

Focus on UCSF Fresno

Spring 2022

Teach

UCSF Fresno Fills All Available Residency Positions During Match Day, Looks Forward to Welcoming Interns Including Many Valley Natives



Match Day 2022 By the Numbers

By Brandy Ramos Nikaido

On Match Day 2022, UCSF Fresno program directors and the campus community learned the identities of the 73 physician residents and four oral and maxillofacial surgery residents who will start training at UCSF Fresno in late June. The San Joaquin Valley has one of the lowest

physician-to-patient ratios in the state and the region ranks near the bottom in California for health outcomes. Roughly 50% of physicians trained at UCSF Fresno remain in the Central Valley to care for patients, continue their education and teach future physicians. UCSF Fresno aims to recruit, train and retain physicians, especially those with ties to the San Joaquin Valley.

“Our reputation as a regional campus of the consistently top-ranked UCSF School of Medicine continues to grow,” said Lori Weichenthal, MD, Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education at UCSF Fresno. “We filled all available residency training positions for the 16th year in a row. Our focus is on training highly skilled, culturally competent physicians who have the tools to be resilient in the increasingly complex field of health care.”

Match Day takes place every year in March and is the time when graduating medical students across the United States, including students in the San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical education (SJV PRIME), receive emails simultaneously that reveal where they will spend the next several years conducting the graduate medical education (residency) necessary to practice medicine in the U.S. It’s also the day when residency programs like UCSF Fresno learn the identities of the first-year residents or interns who will join their training programs.

Six SJV PRIME medical students pursued residency programs this year. The students include:

- **Gagandeep Dhuggais** from Livingston, California, and a graduate of UC Davis
- **Kao Houa Vang** is from Fresno, California, and a graduate of UC Berkeley
- **Michael Montoya** is from Visalia, California, and a graduate of UC Merced
- **Harjot Singh-Virk** is from Fresno, California, and a graduate of UC San Diego
- **Tyler Wilson** is from Fresno, California, and a graduate of Fresno State
- **Ka Xiong** is from Merced, California, and a graduate of UC Davis



All six of the SJV PRIME students are staying in California for residency training and to provide much needed care. Four will be staying in the

Central Valley with one staying on at UCSF Fresno. **Tyler Wilson** matched with the UCSF Fresno Emergency Medicine Residency Program.

“I am beyond excited I get to train to become an emergency medicine doctor in my own community at one of the best EM programs in the country,” said Wilson. “I matched at my number one choice and it’s truly a dream come true.”

“Congratulations to all our SJV PRIME students. It is especially rewarding when SJV PRIME students match with UCSF Fresno,” said Kenny Banh, MD, assistant dean for Undergraduate Medical Education. “It allows us to continue training students from the Valley to care for Valley community members.”

“Increasing and diversifying the physician workforce and training physicians who come from and understand the Valley communities they serve is imperative to improve health outcomes in the San Joaquin Valley,” said Loren I. Alving, director of the UCSF SJV PRIME. “Recruiting, training and retaining physicians for our region is what UCSF SJV PRIME seeks to do.”

Medical school graduates typically register with the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) as part of the Match Day process. The NRMP utilizes a mathematical algorithm to place applicants into residency and fellowship positions. Medical school graduates or interns will then begin residency training at the hospital or program where they “matched. A similar “match” occurs for fellows and sub-specialty training each year in December.

Other medical school graduates from the Valley will be among the interns starting training at UCSF Fresno in June include:



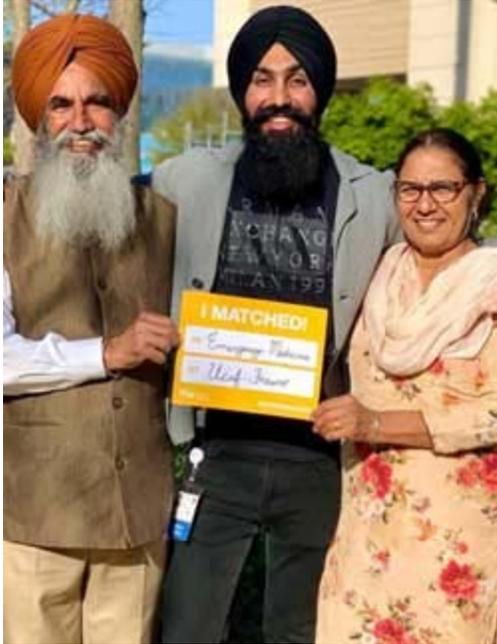
Carolina Aparicio, graduated from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and matched with the UCSF Fresno General Surgery Residency Program.

“I am from Bakersfield, so I know how amazingly creative, hardworking, and resilient the people of the Valley are. It is truly an honor and privilege to come home to serve the communities of the Valley and train as a surgery resident at UCSF Fresno,” said Aparicio. “UCSF Fresno is the perfect place to do surgical training, especially if one is interested in trauma surgery. While at UCSF Fresno, I want to be a positive path for change. I hope to be a worthy role model for first-generation kids from communities like the one I grew up in.”



Fresno native **Andrea Collins** graduated from the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and matched with the UCSF Fresno Psychiatry Residency Program.

“My parents still live in Fresno, and I look forward to being close to them. I’ve lived in the Midwest and missed the warmth, sunlight and culture of California. I look forward to caring for underserved patients throughout the Central Valley and helping meet the need for more local physicians. The residents, faculty and staff who I met on my interview day were kind and encouraging.”



Anuvir Singh, who moved to the San Joaquin Valley from India when he was in ninth grade, matched with the UCSF Fresno Emergency Medicine Residency Program. Singh is a graduate of the UCSF School of Medicine Urban Underserved Program in Medical Education and alumnus of the UCSF Fresno Doctors Academy at Sunnyside High School.

“Life has truly come full circle. My first clinical volunteering experience was at UCSF Fresno while in high school and now I’m heading back home as an ED physician,” said Singh. “I’m beyond excited to learn from, work with and uplift my community.”

The UCSF Fresno residency programs that participated in the NRMP match received 7,889 applications and conducted 913 interviews for 73 positions, filling all available residency positions. UCSF Fresno fellowship programs that took part in the October/December NRMP match received 1,922 applications and conducted 203 interviews for 19 positions. Non-NRMP programs filled available positions through another matching service or through interviews and offers. The UCSF Fresno Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program received 214 applications and conducted 20 interviews for 4 available spots.

“Offering local students the opportunity to complete medical school and pursue residency training in the Valley is vital to keeping them in the region,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Research at UCSF Fresno.

“Undergraduate medical education (medical school) and graduate medical education (residency) are inextricably linked. It’s the continuum of a well-documented pathway that will help keep them in the region.”

UCSF Fresno currently offers residency training in eight medical specialties, one oral and maxillofacial surgery dental residency, fellowship training in 18 medical sub-specialties and three residency programs for physician assistants.



UCSF Fresno Welcomes Interim Chief of UCSF Fresno Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Meg Autry, MD

By Barbara Anderson

UCSF Fresno welcomes Meg Autry, MD, a UCSF professor of obstetrics and gynecology, as the interim Chief of the UCSF Fresno Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology beginning April 1.

“We are excited to have Dr. Autry join us at UCSF Fresno. As the interim Chief of OB/GYN, she brings expertise and enthusiasm to the role that will not only serve the department and residency program well, but that will help to elevate the care of women in the Valley,” said Lori Weichenthal, associate dean of Graduate Medical Education and Clinical Affairs at UCSF Fresno.

“We are very fortunate that Dr. Autry has agreed to assume an interim leadership role as Chief of OB/GYN while we complete a national search for a permanent Chief,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Research at UCSF Fresno. “Dr. Autry is a highly accomplished clinician educator having led national education organizations in her specialty and serving as the OB/GYN residency program director at UCSF. She has a passion for both medical education and care of vulnerable populations. We are very excited to have her join us and lead this important transition for the OB/GYN Department.”

Dr. Autry takes stewardship of the UCSF Fresno Department of OB/GYN from Carlos Sueldo, MD, who is retiring as Chief after eight years at the department’s helm.

A long-term Fresno physician with expertise in reproductive endocrinology and in vitro fertilization, Dr. Sueldo spent many years as a volunteer teacher for UCSF Fresno OB/GYN residents, but in 2014 he agreed to reduce his practice time to 50% to assume short-term leadership of the residency program, and a year later, in 2015, he became Chief. Dr. Sueldo is retiring from the Chief role to return to his practice with his daughter, Carolina Sueldo, MD, volunteer faculty at UCSF Fresno and a residency graduate from UCSF Fresno's program prior to her completing a fellowship in reproductive endocrinology.

“During Dr. Sueldo's tenure he has built the first strong program in Gynecology oncology in the San Joaquin Valley and has maintained an excellent residency program, said Dr. Peterson.

“Personally, I have found Dr. Sueldo to be the consummate gentleman scholar. We wish him the best in the next phase of his life.”

Dr. Autry, who served as director of the UCSF OB/GYN Residency Program for 15 years until this past June, said she is excited for the opportunity to work with faculty, residents and students at UCSF Fresno. “Other than patient care, my passion is education and educating the future leaders in OB/GYN,” she said. “I am excited about the patient population – the diversity of the patient population – and the ability to work with students and residents.”

A self-described “Army brat,” Dr. Autry earned her medical degree at Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Wake Forest, N.C., and completed her OB/GYN residency at UCSF. She served three years in the U.S. Army in Germany and then joined the faculty at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee for five years before returning to UCSF. There she distinguished herself in teaching, including receiving the Excellence and Innovation in Graduate Medical Education Award.

In addition to patient care and education, her interests include Family Planning, Global Health, Advocacy and workforce issues in OB/GYN, particularly in underserved areas such as the San Joaquin Valley. “Recruiting individuals who are either from the Valley and want to come back or are just really dedicated to this area or this population is paramount, because when you have that connection, it just makes everything better,” Dr. Autry said.

UCSF and UCSF Fresno each received state grants designed to recruit individuals who are underrepresented in medicine to be trained in obstetrics and gynecology to take care of patients in underserved populations and then hopefully, to ultimately work in underserved areas, Dr. Autry said. She was the principal investigator for the grant on obstetrics and gynecology at UCSF.

She also is the obstetrics mentor for the HEAL Initiative (Health, Equity, Action, Leadership) UCSF Global Health Fellowship. HEAL fellows in Obstetrics, Anesthesia, Pediatrics and Internal Medicine serve six months in an underserved area in the U.S. and then six months globally. Primarily, the domestic location for the fellowships has been with the Indian Health Service at the Navajo Nation, but in the upcoming year, Dr. Autry said an Obstetrics HEAL fellow will be at a federally qualified health center in the East Bay. “And I'm hoping to be able to start a HEAL ob/gyn fellowship site in Fresno,” she said.

Dr. Autry is the past president of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO). This year, she is the scientific program chair for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) annual meeting, as well as for the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) Congress to be held in Paris in 2023.

By coming to the UCSF Fresno Department of OB/GYN from the department at UCSF, “I hope I can establish a greater collaboration among our two departments and potentially leverage the strengths of both,” Dr. Autry said.



As the interim Chief at UCSF Fresno, her focus is to have a comprehensive department that provides evidence-based superior care in the San Joaquin Valley. The UCSF Fresno OB/GYN Department’s strengths are its patient population, the faculty, trainees, and staff, she said. “The people who work in the Department are very dedicated to providing care to the population that they serve.”

Her goals include increasing staffing – general OB/GYNs, midwives and hospitalists, particularly for labor and delivery. “And then I hope to use my experience and expertise and education to develop some innovative curriculum for the residents and students,” she said.”

Research

UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center is Critical to Six-fold Increase in Physician Led Studies, Innovative Clinical Trials



By Barbara Anderson

UCSF Fresno successfully led a fundraising effort 10 years ago to establish the UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center, bringing together support staff and the Assistant Dean for Research at the UCSF Fresno building. A decade later, the Center has grown into a hub for clinical research in the San Joaquin Valley and is recognized for innovative trials, including several that have contributed to new treatments for COVID-19.

“This Center has become increasingly important as our region was ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Research at UCSF Fresno. “In December 2019, we, along with medical communities around the world were suddenly confronted with a new disease unlike any we had seen for 100 years. We had no diagnostic tools, no treatment guidelines, no vaccines, and no treatments,” Dr. Peterson said. “In very short order, our UCSF Fresno clinical leaders came together to both initiate novel studies and become important contributing participants in many national multicenter studies to help us learn how to manage this new disease.”

UCSF Fresno research has led and continues to contribute to important new knowledge on managing this disease, and during these two years the mortality rate for patients with the infection has steadily decreased, Dr. Peterson said. “Patients in the region had access to new and important treatments through research protocols that were not available to the public including Remdesivir, monoclonal antibodies and immunomodulating treatments.”

At the same time, the scope of research at the Center continues to expand far beyond COVID-19. Currently, UCSF faculty at the Fresno regional campus are overseeing 50 studies and clinical trials in various stages of progress.

“Our research activity has probably increased six-fold compared from 2019 to 2022, said UCSF Fresno Assistant Dean of Research Eyad Almasri. “We have transitioned from COVID-19, from almost 90% COVID studies and 10% non-COVID, to probably 50% COVID and 50% non-COVID today,” he said. “We are a clinical research center for everyone, including Surgery,

Emergency Medicine, Family and Community Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Internal Medicine, Orthopaedic Surgery and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.”

Vascular surgeons in the UCSF Fresno Department of Surgery, for example, are conducting four clinical trials currently – three are post-market studies and one is a non-FDA approved device investigation of a bio-absorbable scaffold for placement below the knee in patients with chronic limb threatening ischemia. The device could afford significant benefit to vascular patients at risk of below-the-knee amputation.

The device is currently experimental. UCSF Fresno is one of about two dozen sites in the United States participating in the Abbott LIFE-BTK clinical trial. “This is an exciting technology that hopefully can be brought to the United States to improve patient care and decrease limb loss,” said Leigh Ann O’Banion, MD, UCSF Fresno vascular surgeon and UCSF assistant clinical professor who serves as the site principal investigator for UCSF Fresno.

Sammy Siada, DO, a UCSF Fresno vascular surgeon and UCSF assistant clinical professor, is a sub-investigator for the LIFE-BTK study and is a site principal investigator for a multicenter study of an FDA-approved stent graft device for the repair of abdominal aortic aneurysms. An abdominal aortic aneurysm occurs when the abdominal aortic wall becomes weakened, resulting in a bulging of the blood vessel. It is a life-threatening diagnosis and patients who meet anatomic criteria are consented and enrolled in the trial to monitor the long-term outcomes of the new stent graft technology. UCSF Fresno is one of a few dozen institutions worldwide selected by the device manufacturer to participate in this study.

The UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center provides the infrastructure for faculty participation in clinical trials, Dr. Siada said. “We’re contributing to the science, which hopefully will ultimately lead to the betterment of our patients in the long run, which is the ultimate goal as always.”

Research to improve health and wellbeing in Central California is a priority of UCSF Fresno. Physicians are encouraged to investigate health conditions specific to the region, as well as clinical trials of novel treatments for patients. The support of the UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center is critical for this mission, said Dr. Almasri, who last year was appointed Assistant Dean of Research to oversee the Center. “When it comes to research involving patients – actual patients, the Clinical Research Center somehow, some way or another, will be needed,” he said.

UCSF Fresno has hired more staff for the Center to facilitate the increase in research projects being conducted by UCSF Fresno physicians. Most recently, it has added a research pharmacist who works with pharmacy technicians at the center. Having a research pharmacist allows outpatient medications to be stored, as well as dispensed, at the Center. Prior to the research pharmacist, both inpatient and outpatient drugs for clinical trials had to be stored at the Investigational Drug Service at Community Regional Medical Center.



UCSF Fresno Research Team

The Center also has added six research coordinators, for a total of eight and doubled the number of research assistants from two to four. “When you have enough people to do the work, you are a lot more efficient and able to concentrate more on your projects and be successful,” said Rebekah Garcia, CCRP, Clinical Research supervisor and interim Clinical Research manager.

Research coordinators work with physicians from the initiation of a research project to its culmination. The coordinator helps prepare paperwork for a project proposal, serves as liaison between the researcher and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for project approval, acts as the liaison between the researcher and a study sponsor, obtains patient consents, enrolls patients in studies, screens patients, schedules follow-up visits with patients and records research findings.

“There is a lot of work that they do in the background,” said Vijay Balasubramanian, MD, a UCSF Fresno pulmonary specialist and UCSF clinical professor. He has led about 18 clinical trials over the past several years with support of the Clinical Research Center. Dr. Balasubramanian, who is the medical director of a nationally acclaimed Pulmonary Hypertension program at UCSF Fresno, has three trials currently in process.

These clinical trials provide the unique opportunity to our Central Valley patients to benefit from cutting edge therapies that treat difficult and complex diseases such as Pulmonary Hypertension, Dr. Balasubramanian said.

“These are not just people to enter data,” Dr. Almasri said of the Clinical Research Center staff members. “You’re talking about daily screening, recruiting, consenting, enrolling. It’s arranging for follow-up. Sometimes they are doing home visits to take blood. Their intervention with someone enrolled in a study can be for only a day or two or the follow-up can be for 18 months or longer.”

The Clinical Research Center is an invaluable resource for physicians who want to conduct and participate in clinical trials, and with a bigger staff the Center can respond to more requests for assistance, Dr. Almasri said. Clinical research is an expensive undertaking and securing funding is an ongoing effort but supporting physicians’ research projects is a responsibility UCSF Fresno seriously. “Research is part of our mission at UCSF Fresno.”



UCSF Fresno and VA Central California Health Care System Partnership Invaluable in Achieving Emergency Department Geriatric Accreditation

Manavjeet S. Sidhu, MD, MBA

By Barbara Anderson



The VA Central California Health Care System, an affiliated partner of UCSF Fresno, recently became the first institution in Central California to receive a Geriatric Emergency Department (GED) accreditation.

“We sought the accreditation to improve patient outcomes, provide standardized approaches to care that basically address very common complaints for patients who are geriatric in age,” said Manavjeet S. Sidhu, MD, MBA, a UCSF Fresno emergency physician, and the Emergency Department (ED) director at the VA.

GED accreditation by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) also “ensures that there is optimal transition of care from the ER to other areas, such as the inpatient setting, the home or community-based care, which a lot of our veterans use,” Dr. Sidhu said.

Geriatric patients in the VA’s Emergency Department are assured of ready access to wheelchairs, walkers and other ability aids and transportation to either their homes or other care facilities, for example, Dr. Sidhu said. “We have essentially worked on ways so there is less of a burden for not just the veteran, but the veteran’s family members, he said.

“Preparing for accreditation allows the hospital and ED to focus on the needs of this complex and growing population and to ensure that the resources available to the ED meet the needs of the patients they serve, said Nicole Tidwell, Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation program director at ACEP. “Early data from existing models of geriatric emergency care – models that promote best clinical practices and create a more positive and sensitive physical environment – show they have the potential to improve health outcomes, coordinate care more effectively, and reduce costs. In sum, GED accreditation signals to the public that accredited institutions are focused on the highest standards of care for their community’s older adults. Standards of care that can make Grandma and Grandpa rest easy knowing they are in good hands,” she said.

In addition to providing veterans with optimal care, the GED accreditation at the VA in Fresno provides opportunities for residents at UCSF Fresno to learn the delivery of excellent geriatric

patient care. As a regional graduate and undergraduate medical education campus of the UCSF School of Medicine, UCSF Fresno conducts its training and patient care through a network of affiliated partners. Medical students, residents and fellows work and train in a variety of training sites and the VA Central California Health Care System is a valued training facility.

“At the VA, one of our pillars is medical education,” Dr. Sidhu said. UCSF Fresno interns, (first-year residents in Internal Medicine), rotate for two weeks at the VA Emergency Department. In their second and third year of training, residents admit patients to the VA hospital under supervision of attending faculty physicians. UCSF Fresno fellows, who are in advanced training in cardiology, gastroenterology, among other specialties, are on call to see patients in the hospital.

“Fellows, as well as residents are able to learn from our patient population, and vice versa, our patient population is really able to take away a lot from our residents and fellows,” Dr. Sidhu said.

Achieving GED accreditation became one of Dr. Sidhu’s first projects in August 2020, when he accepted the position of director of the Emergency Department at the VA. Dr. Sidhu is an alumnus of the Emergency Medicine Residency Program at UCSF Fresno, where he was chief resident.

Dr. Sidhu was instrumental in the VA’s successful application for GED accreditation, said Will McCullough, public affairs officer at the VA Central California Health Care System. “He has been a wonderful addition to our facility, our health care system. And we’re very happy to have him aboard,” McCullough said.

The accreditation process involved physicians, nurse champions, and people in many other areas of the hospital, Dr. Sidhu said. “It was a huge team effort.”

The VA Central California Health Care System is very proud of Dr. Sidhu and the entire Emergency Department team and what they have been able to accomplish in a very short period, McCullough said. “The designation is a milestone, when you consider there are only about 300 health care systems across the country which have achieved this particular status,” he said.

“Accreditation signals to our community that our institution focuses on a high standard of care for our communities’ older adults,” Dr. Sidhu said. “Fortunately, UCSF Fresno Internal Medicine residents have the opportunity to rotate with our ED providers and work in an ED that meets the interdisciplinary geriatric standards set forth by the American College of Emergency Physicians.”

Inspire

UCSF Fresno People Spotlight



Emy Lopez Phillips, EdD

UCSF Fresno’s success and growth are a direct result of the dedication and inspiration of our faculty, staff, residents, fellows, students, alumni, partners, donors and friends. In each issue of Focus, we introduce you to the people who contribute to the greatness of UCSF Fresno through informal interviews.

This month, please meet **Emy Lopez Phillips, EdD, Director, UCSF Fresno Hildebrand Medical Library and Health Pathway Outreach and UCSF Assistant Professor at the Fresno Regional Campus:**

What is your name? Nickname?

My name is Emy Lopez Phillips. I legally changed my middle name to my maiden name after marriage. Keeping “Lopez” as part of my identity was important because my grandparents are from Mexico and Nicaragua. If it wasn’t for their sacrifices in leaving their homeland for better opportunities, I wouldn’t have the privilege of being an American citizen.

My name (Emy) is often confused for a nickname, but it’s my actual name. Interestingly, everyone in my family starts with the letter “E” – including my parents, siblings, husband, and my son. I won’t name everyone here because it’s a lot of people!

What are your titles?

My current title is Director of the Medical Library at UCSF Fresno. I also hold a faculty appointment and support health pathway programs.

Briefly explain your roles at UCSF Fresno. Why did you join the faculty at UCSF Fresno?

In 2019, I was given the opportunity to join the faculty at UCSF Fresno in a split role as the Director of the UCSF Fresno Hildebrand Medical Library, and the Associate Director of the Latino Center for Medical Education and Research (LaCMER). During the pandemic my role with LaCMER shifted and I am now supporting the development of health pathway programs through the Associate Dean's office. In my role with the library, I work with our medical librarians (Robyn Aguiar and Sharon McClain), and collectively, we support UCSF Fresno learners and staff in obtaining reliable and current medical information. Most recently, I am leading the renovation of our physical library space which will include an expansion of services to include a MakersLab, 3D printing, and archival support. While the library is currently open, the space is still "a work in progress" and the goal is for everything to be complete by the summer of 2022.

What are your areas of expertise or special interests in medical education?

One of my favorite quotes is by Thomas Friedman, author of "The World is Flat" – he says, "We are preparing students for jobs that have yet to be invented, to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet!"

This quote really captures the progression of my career. I never considered that I might one day be working at a School of Medicine.

I started my career as an English teacher in the Central Unified School District and was involved in a federal grant that provided laptops to my middle school students. Through that opportunity, I developed a passion for literacy and the integration of technology. This led me to the Fresno County Office of Education where I worked as the Director of Instructional Technology & Library Services for over ten years. During that time, I also served as a Regional Director of a state-funded organization called the California Technology Assistance Project (CTAP) where I was able to provide technical grant assistance, curricular development, and advocacy to school districts across the Central Valley. Through this work, I gained invaluable training on transformative leadership, cognitive coaching, and developed a passion to serve our most vulnerable student populations, from both rural and urban school districts. Upon completing my Doctorate in Educational Leadership & Management, I was given the opportunity to become an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Fresno State, where I taught courses and coordinated the single subject credential program. While in academia, I became well-versed on the importance of pathway programs as tools for recruitment. So I would say that my first 20 years in education really prepared me for the roles I'm in now at UCSF Fresno. Anytime I am asked to help with a project, I feel honored and excited because I know that I'll be able to bring a different perspective to the table. At the end of the day, my focus is the same as it was when I first started teaching: doing what is in the best interest of those we serve.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job/role? What is the most challenging?

The most rewarding aspect of my job is collaborating with like-minded people who really want to provide excellent service to our UCSF Fresno departments and greater community. The most challenging part of my job is finding balance between various projects.

What is at the top of your professional to-do list?

Like the physician shortage in the Valley, we are also facing a teacher shortage (especially in science and math). When middle and high school students experience a revolving door of substitute teachers in their science and math classes, they are not getting the education they deserve – and certainly not being prepared for STEM focused careers, like medicine. The challenge we face with increasing the physician shortage is actually a systemic issue in our Valley that I believe starts in K-12 education.

Therefore, I would really like to see our library space become a place of hope and excitement for aspiring medical students in our Valley. I would also like to start a “Health Pathway Teacher Fellowship” for high school teachers in the Valley who teach STEM and health pathway courses. High school teachers are in a great position to connect students with future careers, but they often don’t have much experience in medical careers because they were focused on getting their teaching credential. I’d love to create a program that allows them to experience “Medical School” so that they can be equipped and encouraged to share with their students in the classroom. Educators can truly be partners in solving the physician shortage.

The zombie apocalypse is coming. Which three people from UCSF Fresno would you pick to be on your team and why?

I don’t like scary things, so thinking practically, I would choose Juan, our security guard at the front desk, because he is always so kind and respectful, he could talk the zombies into leaving the building. I would then choose Kelly Noorani, our Facilities Director, because she could then lock the doors to the building. Then I would choose Maria Ragan because she has access to the budgets and could buy us all some pizza and wine while we wait it out.

What do you like to do in your off time?

In my “off-time” I am a full-time mom to a very creative nine-year-old on the autism spectrum. I spend a lot of time researching emerging biomedical treatments for autism and have found a new interest in learning about genetics and neurodiversity. My son keeps me busy with his various therapies and teaches me new things every day.

What is the most important thing you would like people to know about you? Or what else would you like to add about you, your background, family or career?

I would like to share something vulnerable. When I was in high school, I encountered some obstacles that prevented me from taking coursework that would prepare me for a four-year university. I attended Fresno City College and eventually transferred to CSU Stanislaus to finish

my degree in English. If I were to believe the lies that attending a “poor” school is the reason that I couldn’t attend college, or that attending a community college wouldn’t set me up for success, then I would not be where I am today. We are not defined by our SAT scores, our age upon graduating from (or re-entering) college, or our family circumstances. The young people in our Valley are full of hope and resilience – especially those who you may least expect. Many have a strong desire to give back to their communities and break the cycle of poverty within their families. As part of the UCSF Fresno community, we all have an opportunity to help lift and mentor the next generation.



Support Research at UCSF Fresno to Bring Cutting-Edge Treatments to Valley Patients

By Kathleen Smith, Development and Alumni Relations, UCSF Fresno

Research at UCSF Fresno is vital to our focus on improving health in the San Joaquin Valley. As a regional campus of UCSF, an institution that is world-renowned for its research, faculty at UCSF Fresno lead pioneering research projects across a range of medical disciplines through the UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center. With support from generous donors in 2012, we opened the Clinical Research Center in 2013 – creating a central hub for cutting-edge research collaborations investigating health conditions specific to the Valley, as well as clinical trials that bring new treatments to the area before they are available more broadly.

Clinical trials are research studies that are aimed at evaluating a medical, surgical, or behavioral intervention to improve care. They are the primary way that researchers determine effectiveness

and safety. Other clinical trials test ways to find a disease early or test ways to prevent a health problem.

Despite the many challenges brought about by the pandemic, faculty at UCSF Fresno continue to be at the forefront of active clinical research. Currently, 50 research studies and clinical trials are underway at the Clinical Research Center for a wide variety of health conditions including COVID-19, liver diseases, pulmonary hypertension, vascular diseases, Valley fever, hematologic malignancies, lung cancer, neuro and vascular surgeries to name a few.

In many COVID-19 clinical trials, UCSF Fresno took a leading role and was the first center in the world to enroll in some of the multicenter trials. Other investigations include a study of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) in children, led by Marina Roytman, MD, FACP, a UCSF Fresno hepatologist and director of the Liver Program; a retrospective evaluation of Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH) by UCSF Fresno Pulmonologist Vijay Balasubramanian, MD, MRCP; regulatory T Cell function in preventing Valley fever outcomes by Mohamed Fayed, MD, a pulmonary and critical disease specialist; and a heart failure study by UCSF cardiologist Richard Kiel, MD.

“We are moving from tagging along in nationwide trials to equal partners at the table with centers such as UC Davis, UCLA, UCSF main campus, Stanford and others,” said Eyad Almasri, MD, assistant dean for Research at UCSF Fresno. “We are also looking to increasing collaboration with sister institutions such as UC Merced and Fresno State who share our mission in advancing science and health care in Central California”, said Dr. Almasri.

“None of this work would have been possible without both the commitment of our faculty and the access to resources like the Clinical Research Center,” said UCSF Fresno Associate Dean Michael W. Peterson, MD, FCCP, MACP. “Unfortunately, clinical research is an expensive endeavor and grants for research rarely cover all the costs. We depend on philanthropy in part to continue this work and look forward to opportunities to talk about our work with any interested parties.”

Your generous support of the UCSF Fresno Clinical Research Center helps ensure our faculty have the resources they need to pilot new research and expand clinical trials in an era of rising research costs and fluctuating federal funding. Your gifts enable researchers to approach long-standing, intractable problems from a new perspective while also allowing them to pivot in real-time to address new health concerns like COVID-19.

To learn more about how your gift to UCSF Fresno can inspire a healthier future for the Valley and beyond, please contact Kathleen Smith, assistant director of development at (559) 499-6426 or kathleen.smith@ucsf.edu



Kudos

UCSF Fresno Recognition



Gail Newel, MD, MPH, FACOG

Kudos to **Gail Newel, MD, MPH, FACOG**, former faculty member at UCSF Fresno, graduate of the UCSF Fresno Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program and current Santa Cruz County Health Officer, for being honored with the [2021 PEN/Benenson Courage Award from PEN America](#), which honors individuals for exceptional acts of courage in the exercise of freedom of expression. Dr. Newel was recognized for pursuing stringent measures to contain COVID-19. Her efforts and that of Santa Cruz County's health director resulted in Santa Cruz experiencing some of the lowest COVID case rates and one of the smallest gaps in vaccination by race or ethnicity.



Congratulations to **Renee Kinman, MD**, for being honored with a **2022 Fresno Compact Award** for her work with the Fresno County Office of Education and Fresno Unified School District on pathway programs for students interested in careers in health and medicine. [The Fresno Compact](#) recognizes businesses and individuals that go above and beyond to help students.

Congratulations to recipients at UCSF Fresno who received [Innovations Funding for Education Awards for 2022](#) supported jointly by the UCSF Academy of Medical Educators and UCSF Fresno. Award winners include:

- **Candice Marie Yuvienco, MD**, submitted a grant proposal for “The Creativity Rheum,” a creative pilot project aimed at making complex subject matter accessible to students while “humanizing” the material and experience.
- **Manjit Singh, MD, and Antonio Toribio, MD**, submitted a grant proposal for “A Mile in My Patients’ Shoes: Understanding Social Determinants of Health Through Lived Experiences,” a project that includes a curriculum, lectures and small group exercises aimed at better understanding social determinants of health for optimal patient outcomes.
- **Charney Burk, MD, and Stacy Sawtelle Vohra, MD**, submitted a grant proposal for “Caring for the Caregiver: Confronting the Isolation of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Trainees at UCSF Fresno,” a program that the committee recognized the need for at UCSF Fresno.
- **Lin Li, MD, and Jonathan Pham, MD**, submitted a grant proposal for “Using Mobile Phone Enabled OSCEs for Resident As Teacher Standardized Feedback.” The committee recognized the importance of the program to UCSF Fresno and importantly, UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (SJV PRIME) learners.

Kudos to **Virginia Coningsby** for being recognized in the **Campus 10 Year Service Milestone Program**.

Congratulations to **Teresa Daniele, MD**, for receiving the [George L. Smith Advocate of the Year Award](#) from the [California Chapter of the American College of Cardiology](#).



Kudos to UCSF SJV PRIME medical student **Vanessa Mora** for being a **Latino Medical Student Association** national scholarship recipient.

Please send submissions for Kudos to fresno-communications@ucsf.edu