



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE PHOENIX

Family, Community
& Preventive Medicine

2025 ANNUAL REPORT





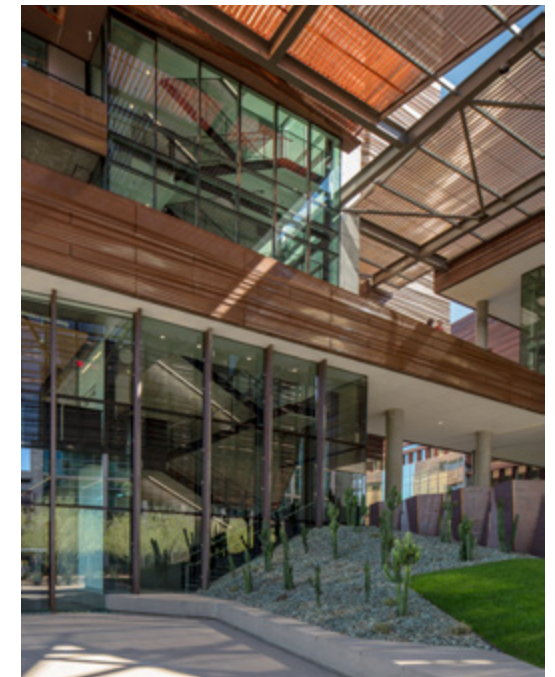
DEDICATION

We dedicate this year’s annual report to Dr Jesselyn R. Gaona, a beloved member of our Family Medicine faculty. Jesselyn R. Gaona, MD graduated from the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Family Medicine Residency in 2014 and was an inspiring teacher and family physician at Wesley Community and Health Center. To learn more about Dr. Gaona and contribute to our Foundation supporting her legacy use this QR code:



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CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Family physicians are trained to lead in the face of uncertainty and change. We care for undifferentiated patients, balance competing priorities, and move forward thoughtfully even when the path is not fully clear. This ability to navigate complexity is one of the defining strengths of family medicine—and in today's rapidly evolving healthcare environment, it is essential.

This past year brought accelerating advances in artificial intelligence across clinical care, education, and research; increasing constraints in the research funding landscape; and continued policy uncertainty affecting patient access to care. In this dynamic context, our department's adaptability, systems thinking, and commitment to mission positioned us not only to respond—but to lead. It's not uncommon to hear the words "pivot", "growth mindset", and "let's explore what's possible" in our meetings.

In 2025, we advanced our mission through meaningful growth in education, workforce development, research, and statewide collaboration.

We strengthened the primary care pipeline through the launch of our Community Medicine and Population Health Summer Internship, welcoming 17 undergraduate students, and developed a statewide STEM opportunities database to expand access to pathways into medicine. We also introduced a 3-Year Primary Care Accelerated Pathway, enabling highly motivated students to enter residency training sooner through focused training and mentorship.

Our commitment to rural and underserved communities expanded with the launch of the Yuma Regional Branch

Campus, Arizona's first rural regional medical school campus, in partnership with Onvida Health and led by Dr. Katie Brite. This initiative responds to a core principle: physicians are more likely to practice where they train, and we need physicians in these rural communities. We further expanded graduate medical education with the accreditation and inaugural class of the Banner Desert Family Medicine Residency Program. We trained two Maternal-Child Health Fellows and plan to grow this program to address critical gaps in care for mothers and infants across Arizona.

At the state level, we hosted the first and second Arizona Primary Care Physician Workforce Summits, convening diverse stakeholders to develop actionable strategies that will strengthen primary care access. This work was supported by funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and private foundation partners, affirming the national relevance of our efforts.

We also expanded our research enterprise. The recruitment of a Research Program Manager strengthened our capacity to operationalize a growing portfolio of collaborative, high-impact work. Our Vice Chair of Research, Dr. Freya Spielberg, was awarded a University of Arizona "Big Ideas" grant to co-lead a collaborative addressing heat-related illness—an urgent public health priority. Under her leadership, the department has participated in practice-based research through national partnerships and engaged in international dialogue on innovative approaches to multimorbidity. A record number of high-quality grants have been submitted this year, and key partnerships have been formed.

Our department continues to serve as a statewide convener and connector. The Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference (AAFMIC) welcomed over 130 participants for its third year, and we continue to lead key initiatives, including the Primary Care Residency Innovation Collaborative (PRICLe PEaR) and the Primary Care Academic Council of Arizona, strengthening alignment and shared learning across institutions.

In a time of rapid change and persistent uncertainty, we continue to demonstrate that comfort with ambiguity and change is one of our greatest strengths. Grounded in our values and responsive to our communities, we remain committed to training the next generation of family physicians, advancing meaningful research, and strengthening primary care access for all Arizonans through innovation and collaboration.

Dr. Sharry Veres
*Chair, Department of Family, Community
& Preventive Medicine*

SCIENCE HALL

MISSION & VISION

MISSION

We teach patient-centered, evidence-based family medicine. We improve the health of individuals and families in Arizona through education, advocacy, research, service and compassionate patient care for our communities. We strive to ensure our department and learners are representative of our community.

VISION

The University of Arizona College of Medicine Phoenix Department of Family, Community and Preventive Medicine will promote access to patient-centered primary care for all Arizonans. We will create innovative and interprofessional approaches to patient care. We will advocate for a health workforce that is representative of our communities. We will be national leaders in understanding and addressing issues of healthcare access for all people in the State of Arizona.



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2025

The Banner Desert Family Medicine Residency Program was accredited and welcomed its first residents in 2025.

The Department launched a Community and Population Health Summer Internship program for 17 undergraduate students, and established a Community Oriented Research curriculum.

The 3 year Primary Care Accelerated pathway was launched at UACOM-P, led by FM faculty.

The Department convened the first and second Primary Care Workforce Summits for the State of Arizona.

The Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference (AAFMIC) was held for the third year in a row, with 130+ attendees from across the State of Arizona.

Dr Steve Brown, Program Director of the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Family Medicine Residency received the Nikitas J. Zervanos Outstanding Program Director award from the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors (AFMRD).

The Family Medicine Interest Group was awarded the AAFP Program of Excellence Award for Clinical Skills Development by the American Academy of Family Physicians.

A Community Advisory Council was established for the UACOM-P, led by our department.

Department Faculty collaborated to raise \$10+ Million in grant funding in the last 2 years.

FAMILY MEDICINE BY THE NUMBERS



THREE
Residency Program Sites

AAFMIC

130+

Attendees at the Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference



26

Clerkship training sites



268
Teaching faculty



9
Specialty Instructors



57
Clinical Instructors



FOUR
Fellowships



164
Assistant Professors

21
Associate Professors

11
Professors

NOTABLE AWARDS



The Pisacano Leadership Foundation awarded Christopher Hernandez Salinas, a fourth-year MD/MPH student at the college the 2025 Pisacano Scholarship. Each recipient of this scholarship is noted as an outstanding medical student who has made a commitment to enter the specialty of family medicine.



Dr Steve Brown, Program Director of the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Family Medicine Residency received the Nikitas J. Zervanos Outstanding Program Director award from the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors (AFMRD).



Dr Kiana Espinosa, a core faculty member in the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Family Medicine Residency received the “Early Career Excellence in Education” Award, a University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix faculty award.

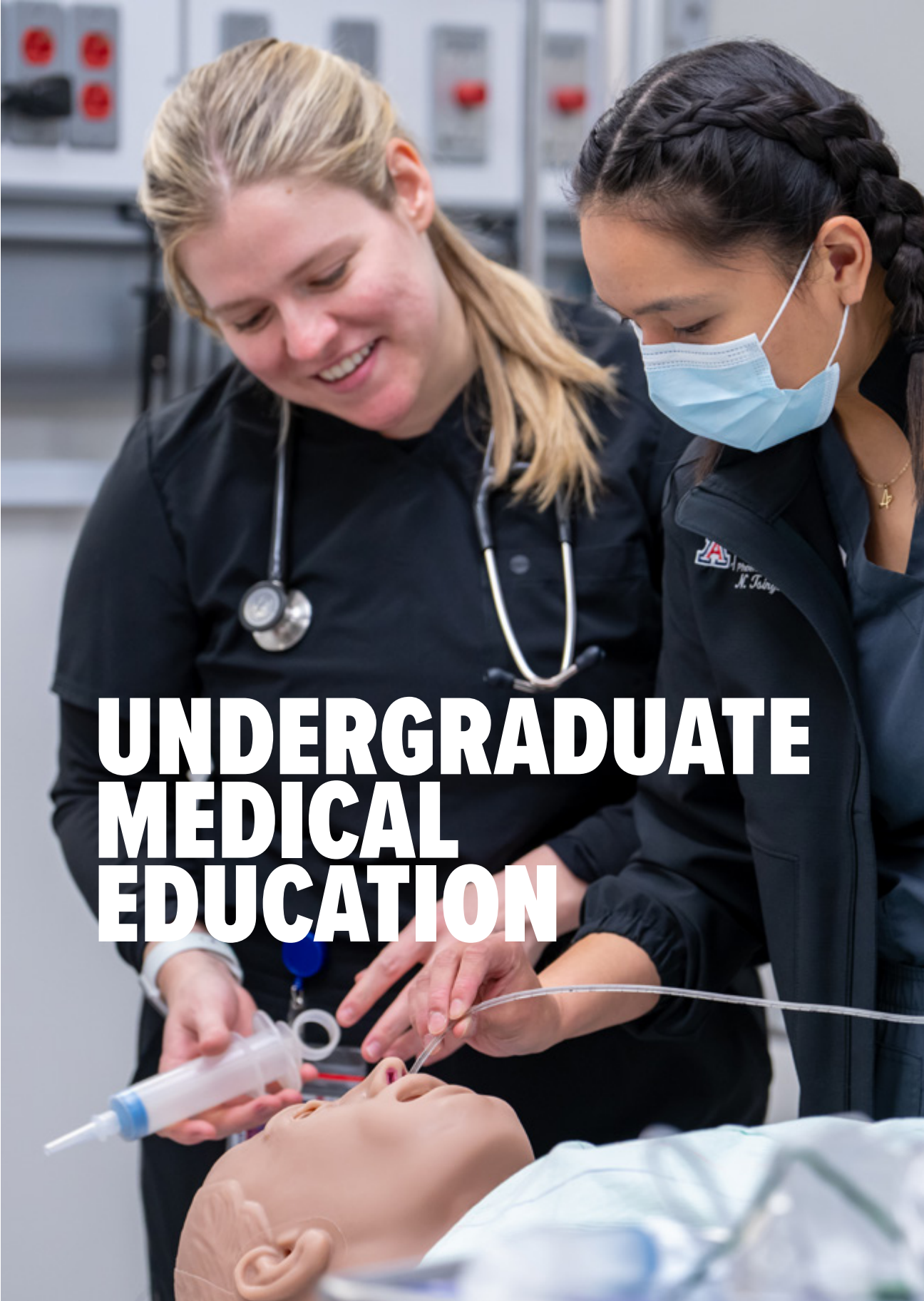


FMIG Program of Excellence (PoE) Award Winners

Categorical Winners

- Excellence in New Programming**
University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth Campus Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Innovation**
The Uniformed Services University F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Collaboration**
Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Promoting the Scope of Family Medicine**
Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine - Quinnipiac University Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Professional Development**
Loma Linda University School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Clinical Skills Development**
University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix Family Medicine Interest Group
- Excellence in Community Service**
Creighton University School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- Rising Star**
Wake Forest University School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- First-Time Applicant**
Creighton University School of Medicine Family Medicine Interest Group
- Memorial Faculty Award**
A. J. D'Onofrio, MD | Oakland University School of Medicine

The Family Medicine Interest Group was awarded the AAFP Program of Excellence Award for Clinical Skills Development by the American Academy of Family Physicians.



UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

CLERKSHIP

After many years of leadership, Dr. Sharzhad Saririan passed the role of FM Clerkship Director to Dr. Ana Gonzales and Assistant Director Dr. Diem-Thuy Kahlon.

The Family, Community and Preventive Medicine Clerkship is a four-week rotation where medical students have the opportunity to experience ambulatory practice within family and community medicine. In collaboration with our university and community partners, students gain competence in diagnosis and treatment of disease and disease prevention while better understanding the social determinants of health that affect a population's health.

Currently, the clerkship boasts 22 partner sites across the state of Arizona, with 10 sites located in rural communities, including Indian Health Services sites at Tuba Regional Health care in Tuba City and Tsehootsooi Medical Center at Fort Defiance.

The clerkship serves as a unique opportunity for medical students to better understand the diversity of care provided within family medicine, the rich relationships that are developed by caring for patients in a longitudinal manner, and the importance of primary care in our communities. Within this four-week block we are introducing students to the unique and diverse opportunities available within primary care.

Over the last academic year, students have consistently described their experiences as supportive and engaging. One student wrote, "This clerkship has shown me that FCPM is [the] backbone of healthcare". This clerkship is a pivotal experience that continues to help address primary care workforce shortages through exposure to our much-needed specialty.



Dr. Ana Gonzales,
*Family Medicine
Clerkship Director*



Dr Diem-
Thuy Kahlon,
*Family Medicine
Clerkship
Assistant Director*

3-YEAR PRIMARY CARE TRACK

The 3-year MD: Primary Care Accelerated Program (PCAP) is an innovative educational pathway designed to address Arizona's primary care workforce needs by preparing highly motivated students for earlier entry into practice.

Launched in Spring 2026, PCAP is a collaborative initiative of the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix and its primary care residency partners, creating a fully integrated continuum from undergraduate medical education (UME) to graduate medical education (GME). The inaugural cohort has been selected, marking a major milestone in program implementation.

PCAP compresses the traditional four-year MD curriculum into three intensive years while maintaining rigorous academic, clinical, and accreditation standards. The program is designed for students with a demonstrated commitment to Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, or General Pediatrics, particularly those interested in serving underserved, rural, and vulnerable populations in Arizona. Participants are embedded in the College of Medicine – Phoenix Primary Care Program from the outset, supporting early professional identity formation aligned with community-centered care.

A hallmark of PCAP is its seamless UME–GME integration. Medical school and residency faculty collaborate in student selection, education, mentorship, and assessment, ensuring continuity across the training continuum. Students who meet defined performance benchmarks may transition directly into partnered Arizona-based primary care residency programs through a modified, streamlined match process, strengthening workforce retention in the state.

The curriculum emphasizes accelerated, primary care-focused learning, incorporating foundational sciences, early clinical exposure, and longitudinal primary care experiences. Students participate in Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships, including rural and community-based settings, fostering sustained patient relationships and real-world primary care experience. A dedicated Personalized Active Learning (PAL) block at the end of the first year provides focused faculty engagement, clinical readiness coaching, and exposure to residency training environments.

Throughout the program, students receive regular formative coaching and individualized feedback to support academic progress and residency readiness. Structured off-ramps allow students to transition to the traditional four-year MD pathway if the accelerated track is no longer appropriate.

By shortening time to practice, PCAP helps reduce educational debt, complementing available primary care scholarships. Graduates are positioned to enter practice sooner, work alongside dedicated primary care mentors, and make an immediate impact on the health of Arizona's communities.



FAMILY MEDICINE INTEREST GROUP

The Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG) introduces medical students to the breadth of Family Medicine while providing mentorship for those pursuing careers in the specialty. This year, FMIG received national recognition from the American Academy of Family Physicians with the Program of Excellence in Clinical Skills Development Award, highlighting the group's strong emphasis on hands-on learning.

Educational programming included skills sessions in the pediatric physical examination, common in-office dermatologic procedures (including skin biopsies, dermoscopy, cryotherapy, suturing, and laceration repair), and an obstetrics-focused skills evening. The obstetrics session highlighted the role of obstetrics in Family Medicine and provided hands-on experience with vaginal laceration repair, amniotomies, cervical examinations, and prenatal assessment skills.

FMIG also hosted a session focused on health policy, physician advocacy, and organized medicine, introducing students to opportunities for engagement at the local, state, and national levels. In addition, FMIG coordinated a comprehensive Primary Care Week (see below). Students were also paired with resident mentors and participated in two mentor social events, further fostering professional development, mentorship, and community within the department.



PRIMARY CARE WEEK

The Family Medicine Interest Group hosted a successful Primary Care Week focused on education, advocacy, and professional development. A centerpiece of the week was an advocacy town hall titled Navigating Current Advocacy Challenges in Primary Care, which addressed current policy changes, including HR1, and growing mistrust in science and medicine. Speakers included the Health Policy Advisor to the Governor, the Director of Government Relations for the Arizona Medical Association, a State Representative, a physician advocate, and a resident physician leader in organized medicine.

Additional events included a primary care speed networking session connecting students with physicians across all primary care specialties, a panel on artificial intelligence innovations in primary care, a lecture addressing the primary care workforce shortage in underserved Arizona communities, and a discussion focused on primary care career pathways and financial considerations.



CERTIFICATES OF DISTINCTION

Certificates of Distinction offer an extracurricular opportunity for medical students to pursue their passions by engaging with scholarly work, didactic teaching, interactive experiences and community engagement longitudinally over their years of medical school. Two of the CODs are led by our Family Medicine Faculty: Health Humanities and Service of Community.

Service and Community Health

This past year, a major overhaul was conducted in the Certificates of Distinction at UACOM-P. The previous Certificates of Distinction in Service and Community Health, Rural Health, Primary Care, and Wellness, Integrative Medicine, and Nutrition were all combined under a new umbrella COD called Service of Community, led by Family Medicine Faculty member, Dr Leah Hillier. The Service of Community COD has 3 new Focus Areas: 1) Health Promotion, 2) Advocacy, and 3) Population Focus. Through the COD, seminar series are delivered to enhance medical student knowledge and exposure to content that will enhance their understanding of disparate health outcomes in our community.

Health Humanities

The Health Humanities COD is led by Dr Jennifer Hartmark-Hill. The mission of the Health Humanities Certificate of Distinction is to educate and empower medical students to employ humanistic and person-centered approaches to patient care as informed by the disciplines of bioethics, narrative medicine, history of medicine, the arts and a wide range of medical humanities. The program promotes leadership, advocacy, research, curriculum development, networking and community engagement to inspire and develop a crossdisciplinary and interprofessional community of scholars, educators, and learners.



GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION



BANNER UNIVERSITY



Dr Steve Brown,
*Program
Director, Banner
University
Family Medicine
Residency*

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix Family Medicine Residency, founded in 1970, continues to strive to elevate health for all through innovative primary care, education, leadership, and community engagement.

Our residents and graduates

Our current residents matched to our program from all over the country. Eight of our current residents are graduates of the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix, four come from other medical schools in Arizona, and twelve moved to Arizona from medical schools in the US outside our state. We train our residents to thrive in a wide range of practice settings. Recent graduates have joined fellowships in maternal-child health, addiction medicine, hospice and palliative medicine, and sports medicine. Other graduates have gone straight into faculty positions in Arizona residency programs, or began serving their communities working in Banner primary care positions or local Federally Qualified Health Centers. Graduates that stay with Banner and/or in-state can take advantage of significant financial benefits including stipends while in residency, signing bonuses, and generous loan repayment.

Our scope of practice

Our faculty and residents deliver full spectrum care. We provide comprehensive, first-contact, coordinated, continuous care for thousands of patients each year at the Banner Family Medicine Center (FMC). In addition, four of our faculty provide maternity care with our residents including deliveries. We have a robust inpatient service at Banner University Medical Center-Phoenix where eight of our faculty teach residents and care for patients from our FMC who are admitted to the hospital in addition to hundreds of newborns each year. Recent improvements to our inpatient service include a resident night float system, created and optimized based on extensive resident feedback. The night float system helps our inpatients get safe care with improved overnight continuity. In addition, one of our faculty works with our residents to care for our patients at a local long-term care facility.

Community engagement

Our residents and faculty provide coverage for numerous local high school sports teams, especially for teams in traditionally underserved communities. We provide weekly education to middle school students about their own health and inspire them to seek careers in health fields through our “Mini Med School” program. Since 2023, we provide fresh produce and healthy non-perishables to our patients experiencing food insecurity through our innovative Banner Family Food Pantry. Run by residents, faculty, and FMC staff, our food pantry has served over 7,000 households and over 21,000 individuals. We mentor medical students and pre-medical students in multiple University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix programs that provide pathways to medical careers.

BANNER PAYSON

The Payson Family Medicine Residency entered its second year in 2025 and continues to grow as a strong rural training site serving Arizona's Rim Country.



Dr. Roberta Matern, Program Director, Banner Payson Family Medicine Residency

We currently train three residents and are actively recruiting our third class. A major milestone for the program occurred this fall when our PGY-2 resident, Dr. Ben Johnson, signed a contract to remain in Payson after graduation—an early demonstration of our mission to develop and retain a rural primary care workforce.

This year marked meaningful growth in leadership. Dr. Maryssa Spires joined us in September as Associate Program Director, returning to the site where she completed her Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship as a medical student. She now oversees didactics and is developing a coordinated 18-month didactic schedule in collaboration with the new family medicine residency program in San Luis, expanding shared teaching resources and fostering alignment across rural Arizona programs. Dr. Spires also leads the curriculum and supervision for our LIC students and family medicine subinterns.

We continue to strengthen integrated behavioral health training under the leadership of Dr. Gina Touch-Mercer, who has expanded teaching, case-based learning, and collaboration to better prepare residents for full-spectrum practice in rural communities.

The residency completed its first ACGME continuing accreditation site visit this fall, an important milestone for our developing program. The visit was comprehensive and, by all indications, went very well. In preparation, the program advanced its competency-based curriculum, refined evaluation and milestone mapping, and expanded faculty development offerings to faculty across the Payson campus—including targeted micro-learning modules delivered during quarterly GME meetings.

We are also enthusiastic about strengthening our point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) curriculum. With the acquisition of a new ultrasound machine and the launch of SonoSim for simulation-based learning, the program is expanding hands-on scanning opportunities across outpatient, emergency, and inpatient settings.

We continue to enhance the applicant experience through structured in-person sessions and opportunities to understand training in a rural, full-spectrum environment. Support from local partners—including a small grant from the MHA Foundation that allows us to offer hotel accommodations—has helped make the recruitment process more accessible. We were excited to welcome our first three-year Longitudinal Integrated Curriculum (LIC) student, Bryce Palmer, who began his LIC in March 2026, and we hope this early connection will lead him to join our residency in the summer of 2027.

Overall, the residency continues on a trajectory of steady growth, expanding educational infrastructure, strengthening behavioral health integration, and demonstrating early success in rural workforce development. We look forward to welcoming our next class and further advancing high-quality family medicine training in northern Gila County.

BANNER DESERT



Dr. Jake Anderson, Program Director, Banner Desert Family Medicine Residency

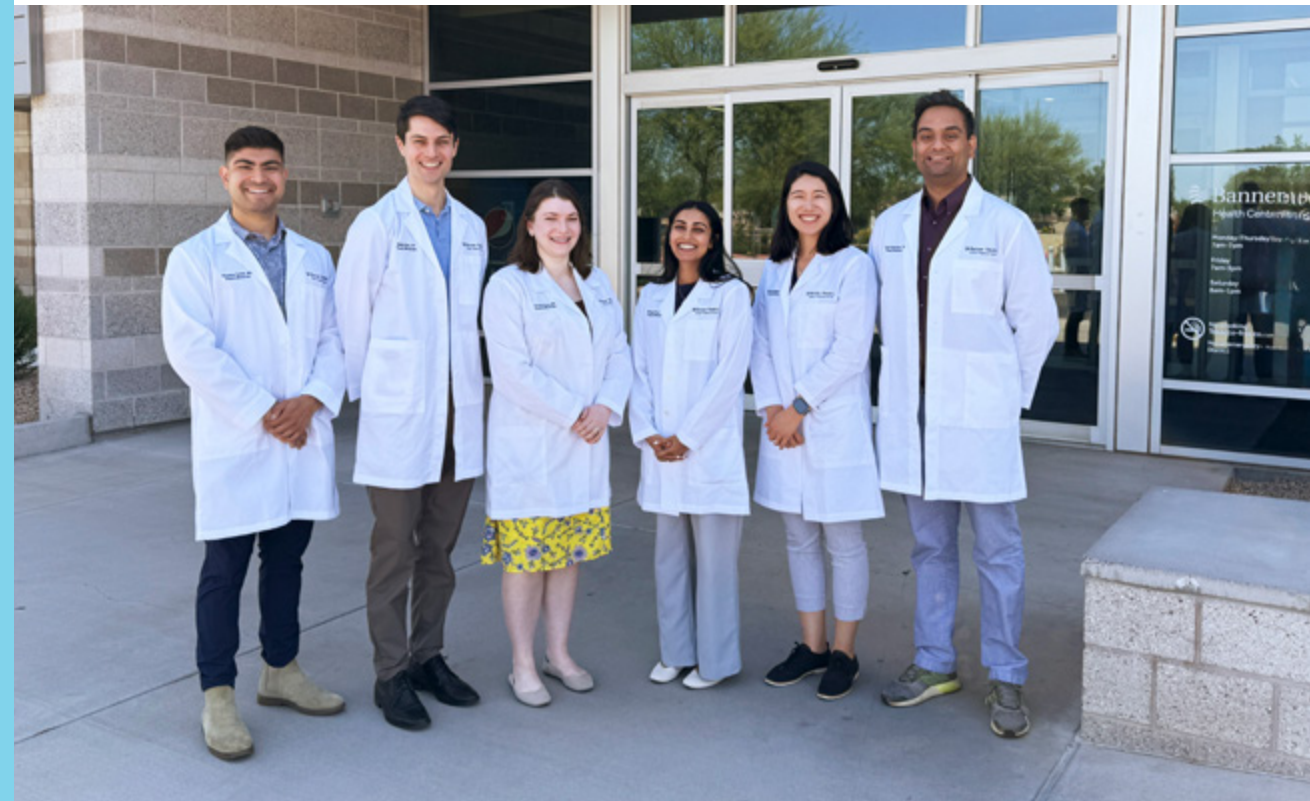
June 2025 marked the official launch of the newest University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix family medicine residency program and things have been full speed ahead ever since. After filling in its first Match in March of 2025, the program welcomed six amazing residents from all over the country that share a passion for high-quality, community-centered family medicine. This program represents part of the ongoing work to address the primary care needs of our state by expanding GME into the East Valley of the Phoenix Metropolitan. Based at Banner Desert Medical

Center and Banner Health Center Chandler, the program strives to train full-spectrum family doctors through innovative curriculum and community partnership that place an emphasis on our residents' and faculty roles as leaders in the community.

One such example has been through our partnership with a pediatric free clinic. The Banner Children's Community Clinic (pictured below) provides care to patients without insurance and is staffed by our faculty and residents every Friday.

In addition to the incredible group of residents, the Program has also continued to build a committed and passionate core faculty group that includes a wealth of experience (pictured below).

The accomplishments of 2025 reflect the dedication and collaboration of residents, faculty, staff, and institutional partners. Banner Desert Family Medicine Residency Program remains committed to training family physicians who deliver exceptional care, lead with integrity, and serve their communities with purpose. With a strong foundation and shared vision, the program looks forward to continued growth and innovation in 2026.



FELLOWSHIPS

Sports Medicine

Led by several of our graduates serving as core faculty, the Primary Care Sports Medicine Fellowship serves as a center for patient care, medical education, and scholarly research. Fellows gain hands-on experience in the prevention, diagnosis and management of sports-related injuries in a variety of clinical settings.

Addiction Medicine

In collaboration with the Phoenix VA Health Care System, our Department supports the Addiction Medicine Fellowship, providing comprehensive training in the management of substance use disorders. This fellowship equips physicians with the skills needed to address addiction in various clinical settings.



Dr. Keisha Pierre-Lys,
Maternal Child Health Fellow

Maternal Child Health

Launched in 2025, the Maternal Child Health Fellowship provides an additional year of advanced training in maternity care, including surgical deliveries and enhanced skills in stabilizing and managing newborns. The fellowship aims to expand access to maternity and newborn care in rural and underserved communities by promoting a family-centered maternity care model.

Community Medicine

In collaboration with the Wesley Community & Health Center, the Community Medicine Fellowship was established to equip fellows with hands-on experience in community-based health care. Fellows will provide care at the Wesley Clinic, engage in community health programs, and participate in mentored research and leadership initiatives focused on addressing health disparities and advancing community health.

ADVOCACY

In 2025 our residents and faculty advocated on a state and national level for affordable prescription drugs, expanding access to care, and optimizing vaccine coverage. Many of our residents completed the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians Health Policy Scholars program and attended the AAFP's Family Medicine Advocacy Summit in Washington, DC. Two of our current residents, Chisom Okuagu, DO and

Rachel Dunn, MD, were elected to the board of the Arizona Medical Association (ArMA). Dr. Dunn was also appointed to the AAFP's Commission on Federal and State Policy. Several of our faculty serve as ArMA Doctor of the Day at the State Legislature each year and numerous residents and faculty attend the AzAFP's Emerging Leader day at the State Capitol each year.



GRAND ROUNDS

Led by CME Activity Director Dr Viktoria Krajnc, the Department of Family, Community & Preventive Medicine Grand Rounds take place on the 4th Thursday of the month, every 2 months at the BUMC–P Family Medicine Clinic Conference room at the Edwards Medical Plaza and on Zoom. They feature local and national champions in primary care to provide enriching and inspiring accredited CME for our department faculty and education to medical learners on topics pertinent to primary care and serving our community.

Grand rounds highlight:



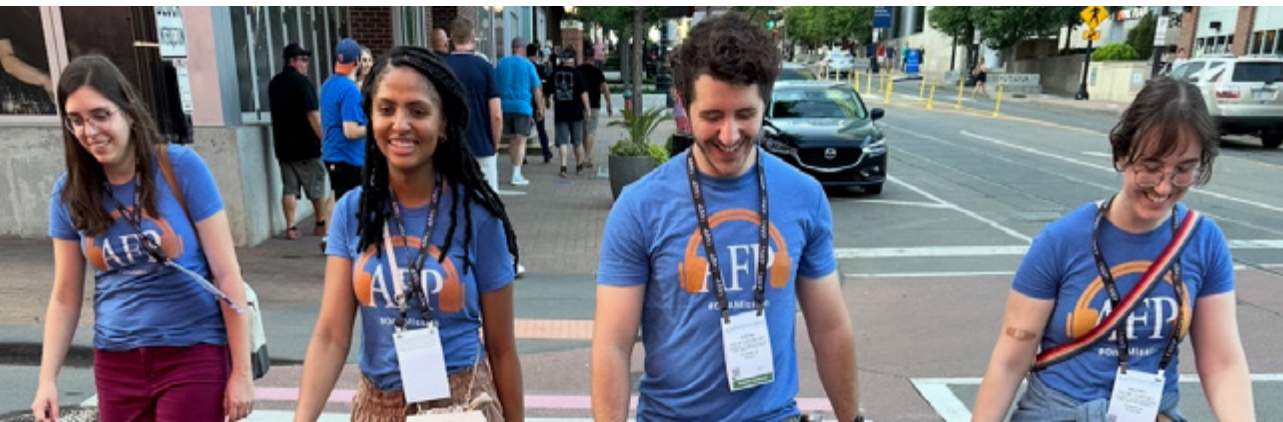
“Building Research Capacity in the Community Setting: Insights and Opportunities”– Trudie Milner, PHD

“Trudie F. Milner has over 30 years of experience in healthcare leadership, strategy, hospital and ambulatory operations. She has worked within a multi-hospital integrated system, an academic medical center and most recently at a community hospital where she served as an SVP and Chief Operating Officer. Key achievements include building effective, high functioning teams, developing and empowering both administrator and physician dyads and leading through change. She is passionate and committed to graduate-level education for both clinical and non-clinical leaders with a focus on curriculum development, teaching and mentoring. She is an adjunct assistant professor in the College of Health Professions at the Medical University of South Carolina where she has taught for the last 15 years. She is an active researcher, a published author and a TEDx speaker.”

THE AMERICAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN PODCAST

Our residents and faculty host the award-winning American Family Physician Podcast, a twice monthly discussion of the key evidence-based learning points from each issue of American Family Physician (AFP). More than 40,000 listeners tune in to each episode of AFP Podcast to get their clinical highlights. The episodes have been downloaded over 8,000,000 times. The podcast was awarded the 2018 Innovative Program Award by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine and top honors by the Association of Media and Publishing.

Our faculty podcast editors are Steven R. Brown, MD, Jacob Anderson, DO, and Sarah Coles, MD who founded the podcast in 2015. Drs. Brown and Anderson co-host the episodes twice per month with third-year residents. Currently on its eleventh season, the AFP Podcast is approaching 250 regular episodes and has featured over sixty third-year resident hosts.



FACULTY

LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

Successfully launched in 2024, the Department's Leadership Accelerator Program was offered again in 2025 and was hosted by physician leadership coach Sandy Scott. The program included eight faculty participants in leadership roles in the department and was designed to cultivate a shared vision, strengthen collaboration, and build advanced leadership capacity among the Department's physician leaders. Through facilitated group sessions and peer check-ins, the program aligned participants around shared goals while enhancing skills in leadership, teamwork, and cohesion. Faculty participants increased self-awareness, accountability, and leadership effectiveness, culminating in the completion of individualized leadership development plans to support ongoing professional growth.

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES PODCAST



In response to faculty feedback, the department launched a Departmental Updates podcast this year to provide a flexible, asynchronous alternative to traditional faculty meetings. The podcast features regular departmental updates and interviews, ensuring faculty remain informed and connected to departmental activities. Faculty can access the podcast by scanning the accompanying QR code.

FACULTY AWARDS

The annual Departmental meeting was held at the University Club on May 9, 2025. During that meeting, department updates were presented as well as the annual departmental awards:

- Clerkship Educator - Giao Quach, MD
- Clinical Quality - Jason Leubner, MD
- Collaboration - Jenna Buchanan, MD
- Impact - Birdie Matern, MD
- Innovation - Leah Hillier, MD
- Interprofessional Leadership - Taylor Young, PhD, LMFT
- Leadership - Katie Brite, MD
- Research - Freya Spielberg, MD
- Rural Educator - Naomi Clancy, MD

Academic Promotions

Merima Bucaj, DO	Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor	Clinical Series Track
Nalini S Bhalla, MD	Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor	Clinical Series Track
Stephanie Briney, DO	Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor	Clinical Series Track
Jennifer Hartmark-Hill, MD	Promotion to Professor	Clinical Scholar Track
Leah Hillier, MD	Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor	Clinical Series Track
Kathleen J Hillis, MD	Promotion to Associate Clinical Professor	Clinical Series Track

CLINICAL AFFAIRS



MESSAGE FROM DR. BUCHANAN



Dr. Jenna Buchanan, Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs, Department of Family, Community, & Preventive Medicine

Our clinical division at Banner—University Medical Group Phoenix includes practices in the Edwards Medical Plaza and our primary expansion clinic in the Arcadia Health Center Plus facility. The clinical component of the department represents a subset of the faculty that provides direct patient care, education in both inpatient and outpatient settings for medical students and residents and serves as an important tie to the community. We maintain close partnerships with the Wesley Community &

Health Center, collaborating in the management of maternity care and delivery and clinical education for our residents. While the Family Medicine residency sponsors the Addiction and Sports Medicine fellowships, these clinics are operated separately, with some physicians providing services in both clinical settings.

Work in our outpatient practices has focused on strengthening our core operations while striving for clinical innovation. This work includes continuing facility updates, lean process and quality improvement, team-based care, integrating innovative technology into clinical practice, and addressing work satisfaction for staff and providers. The practices have implemented facility updates, scheduling improvements, streamlining supply and procedure handling, and developing ways to optimize common workflows. We have targeted clinic message routing, documentation and “after hours workload,” paperwork management, panel sizes and patient/provider continuity. Streamlining this work remains complex and is key to improving the outpatient clinical experiences in our department.

We are committed to identifying clinic innovations as we embrace the dual agendas of both patient access and value-based care. This work has long been a goal in Family Medicine, focusing on care that truly improves the health and well-being of our patients. With this goal comes new care activities, new team members, new resources, and navigating changes in coding and payment methodologies. We aim to retain the positive aspects of these changes while reducing the frustration our teams experience in the pursuit of comprehensive care.

The practices have incorporated pharmacy, social work, behavioral health providers, population health-focused medical assistants, Transitional Care nurse navigators, and will soon be adding a registered dietician. We have also introduced a team of advanced practice providers who support same-day access, in-basket and paperwork management, and convenience care (after-hours) schedules. Team members have completed additional training and board certification in Obesity Medicine to better integrate this care into our practices, following our previous work in opioid addiction MAT.

The clinics have participated in collaboration with the Banner Cultivating Happiness in Medicine (CHIM) team. We have adopted clinic-wide practices aimed at improving staff and physician well-being by enhancing communication, team-building opportunities and the creation of organizational and optimization structures guided by these teams, supported by an IT infrastructure. The Department of Family Medicine remains engaged in comprehensive family medicine including inpatient hospital teaching service, geriatric facility rounding, maternity care including deliveries, a full array of procedures, and an ongoing robust array of outpatient procedures in the clinics. We see this as an important reinforcement of the ongoing value in maintaining and role-modeling these full-spectrum primary care abilities.



RESEARCH

MESSAGE FROM DR. SPIELBERG



Dr. Freya Spielberg, *Vice Chair of Research, Department of Family, Community, & Preventive Medicine*

The Department of Family, Community, and Preventive Medicine is uniquely positioned to advance family medicine research, where the community itself serves as our laboratory. Our mission—to improve health for all Arizonans through rigorous, community-driven, patient-centered research—guides both our current work and our vision for the future. Family medicine allows us to pilot interventions that are innovative, feasible, and sustainable in real-world clinical settings, with the potential for broad impact.

Over the past year, our Department has made significant strides in building research capacity and advancing community-oriented inquiry. We participated in multiple national Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) studies at Banner University, added a full-time research manager to support departmental projects, and piloted a Community-Oriented Research curriculum with summer interns. We were honored with the Big Idea Award for our work on heat-related illness and death, created structured processes to connect medical students with research mentors, and hosted nine clinically embedded scholars in collaboration with ASU's College of Health Solutions Safety Net Advancement Center through the SSNE-STaR program, providing training in patient-centered outcomes research within safety-net clinical settings. Additionally, our faculty and learners delivered multiple presentations at the World Congress on Family Medicine in Portugal, showcasing our research on national and international stages. These accomplishments reflect our commitment to faculty and learner development, rigorous scholarship, and meaningful community impact.

Looking ahead, the 2026 Research Strategic Plan sets a clear roadmap for the future. The plan focuses on expanding our research infrastructure, formalizing affinity groups, enhancing faculty mentorship and protected research time, strengthening grant development and dissemination pipelines, and building our Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) to pilot real-world studies across clinic networks. Guided by principles of community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, precision prevention, and value-driven research, we aim to generate actionable evidence, scale effective interventions, and train the next generation of primary care researchers.

By combining the lessons and momentum from last year with this strategic vision, our Department seeks to continue shaping the future of family medicine research in Arizona. We are committed to producing research that is rigorous, equitable, and impactful—improving access, outcomes, and health across the communities we serve.

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH STUDIES

Practice Based Research Studies - In 2025 the department participated in three DartNet funded studies. While these studies are national comparative effectiveness trials, we have assigned medical students to each to determine the impact, acceptability and feasibility of the interventions for Banner patients which will lead to improved health care, and will provide our medical students the opportunity to engage in presentations and publications.

- 1. Firstlook** - This study tested a novel FDA approved blood test to screen for lung cancer risk. Participating providers found that many patients who had not completed the ordered LDCT were willing to take the blood test, and if positive follow through for the LDCT so that lung nodules could be identified and appropriately treated. Providers and patients found this testing algorithm to be acceptable, feasible and preferable for patients with barriers to LDCT screening.
- 2. HOPE** - This study tested the implementation of an evidence based year long intervention for Lifestyle (Nutrition, Exercise, Self-Care) among Family Medicine clinic patients with BMIs 30 or higher. We launched both biweekly group visits and individual visits using a multidisciplinary team including MDs, PAs and Social Workers. The HOPE enrollment has been completed for the national study, and we are continuing offering this service to our patients while engaging in ongoing quality improvement efforts to increase participation and impact.

- 3. My Health My Choice** - This study tests the impact of a digital tool for women with chronic diseases to help them make decisions with their providers about contraception. We just launched this study and are looking forward to evaluating the impact, acceptability and feasibility through Medical Student research over the next year
- 4. Lifestyle Intervention in Low Income Housing** - We have partnered with Rehoboth Development Corporation and Be Head Strong to evaluate the delivery of a 9 week or 9 month Wellness Intervention which focused on cooking skills and exercise. An interim analysis showed 37 participants lost 113 pounds to date. A summer intern and medical student are working together on the evaluation of this project to determine the impact of both programs on health behaviors and weight loss, and to determine the effectiveness of incentives (per pound lost) on weight loss and behavior change.
- 5. Diabetic Food Boxes** - We are partnering with Creighton Community Foundation on linkage of Banner Diabetic patients who are food insecure with Creighton's Diabetic food box program which provides healthy produce and whole foods, recipes, and cooking classes. We will partner with them to evaluate the impact of their program on access to healthy foods, nutrition behaviors and diabetes outcomes. .

WONCA

WONCA - the World Organization of Family Doctors (the acronym is from its founding title in 1972: the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies, and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/ Family Physicians) held its World Conference in Lisbon, Portugal in September, 2025.

Two podium presentations and a poster were presented by the UACOM-P DFCEM, the first presentation offered by Christopher Hernandez Salinas, a medical student matching to Family Medicine under the mentorship of Dr Leah Hillier, and the second presentation and poster offered by Vice Chair of Research, Dr Freya Spielberg.

The World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) is a not-for-profit organization and was founded in 1972 by member organizations in 18 countries. WONCA now has 133 Member Organizations in 111 countries and territories with membership of about 500,000 family doctors and more than 90 per cent of the world's population. This includes eight organizations in collaborative relations with WONCA. There are some 35 members in the Academic membership category, which consists of Academic Departments of Family Medicine. Over 800 individual general practitioners and family physicians have chose to join WONCA in their own right.

WONCA represents and acts as an advocate for its constituent members at an international level where it interacts with world bodies such as the World Health Organization, with whom it has official relations as a non-governmental organization and is engaged in a number of collaborative projects.



AFFINITY GROUPS

In order to accelerate research efforts important to Family Physicians in Arizona, the UACOM-P is in the process of launching research affinity groups for faculty and medical learners to support collaboration and synergy in research efforts across the state of Arizona. Affinity groups will identify key research priorities and develop research plans in 6 areas:

- 1) Primary Care Education and Workforce Development;**
- 2) Community and Population Health;**
- 3) Primary Care Innovation;**
- 4) Behavioral Health and Substance Use;**
- 5) Technology, AI, and Innovation;**
- 6) Practice Improvement.**

Each group will meet quarterly to develop and move forward research agendas and scholarly activities. To support this effort, a curriculum in Community Oriented Research will be delivered biweekly to build research capacity, and Work in Progress sessions will provide weekly mentoring. The goals for the affinity groups will be to collect pilot data, submit presentations and publications, and to apply for grants to fund clinician teams to scale up research.



POSTERS, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS FROM OUR FAMILY MEDICINE FACULTY

Posters

Cunningham E, Peña P, Sherwood A, Hillier L. Establishing a focus track within the certificate of distinction in service of community to enhance medical student involvement and familiarity with sexual orientation and gender diverse patients. Poster presented at: LGBT Health Workforce Conference; May 2025; New York, NY.

Dunn R, Bellack C, Brown S, Bedor S. Connecting patients with food insecurity to a clinic food pantry. Poster presented at: Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 3, 2026; New Orleans, LA.

Dunn R, Leaver J, De La Pena N, Ackerley H, Doan M, Hostal K, Grizzle L, et al. Beliefs belonging to people of color with cervixes regarding cervical cancer screening. Poster presented at: Mayo Clinic Family Medicine Forum; 2021; Rochester, MN.

Konkankit VV, Galarza N, Reusser GE, Kumar NC, Diaz KM. EMR efficacy of asthma action plan implementation in an outpatient clinic. Poster presented at: Arizona Medical Association Annual Conference; April 2023; Phoenix, AZ.

Konkankit VV, Reusser GE, Kumar NC, Diaz KM. Increased asthma action plan utilization by improving EHR efficiency. Poster presented at: American Academy of Family Physicians; July 2023; Kansas City, MO.

Lee T, Kasabyan A, Wieland D, Arun S, Solomon J, Bernal S, Klosterman K, Miller A, Galliano A, Roveda J, Hillier L, Fauer R, Spielberg F. Desired heat relief interventions among housing insecure individuals in Phoenix, Arizona. Poster presented at: Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 2025; Salt Lake City, UT.

Liu V, Matthias K, Jones A. Trust but verify: a thigh pain conundrum. Poster presented at: AMSSM Annual Conference; April 2025; Kansas City, MO.

Matthias K, Liu V, Jones A. Chronic shoulder pain with recent new onset jaundice. Poster presented at: AMSSM Annual Conference; April 2025; Kansas City, MO.

Presentations

Bentley A, Brown SR, Sairenji T, Mitchell K, Malhi A. Matching successfully: best practices for applicants, advisors, and programs. Presented at: Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 4, 2025; Salt Lake City, UT.

Brite Hills K. Arizona trails: mapping the path to workforce development. Presented at: Consortium of Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships; September 2025; Wales, UK.

Brite Hills K. CHC-U Workforce Convening National Group. Invited workforce representative; January 2026; Washington, DC.

Brite Hills K. The SCOPE at AAMC Learn Serve Lead. Invited presentation; 2025.

Brite-Hillis K, Cartsonis JZ. Workforce innovations: undergraduate medical education to graduate medical education. Poster oral presentation presented at: Consortium of Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships Annual Meeting; September 7, 2025; Cardiff, Wales.

Brown SR, Wong J, Butler M, Schutz LN, Hirakawa A, Dunn R. Food pantries in family medicine residency clinics can directly address food insecurity. Presented at: Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 6, 2025; Salt Lake City, UT.

Grizzle L, Boltz M. Residency program + community health center = numerous offspring 9 months later: how we increased maternity care numbers. Presented at: STFM Annual Spring Conference; May 2025.

Guddlebrook D, Tall F, Hunt J, Castaneda U, Cartsonis JZ. Arizona trails and rivers: mapping the path to workforce development. Workshop presented at: Rural Medical Training Collaborative; April 11, 2025; Santa Fe, NM.

Heiser D, Hartmark-Hill J. Substance use disorder, depression, and healthcare utilization among homeless young adults: a SDOH perspective. Presented at: Health Care Advancement Symposium; May 2025; Phoenix, AZ.

Heiser D, Wu S, Hartmark-Hill J. Substance use disorder, depression, and healthcare utilization among homeless young adults: a SDOH perspective. Presented at: Arizona Medical Association Annual Meeting Symposium; April 2025.

Hirakawa A, Brown SR. How do patients utilize food from a clinic-based food pantry? Presented at: Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference; April 4, 2025; Phoenix, AZ.

Hunt J, Cartsonis JZ. Geographic narcissism. Poster oral presentation presented at: Consortium of Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships Annual Meeting; September 7, 2025; Cardiff, Wales.

Hunt J, Trulove G, Cartsonis JZ. Mastering rural medicine: a roadmap through competency-based learning. Presented at: Arizona Rural Health Conference; June 5, 2025; Flagstaff, AZ.

Konkankit VV, Reusser GE, Kumar NC, Diaz KM. Increased asthma action plan utilization by improving EHR efficiency. Oral presentation presented at: Arizona Academy of Family Physicians Research Symposium; March 2024; Phoenix, AZ.

Lalwani K, Sirilan AG, Hillier L. Digital misinformation and public health: a cross-sectional analysis of sexual health content on TikTok. Presented at: American Academy of Pediatrics Experience Council on Adolescents and Young Adults Program; September 2025; Denver, CO.

Nguyen C, Ha J, Lopez BM, Azhar E, Kang P, Waheed A. Outcomes of a health systems advocacy, leadership, and management curriculum in a family medicine residency program. Presented at: Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference; April 4, 2025; Phoenix, AZ; and Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 6, 2025; Salt Lake City, UT.

Odrejka L, Robin M, Hartmark-Hill J. Melodies of medicine: impacts of music on the well-being of hospitalized children and adolescents. Presented at: AzAAP 48th Annual Conference; June 2025; Sedona, AZ

Paladine H, Foster K, Brown S, Espinosa K, Gonzalez A, Karnik A, Dunn R. Transforming community engagement into resident scholarly work. Presented at: Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 3, 2026; New Orleans, LA.

Paul E. Empowering health: training primary care physicians in rural Arizona. Presented at: Onvida Health Research Symposium; September 27, 2025; Yuma, AZ.

Paul E. Partnerships in underserved GME: Area Health Education Centers. Presented at: ACGME Medically Underserved Populations Interest Group Webinar; August 19, 2025; Virtual.

Paul E. Review of GME programs under development and future grant opportunities. Presented at: Arizona GME Workforce Summit; January 15, 2025; Phoenix, AZ.

Paul E. Workforce development in rural communities. Presented at: 7th Annual Yuma County NAU/ABRC Community Forum; April 15, 2025; San Luis, AZ.

Paul E, Derksen D. Growing the physician workforce in critical access hospitals. Presented at: Western Region FLEX Conference; June 6, 2025; Flagstaff, AZ.

Salinas C, Eisner AL, Gautam N, Hillier L. Family medicine residency leaders' perspectives on the September 2025 development of a family medicine learning collaborative in Arizona: a qualitative study. Presented at: WONCA World Conference; 2025; Lisbon, Portugal.

Shah P, Hartmark-Hill J. Narrative medicine curriculum for teaching clinical ethics. Presented at: Gold Humanism Summit; 2025; Baltimore, MD.

Spielberg F. Collaborative Research for Multimorbidity Care. Presented at: WONCA World Conference; 2025; Lisbon, Portugal.

Spielberg F. Urgent Wellness: Redesigning Primary Care to Address Health Disparities. Presented at: WONCA World Conference; 2025; Lisbon, Portugal.

Stephenson K. Hobbiton & beyond: practicing family medicine in rural New Zealand: cultural and linguistic literacy. Presented at: Prozano Health; March 2025; Tucson, AZ.

Stapp J. Building an academic assisted living facility. Presented at: Generations United International Conference; 2015.

Stapp J. Storytelling in the garden. Invited lecture presented at: GRHC Lecture Series; May 2026.

Touch Mercer G. Behavioral medicine in health care: building resilience and flourishing in health care clinicians, institutions, and patients. Continuing Education. Net international CME course; August 31–September 7, 2026.

Voy C, Brown SR, Stauss K, Patel S, Spielberg F, Langsetmo S, Dubey S. Voter engagement in a family medicine office. Presented at: Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference; April 4, 2025; Phoenix, AZ; and Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Annual Spring Conference; May 6, 2025; Salt Lake City, UT.

Publications

Alomar T, Otieno R, Alomar S, Jones A. Cutibacterium acnes osteomyelitis 2 years after intra-articular steroid injection. *AIM Clin Cases.* 2024;3:e240264.

Ball G, Merdad R, Birken C, Cohen T, et al, including Naji L. Managing obesity in children: a clinical practice guideline. *CMAJ.* 2025;197(14).

Brown SR. Ankle injury. In: Ebell M, et al., eds. *Essential Evidence Plus.* 2025.

Brown SR. Osteoporosis. In: Ebell M, et al., eds. *Essential Evidence Plus.* 2025.

Brown SR. Preoperative evaluation. *Family Medicine Residency Curriculum Resource.* Accessed February 11, 2026.

Chiang CC, Dunn R, et al. Real-world efficacy, tolerability, and safety of ubrogepant. *Headache.* 2021;61(4):620-627.

Dunn R. Cultural humility: a guide for medical practitioners. *Family Physician Focus.* 2023;23(1):14-19.

Fauer R, et al. Orthopedic conditions and treatment patterns among unhoused urban patients: a street medicine study. *Research Square preprint.* 2025.

Fauer R, et al. Recommended cardiometabolic screening guidelines for unhoused adults: a street medicine needs assessment.

Hamilton G, Azuma T, Volk K, Best E, Crance S. Living alone with dementia: supportive care for dementia, a replicable model for support and lessons learned. *Dementia.* 2025.

Hamilton G, Pierson K, Volk K, Azuma T. A financially viable model supporting persons living alone or with caregivers. *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2024;67(5):e512-e513.

Jackson E, Bach P, Socias M, Brooks O, Fairbairn N, Rodrigues M, Rosic T, Naji L, et al. Trends in stimulant use among patients with opioid use disorder receiving substance use treatment: findings from a prospective cohort study from 2013 to 2020. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2025.

Keister D, Hartmark-Hill J, Tattelman E, Grant P, Hartl K, eds. *New Faculty Guide to Academic Family Medicine.* 1st ed. KDP Publishers; 2025.

Knapp S, Kehring A, Stepp J, et al. Elevated coefficient of variation in total fecal bile acids precedes diagnosis of necrotizing enterocolitis. *Sci Rep.* 2020;10:249.

Marvasti FF, Thomas O, Albin J, Reilly JM, Wood N. Lifestyle medicine and culinary medicine: a narrative review of important synergies. *Am J Lifestyle Med.* Published online December 8, 2025.

Metz TD, Reeder HT, Clifton RG, Flaherman V, Hillier L, et al. Long COVID after acquisition of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 during pregnancy compared with outside of pregnancy. *Obstet Gynecol.* Published online October 2, 2025.

Naji L, Rosic T, Dennis B, Worster A, Paul J, Thabane L, Samaan Z. Effectiveness of methadone versus buprenorphine in the treatment of opioid use disorder: a propensity score matched analysis. *BMJ Open.* In press. 2025.

Nguyen C, Ha J, Lopez BM, Azhar E, Kang P, Waheed A. Outcomes of a health systems advocacy, leadership, and management curriculum in a family medicine residency program. *PRiMER.* 2025;9:50.

Reusser GE. Transient ischemic attack (TIA). In: Domino FJ, Baldor RA, Barry KA, Golding J, Stephens MB, eds. *The 5-Minute Clinical Consult.* 34th ed. Wolters Kluwer; 2026.

Richert ME, Diao G, Mancera A, Villarroel L, et al. Statewide transfer coordination and patient transfer rates among hospitals during occupancy stress. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2025;8(12):e2546002.

Rothers JL, Stepp J, et al. Enteral feeding and antibiotic treatment do not influence increased coefficient of variation of total fecal bile acids in necrotizing enterocolitis. *Newborn.* 2023;2(2):128-132.

Sandweiss AJ, Dunn R, et al. Genetic and pharmacological antagonism of NK1 receptor prevents opiate abuse potential. *Mol Psychiatry.* 2018;23(8):1745-1755.

Stephenson K. A crystal story. *ChART Journal.* 2025;11:84-92.

Stephenson K. Pain, grief, moon. *ChART Journal.* 2025;11:160-164.

Stephenson K. Resuscitation. *ChART Journal.* 2025;11:56-64.

Villarroel L. An executive order for a public orchestra: a public health thought experiment. In: Laing A, Eschrich J, Finn E, eds. *Sound Systems: The Future of the Orchestra.* Arizona State University Center for Science and the Imagination; 2025.

Villarroel L, Kenney A, Stegemeyer J, Eller B, et al. The necessity of a health and safety officer in a public health emergency operations center. *Disaster Med Public Health Prep.* 2025.

Villarroel LR, Mardian AS, Townsend CO, Brown SR. Brick walls and broken hearts: physicians draw how they feel about treating pain and addiction. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2025;40(5):1194-1196.

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Zeien J, Vieira J, Hanna J, Ramirez A, Miller C, Hartmark-Hill J, Rosales C. Utilization of street-based COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Phoenix's homeless population. *Community Health Equity Res Policy.* 2025;45(3):265-273.

CLINICALLY EMBEDDED SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Arizona State University's College of Health Solutions National Safety Net Advancement Center (SNAC) received grant funding from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to launch an innovative program training researchers caring for patients in safety-net settings. Five UACOM-P Faculty started the program in 2025 and four more were offered participation for 2026 as Clinically Embedded Scholars. This partnership between UA and ASU is an exciting opportunity to build research capacity within our department. The scholars are developing a range of research projects focused on improving health outcomes and patient satisfaction in primary care. The five 2025 Fellows and project descriptions are as follows:

Dr. Leen Najj



Dr Najj is looking at the comparative effectiveness of methadone versus buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder in people with OUD who use methamphetamine using prospectively collected data from

~3500 patients with OUD receiving treatment across >50 sites in Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Jason Leubner



Dr. Leubner is looking at the impact of transportation insecurity and transportation interventions on the impact of adherence to recommended healthcare and on chronic disease outcomes. He will test the impact of a system that

includes universal SDOH screening, automated referral for transportation insecurity to Social Work, and the use of the state closed loop referral system, to track referrals and link to outcomes.

Dr. Sharzhad Saririan



Dr Saririan is leading a multi-phase, patient-centered research project focused on improving Helicobacter pylori treatment completion and test-of-cure follow-up in safety-net primary care settings serving underserved, immigrant, and

refugee populations. The project integrates community health workers, frontline clinicians, and patients in co-design and emphasizes health equity, real-world feasibility, and scalability across safety-net systems.

Dr. Taylor Young



Dr. Young is leading a Banner study evaluating the impact of Patient Co-design on Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. He will test the hypothesis that engaging patients in co-designing interventions will result in interventions that are more

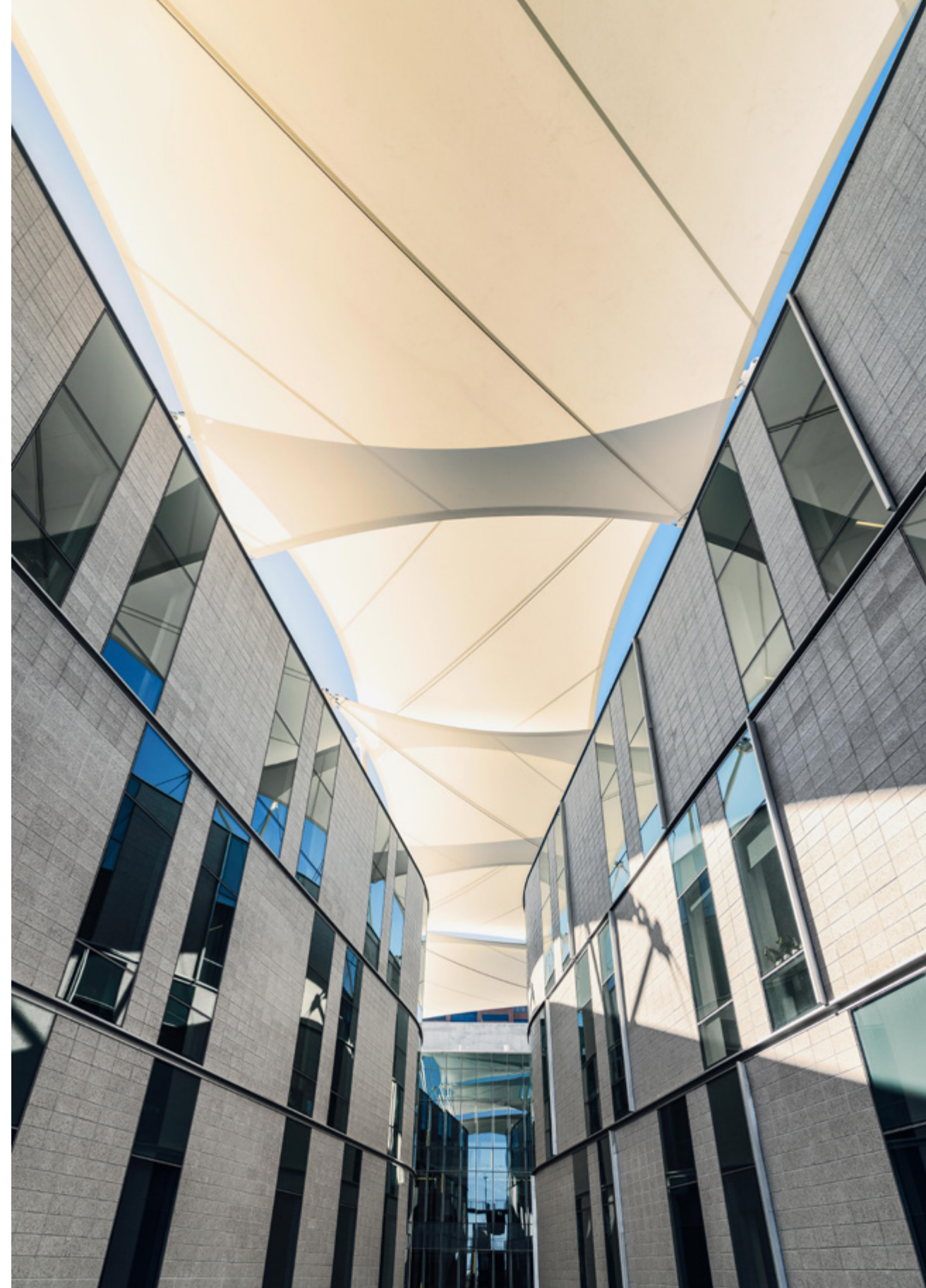
likely to meet patient needs and have greater impact.

Dr. Leah Hillier



Dr Hillier is leading a retrospective cohort study of patients enrolled in Medicaid to assess whether use of GLP-1 receptor agonists was associated with decreased patient healthcare contact days for knee osteoarthritis. Healthcare utilization

is associated with knee arthritis symptom burden, so this study takes a novel approach to assessing patient-centered knee osteoarthritis outcomes. This multi-institutional research team includes U of A, ASU, Harvard, and University of Toronto researchers.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



MESSAGE FROM DR. BRITE HILLIS



Dr. Katie Brite Hillis, *Associate Dean, Office of Community Engagement Vice Dean Medical Education, Yuma Branch*

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) values its community partnerships and leads a range of innovative initiatives designed to address physician workforce needs and improve community health outcomes. OCE oversees and supports rural and Tribal health curricula and rotations—areas in which student participation and interest have grown significantly over the past decade. These offerings include block clerkships and elective rotations across the state, as well as a Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship in Arizona’s rural and Tribal communities.

In addition, the 3-Year MD: Primary Care Accelerated Pathway is a key OCE initiative. Launching in spring 2026, this program is designed to graduate primary care physicians into Arizona residency programs in just three years, rather than the traditional four. By accelerating training, the program enables physicians to

enter the workforce sooner while reducing educational debt, positioning it to make a meaningful impact on Arizona’s primary care physician shortage.

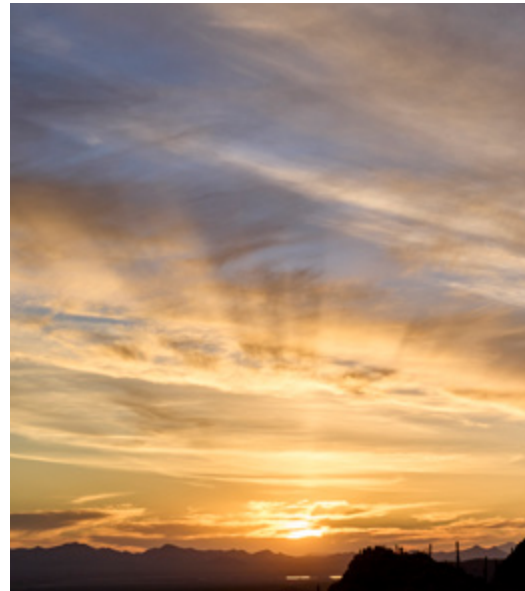
The Community Health Initiative of Phoenix (CHIP), also housed within OCE, encompasses the service-learning activities undertaken by medical students during their training. UACOM-P students collectively contribute nearly 10,000 hours of community service each year, above and beyond their academic responsibilities. The Service of Community Certificate of Distinction, supported by OCE, recognizes students who demonstrate exceptional dedication to service and provides a pathway for them to further their impact while earning well-deserved recognition.

OCE has also played an integral role in relationship building and the expansion of medical education, leading to the establishment of the first regional branch campus outside of Phoenix or Tucson in state history, located in Yuma in partnership with Onvida Health. Additional branch campuses—including one in collaboration with a Tribal community—are also on the horizon, driven by OCE’s ongoing commitment to partnership and community engagement.



COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The University of Arizona College of Medicine–Phoenix Community Health Advisory Council provides a formal structure for community members and academic faculty to work together to address community health needs. Led by chair Kristina Robinson, the council serves as a forum for discussion, feedback, and partnership between the College of Medicine–Phoenix and the broader community, ensuring that community perspectives help inform priorities in education, research, faculty development, and outreach. Composed primarily of community representatives, the council meets bi-monthly to identify and discuss key community and state health needs, provide recommendations to college leadership, and strengthen collaboration between community partners and academic departments. Through its annual report and prioritized list of health needs, the council helps guide the Department of Family, Community and Preventive Medicine and the College of Medicine–Phoenix in developing programs and initiatives that are responsive to the health priorities of the communities they serve.



YUMA BRANCH CAMPUS

In November 2025, the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix celebrated the launch of the Yuma Regional Branch Campus with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking a major milestone in advancing rural medical education and addressing Arizona’s critical primary care workforce shortage. Built on more than a decade of partnership with Onvida Health, the Yuma branch campus is Arizona’s first rural regional medical school branch and features a newly LCME-approved three-year MD curriculum dedicated to training future primary care physicians.

The Yuma Regional Branch Campus reflects a shared commitment by UACOM-P and Onvida Health to address severe physician shortages in rural Arizona, where the majority of federally designated primary care shortage areas are located. Onvida Health’s \$32.9 million investment over eight years ensures the program’s sustainability and supports long-term workforce development in Yuma County and surrounding regions. Building on Onvida Health’s established Family and Community Medicine Residency Program, the partnership creates a seamless pathway from medical school to residency and ultimately to clinical practice in the community. This initiative represents a defining step forward in rural health innovation in Arizona and serves as a model for future regional branch campuses aimed at improving access, equity, and continuity of primary care statewide.

The program is designed to strengthen pathways into primary care, preparing physicians for careers in family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics, with graduates matching into Arizona-based primary care residencies. The program will be led by family physician Dr. Katie Brite-Hillis, COM-P’s Associate Dean of Community Engagement and Rural Health. A defining feature of the initiative is a full-tuition scholarship for all admitted students, funded by Onvida Health, significantly reducing financial barriers for learners committed to practicing in rural and underserved communities.

Each year, up to 15 highly qualified students will be selected from a competitive applicant pool, with 45 students admitted during the first three years of the program. Students will complete the first 18 months of foundational science education in Phoenix, followed by 18 months of immersive clinical training at the Yuma branch campus across eight core specialties. With capacity to support up to 300 clinical rotations annually, the campus will also expand clinical training opportunities for learners across the University of Arizona health sciences.

Community Advisory Council Members

Alteri, Natalie	Resident	Banner University Medical Center-Phx
Barraza JD, Leila	Dir. AHEC	AZ Area Health Education Centers Program
Bowe, Julie	Director of Development	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Brite MD, Katie	Associate Dean Community Engagement	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Cartsonis MD, Jonathan	Dir, Rural Health Professions Program	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Ellert MD, William (Bill)	Chief Medical Officer	Circle the City
Fauer MD, Robert (Bob)	College of Public Health Medical Dir.	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Garganta, Marisue	Retired community foundation leader, runs a non-profit	Marisue Garganta and Associates
Gonzales, Ana	Faculty	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Hernandez, Marvin	MS3	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Hillier MD, Leah	Faculty	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Liu, Sage	MS2	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Lucio JD, Francisco	Sr. Assoc. Dean Health Care Advancement	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Magruder, Laura	Chief Executive Officer	Maggie’s Place
Mendoza MD, Elen	Resident	Banner University Medical Center-Phx
Mugo, Eiven	Student	ASU undergrad, premed
Redford DNP, Wendy	Chief Clinical Officer	Wesley Community & Health Centers
Robinson, Kristina	Founder	Halite Solutions Group
Touch - Mercer, Gina	Faculty	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Turner, Claire	Executive Assistant, Family Medicine	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Veres, Sharry	Department Chair, Family Medicine	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx
Walsh, Franki	MS3	University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phx



MESSAGE FROM DR. CARTSONIS



Dr. Jonathan Cartsonis, Assistant Dean, Rural Health

2025 marked greater engagement with rural Arizona communities and the largest number of medical students placed in these settings for training to date. The Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC)—clinical training emphasizing months-long placements in rural health systems—continued to grow. In partnership with Safford’s community physicians and Mt. Graham Regional Medical Center, the Safford LIC launched this year,

joining existing LICs in Payson, San Luis, the Gila River Indian Community, and Page.

Evidence shows the LIC, with longer periods spent in rural communities, produces better learning outcomes than the traditional “block” monthly rotation model. Rural communities embrace the program, building strong bonds with “their” students and taking pride in helping them develop professionally. LIC graduates consistently report that the experience provided a supportive environment built on lasting relationships with patients, preceptors, and the community. Most importantly, LIC participation increases the number of graduates entering rural practice after graduation. Now in its fifth year, U of A COM-P’s LIC has matured into a nationally recognized program.

Complementing the LIC is a newly approved three-year medical school curriculum to be piloted at U of A COM-P rural sites. Applicants interested in primary care will be placed in select rural LIC locations that also host rural primary care residencies. The curriculum delivers the same content as the traditional four-year program, but in an accelerated three-year format. The accelerated pathway works because LIC’s immersive environment enables rapid skill acquisition. Physician mentors, who get to know their students well, assess readiness for early graduation, allowing them to transition directly into residency (also known as graduate medical education or GME) at the same site where they received undergraduate medical education (UME) training.

Arizona’s rural and Tribal communities remain disproportionately affected by health workforce shortages. U of A COM-P’s integrated approach that combines LIC, the three-year UME curriculum, and strong community partnerships, offers an evidence-based solution to this challenge. We are already seeing results: early graduates are returning to practice in the very communities where they trained. None of this would be possible without AzaHEC grant funding, which in FY 2025 supported 208 unique medical students in Community Based Experiential Training (CBET) clinical rotations. This investment is building sustainable, healthy communities.

CACTUS WREN

Center for Advocacy and Training in the Underserved Southwestern Regional Educational Network

Supported by the Halle Foundation, CACTUS WREN is a resource hub being developed to support educational efforts statewide. CACTUS WREN serves as a repository of resources for UME and GME, including didactics, faculty development, and support services for Arizona medical education—ensuring that no one feels isolated or the need to “reinvent the wheel.”

LASSO

The Rural Longitudinal Academic Strategic Student Opportunities (LASSO) Zoom presentations continued in FY 2025, engaging health professionals and health professional trainees statewide as both presenters and learners. Physicians and nurses in attendance earned CME and CE credits through Banner Health. Representative topics included:

- Wrongful Incarceration as a Public Health Hazard
- Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis by the Rural Physician
- Care of the Critically Ill Patient
- Management of COPD in High Altitude Settings
- Medical Student Difficult Case Presentations
- Management of Diabetes in Pregnancy
- Reflections on Homelessness in Rural Arizona

Anyone affiliated with UA COM-P, medical education, rural or urban, is invited to attend. Judy Hunt, MD leads the effort from Payson. Announcements and outlook invites are managed by Dan Waters through CERE, our educational partner northeastern Arizona. Like to be added to the mailing list? Please email Dan at this address: dan@ruraled.org.

HAURY NATIVE AMERICAN SPEAKER SERIES

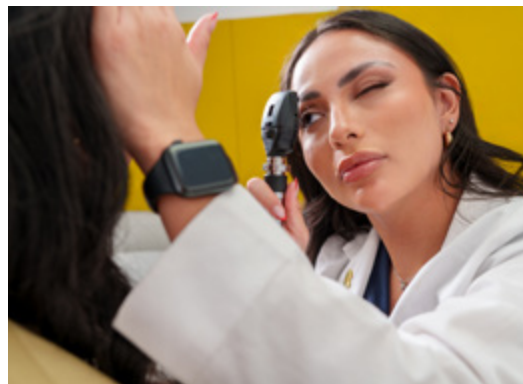
Haury grant funding has allowed the Community Engagement team to create intentional space for Native voices and knowledge systems. The Native American Physicians and Healthcare speaker series has enriched medical education and strengthened our relationships with tribal partners. Grant support enables us to organize high-quality programming, expand outreach to diverse tribal communities, provide support to presenting medical professionals, cover travel and honorariums, as well as provide nourishment to participants as a cultural practice of sharing knowledge respectfully. Professional medical partnerships with presenters will sustain the series' impact beyond each event. Haury grant support ensures that we are preparing the next generation of culturally informed future physicians and fostering more respectful, effective collaborations with Arizona's tribal nations.



COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE PHOENIX

The Community Health Initiative – Phoenix (CHIP) is a student-developed and student-directed service-learning program at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix, proudly housed in the Office of Community Engagement and Rural Health and led by faculty from the Department of Family, Community, and Preventive Medicine. CHIP provides medical students with structured opportunities to serve medically underserved and underserved populations in the Phoenix community through clinical care, health education, and mentoring. The initiative encompasses over 35 programs in partnership with community organizations, each led by dedicated student leaders. Flagship programs include the student-run clinic at the Wesley Community and Health Center and participation in Street Medicine Phoenix, where students provide direct care and support to individuals experiencing homelessness. Additional activities include organizing and staffing community health fairs, delivering STEM pathways presentations and mentoring to grade school students, and volunteering with a multitude of community-based organizations and events.

By emphasizing service as an integral component of medical training, CHIP fosters a sense of civic responsibility and reinforces the principle that giving back to the community is central to the physician's role. Through hands-on experiences and community engagement, the initiative prepares medical students to become compassionate, community-oriented physicians while directly addressing health disparities in the Phoenix area.



COMMUNITY HEALTH SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Launched in 2025, the Community Medicine and Population Health (CMPH) Summer Internship is a competitive, HRSA-funded program offered by the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix through the Office of Community Engagement and the Department of Family, Community, and Preventive Medicine.

In its inaugural year, the program supported 17 undergraduate and master's-level students who participated in mentored research, clinical shadowing, and community engagement. Interns completed a structured, community-oriented research curriculum and worked closely with faculty on applied projects, gaining experience in study design, data analysis, and scholarly dissemination through guided works-in-progress sessions.

Interns also shadowed primary care physicians in community-based settings and engaged in guided reflection. Community engagement projects included development of a publicly searchable STEM program database, stakeholder engagement strategies, and the creation of the UA COM–Phoenix Community Advisory Council.

Educational enrichment included seminars, workshops, and medical school application preparation. The program concluded with a formal presentation day. Running from early June through August, the internship provides a weekly stipend and prioritizes students with strong ties to Arizona. The program is excited to welcome its second cohort in summer 2026 as it continues to build a pathway to community-focused medical careers.



GRANTS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COLLABORATIONS

The Department of Family, Community, & Preventive Medicine has successfully obtained over 14 million dollars in grant awards in the last few years:

Halle Foundation: Support for state wide medical education initiatives with a focus on rural and Tribal communities. Supporting the CACTUS WREN resource hub for medical education across Arizona.

Additional funding awarded to support primary care GME expansion in rural and Tribal areas, and the 3-year curriculum to bridge in a 3+3 model UME to GME in Arizona. This effort retains physician workforce talent and allows these needed physicians to hit the workforce faster. Additionally, this funding has supported the creation of an Az AHEC Primary Care Consortium Sponsoring Institution to support rural, Tribal and urban underserved GME expansion.

HRSA: Medical Student Education grant to support primary care expansion with focus on rural, Tribal and urban underserved regions in Arizona. Grant is providing tuition and cost of living scholarships for primary care bound students, providing technology resources for rural communities in the form of simulation equipment, point of care US devices and training, Community Health Internship for pre-med students, Primary Care Workforce summit and conference funding, data evaluation and more.

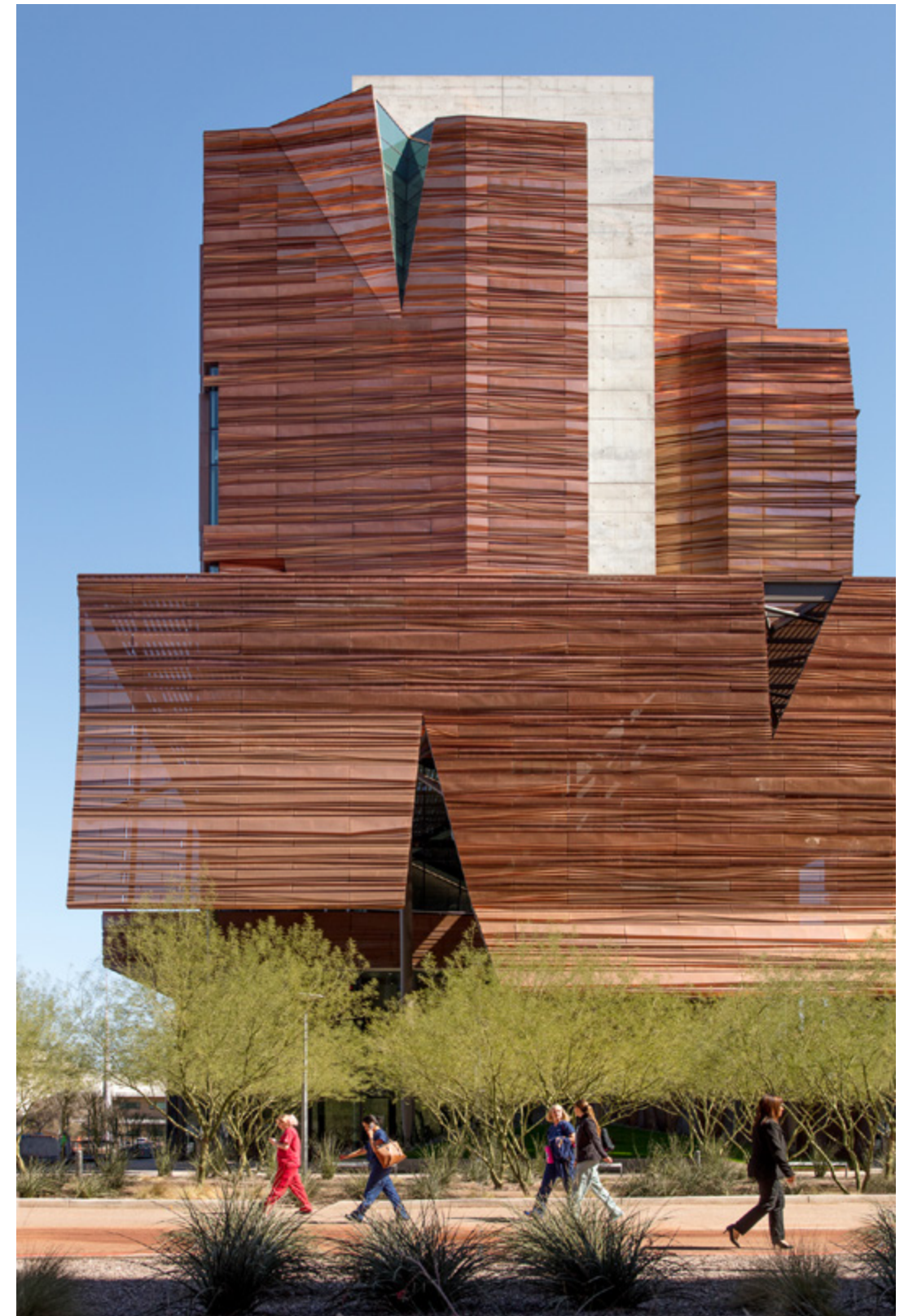
HRSA expansion/supplemental: An extension of the above HRSA grant with an expansion of the primary care scholarships and funding for a community garden, and personnel support for the HRSA initiatives.

Arizona Health Educational Center (AHEC): An annual grant covering the majority of housing for our medical students to participate in rural community clinical placements, both block rotations and Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship, as well as stipends and mileage to enable the success of the rural health program.

American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) Foundation Supports PRICLe PEaR, the residency learning collaborative in the State of Arizona, to study and improve patient and provider-sided continuity in Family Medicine residency programs.

Agnes Nelms Haury Trust Supports health equity research, a health equity symposium, the health equity speaker series and the creation of a leadership position to enhance Native American/ Indigenous health education at the medical school.

Big Idea Challenge Award: for the Heat and Health Resilience Innovation Collaborative to develop multi-disciplinary innovations to decrease heat related illness and death. The collaboration includes built environment innovations from the school of architecture, wearable technologies from the school of engineering, digital tools from bioinformatics, and clinical innovations from the school of medicine. Additionally, the team is working on developing and disseminating educational curriculum on heat and health.



STATEWIDE INITIATIVES



PRIMARY CARE WORKFORCE

Arizona is facing a critical shortage of primary care physicians. The PCPWG (Arizona Primary Care Physician Workforce Group) was created to help us coordinate statewide efforts, align resources, and support bold, collaborative strategies to strengthen Arizona's primary care workforce.

In January 2025, we hosted the inaugural Arizona Primary Care Physician Workforce Summit, which was well-attended and helped launch our HRSA Primary Care Training Enhancement grant work. The summit brought together educational leaders, healthcare organizations, and policymakers from across Arizona to discuss urgent strategies for strengthening the state's primary care physician pipeline. The meeting was led by a team of statewide primary care academic leaders, setting a collaborative foundation for our future work

Thematic needs identified spanned bolstering student interest in primary care to scaling rural rotations. Eight core areas of need with recommended next steps. Summit evaluation showed enthusiasm for ongoing collaboration and consensus that Arizona needs a unified statewide approach to tracking, strengthening

and expanding the primary care workforce and aligning incentives to attract and retain primary care physicians who practice in high-need rural, Tribal, border and urban underserved communities.

The recommendations build on previous efforts supported by the HRSA Primary Care Training Enhancement grant and the Halle Foundation rural primary care workforce initiative, incorporating community-informed strategies and multi-sector input. The momentum generated from this Summit provides a foundation for bold, systemic actions to support primary care as the backbone of a healthier Arizona.

In September 2025, we hosted the second summit, furthering the foundation set during the initial January meeting.



ARIZONA ACADEMIC FAMILY MEDICINE INNOVATION CONFERENCE (AAFMIC)

The Arizona Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference (AAFMIC) is a premier gathering of medical professionals, educators, researchers, and students dedicated to advancing family medicine through research, collaboration, and innovation. This full-day event provides a unique platform to engage in keynote discussions, oral presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities with leaders in the field. The 3rd annual conference was held on April 4th, 2025 at Creighton University Health Sciences Phoenix.

The keynote, “A Research Journey: Story-Telling to Drive Healthcare Change”, was presented by Dr. Nancy Pandhi, MD, MPH, PhD. Dr. Pandhi is a physician-scientist whose primary focus is improving the delivery of primary care to vulnerable populations through patient-centered engagement approaches that are implemented at both the individual and organizational level. She is the national training director for the Health Experiences Research Network, which conducts research and develops public-facing dissemination products according to the international DIPEX methodology. She leads the Clinical Translational Sciences Award at the University of New Mexico, which has partnered with the University of Arizona to apply for funding together as a new Southwest Center for Advancing Clinical and Translational Innovation (SW CACTI). She is co-leading the recently NIH-funded Primary Care-Building Research Integration in Diverse Geographic Environments initiative, also in collaboration with University of Arizona. She is assistant vice president of Research for Clinical Translational Research, associate chair for the Department of Family and Community Medicine, and a practicing family physician.

The event also included an awards luncheon hosted by the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians, during which resident awards were presented, a panel discussion on making scholarship a part of your family medicine career, and the first AzAFP Family Medicine Residency Fair Reception.



PRICLE PEAR

The Primary Care Residency Innovation Collaborative – Learning, Peer Education and Research (PRICLe PEaR) is Arizona's statewide learning collaborative dedicated to advancing primary care education and practice. Convened by the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix (UACOM-P), the collaborative brings together medical schools and residency programs across the state and meets three times annually to foster collaboration, resource sharing, and peer learning. PRICLe PEaR supports the development of evidence-conscious, community-oriented primary care physicians and emphasizes high-quality, evidence-based care, community responsiveness, team-based practice, and physician wellness. Its vision is to ensure that every Arizonan has access to an exceptionally trained primary care physician. Operating on principles of inclusivity, practicality, shared learning, and data-informed approaches, PRICLe PEaR translates collective expertise into meaningful improvements in medical education, patient care, and community health.



ARIZONA FAMILY MEDICINE AND PRIMARY CARE ACADEMIC COUNCIL

The Primary Care Academic Council of Arizona was established to strengthen collaboration and alignment across family medicine and primary care in the state. What began as a small partnership among three family medicine department chairs at Creighton University Arizona, COM-Phoenix, and COM-Tucson has, over three years, grown into a comprehensive statewide network. Today, the Council includes all family medicine and primary care academic departments, self-sponsored residency programs, the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians, Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), and the University of Arizona's Office of Community Engagement. The Council meets monthly, operates under a formal charter, and is focused on advancing shared strategies to strengthen primary care across Arizona.

The Council serves as both a strategic convener and an advisory body for grant-funded workforce initiatives, with a central focus on addressing Arizona's primary care physician shortage. Through this collaborative structure, members collectively support and oversee key statewide efforts, including ALSO training, the Academic Family Medicine Innovation Conference, primary care pipeline and recruitment initiatives, the PRICLe PEaR residency network, and emerging priorities such as point-of-care ultrasound training. The Council has also played a foundational role in developing the Arizona Primary Care Workforce Summits. This work is grounded in a shared understanding: the most pressing challenges in primary care—particularly workforce shortages in rural and underserved communities—are too complex for any single institution to solve alone, and meaningful progress requires sustained, statewide collaboration.

STEM DATABASE

The Arizona STEM Opportunities Database is a department-developed resource designed to expand access to STEM learning experiences and strengthen pathways into medicine and other STEM careers across the state. Created as a centralized, user-friendly tool, the database connects elementary, middle school, high school, and college students with hands-on programs in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics offered throughout Arizona.

By allowing users to search and filter opportunities by location, grade level, and program type, the database reduces barriers to information and helps learners and families identify experiences that align with their interests and goals. The Arizona STEM Opportunities Database supports the development of a diverse and future-ready workforce, with a particular focus on strengthening pathways into clinical medicine.





THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE PHOENIX

Family, Community
& Preventive Medicine



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