

Med School Watercooler

NEWS FROM FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Thursday, May 12, 2016

Medical School Graduates Participate in Honors Convocation Ceremony



University of South Alabama College of Medicine Class of 2016 graduate Katie Richards walks down the aisle at the conclusion of the honors convocation ceremony at the USA Mitchell Center on May 6, 2016.



The University of South Alabama held commencement ceremonies for the 2016 College of Medicine on May 7, 2016, marking the 41st class to earn medical degrees from USA.

The day before, the graduates participated in an honors convocation where they were "hooded" by an individual of their choice, signifying the awarding of a doctoral-level degree. During the honors convocation ceremony, students were also recognized for their academic achievements. Both ceremonies took place at the USA Mitchell Center.

Including the 2016 class, 2,546 physicians have graduated from the USA College of Medicine since its opening in 1973.

Approximately one-third of the physicians practicing in the Mobile area earned their medical degree from USA or completed residency training in the USA Hospitals System.

[Click here](#) to view all photos from this year's event and [here](#) to see the award recipients.

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- 2023 (10)
- 2022 (249)
- 2021 (269)
- 2020 (191)
- 2019 (245)
- 2018 (236)
- 2017 (231)
- ▼ 2016 (206)
 - 12/18 - 12/25 (1)
 - 12/11 - 12/18 (3)
 - 12/04 - 12/11 (5)
 - 11/27 - 12/04 (4)
 - 11/20 - 11/27 (1)
 - 11/13 - 11/20 (3)
 - 11/06 - 11/13 (4)
 - 10/30 - 11/06 (4)
 - 10/23 - 10/30 (4)
 - 10/16 - 10/23 (4)
 - 10/09 - 10/16 (4)
 - 10/02 - 10/09 (4)
 - 09/25 - 10/02 (4)
 - 09/18 - 09/25 (4)
 - 09/11 - 09/18 (4)
 - 09/04 - 09/11 (4)
 - 08/28 - 09/04 (5)
 - 08/21 - 08/28 (4)
 - 08/14 - 08/21 (4)
 - 08/07 - 08/14 (4)
 - 07/31 - 08/07 (5)
 - 07/24 - 07/31 (3)
 - 07/17 - 07/24 (5)
 - 07/10 - 07/17 (5)
 - 07/03 - 07/10 (4)

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Wednesday, May 11, 2016

Office of Diversity and Inclusion Hosts Lecture in Celebration of Minority Health Month



The University of South Alabama College of Medicine's Office of Diversity and Inclusion recently hosted a lecture featuring Dr. Jamie L. Franco-Zamudio, associate professor of psychology at Spring Hill College.

Dr. Franco-Zamudio addressed issues of diversity and inclusion in health care and higher education as related to the LGBT community and other areas of diversity.

A self-identified Chicana/ Native-American, first-generation college student and lesbian professor, Dr. Franco-Zamudio finds issues of diversity and social justice deeply interesting. She incorporates her personal experiences with privilege and marginalization to develop research questions and course content. She is interested in research involving the intersections of identity, perceptions of person-environment fit and intergroup relations.

View more photos from the lecture [here](#).

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- ▶ 06/26 - 07/03 (3)
- ▶ 06/19 - 06/26 (6)
- ▶ 06/12 - 06/19 (4)
- ▶ 06/05 - 06/12 (5)
- ▶ 05/29 - 06/05 (5)
- ▶ 05/22 - 05/29 (4)
- ▶ 05/15 - 05/22 (4)
- ▼ 05/08 - 05/15 (5)
- Medical School Graduates
Participate in Honors Con...
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Hosts Lecture in...
- Dr. Gerthoffer Awarded NIH
Research Grant to Devel...
- Med School Cafe - Expert Advice for
the Community
- May 12 DSS to Feature Dr. Karen
Vasquez
- ▶ 05/01 - 05/08 (4)
- ▶ 04/24 - 05/01 (4)
- ▶ 04/17 - 04/24 (4)
- ▶ 04/10 - 04/17 (3)
- ▶ 04/03 - 04/10 (5)
- ▶ 03/27 - 04/03 (4)
- ▶ 03/20 - 03/27 (2)
- ▶ 03/13 - 03/20 (8)
- ▶ 03/06 - 03/13 (3)
- ▶ 02/28 - 03/06 (5)
- ▶ 02/21 - 02/28 (4)
- ▶ 02/14 - 02/21 (4)
- ▶ 02/07 - 02/14 (4)
- ▶ 01/31 - 02/07 (4)
- ▶ 01/24 - 01/31 (4)
- ▶ 01/17 - 01/24 (4)
- ▶ 01/10 - 01/17 (4)
- ▶ 01/03 - 01/10 (4)
- ▶ 2015 (205)
- ▶ 2014 (241)
- ▶ 2013 (232)
- ▶ 2012 (245)
- ▶ 2011 (262)
- ▶ 2010 (247)
- ▶ 2009 (88)

Dr. Gerthoffer Awarded NIH Research Grant to Develop Therapies for Asthma



Dr. William Gerthoffer works in the lab with Sabrina Ramelli, a third-year graduate student in the lung biology track of the Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program. Her thesis project will be supported by NIH funding.

Dr. William Gerthoffer, professor and chair of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, recently was awarded a research grant by the National Institutes of Health to help develop new oligonucleotide-based therapies for those suffering from severe asthma. The grant award totals \$416,625.

A significant number of patients suffer from severe asthma, a debilitating and potentially fatal disease that is not well controlled by current drug therapy. For patients with severe asthma, new types of drugs are needed to stop the progression of the disease and repair damaged airways. The goal of Dr. Gerthoffer's research is to block the disease-promoting effects of naturally occurring, small ribonucleic acid molecules, which are short, single-stranded nucleotides that control protein synthesis.

Dr. Gerthoffer's lab, in collaboration with Dr. Robert Barrington's lab at USA and Celsion Corporation located in Huntsville, Ala., are working together to develop these new drugs. The new drugs will be delivered to the lungs using a novel nanoparticle drug carrier invented at Celsion.

"The long-term goal is to prevent symptoms of severe, drug-resistant asthma and to allow the damaged lung to repair itself," Dr. Gerthoffer said. "If the project succeeds, physicians may someday have another way to manage difficult asthma cases when standard drug treatment is not effective."

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Med School Cafe - Expert Advice for the Community



Dr. Philip Almalouf, assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and a pulmonologist with USA Physicians Group, presented the March Med School Café lecture titled "Hard to Breathe? Let's Talk about COPD."

During the talk, Dr. Almalouf discussed COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs.

Dr. Almalouf earned his medical degree from the University of Damascus School of Medicine in Damascus, Syria. He completed his internship and residency in internal medicine at Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Mich. He then completed his fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at USA.

Watch the video below to view the lecture in its entirety.

The next Med School Café lecture will feature Dr. Thomas Leytham, a family medicine physician at University Physicians Group. His lecture, titled "Stressed Out? When to See Your Doctor," will take place May 17, 2016, at the USA Faculty Club on USA's main campus. Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m., and the presentation begins at noon. The Med School Café lecture and lunch are provided free of charge, but reservations are required. For more information or to make reservations, call Kim Partridge at (251) 460-7770 or e-mail kepartridge@health.southalabama.edu.

59:00

Med School Café - "Hard to Breathe? Let's Talk about COPD" from USA Health System on Vimeo.

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Tuesday, May 10, 2016

May 12 DSS to Feature Dr. Karen Vasquez



This week's Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will feature Dr. Karen Vasquez, professor and head of the division of pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Texas at Austin.

The lecture, titled "DNA Structure-Induced Genetic Instability and Cancer," will take place May 12, 2016, at 4 p.m. in the first floor auditorium of the Medical Sciences Building on USA's main campus.

Dr. Vasquez earned her Ph.D. in biochemistry from the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

She completed postdoctoral training at Yale University School of Medicine in the department of therapeutic radiology.

The primary focus of Dr. Vasquez's laboratory includes three areas of research: DNA structure in genomic instability and human disease, molecular mechanisms of DNA damage recognition and repair, and novel strategies to modify gene structure and function in living organisms.

Learn more about Dr. Vasquez [here](#).

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