

Med School Watercooler

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

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

MAA Reunion to include tour of College of Medicine

Alumni will have the opportunity to tour the USA College of Medicine as part of the USA Medical Alumni Association Reunion, set for June 10-12 at the Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa in Point Clear, Alabama.

"This year's reunion is different from years past in that it is close enough to Mobile that we are able to take a trip to campus," said Anna Claire Parks, associate director for medical alumni relations. "This likely will be the last time that our alumni will have this opportunity to see the Medical Sciences Building as it was when they were medical students."

USA plans to break ground in the next year on new construction and extensive renovation of the existing structure, which was completed in 1974.

To make a reservation and sign up for events, visit the [MAA Reunion registration page](#).



Students gather on the steps of the Medical Sciences Building in 1994.



The Class of 2025 assembles for the class photo during M1 Orientation.

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Meet A Med Student: Victoria Antonello

Victoria Antonello

Age: 24

Class of: 2025

Hometown: Fairfield, Ala.

Undergrad/grad institution: Vanderbilt University

Degrees earned: Bachelor of Arts in medicine, health and society; minor in psychology

Interests, hobbies: Cooking and baking (especially Italian food!), drawing portraits, interior design and snuggling with my cat, Cannoli!

Something unique about me: When I was younger, I had six baby dolls who I constantly pretended were gravely ill (of course, I was the doctor). To make their illnesses more realistic, I would steal my mom's red food coloring and flour and mix it with water to make blood, take her clear necklace strings and tape them under my dolls' noses to provide them O2, and most importantly, inject them with "medicine" by using her sewing needles lodged into oral medicine syringes. To this day, I really enjoy being creative, I'm still interested in emergency medicine/intensive care, and I still want to have six kids (who aren't gravely ill)!

Three of my favorite things: My family (Cannoli included), my boyfriend and working out (when I'm not injured)!

What I enjoy most about being a student at the USA College of Medicine: I really love how close my class is and how easy it is to get along with most everyone. South truly has an incredibly supportive and strong family atmosphere, which makes coming to lecture and studying more enjoyable.



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USA College of Medicine joins AAMC initiative to advance diversity, equity and inclusion

Dear campus community,

In December 2021, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Council of Deans (COD) launched a new Collective Action Initiative on Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This initiative is designed to respond to the academic medicine community's desire for concrete actions and accountability from medical

school leaders to accelerate meaningful change that supports DEI and anti-racism efforts across U.S. and Canadian medical schools. This Collective Action Initiative is an opportunity to demonstrate a national leadership commitment to DEI and aligns with the [AAMC's Strategic Action Plan #3](#): "Equip Medical Schools and



Teaching Hospitals to Become More Inclusive, Equitable Organizations.” I am pleased to announce that we have joined this national effort.

As part of the COD Collective Action Initiative on Advancing DEI, 109 medical schools are participating in a collective administration of the Diversity, Inclusion, Culture and Equity (DICE) Inventory. The DICE Inventory is a tool to help institutions conduct a comprehensive review of institutional policies, practices, procedures and programs that impact the climate and culture around DEI and identify strengths and areas for improvement related to DEI in six domains: governance, leadership and mission; institutional planning and policies; communications and engagement; data and assessment; faculty and staff; and students. This project is a collaborative effort that will be led by members from across our medical school and completed between now and May 2022.

Participating in this initiative will help our school improve our organizational climate and culture by outlining our specific strengths and areas for improvement related to DEI. The AAMC will create a report of the aggregated national data for this initiative, analyzing trends in DEI policies, programs and practices across all medical schools, which will allow us to benchmark our progress. Participating in this initiative alongside national peers also will facilitate the development of future AAMC resources that will support our efforts to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive institution. Participation also supports the College of Medicine’s meeting and exceeding accreditation standards of the national accrediting body for U.S. medical schools, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

We look forward to participating in this exciting national initiative. We will update the campus community on the findings from this assessment and the development of related action plans to further our DEI efforts at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

Best,

Dr. John Marymont
Vice President for Medical Affairs, Dean of the College of Medicine

Monday, March 21, 2022

Del Pozo-Yauner presents amyloidosis research at international meeting



Luis del Pozo-Yauner, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pathology at the USA College of Medicine, recently presented his research at the Ulm Meeting on Biophysics of Amyloid Formation, organized by Ulm University in Germany. The international meeting was held virtually Feb. 22-23.

Del Pozo-Yauner, who also is a biochemist with USA Health, has devoted the past 20 years to amyloidosis research. Proteins are the molecules responsible for translating the information encoded in the cellular genome into specific molecular actions that sustain life. Amyloidosis occurs when abnormal proteins called amyloids build up in tissue and organs. The result is impaired function of the affected organs and systems, causing disease.

“Humans can suffer from a number of diseases caused by or associated with amyloid deposition, a category of diseases known collectively as amyloidoses,” del Pozo-Yauner said. “In the last decades, some amyloidoses – such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus and prion diseases – have acquired great relevance due to the increase of their worldwide incidence and severe impact on the quality of life of the affected patients that characterize their clinical evolution.”

Among the findings he presented at the meeting was experimental evidence for the presence of segments in the immunoglobulin light chains – proteins made by plasma cells – with a specific pattern of amino acid sequence. These sequences, known as pro-amyloidogenic sequences, determine the propensity of light-chain proteins to aggregate as amyloid fibrils. “The identification of pro-amyloidogenic sequences is important because they constitute potential targets for therapeutic agents designed to inhibit light-chain amyloid aggregation,” he said.

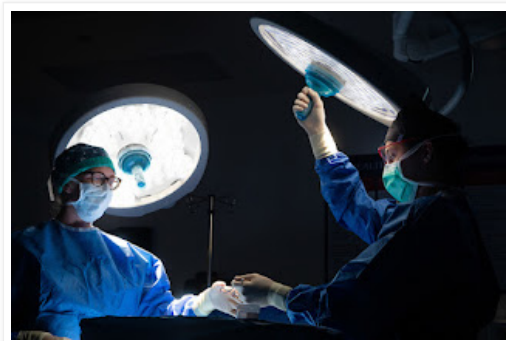
He also presented the results of a recent study, performed in collaboration with two European laboratories, aimed at determining the structure of amyloid fibrils formed by a family of light chains that shows a strong association with AL (amyloid light-chain) amyloidosis, a bone marrow disorder.

“My research, together with those being carried out in other laboratories, could help to develop new strategies for the diagnosis, treatment and clinical evaluation of patients with AL amyloidosis,” del Pozo-Yauner said.

Collaborators on the research included Guillermo Herrera, M.D., professor and chair of pathology at the USA College of Medicine; Louise Serpell, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry at the University of Sussex; Beat Meier, Ph.D., professor of physical chemistry at ETH Zürich; and Anja Böckmann, Ph.D., a researcher at the University of Lyon.

Del Pozo-Yauner received his medical degree from Cienfuegos Medical School in Cuba and went on to earn his Ph.D. in biochemistry at the Institute of Biotechnology UNAM in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. He joined the faculty of the USA College of Medicine in 2019.

University Hospital approved for additional operating rooms



USA Health received unanimous approval from the Alabama Certificate of Need Review Board to construct four new traditional operating rooms, a hybrid operating room and a post-anesthesia care unit at University Hospital.

“The Mobile region continues to grow and so does the demand for our services,” said Shannon Scaturro,

administrator of University Hospital. “We are very grateful to the members of the review board, led by Dr. Swaid Swaid, for their thorough understanding of the need for these operating rooms and the tremendous impact they will have in helping meet the healthcare needs of the people in Mobile and beyond.”

The project, expected to take about a year, will be constructed in space that formerly housed the trauma center. The space became available with the opening of the Fanny Meisler Trauma Center in 2021.

Not only will the project expand the number of operating rooms, but also will allow for larger rooms to better accommodate state-of-the-art equipment such as surgical robotic technology and systems that support extremely complex surgical care. Further, it will create necessary support areas, including the 12-bed PACU and surgical storage areas.

The hybrid operating room is an advanced procedural space that combines a traditional operating room with an image-guided interventional suite. This room will increase the capability to perform cardiothoracic surgery, minimally invasive cardiology procedures, vascular surgery, interventional radiology procedures and neurosurgical cranial procedures.

"This project will provide up-to-date surgical space that can accommodate not only typical surgical staff, but also our residents and fellows, thus advancing the education purpose of University Hospital as an academic medical center," said Owen Bailey, M.H.S.A., FACHE, chief executive officer of USA Health.

The construction costs of the project are estimated at \$9.5 million. The new equipment is expected to cost \$9.77 million.

Distinguished Scientist Seminar set for March 24

The USA College of Medicine's next Distinguished Scientist Seminar is set for 4 p.m. Thursday, March 24, in the Medical Sciences Building first-floor auditorium.

The speaker is Jere W. McBride, Ph.D., professor of pathology, director of the Experimental Pathology Graduate Program, and the Center for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases at University of Texas Medical Branch. He will present "Ehrlichia SLiM Ligand Mimicry as an Immune Evasion Strategy."



The lecture, hosted by Meghan Hermance, Ph.D., is sponsored by the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

Distinguished Scientist Seminars bring medical researchers from around the world to the USA College of Medicine to present on the research they are doing every day.