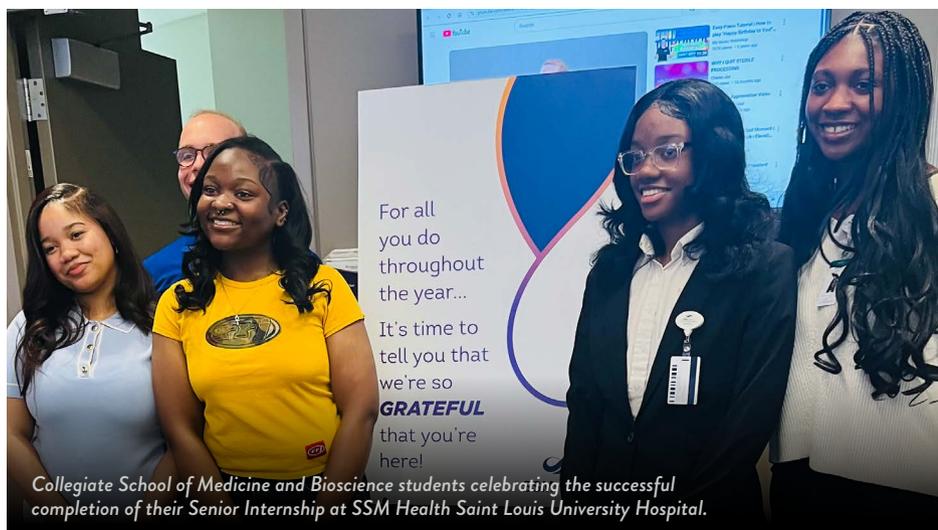
**In October 2025, the inaugural Health Science Education Summit explored the future of health science education at Saint Louis University.**

The Summit brought together 114 attendees from 10 schools and colleges, along with 20 distinguished speakers. Participants examined higher education trends, market demands, and workforce priorities to guide the development of advanced programming.

Notably, the event featured a Team Pitch Competition that allowed faculty to propose ideas for cutting-edge programs. The winning concept — a Master's in Intelligence in Healthcare — is now in active development.

Brittany Hollister, Ph.D., associate dean for graduate studies and postdoctoral affairs, believes intercollegiate collaboration will strengthen SLU's leadership in health science education.

*“This space will continually leverage our strengths, both in the School of Medicine and other schools,” Hollister said. “Together, we're developing interdisciplinary opportunities that address an ever-evolving field.”*



*Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience students celebrating the successful completion of their Senior Internship at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital.*



Medical students engage in active discussion of coursework on SLU's medical campus.

## Opening Doors to Medical Education



**With rising educational costs and shifting federal support, countless hopeful physicians seek new avenues of support in their journey. Scholarships are a vital pathway to opportunity, opening doors for talented students in need. As such, Saint Louis University School of Medicine remains steadfast in its mission to broaden access to education.**

create a sense of security that empowers students to explore specialties that align with their passions, strengths, and sense of purpose without being influenced by loan repayment in choosing a specialty. This freedom enriches their medical school experience, helping them discover where they can make the greatest impact.

Over the past year, seven new medical students have been awarded full-ride scholarships — six receiving School of Medicine Opportunity Scholarships and one receiving the Lo Family Scholarship. Dr. Hiral Choksi, associate dean of admissions at SLU School of Medicine, shared that these opportunities support physicians grounded in integrity and care.

“When a medical student receives scholarship support, it lifts an enormous weight off their shoulders.”

— Hiral Choksi

“When a student receives scholarship support, it lifts an enormous weight off their shoulders,” Choksi said. “It allows them to focus fully on studies, research, and patient care rather than financial stress.”

“These scholarships open doors for students who might not otherwise have the financial means to pursue medical education, yet embody the mission and values of Saint Louis University — compassion, service, and a commitment to the greater good,” Choksi said.

She emphasized that the impact of financial support extends far beyond reducing debt. By easing financial pressure, scholarships

Choksi explained that SLU School of Medicine aims to expand scholarship offerings, but growth relies on external support. She encourages those who found their start at SLU School of Medicine to reflect on the value of Jesuit education and give back in whatever way they can.

“Donor support makes it all possible,” Choksi said. “It allows us to provide meaningful financial assistance to students with need, while also ensuring that top applicants choose SLU because they feel valued and supported here.”

# Diego Silva-Mendoza

Med '27

Excellence in Diversity Opportunity  
Scholarship Recipient

Exceptional patient care relies on a diverse health care workforce that mirrors its communities. The School of Medicine Opportunity Scholarship supports students with financial need who dedicate themselves to leadership, service, and health equity — including Diego Silva-Mendoza.



Silva-Mendoza grew up in Tucson, Arizona. Coming from a Mexican-American background, he was hyper-aware of health disparities affecting Hispanic and Latino populations. This awareness sparked an interest in medicine, leading him to begin his journey at the University of Arizona, Tucson.

Silva-Mendoza excelled academically and served others at COVID-19 vaccine clinics and health clinics in Mexico. Upon graduation, he was drawn to SLU School of Medicine, as Jesuit values aligned with his own. The Opportunity Scholarship removed financial barriers, freeing him to join an environment that prioritizes caring for the whole person.

*“Cura personalis has pushed me to focus on understanding patients’ stories, their environments, and the social and cultural forces that influence their health,”* Silva-Mendoza said.

Now a third-year medical student interested in orthopedic surgery, Silva-Mendoza continues to engage in the St. Louis community — working at Family Care Health Centers and Casa de Salud. He noted that a few short years have established a lasting foundation for his career.

“Being a physician is a privilege rooted in service, humility, and justice,” Silva-Mendoza said. “Those values will continually shape how I care for every patient.”

# Lauren Fox

Med '26

Fleur de Lis  
Scholarship Recipient

Health care systems are strengthened by professionals who feel truly connected to their community. The Fleur de Lis Scholarship taps into local talent, funding St. Louis students whose academic promise marks them as future leaders in medicine.

Among them is Lauren Fox, a University City, Missouri native. Fox’s passion for medicine emerged at the age of six, with a doctor-themed birthday party. This dream only grew as she did — as did her commitment to achieving it.

Fox’s undergraduate years at Saint Louis University demonstrated her unique aptitude for excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service — earning her financial support through the Fleur de Lis Scholarship. Now a fourth-year medical student pursuing an obstetrics and gynecology residency, Fox recognizes that eight years of Jesuit education shaped her worldview.

*“In my clinical experience, I care for the whole person and dedicate myself to social justice,”* Fox said. *“I make a conscious effort to see goodness in everyone I interact with.”*

In reflection, Fox noted that scholarships alleviate financial pressures for students like her — empowering them to embrace opportunities beyond academics.

“The Fleur de Lis Scholarship has given me the freedom to be heavily involved in the Medical Student Government, start research projects, and excel academically,” Fox said.



# 5.4M

total scholarships for medical and  
M.D./Ph.D. students (AY 2025)

# White Coat Society

**List of White Coat Society donors who contributed from May 22, 2025, to December 1, 2025. Donations made after this date that are not reflected here are appreciated. For a complete list of donors to SLU, please visit [slu.edu/give/donor-recognition/honor-roll.php](http://slu.edu/give/donor-recognition/honor-roll.php)**

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\* denotes the individual is deceased



The Class of 2029 attends the 2025 White Coat Ceremony.

# THE JOURNEY CLASS

**This past July, Saint Louis University School of Medicine filled St. Francis Xavier College Church with cheers, applause, and newly minted medical students.**

The 2025 White Coat Ceremony welcomed 175 first-year medical students into the fold. Each donned a white coat as not just a uniform, but a symbol of academic achievement, compassion, and a commitment to patient care.

The ceremony marked the culmination of a highly competitive admissions process. Hand-picked from a pool of 6,672 applicants, this cohort truly embodies the values of Saint Louis University, demonstrating excellence, resilience, and a dedication to service.

We applaud the Class of 2029 for reaching this milestone and look forward to supporting their development over the next four years.



Seraphim Le (left) and Katelyn (Katy) Craft (right) following the 2025 White Coat Ceremony.



Laura Swords, a first-year medical student, receives her white coat.



Members of the Class of 2029 lead the congregation in song.

# BEGINS FOR THE OF 2029



Aakarsh Rai (left) and Sammy Ramirez (right) receive white coats from faculty members and loved ones.

98

women in the Class of 2029

94

students from Missouri & Illinois

12

first-generation college graduates

## Reuniting on Campus: The 2025 Med Reunion Recap

In October 2025, Saint Louis University School of Medicine proudly hosted its 2025 Med Reunion — welcoming decades of alumni back to campus for a period of celebration and reconnection.

SLU School of Medicine presented a robust program of campus tours, engagements with medical students and faculty members, and a dedicated luncheon with Dean Christine Jacobs, M.D. On the final night, alumni enjoyed a festive reception and dinner, where class representatives received accolades for their leadership and dedication.

Attendees reflected on SLU's enduring mission of *cura personalis* — care for the whole person — all while discovering exciting new initiatives shaping the future of medical education. Ultimately, the event served as a powerful reminder that four formative years can inspire a lifetime of service.

“Hands-on training at Saint Louis University Med School led me to a wonderful many years — over 40 — practicing medicine, leaving a legacy of helping people, and teaching others behind me,” Richard Rosen, M.D., ('70), said.

In the year leading up to the reunion, representatives from 10 different classes worked tirelessly to make the 2025 Med Reunion a reality. One representative — Laurence Kinsella, M.D. ('85) — shared his gratitude for remaining involved with Saint Louis University.

“Working with my classmate, Dr. Jerry Dwyer, to build excitement for our 40th reunion was such a joy,” Kinsella said. “The event offered a wonderful chance to reconnect, celebrate the journeys we've taken in our careers, and reflect on the privilege of serving patients throughout the years.”

Plans are currently underway for the 2026 Med Reunion. Alumni are encouraged to stay engaged and seize the next opportunity to share their experiences.



View additional photos from the weekend:  
[slualumni.zenfoliosite.com/med-reunion-2025](http://slualumni.zenfoliosite.com/med-reunion-2025)



## Save the Date: The 2026 Med Reunion

To the Class of: 1961, 1966, 1971,  
1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001,  
2006, 2011, 2016, & 2021

Mark your calendars for October 23-24, 2026, when the School of Medicine will welcome you back to campus for a weekend brimming with old memories and new connections. Join us to relive your favorite SLU moments, tour long-standing facilities and innovative new spaces, and hear the latest updates directly from School of Medicine leadership.



# In Memoriam

**In remembrance of our colleagues who have passed away. The following notices of deaths were received from May 22, 2025, to December 1, 2025.**

Dr. Peter Danis, *Class of 1931*  
Dr. Luis Torres-Aguiar, *Class of 1944*  
Dr. Albert Shiflet, *Class of 1951*  
Dr. Mary Nawrocki McGinnis, *Class of 1952*  
Dr. Leonard Dumonceaux, *Class of 1954*  
Dr. Thomas Sweeney, *Class of 1954*  
Dr. Edmond Fitzgerald, *Class of 1955*  
Dr. Stuart Yaffe, *Class of 1956*  
Dr. John Bouhasin, *Class of 1957*  
Dr. William Sly, *Class of 1957*  
Dr. Ronald Schoeck, *Class of 1958*  
Dr. Rafael Correa-Coronas, *Class of 1959*  
Dr. Francis McCafferty, *Class of 1959*  
Dr. Mark O'Brien, *Class of 1959*  
Dr. James Grisez, *Class of 1960*  
Dr. Bernard Swaykus, *Class of 1962*  
Dr. Kenneth Cavanaugh, *Class of 1963*  
Dr. Raymond Decker, *Class of 1964*  
Dr. Ghazi Accaoui, *Class of 1965*  
Dr. Richard Davis, *Class of 1966*  
Dr. Philip LeFevre, *Class of 1966*  
Dr. Michael Lynch, *Class of 1966*  
Dr. David Olenik, *Class of 1966*  
Dr. Edward Pepper, *Class of 1966*  
Dr. Vincent Scuzzo, *Class of 1967*  
Dr. Robert Bridges, *Class of 1968*  
Dr. George Hambrook, *Class of 1969*  
Dr. Joseph Cocozzella, *Class of 1970*  
Dr. Robert Cralle, *Class of 1970*  
Dr. Alexander Herzen, *Class of 1970*  
Dr. Joseph McDonald, *Class of 1970*  
Dr. Thomas Thomas, *Class of 1970*  
Dr. Ted Thompson, *Class of 1973*  
Dr. Peter Masucci, *Class of 1974*  
Dr. Phyllis Headley, *Class of 1977*  
Dr. Jad Gennaoui, *Class of 1979*  
Dr. John Lochner, *Class of 1980*  
Dr. Steven Milligan, *Class of 1984*  
Dr. Lauren King, *Class of 2007*  
Dr. Charles Dahm Jr., *Class of 2010*

## Mary F.N. McGinnis, M.D.

1924-2025



Mary F.N. McGinnis, M.D., passed away on Saturday, September 13, 2025. Throughout her life, McGinnis had a knack for making history — becoming the first woman to graduate from Saint Louis University School of Medicine in 1952 and later becoming the first woman to be inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society. McGinnis also received the Saint Louis University Pioneer Award in 2002, becoming the first woman to receive this honor.

Following graduation, McGinnis laid down roots in Pennsylvania, where she practiced under the name Dr. Nawrocki. She worked at Philadelphia General Hospital for three years before getting married in 1957. Despite taking time off to start a family, McGinnis' compassion drove her back to the medical field. She eventually joined Harmarville Rehabilitation Center, where she practiced rehabilitative medicine for 27 years.

Mary F.N. McGinnis is survived by her children, Mary McGinnis DeV Vaughn, Eileen M. Frankil, Thomas Francis McGinnis, and Rosemary McGinnis; her grandchildren, Megan, Liz, Leah, Karen, Michael, Rose, Margaret, and Marcy; as well as numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Mary is preceded in death by her son, James Patrick, who passed away in January 2025.

## Bruce Bacon, M.D.

1949-2025



Bruce Bacon, M.D., professor emeritus of internal medicine, passed away on Sunday, July 6, 2025. Bacon was an internationally recognized clinician and researcher whose work touched the lives of countless patients with liver disease.

Throughout his distinguished career, Bacon effectively reshaped the field of hepatology. He identified the gene responsible for hemochromatosis, pioneered innovative treatments for hepatitis C, and even helped establish transplant hepatology as its own specialty. His reputation in hepatology drew patients from across the globe to seek out his care.

Bacon joined SLU in 1990 as a professor of internal medicine and eventually served as the director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. In 1994, he helped launch the Saint Louis University Liver Center, which now stands as a world-renowned hub for patient care, basic and clinical research, and public education in liver disease.

**Read more about Bruce Bacon's life and legacy:**  
[slu.edu/news/2025/july/bruce-bacon-obituary.php](http://slu.edu/news/2025/july/bruce-bacon-obituary.php)

# GET ENGAGED

With SLU School of Medicine



## Share a Meal. Shape a Future.

The **School of Medicine Alumni Student Dinner Program** is a unique opportunity to share your experience and passion with the next generation of physicians. Host a small, personalized dinner to spark meaningful connections with SLU medical students who share your interests.

Ready to make a difference? For more information, email Kate Goodman at [kate.goodman@health.slu.edu](mailto:kate.goodman@health.slu.edu)

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Each gift to the School of Medicine strengthens and expands our capacity to meet the needs of students, faculty members, researchers, and the community.

Please consider a gift to support SLU School of Medicine and these important initiatives:

A gift to the **School of Medicine Annual Fund** allows us to allocate funds as needed, ensuring key priorities receive the support to succeed.

A gift to the **White Coat Scholarship Fund** helps lower cost barriers for our students who rely on scholarships to achieve their dream of a SLU School of Medicine education.

A gift to the **Dean's Education and Research Fund** provides seed grants to investigators who will start programs, grow ideas, and accelerate basic, clinical, and translational research.



## Promote Your Progress

We are interested in our alumni's news and accomplishments, both personal and professional. Share your news with us at [som-deansoffice@health.slu.edu](mailto:som-deansoffice@health.slu.edu)

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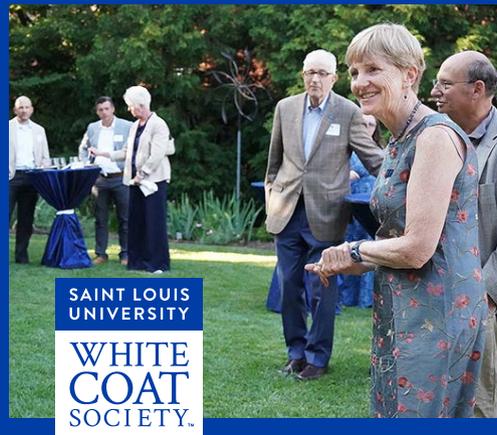
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## The White Coat Society

The white coat is an enduring symbol of the integrity and respect accorded to the medical profession. It signifies the achievements of countless physicians and scientists who help others and advance health care.

The White Coat Society celebrates the robust partnerships between the School of Medicine, its alumni, and its supporters. By joining, you help Saint Louis University School of Medicine provide an excellent learning environment and engage in meaningful research.

Membership is granted automatically to those who support SLU School of Medicine with a gift of \$2,500 or more annually.



Membership benefits include invitations to White Coat Society events, President's Circle benefits, and exclusive event invitations.

For more information, contact Leadership Giving at 314-977-3145 or [leadershipgiving@slu.edu](mailto:leadershipgiving@slu.edu).

## Plan the Perfect Reunion

SLU School of Medicine is searching for volunteers for the 2026 Med Reunion weekend! No matter how you would like to be involved, we have an opportunity for you.

Contact the Office of Alumni Engagement at [reunions@slu.edu](mailto:reunions@slu.edu) for more information.