



Great Doctors, Great Medicine since 1828.

Faculty Awards Ceremony

Medical College of Georgia Faculty Senate

5 p.m., Thursday, May 23, 2024



Dear Colleagues:

The MCG Faculty Senate's Faculty Awards Ceremony recognizes exceptional achievement by faculty and residents in the areas of teaching, research, clinical care and service.

Today's honorees have contributed their significant skills and passion to attaining excellence and have set a high standard for us all. We gather today to thank them for their contributions to our medical school and to the dynamic present and future of medicine.

We thank the members of the MCG Faculty Senate Faculty Recognition Committee as well for their diligent efforts to make this celebration possible.

Thank you for all you do.

Most respectfully yours,

David C. Hess, MD
*Dean, Medical College of Georgia
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs
and Integration, Augusta University
Presidential Distinguished Chair
Professor, Department of Neurology*

Vishal Arora, MD
*President, MCG Faculty Senate
Professor, Department of Medicine*

Program

Welcome	Vishal Arora, MD President, MCG Faculty Senate Professor, Department of Medicine
Remarks	David Hess, MD Dean, Medical College of Georgia Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and Integration, Augusta University Presidential Distinguished Chair Professor, Department of Neurology
Educator of the Year Awards	Class Presidents
Outstanding Basic Science Teaching Award	Class Presidents
Outstanding Clinical Science Teaching Award	Class Presidents
Resident of the Year Award	Michael Groves, MD Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education Associate Professor, Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
Mentoring Excellence Award	Lara Stepleman, PhD Associate Dean for Faculty Success and Inclusive Excellence Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Health Behavior
Distinguished Faculty Awards	Cassandre Perard, DO Chair, Faculty Recognition Committee Secretary, MCG Faculty Senate Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine – Division of Hospital Medicine
	Almira Vazdarjanova, PhD Vice President, MCG Faculty Senate Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology
Champion of Diversity Award	Dr. Vazdarjanova
Institutional Service Award	Dr. Perard
Patient Care Award	Dr. Vazdarjanova
Outstanding Faculty Award	Dr. Perard
Lifetime Achievement Awards	Dr. Vazdarjanova
Spirit of MCG Award	Dr. Arora
Recognition of Faculty Senate Executive Committee	Dr. Hess
Closing Remarks	Dr. Arora

Honorees:

Educators of the Year

Christopher Watson, MD, MPH, FAAP, FCCM

Professor, Department of Pediatrics: Pediatric Intensive Care

Selected By: Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Thomas Howdieshell, MD

Professor, Department of Surgery

Selected By: Class of 2024, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Jack Ellis, DO

Associate Professor, Department of Medicine: Hospital Medicine

Selected By: Class of 2025, Main Campus, Augusta

Kimberly Rathbun, MD, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine

Selected By: Class of 2025, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Nicole Winston, PharmD, EdD

Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology

Selected By: Class of 2026, Main Campus, Augusta

Thomas Howdieshell, MD

Professor, Department of Surgery

Selected By: Class of 2026, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Amanda Barrett, MD

Assistant Professor, Department of Pathology

Selected By: Class of 2027, Main Campus, Augusta

Brett Szymik, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy

Selected By: Class of 2027, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, Athens

Outstanding Basic Science Teaching Award

Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy

Selected By: Class of 2026, Main Campus, Augusta

Outstanding Clinical Science Teaching Award

Department of Medicine: Division of Internal Medicine

Selected By: Class of 2024, Main Campus, Augusta

Mentoring Excellence Award



Eric Belin de Chantemele, D.Sc., FAHA

Dr. Eric J. Belin de Chantemele is a professor in the Vascular Biology Center at the Medical College of Georgia. He completed his education at the Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 in France, where he graduated with a master's in cell biology and physiology and an PhD in cardiovascular physiology. He then moved on to do a short post-doctorate at the University of Angers in France, before joining the laboratory of Dr. David Stepp, in the VBC, to gain additional training. In 2011, he joined the MCG faculty. He was promoted to full professor in 2021.

Trained as a vascular biologist and expert in cardiometabolic diseases, Dr. Belin de Chantemele's lab has been focusing on understanding the mechanisms

whereby obesity and excess salt intake abolish the cardioprotective effects of female sex hormones and promote the development of hypertension. His lab has made the seminal observation that obesity induces hypertension via sex-specific mechanisms and discovered that the adipocyte-derived hormone leptin is a direct regulator of aldosterone production. In parallel to these studies on women's health, his laboratory is also interested in understanding the mechanisms whereby HIV promotes the development of hypertension and pulmonary hypertension. Dr. Belin de Chantemele has more than 70 publications in high-impact journals such as *Hypertension*, *Circulation Research*, and *Circulation*, and remains continuously funded. He is currently the PI on 3 R01s and on an Established Investigator Award from the American Heart Association. More impressively, he has been extremely successful at getting his trainees funded. Thanks to his mentorship, all of them have been able to secure pre- and postdoctoral fellowships, as well as trainee to faculty transition awards. Two of his trainees, including, Dr. Jessica Faulkner, this year's recipient of the Outstanding Young Faculty Award, were awarded a prestigious NIH K99/R00 award, which enabled them to transition to faculty position at MCG.

Distinguished Faculty Awards

Basic Science Teaching



Honglin Li, PhD

Dr. Honglin Li, originally from China, earned his bachelor of science degree in biology from the University of Science and Technology of China in 1988. After receiving his PhD degree in biology from Wayne State University in 1994, Dr. Li joined Dr. Junying Yuan's lab in the Department of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School as a postdoctoral fellow studying the molecular mechanism of apoptosis, a suicidal mechanism of cell death. During the training, he made a seminal discovery of a key molecule that mediates the crosstalk of two fundamental cell death pathways, and this finding was included in the revised textbook *Genes* in the following year.

After his postdoc training in 2000, Dr. Li joined the Department of Pediatrics at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University as a tenure-track assistant professor and Eleanor Research Scholar. In 2010, he joined MCG as an associate professor, and he is currently a tenured professor the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Dr. Li's current research focuses on elucidating the function and mechanism of a novel protein modification system called UFMylation, and his team was one of the first to identify the key component of this system. His research program has been funded by the NIH and his research publications have been cited over 10,000 times.

In addition to his research, Dr. Li has been actively engaged in teaching and mentoring since joining MCG. He has taught all levels of graduate courses and served as course director for (continued on next page)

three courses, including one of the required fundamental courses for first-year graduate students. In 2018, Dr. Li was awarded student-chosen Awards for Excellence in Teaching. Dr. Li also teaches medical students and has been a Case Based Learning facilitator for the last three years. Earlier this year, he was appointed as the director of Career Paths in Medicine, a course that provides medical students with opportunities to explore various areas of interest.

Clinical Science Teaching



Debra Moore-Hill, MD, MPH

Dr. Debra Moore-Hill is truly homegrown, growing up in Harlem, Georgia, attending high school there and then completing college on a full scholarship from a local university. Fueled by the passion that she saw in her older sister, she knew that she wanted to attend medical school and enrolled at MCG with an 8-month-old and then welcomed her daughter, Leila, right before her Step 1 examination. She always found neurology fascinating and was selected as the Department of Neurology's Student of the Year during her 4th year of medical school. She finished a neurology residency, ranked at the 93rd percentile of residents nationally, and then joined the MCG Department of Neurology faculty as an epileptologist, following completion of two fellowships (Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology). During her career at MCG, she has held several leadership roles, including assistant clerkship director for neurology, neurology residency program director, and now vice chair of education. In her role as the neurology residency program director, she was able to successfully expand the residency which led to a significant improvement of quality of life for residents. She created new educational opportunities which led to improvements with EEG reading among residents. She enjoys advocating for resident wellness, and has employed several ways to improve wellness including organizing outings for bowling and movies. She developed an epilepsy fellowship and has been working diligently to build EEG capacity and reach.

She currently serves as program director for Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology. In her role as chief of Epilepsy, she is currently working on a website for EEG education for trainees and has been instrumental in enhancing the epilepsy department's social reach. She has employed several ways to "gamify" neurology to make it more fun for learners of all levels. She has been selected as one of 10 Transforming Leaders for the American Academy of Neurology, and was selected by her peers within that program, to give a presentation to the American Academy of Neurology Board of Directors. She serves on the Maintenance of Certification Committee for the American Clinical Neurophysiology Society, as well as two other American Academy of Neurology Committees. During this year, she has been very active with research, leading to a publication and four abstracts at national conferences.

Basic Science Research



Raghavan Raju, PhD

Dr. Raghavan Pillai Raju is a tenured professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. Dr. Raju was born in India, in the southwestern state of Kerala. He received his PhD from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, a premier medical research institution in New Delhi. After his PhD work, he came to the University of Minnesota in 1992, and in 1995, he joined the laboratory of Dr. Chella David at the Mayo Clinic to further his postdoctoral training in immunogenetics. He was later recruited to the National Institutes of Health in 2001 as a senior staff fellow. In 2007, he moved to the University of Alabama at Birmingham as an associate professor, where he began his investigations in trauma (continued on next page)

immunobiology, which he continues today. It was over 10 years ago, in 2013, that he came to Augusta University's College of Allied Health Sciences as a professor, and as the founding director of the PhD program in Applied Health Sciences. He moved to MCG in 2017.

Since he left the intramural program at the NIH, Dr. Raju's research has been continuously funded by the NIH and is currently funded by an R01, two Department of Defense grants, as well as a merit award from the VA. Dr. Raju's research is in the broad areas of trauma, sepsis, and aging. Dr. Raju is a member of several professional societies. He has published over 80 articles, most of them as first or last author in reputable journals. He was an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Immunology* and is currently on the editorial board of several peer-reviewed and indexed journals. He has participated in several grant review panels for the US Government and other agencies, including the NIH, VA, DOD, and American Heart Association. He also served as a chartered member of an NIH study section.

Clinical Science Research



Theodore Johnson, MD/PhD

Dr. Theodore (Ted) Johnson is professor of pediatric oncology and co-director of the Pediatric Immunotherapy Program at the Children's Hospital of Georgia and the Georgia Cancer Center. The Pediatric Immunotherapy Program (PIP) is designed specifically as a "destination" program to provide highly-specialized experimental immunotherapy treatments for children with cancer from around the country, who may not have other options for continued therapy. Dr. Johnson and his team have developed multiple patient-friendly treatment regimens using the IDO-inhibitor indoximod as immunotherapy, together with various combinations of chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy for children with some of the most

incurable brain tumors known.

He earned a combined MD/PhD degree from the Medical College of Georgia in 2004, and his PhD research was performed under the guidance of Drs. Andrew Mellor and David Munn, who discovered the role of the IDO pathway in protecting tumors from the body's immune system. He completed a residency in pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Georgia, and then completed a clinical fellowship in pediatric hematology/oncology at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. He joined the MCG faculty in 2010 to open a translational research laboratory and establish a Pediatric Immunotherapy Program. His primary professional goal is to bring cutting-edge immunotherapy drugs into the clinic for children with cancer.

Outstanding Young Basic Science Faculty Award

Jessica Faulkner, PhD



Dr. Jessica Faulkner is an assistant professor in the Department of Physiology and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Medical College of Georgia. Dr. Faulkner graduated in 2015 from the University of Mississippi Medical Center with a PhD in medical pharmacology, studying under Dr. Babbette LaMarca. She then did her postdoctoral fellowship under Dr. Eric Belin de Chantemele in the MCG Vascular Biology Center. Dr. Faulkner became an assistant professor in 2021 and began her research program, which focuses on mechanisms whereby pregnant women develop endothelial dysfunction, hypertension, fetal growth restriction and other adverse events in pregnancy. Her primary disease focuses are acute kidney injury

and preeclampsia of pregnancy and she studies these disease outcomes using a combination of clinical studies, animal models and molecular investigation. Dr. Faulkner has published more than 40 peer-reviewed manuscripts in prominent journals such as *Hypertension* and *AJP Heart and Circulatory*. Dr. Faulkner is very active in service, currently serving on AHA and NIH study sections, is a consulting editor for *AJP Heart and Circulatory*, and is a member of the Trainee Advisory (continued on next page)

Committee of the AHA Council on Hypertension, among others. Dr Faulkner's research is currently supported by numerous extramural grants from the NIH and AHA. Last year she received the Harry Goldblatt Award for New Investigators from the American Heart Association.

Outstanding Young Clinical Science Faculty Award



Avirup Guha, MBBS, MPH

Dr. Avirup Guha is the inaugural director of cardio-oncology at the Georgia Cancer Center at the Medical College of Georgia. Dr. Guha is a physician-scientist who has dedicated his clinical and research work to the emerging field of cardio-oncology with over 150 peer-reviewed publications in prestigious journals such as *Circulation*, *European Heart Journal*, *Journal of American College of Cardiology*, and *Blood*. Dr. Guha is a rising star in the field of cardio-oncology with a recent American Heart Association Strategically Focused Research Network Grant in disparities in cardio-oncology. He also has the rare distinction of being a Fellow of the International Cardio-Oncology Society.

Champion of Diversity



Betty Pace, MD

Dr. Betty Pace is a professor in the Department of Pediatrics and Francis J. Tedesco, Distinguished Chair of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at the Medical College of Georgia. Dr. Pace received her MD degree and residency training in pediatrics at the Medical College of Wisconsin; a subsequent pediatric hematology/oncology fellowship was completed at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in 1990. After serving on the faculty at the University of South Alabama (1994-2001) and the University of Texas at Dallas (2002-10), Dr. Pace joined the faculty at MCG. As a physician-scientist, she leads an NIH-funded basic/translational research laboratory focused on drug discovery for treating sickle cell disease. In addition to research, Dr. Pace has personally trained over 100 junior scientists in her laboratory. She directs the NHLBI-funded training Program to Increase Diversity for Individuals Engaged in Health-Related Research-Functional and Translation Genomics (PRIDE-FTG). Over 114 junior faculty members have completed the PRIDE-FTG program to expand the diversity of the US biomedical science workforce. Dr. Pace received the Leadership in Promoting Diversity Honorific Award from the American Society of Hematology in 2017 for her mentoring contributions. Recently, she received the 2023 Woman in Science from the American Medical Women's Association for her research and training accomplishments.

Institutional Service Award



Steven Shiver, MD

Dr. Shiver was born and raised in Albany, Georgia. He is an alumnus from the University of Georgia and obtained his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia in 1997. Subsequently, he completed a general surgery residency at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and an emergency medicine residency at the Medical College of Georgia. He has been a faculty member in the MCG Department of Emergency Medicine since 2005. He was awarded the rank of professor in 2014 and served as the residency program director for nine years (2008-17). He currently serves as vice chair of clinical operations for the Department of Emergency Medicine. Clinical interests include point of care ultrasonography and emergency cardiology/ECG interpretation. He has published numerous peer reviewed papers and continues to be active in clinically-based research. Dr. Shiver is a Fellow in the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Patient Care Award



Namita Mohanty, MD

Dr. Namita Mohanty is an assistant professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine. She initially worked in both ambulatory and hospital settings but has transitioned to outpatient primary care. She sees patients in the Internal Medicine Faculty and Resident Continuity clinics. She is passionate about primary care, especially preventive care and chronic disease management and enjoys the breadth of general internal medicine. She serves as director of the Ambulatory Medicine Selective and as a preceptor for the Patient Centered Learning course for first- and second-year medical students.

She graduated from Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, with a bachelor of arts in biology and then completed medical school at Mercer University School of Medicine. She returned to Augusta and completed her internal medicine residency at the Medical College of Georgia.

Outstanding Faculty Award



Jennifer Sullivan, PhD

Dr. Sullivan is an internationally recognized expert and leader in the field of sex differences in cardiovascular physiology and pathophysiology. Her work has been continuously funded by the NIH and the American Heart Association since becoming a tenure track faculty member in 2008. Dr. Sullivan consistently publishes her work in the top journals in the field of hypertension, with over 120 peer reviewed articles. For her outstanding work, Dr. Sullivan has received numerous prestigious awards including the Inaugural John Laragh Research Award from the *American Journal of Hypertension*, the Mid-Career Award for Research Excellence from the American

Heart Association Hypertension Council, and the Ernest Starling Lectureship Award from the American Physiological Society. As further evidence of her status in the scientific community, Dr. Sullivan has active leadership roles in national scientific societies such as the American Physiological Society and American Heart Association, serves on the editorial board and as associate editor for leading peer reviewed journals, and currently is chair of an NIH grant study section.

Dr. Sullivan is an exceptional educator and mentor, with a demonstrated commitment to the training of undergraduate, graduate, and medical students, as well as postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty members. She creates a challenging and collaborative training environment for all of her trainees while focusing on the needs of each individual. To date, she has successfully mentored five postdoctoral fellows, eight PhD students as major advisor, 12 PhD students as a thesis committee member, 10 undergraduate students and four medical students. Dr. Sullivan's trainees routinely earn prestigious fellowships, travel awards, and research recognition honors, and all are currently engaged in biomedical science related careers.

In addition to her scientific achievements, Dr. Sullivan serves as the Dean of The Graduate School, providing vision and leadership for over 40 graduate programs across the ten colleges and schools that make up Augusta University. In this role, she works collaboratively with leadership to provide a rich intellectual environment for over 2,000 graduate student and partners with units across campus to develop, enhance and promote graduate student services.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Natalie Lane, MD

Dr. Natalie Lane is dually appointed as an associate professor in the Department of Pediatrics and a Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine. She has served as the emergency department's Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellowship Director since 2005. She has worked and served in a number of administrative leadership roles in the department of emergency medicine and for the institution since her arrival at MCG in 1997. Presently she serves as the section chief of Pediatric Emergency Medicine and the CHOG ED Medical Director.

She has been awarded the Exemplary Teaching Award both for medical student and graduate medical education teaching four different years. She has also been honored by the EM residency for outstanding pediatric clinical faculty on six occasions.

Dr. Lane continues to enjoy the clinical care of patients while engaging learners of all levels and helping fellows in pediatric emergency medicine find their inherent passions within the field. She has been a leader within emergency medicine and pediatrics striving to enhance and improve pediatric emergency care at the Children's Hospital of Georgia. She is very passionate about the continuum of care for pediatric patients in the emergency system and serves as a leader regionally, within the state and nationally as an advocate within the Emergency Medical Services for Children organization. She has contributed to both policy and scholarly work within this area. She additionally serves as a leader in pediatric disaster emergency preparedness and supports state engagement by leading the Preparedness Committee for the Georgia Pediatric Health Improvement Coalition.

Dr. Lane was both residency and fellowship trained at the University of Louisville prior to her arrival at MCG.

Spirit of MCG Award



Joseph Hobbs, MD

Dr. Joseph Hobbs, a 1970 graduate of Mercer University and 1974 graduate of the Medical College of Georgia, served his medical school for over 45 years, including 22 years as professor and chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine and chief of its clinical services. As chair, he was the first occupant of the J.W. Tollison Distinguished University Endowed Chair and served as MCG's senior associate dean of primary care. His roles at MCG have included director of the Family Medicine Residency Program, Student Education, Family Medicine In-patient Service, and vice dean of primary care. He maintained an academic clinical practice and actively taught medical students, residents and postgraduates throughout his career. He and his colleagues nurtured the evolution of the Family Medicine Center, implementing the medical school and its teaching hospital's first ambulatory electronic health record and establishing its practice as a NCQA Recognized Patient Centered Medical Home. He secured state funding to support the growth and support of the Family Medicine Residency Program.

Dr. Hobbs chaired the committee for the 50th Anniversary of the Desegregation of MCG. His scholarship and extramurally funded grant activities explored innovations in distributed primary care education using community clinical ambulatory platforms in private and health center settings across the state. He received multiple service and educational recognitions from MCG, Augusta University and state and national organizations while serving as president of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine and the Association of Departments of Family Medicine and as a member of the American Board of Family Medicine. He was also the Voice of GPB's *Medical Minute* for 10 years. After retirement in 2020, Dr. Hobbs returned to assist MCG's Office of Academic Affairs in expanding community-based educational opportunities as the senior associate dean for clinical programs in FQHCs and CHCs. Recently, he received the Mayor's 2024 Community Service Award and the MCG Alumni Association's 2024 Professional Achievement Award. In 2023, he received the University System of Georgia's Alumni and Friends Hall of Fame Award.

MCG Faculty Senate Executive Committee 2023 – 2024

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Almira Vazdarjanova, PhD, Vice President
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MCG Faculty Senate Faculty Recognition Committee

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