The 11th Annual Meeting of the
Society of Asian Academic Surgeons

Cincinnati Children's and University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
September 10-11, 2026

Hosts: David Gerber, MD, Chair, Department of Surgery, University of Cincinnati and Daniel Ostlie, MD, Senior Vice President, Surgical Services, Cincinnati Children's
Program Committee Chair: Gina Adrales, MD, MPH
Program Committee Vice Chair: Emily Keung, MD, AM
Local Arrangements Chairs: Sameer Patel, MD and Alexander Bondoc, MD

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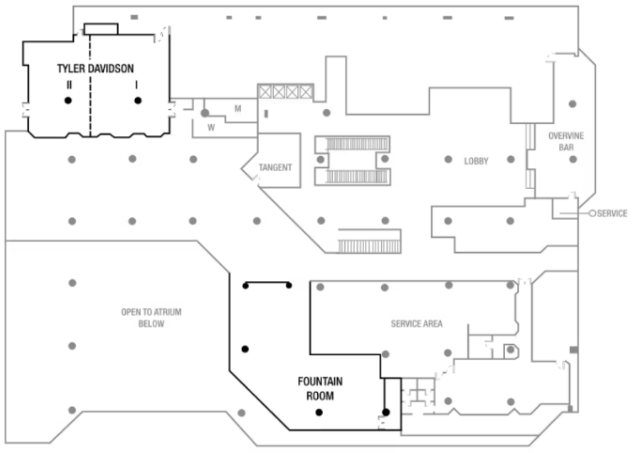
Maps

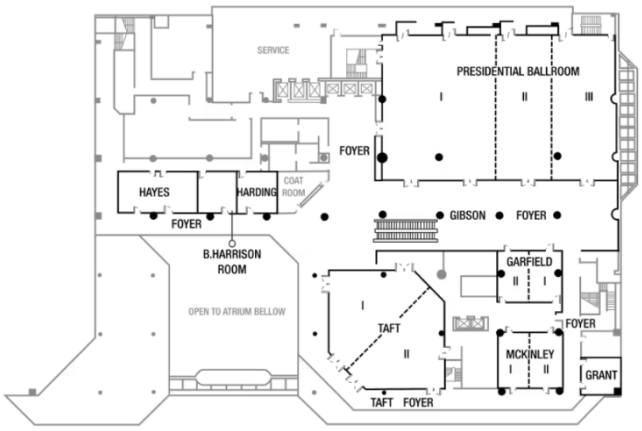
Meeting Time
Thursday and Friday, September 10-11, 2026

Meeting Location
Westin Cincinnati
21 E 5th St
Cincinnati, OH 45202
United States

SECOND LEVEL



THIRD LEVEL



Our Mission

The objectives of the **Society of Asian Academic Surgeons** shall be to cultivate, nurture and support the advancement of Asians in academic surgery. To achieve these objectives, the Society shall:

1. **Enhance** the personal and professional development of Asians in academic surgery.
2. **Promote** the advancement of a broad and representative leadership in academic surgery.
3. **Encourage** and assist in the study of issues of importance to the Asian community.

Our History

The founding of SAAS can be traced to the Presidential Session on Unconscious Bias in Academic Surgery that took place during the 6th Annual Academic Surgical Congress (ASC), directed by then-Society of University Surgeons (SUS) President Dr. Dai Chung. Dr. Don Nakayama presented an eye-opening talk on the lack of Asians in the leadership of American academic surgery, and would later publish that data in the *Annals of Surgery* [Nakayama, DK. Asian Americans in leadership positions in academic surgery. *Ann Surg*. 2012]. As it turned out, Dr. Chung was the first Asian to ever be elected to the SUS presidency.

That October, during the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Clinical Congress in Washington, DC, a group of nine Asian academic surgeons gathered to talk about the implications of that talk. This group would become the founding members of SAAS. During that meeting, they agreed to pay the initial dues that would provide the seed money to create a new society. After the initial tongue-in-cheek suggestion of naming it the Asian Surgical Society, it was decided to call it the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons.

At first, it was unclear what role we would serve to our membership. The first thought was that we would serve more as a social society that would allow members of the Asian community to meet and network. However, we soon recognized key challenges within our community and shifted our focus to empowering Asian academic surgeons to achieve their highest potential with the belief that fostering their growth and development would enhance their contributions to surgical leadership.

Towards this end, we raised money to provide scholarships for both trainees and junior faculty to help them with their career development. We also initiated awards for the best research submitted by members to the ASC to showcase the advances being made by Asians in the field of academic surgery.

From the beginning, our society has been fully welcoming to all. We defined “Asian” in the broadest sense to include not only those from East, Southeast, and South Asia, but also Persians, Arabs, Turks and any other nationality from the Asian continent. Furthermore, membership in SAAS is open to anyone of any background who is dedicated to supporting greater representation in academic surgery.

Our membership quickly grew by word of mouth, and we hosted get-togethers at the ACS Clinical Congress and at the ASC. It soon became apparent that we needed to take the next step of organizing our own meeting focusing on the issues important to our membership. The Inaugural Annual Meeting was held in 2016 and hosted by Dr. Mary Hawn and the Stanford Department of Surgery. The 2017 annual meeting saw a significant increase in participation with over twice the number of abstracts submitted. The membership continues to grow and interest has never been stronger.

Founding Members:

Herbert Chen, MD
Dev Desai, MD, PhD
Tien Ko, MD
Nipun Merchant, MD
George Yang, MD, PhD
Dai Chung, MD
Lillian Kao, MD, MS
Paul Kuo, MD
Jennifer Tseng, MD, MPH

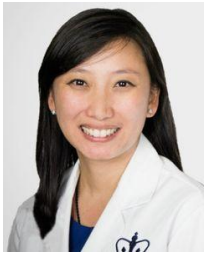
Executive Council and Past Presidents

Tejal Brahmbhatt, MD, President - Tejal S. Brahmbhatt, MD, FACS, is an Associate Professor of Surgery and serves as the Medical Director and Fellowship Director of Surgical Critical Care at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He completed his internship at Washington University in St. Louis, followed by a General Surgery residency at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. He then pursued a Fellowship in Traumatology, Emergency General Surgery, and Surgical Critical Care at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. In addition to his medical training, Dr. Brahmbhatt holds advanced doctoral training in music theory and composition, with a focus on the post-Romantic era Russian style and consults for several film production companies in the U.S. and abroad. His clinical research, supported by BARDA and industry sponsorship, focuses on the application of artificial intelligence in point-of-care ultrasound, innovations in surgical education, the psychological stressors of trauma surgical practice, and optimizing trauma and emergency surgery resource allocation in the context of diminishing healthcare resources.

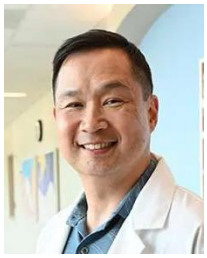
Daniel Chu, MD, MSPH, President-Elect - Daniel I. Chu, MD, MSPH, is Professor, Director of the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery, and Selwyn M. Vickers Endowed Chair at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed his undergraduate at Yale and medical school at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. After residency at Boston University Medical Center, he completed a colon and rectal surgery fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. As a double-board certified colorectal surgeon, he specializes in the spectrum of colorectal disease including inflammatory bowel disease, colorectal cancer, diverticular disease, and anorectal disorders. His NIH-funded research interests focus on identifying, understanding, and reducing health disparities in surgery with particular attention to health literacy.

Jinny Ha, MD, MHS, Secretary - Jinny Ha, MD, MHS, is an Associate Professor of Surgery and thoracic surgeon in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she also serves as Co-Director of the Surgical Clerkship at the UNC School of Medicine. Her research examines the role of cardiac sympathetic denervation in dysautonomia and ventricular arrhythmia, alongside broader interests in surgical education and health care delivery. She received her medical degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine and completed her general surgery residency at the University of Maryland Medical Center. She went on to complete her cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at Johns Hopkins, where she later served as Associate Program Director of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship Program.

Lindsay Kuo, MD, MBA, Treasurer - Lindsay Kuo, MD, MBA, is an endocrine surgeon and an Associate Professor of Surgery at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. She received her general surgery training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, followed by an endocrine surgery fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital. From there, she established the endocrine surgery section at Temple University where she has built a robust, high-volume program. In 2025, Dr. Kuo was named Division Chief of Endocrine Surgery, and in 2026 the Vice Chair of the Department. Dr. Kuo is also an Associate Program Director for the general surgery residency program, where she enjoys working with and mentoring residents.



Jennifer H. Kuo, MD, MS, Recorder and Journal Editor - Jennifer H. Kuo, MD, MS, is the Richard L White Professor of Endocrine Surgery and Vice Chair of Informatics for the Department of Surgery at Columbia University. She is an accomplished, high-volume surgeon in minimally invasive surgical techniques, including trans-oral thyroidectomy and robotic adrenalectomy. She is one of the leading international experts in ultrasound-guided percutaneous ablation of thyroid nodules and spearheaded the Interventional Endocrinology program at Columbia. Dr. Kuo also serves as Director of the Endocrine Surgery Research program. Her research focuses on the use of predictive algorithms to improve and optimize care for endocrine patients, and is internationally recognized as a pioneer in the safe adoption of new technology in surgical care.



Russell Woo, MD, Councilor-Active Member - Russell Woo, MD, is the Associate Dean for Clinical Programs at the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine, and the Chief Academic Officer for the Hawaii Pacific Health Medical Group. He is a Professor of Surgery and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Surgery at JABSOM. Dr. Woo is a graduate of the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering and the Yale University School of Medicine. He completed his general surgery residency at Stanford University as well as research fellowships in surgical robotics and biotechnology innovation. He then completed his subspecialty fellowship training in pediatric surgery at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Dr. Woo's clinical interests include general and thoracic pediatric surgery, neonatal surgery, and pediatric vascular anomalies. In addition, his scholarly interests center on pediatric surgical outcomes and medical technology innovation. He has made contributions in the areas of surgical robotics, telehealth delivery of surgical care, and magnet based surgical therapies, and has an active research and teaching program aimed at developing new technologies to improve surgical care. Dr. Woo is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the American Academy of Pediatrics and is an active member of the American Pediatric Surgical Association and the Society of University Surgeons. Dr. Woo has served on the Executive Councils of the Association for Academic Surgery, the Society of University Surgeons, and the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons, and serves on the Board of Governors for the American College of Surgeons.

Priyanka Chugh, MD, MS, Councilor-Associate Member - Priyanka V. Chugh MD, MS, is a pediatric surgery fellow at British Columbia Children's Hospital in Vancouver. She completed her undergraduate degree at New York University, a Masters in Biotechnology at Johns Hopkins, and medical school at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University. She recently graduated from General Surgery Residency at Boston University/Boston Medical Center. She has a clinical interest in surgical nutrition and intestinal failure and completed a research fellowship at Boston Children's with the Center for Advanced Intestinal Rehabilitation (CAIR). Additionally, she has a passion for improving equity and inclusion for both patients and surgeons. She founded a group, Advancing Cultural Competency and Equity in Surgical Specialties, focused on supporting and advocating for surgeons and trainees of diverse backgrounds at Boston Medical Center.

Kenric M. Murayama, MD, MBA, Past-President, (2015-2016) - Kenric Murayama, MD, MBA, is Emeritus Professor of Surgery for the University of Hawaii. He was the Executive Vice President and Chief Health Officer for the Hawaii Medical Services Association (HMSA), Blue Cross Blue Shield of Hawaii. He retired as Chair and Program Director of the Department of Surgery at the John A. Burns School of Medicine of the University of Hawaii where he attended medical school. He completed his surgery training at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. He received his MBA from Marist College in May 2019. He was the inaugural President of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons, President of the Southwestern Surgical Congress, and a longstanding Board member for the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons. Dr. Murayama is on the Board of Directors for the Blood Bank of Hawaii, having recently completed his term as Board Chair. Dr. Murayama also previously served on the American College of Surgeons Board of Governors as the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons representative. Dr. Murayama has a longstanding commitment to surgical education and leadership development in surgery.

Paul Kuo, MD, MS, MBA, Past-President (2016-2017) - Paul C. Kuo, MD, MS, MBA, FACS, is Professor of Surgery and Assistant Dean for Research Program Development at the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine, Professor of Information Systems and Decision Sciences at the Muma College of Business, and Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development at the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System. A 1985 graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine where he was inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha, Dr. Kuo completed his general surgery training at Brigham and Women's Hospital and fellowship in hepatobiliary and transplant surgery at BI-Deaconess Hospital. He spent three years as a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard Medical School under the mentorship of Joseph Loscalzo, MD, PhD. Dr. Kuo previously served as Chairman of Surgery at the University of South Florida (2017-2022) and Loyola University Medical Center (2010-2017). A U.S. Army Reserve Colonel (Ret.) with deployments to Afghanistan, he is board-certified in general surgery, surgical critical care and clinical informatics. With over 440 peer-reviewed publications and an h-index of 80, Dr. Kuo's NIH-funded

research focused on the molecular mechanisms of inflammation and cancer metastasis. He has pioneered work in clinical analytics and machine learning applications in surgery, founding the OnetoMAP analytics platform. His dedication to surgical education and innovation has earned him numerous multiple teaching awards.

Nipun Merchant, MD, Past-President (2017-2018) and Foundation President - Nipun Merchant, MD, is the Alan S. Livingstone Endowed Professor of Surgery in the University of Miami, Department Of Surgery, Vice Chair of Surgical Oncology Services, and the Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology. He is also the Chief Surgical Officer and Director of Surgical Oncology Research of the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. He is a recognized leader in the clinical management of hepato-pancreatico-biliary and neuroendocrine malignancies. Dr. Merchant has an active basic science and translational research laboratory investigating signal transduction and tumor- stromal interactions in pancreas cancer. He has served on several study sections for the NIH and chaired the NCI-F Study Section. He is also a member of the Pancreas Task Force of the GI Steering Committee of the National Cancer Institute, the Commission on Cancer and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma Panel Member. He serves on the Editorial Boards of the *Annals of Surgery*, *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, *Surgery*, *American Journal of Translational Research* and is an Associate Editor for *BMC Cancer*.

Jennifer F. Tseng, MD, MPH, Past President (2018-2019) - Jennifer F. Tseng, MD, MPH, is Trustee at the Pria Foundation, Clinical Professor at Creighton University, Professor of Surgery Emerita at Boston University School of Medicine and Immediate Past Chair of Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief at BU. Dr. Tseng was the first nonwhite person and remains the only woman to have served as Chair of Surgery in the city of Boston. Prior to BU, Dr. Tseng served as the Chief of Surgical Oncology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) and rose to Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Tseng was the first female full HMS Professor of Surgery at BIDMC and only the fourth in the history of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Tseng has published 200+ articles on leadership, health policy, reducing surgical risk, cancer biomarkers, and developing models for cancer treatment-sequencing strategies. Dr. Tseng is Deputy Editor of *JAMA Surgery* and HPB Section Editor at *UpToDate*. She is Past-President of the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract (SSAT), the first Asian to hold the position. Dr Tseng served 2018-2025 on the American Board of Surgery as Director and Councilor and as a Director of the Complex General Surgical Oncology Board. In 2025 she succeeded the late visionary founder Rose Cole as Trustee of the Pria to build a bold strategy leading PRIA to improve research and access in pancreatic cancer with a newly amplified $250 Million corpus: Priafoundation.org

Tracy S. Wang, MD, MPH, Past President (2019-2021) - Tracy S. Wang, MD, MPH, FACS, is a Professor of Surgery and Vice-Chair of Strategic and Professional Development. She leads the Department's CAPTAINS (Career Advancement and Professional Training Academy IN Surgery) course. Her clinical practice is focused on the surgical endocrine disease of the thyroid, parathyroid, and adrenal glands, including inherited endocrine syndromes. Dr. Wang has published >150 peer-reviewed manuscripts and book chapters. She serves as an Associate Editor for the *American Journal of Surgery*. She is the Treasurer of the Central Surgical Association, and its Representative to the American College of Surgeons' Board of Governors. She is on the Executive Council for the International Association of Endocrine Surgeons, Secretary of the AAES Foundation, and is President-Elect of the Society of University Surgeons.

Allan Tsung, MD, Past President (2021-2022) - Allan Tsung, MD, is Chair of the Department of Surgery and the S. Hurt Watts Professor of Surgery at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. A surgical oncologist and surgeon-scientist, his clinical practice focuses on hepatopancreatobiliary cancers, with particular expertise in robotic surgery. His research explores how inflammation and the tumor microenvironment shape cancer progression and treatment response, with the goal of translating these discoveries into new therapeutic approaches. As Chair, he is passionate about building programs and partnerships and creating opportunities for faculty and trainees to grow and succeed. Throughout his career, he has been deeply committed to mentorship and developing future leaders in academic surgery. Dr. Tsung has served as President of both the Society of University Surgeons and the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons and remains active in national surgical organizations focused on research, education, and leadership.

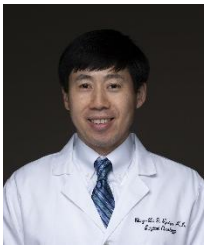
Susan Tsai, MD, MHS, Past President (2022-2023) - Susan Tsai, MD, MHS, is a Professor and Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology, Department of Surgery at the Ohio State University. She completed her medical school and residency training at the University of Michigan. During residency, she completed a clinical research fellowship at the National Cancer Institute in the laboratory of Dr. Suzanne Topalian. After residency, she completed a Surgical Oncology Fellowship at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. While in fellowship, she also received a Master's in Clinical Investigation from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Her clinical practice focused on GI oncology and pancreatic cancer. Her research interests include blood-based biomarkers in pancreatic cancer and investigator-initiated clinical trials. She has over 140 peer-reviewed publications and has served on the Editorial Boards of the *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, *Surgery, Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery*, and *Surgical Oncology Insight*.

Eugene S. Kim, MD, Past President (2023-2024) - Eugene S. Kim, MD, received his undergraduate degree in Biochemical Sciences from Harvard University and his medical degree from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He completed his residency in general surgery at Columbia University Medical Center, New York-Presbyterian Hospital, in New York City. Dr. Kim subsequently completed a fellowship in pediatric surgery at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati, Ohio. Currently, Dr. Kim is Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics, Division Chief of Pediatric Surgery and Vice Chair in the Department of Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief of Guerin Children's at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Dr. Kim's clinical expertise is in pediatric surgical oncology and the surgical management of complex solid tumors, the surgical repair of chest wall deformities (pectus excavatum), and anorectal malformations. In addition, Dr. Kim is the principal investigator of a basic science laboratory focused on novel preclinical therapeutics for the aggressive childhood malignancy, neuroblastoma. Dr. Kim's research interests are focused on a novel cancer stem cell population in neuroblastoma and its role in tumor recurrence and metastatic disease. He is also studying mechanisms of recurrent metastatic disease in high-risk neuroblastoma. Dr. Kim is a Past-President of the Association for Academic Surgery and has a passion for the mentorship and sponsorship of young academic surgeons.

Ankush Gosain, MD, PhD, MBA, Past President (2024-2025) ACS Board of Governors Representative (2025-2028) - Ankush Gosain, MD, PhD, MBA, is the Surgeon-in-Chief of UVA Health Children's Hospital, C. Bruce Morton Professor of Surgery and Division Chief of Pediatric Surgery in the Department of Surgery at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and Physician Executive of Fortify Children's Health, which is Virginia's first Clinically Integrated Network (CIN) dedicated to children. He is an NIH-funded Pediatric Surgeon-Scientist with a basic & translational science laboratory studying the enteric nervous system and gastrointestinal mucosal immune development and function as they relate to congenital colorectal disease (e.g., Hirschsprung disease) and aberrant intestinal homeostasis, with the overarching goal of developing novel therapies. His clinical expertise is in pediatric colorectal surgery, pediatric surgical oncology, congenital diaphragmatic hernia, and pediatric trauma. Dr. Gosain serves on the Executive Councils of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons (Past-President), the Society of University Surgeons (Secretary), and the Surgical Research Committee of the American College of Surgeons (Vice-Chair). He is an elected member of the Society of Clinical Surgery (Treasurer) and the American Society for Clinical Investigation, platforms which he uses to advocate for the Surgeon-Scientist phenotype. His overarching goals are to nurture and develop trainees and faculty, including those who have been traditionally underrepresented in medicine, in their academic and research careers to achieve national and international prominence by advancing patient care and surgical research.

Gina Adrales, MD, MPH, Program Committee Chair - Gina L. Adrales, MD, MPH, FACS serves as Chief of the Division of the Minimally Invasive Surgery, Director of the Minimally Invasive Surgical Training and Innovation Center, Associate Director of the Bariatric Surgery Fellowship at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Her areas of clinical expertise include minimally invasive gastrointestinal surgery with particular interest in comprehensive abdominal wall reconstruction, acid reflux and complex foregut surgery, gastroesophageal dysmotility, and obesity. Dr. Adrales is Co-Editor of the *Textbook of Hernia*. She served on the Executive Council of the American Hernia Society rising to serve the society as its first woman President. Dr. Adrales also serves as a faculty mentor for the Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Whiting School of Engineering, where she is an affiliate faculty member of the Malone Center for Engineering in Healthcare. A dedicated surgical educator, Dr. Adrales was inducted as an Associate member of the American College of Surgeons Academy of Master Surgeon Educators in 2022. She is currently the Director of Robotic Surgery Education for the Department of Surgery at Hopkins. Dr. Adrales' research interests include surgical education, simulation and machine learning, and clinical outcomes and healthcare disparity in minimally invasive surgery.

Emily Keung, MD, AM, Program Committee Vice Chair - Emily Keung, MD, AM, is Associate Professor of Surgery and Vice-Chair of Research in the Department of Surgical Oncology at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her clinical practice focuses on the care of patients with soft tissue sarcomas. Dr. Keung received her undergraduate degree from Harvard College and her medical degree from Harvard Medical School. She completed her general surgery residency and surgical critical care fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital and fellowship in Complex General Surgical Oncology at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her primary research focus has been to investigate the role of immunotherapy for the treatment of soft tissue sarcoma and melanoma and to study the role of the epigenome in soft tissue sarcoma.



Ching-Wei Tzeng, MD, MS, Chair, Scholarships Committee - Ching-Wei D. Tzeng, MD, MS is a Professor of Surgical Oncology at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, specializing in the treatment of hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) cancers. He is the Chief of Hepatobiliary Surgery and HPB Fellowship Program Director. He previously served terms as Department Vice Chair for Education and Vice Chair for Clinical Operations. He is the Chair of the SAAS Scholarship Committee and Chair of the AHPBA Program Directors Committee. Dr. Tzeng is an educator dedicated to the training of fellows, residents, and students, and serves as Vice Chair of the MD Anderson GME council. He has been recognized with the University of Texas Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award in 2021, and Department of Surgical Oncology Graduating Fellows' Teaching Award in 2018, 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2025. His research focuses on perioperative quality improvement, clinical trials for advanced hepatobiliary and pancreatic cancers, and patient-centered opioid reduction protocols, for which he was

named a 2021 Andrew Sabin Family Foundation Fellow.

Jessica McMullin, MD, MS, Chair, Communications Committee – Jessica Liu McMullin, MD MS is an Assistant Professor at the University of Utah and Section Chief of Endocrine Surgery in the Division of Surgical Oncology. She is a fellowship trained endocrine surgeon who specializes in caring for patients with thyroid, parathyroid, and adrenal disease. She received her MD from Emory University and completed her residency in general surgery at Emory University followed by a fellowship in endocrine surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is a former Clinical Scholar in Residence at the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and was also a research fellow at the Surgical Outcomes & Quality Improvement Center (SOQIC) during this time. Her research focuses on decision analysis, large data, and implementation science.

Raja R. Narayan, MD, MPH, SAAS Representative to the Association for Academic Surgery (AAS) - Raja Narayan MD, MPH, is an Assistant Professor and Hepatopancreatobiliary Surgical Oncologist at Loma Linda University Health. He completed his graduate training at Yale, Surgery residency at Stanford, Postdoctoral Fellowship in Cancer Biology at Memorial Sloan Kettering, Surgical Oncology Fellowship at Harvard Medical School with Dana-Farber/Mass Gen Brigham, and an International Minimally Invasive Surgical Oncology Fellowship at Seoul National University Hospital in South Korea. He is an NCI-awarded cancer surgeon scientist whose research focuses on reprogramming aggressive molecular profiles of tumor biology to improve treatment response and learning curves of robotic oncology surgery.

Annabelle L. Fonseca, MD, MHS, SAAS Representative to the Association for Women in Surgery (AWS) - Annabelle L. Fonseca, MD, MHS, is an Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) with joint appointments at the UAB Institute for Cancer Outcomes and Survivorship, the Center for Clinical and Translational Science, and the Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research and Education. A fellowship-trained complex general surgical oncologist, Dr. Fonseca specializes in hepatopancreatobiliary and foregut malignancies. Her research, supported by the NIH and Department of Defense, uses implementation science to identify and address modifiable barriers to guideline-concordant care in foregut cancers, with a focus on improving access and outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Yumi Hori, BA, Executive Director - Yumi Hori is the Executive Director of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons and Director of Education for BSC Management. She is a management executive with extensive experience in nonprofit education planning. Yumi has also worked with the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES), The Fellowship Council, the Society of University Surgeons (SUS), the Academic Surgical Congress (ASC), and the Association for Surgical Education (ASE). She previously worked at UCLA in public policy education, as well as in the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) Education Department. She graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles with a BA in Political Science.

Suzanne Quon, MEd, Program Manager – Suzanne Quon, MEd, is the Program Manager for the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons. She has 10 years of non-profit management experience. Suzanne has also worked with the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES), The Fellowship Council, the Society of University Surgeons (SUS), the Academic Surgical Congress (ASC), the Association for Surgical Education (ASE), and the Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS). She received her Masters in International Education Policy & Management from Vanderbilt University, and got her B.A. in Chinese Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

SAAS Committees

Communications Committee

Jessica Liu McMullin (Chair, 2025-2026)
Carlos Chan (Co-Chair, 2025-2026)
Suresh “Mitu” Agarwal (2024-2026)
Neal Bhutiani (2025-2027)
Christy Chai (2024-2026)
Eunise Chen (2025-2027, Associate)
Samir Gadepalli (2024-2026)
Terry Gao (2024-2026, Associate)
Tammy Holm (2024-2026)
Julie Hong (2024-2026, Associate)
Sora Nithikasem (2024-2026, Associate)
David Su (2024-2026, Associate)

Membership Committee

Russell Woo (Chair and Councilor-Active, 2024-2027)
Priyanka Chugh (Councilor-Associate, 2024-2026)
Edward Auyang (2025-2027)
Bonnie Chow (2025-2027)
Yoshiko Iwai (2023-2026, Associate)
Marin Kheng (2025-2027, Associate)
Sharven Taghavi (2023-2026)

Program Committee

Gina Adrales (Chair/2nd Society *AJS* Editor, 2025-2026)
Emily Keung (Co-Chair, 2025-2026)
Jennifer Kuo (Ex Officio, Recorder, 2023-2026)
Hassan Aziz (2024-2026)
Alex Bondoc (2026 Local Arrangements Chair)
Lily Cheng (2024-2026)
Taylor Chiang (2025-2027, Associate)
Priya Dedhia (2024-2026)
Monica Dua (2025-2027)
Dylan Goto (2027 Local Arrangements Chair)
Young Hong (2025-2027)
Crisanta Ilagan (2025-2027, Associate)
Victoria Lai (2024-2026)

William Lee (2024-2026, Associate)
Sameer Patel (2026 Local Arrangements Chair)
Areeba Saif (2025-2027, Associate)
Reid Sakamoto (2027 Local Arrangements Chair)
Connie Shao (2024-2026, Associate)
Wing Sze Esther Wu (Yung) (2025-2027)

Publications Committee

Jennifer Kuo (Chair, Recorder, *AJS* Editor, 2023-2026)
Priya Dedhia (*AJS* Editorial Board Member)
Neal Bhutiani (*AJS* Editorial Board Member)
Steven Chao (2023-2025)
Dillon Cheung (2025-2027, Associate)
Aimal Khan (2024-2026)
Ravi Radhakrishnan (2024-2026)
Zhixing Song (2024-2026, Associate)
Shawn Tejiram (2025-2027)
Thuy Tran (2024-2026)
Jeffrey Velotta (2024-2026)
Russell Witt (2024-2026)
Kay Yoon-Flannery (2025-2027)
Jessica Zagory (2024-2026)

Scholarships Committee

Ching-Wei Tzeng (Chair, 2024-2026)
Christy Chai (2024-2026)
Jeremy Chang (2024-2026, Associate)
Oliver Eng (2024-2026)
Aarti Mathur (2024-2026)
Raja Narayan (2025-2027)
Areeba Saif (2025-2027, Associate)
Zhi Ven Fong (2024-2026)
Jeffrey Velotta (2025-2027)

SAAS Foundation Visiting Professors

The **Society of Asian Academic Surgeons Fund Visiting Professorships** are open for SAAS Active Members who are faculty members at the Assistant or Associate Professor level and are within the first 10 years of their faculty appointment. It will support their travel to host institutions to give grand rounds and will increase the national visibility of rising stars in academic surgery.

2026-2027 SAAS Visiting Professorships

- City of Hope (Host: Yuman Fong, MD)
    - *Lenna Saranti Visiting Professorship (endowed by Quan Duh, MD)*
    - **Beiqun (Mark) Zhao, MD** (University of California San Francisco)
- Duke University (Host: Suresh Agarwal, MD)
    - *Sudha and Suresh Agarwal Visiting Professorship (endowed by Suresh Agarwal, MD)*
    - **Mihir Shah, MD** (Medstar)
- Yale University (Host: Benjamin Judson, MD, MBA)
    - *Peter and Meilin Wang Visiting Professorship (endowed by Thomas Wang, MD)*
    - **James De Andrade, MD, MME** (University of Iowa)
- Roswell Park (Host: Sai Yendamuri, MD, MBA)
    - *William and Jennie Yeh Visiting Professorship (endowed by Michael Yeh, MD)*
    - **Elizabeth Lilley, MD, MPH** (Brigham Women's Hospital)
- University of Pennsylvania (Host: Rachel Kelz, Md, MSCE)
    - *Dr. Masato and Miyeko Tanabe Professorship (endowed by Ken Tanabe, MD)*
    - **Raja Narayan, MD, MPH** (Loma Linda University)
- Medical College of Wisconsin (Host: Tracy Wang, MD)
    - *Chanil and Hyunsook In Visiting Professorship (endowed by Haejin In, MD, MPH, MBA)*
    - **Baddr Shakhsheer, MD** (University of Chicago)
- Tulane University (Host: Mary Killackey, MD)
    - *Tchou and McGovern Visiting Professorship (endowed by Julia Tchou, MD, PhD)*
    - **Ashish Singhal, MD** (Tampa General Hospital)
- University of Cincinnati (Host: Greg Tiao, MD)
    - *Man-Wah and Paul Ying Visiting Professorship (endowed by Quyen Ying, DMD, and Yedeh Ying, MD, DMD)*
    - **Thomas Shin, MD, PhD** (University of Virginia)

In Memory of George Yang, MD, PhD

George Yang, MD, PhD, went to undergraduate and medical school at Northwestern University. He earned his PhD in molecular genetics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He completed his residency in general surgery at Stanford University and remained at Stanford as faculty until coming to UAB in 2018.

George ran a successful laboratory that focused on mechanisms of injury repair. His caring nature and surgical skill helped countless patients not only at UAB but at the Birmingham Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital – a place where his dedication to his patients, peers and staff was unparalleled.

In addition to his clinical and research leadership, George was known across the community as someone who acted on his values. He was motivated, inclusive, and humble, and the field of surgery took note. In 2021, George was named the Society of University Surgeons Inaugural Trailblazer Award Winner. The SUS noted that he was nominated and selected by his peers based on his leadership and contributions to the SUS as well as his unwavering vision, commitment, and dedication to the promotion of the Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) community in academic surgical leadership.

George has always been an advocate for underrepresented groups in medicine. In 2010, he was a founding member of our very own Society of Asian Academic Surgeons (SAAS) and was named our first executive director in 2016. George will always be known for championing social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion. He believed in building groups of individuals with shared experiences and creating deep community. He believed in created spaces where everyone felt safe. In 2021, SAAS honored George by creating and bestowing him the George Yang SAAS Trailblazer Award.

Let's honor George by lifting up those around us, giving back, and moving the field of surgery forward.

SAAS Award Winners

George Yang, MD, PhD Trailblazer Award

An award that recognizes a surgeon for contributions to surgical science and for paving the way for the next generation of surgeons.

2018	Quan-Yang Duh, MD – University of California, San Francisco
2019	Steven Stain, MD – Albany Medical Center
2021	George Yang, MD, PhD – University of Alabama, Birmingham
2022	Herbert Chen, MD – University of Alabama, Birmingham
2024	Sandra L. Wong, MD, MS – Emory University
2026	Kenric Murayama, MD, MBA - University of Hawaii John A. Burns SOM

Resident/Fellow Development Scholarship

The SAAS Resident/Fellow Development Scholarship is a travel grant supporting attendance of a surgical trainee at the Association for Academic Surgery's Fall Courses, held each year just prior to the American College of Surgeons' Clinical Congress. The recipient of this award serves a two-year term as a Resident member of the Scholarships Committee.

2014	Vikas Dudeja, MD, PhD – Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
2015	Lyen Huang, MD, MPH – Stanford University
2016	Zhi Ven Fong, MD, MPH – Massachusetts General Hospital
2017	Deepa Cherla, MD – Cleveland Clinic
2018	Emily Keung, MD – M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
2019	Chi-Fu Jeffrey Yang, MD – Stanford University
2020	Nikhil Panda, MD - Massachusetts General Hospital
	Linda Pak, MD - Brigham and Women's Hospital
	Selena Li, MD - Massachusetts General Hospital
	Bhuwan Giri, MD - University of Miami
2021	Neal Bhutiani, MD PhD - The University of Texas – M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
	Heather Lyu, MD - The University of Texas – M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
	Rowza Rumma, MD - Brigham and Women's Hospital
	Ahmad Hamad, MD - The Ohio State University
	Jessie Ho, MD - Northwestern University
2022	Calvin Chao, MD- Northwestern University
2023	Raja Narayan, MD, MPH - Dana-Farber Cancer Institute/Mass General Brigham
2024	Jeremy Chang, MD, MS - University of Iowa
2025	Areeba Saif, MD - UTHealth McGovern Medical School
2026	Tracey Pu, MD - University of Alabama at Birmingham

Junior Faculty/Early Career Development Award

The SAAS Junior Faculty/Early Career Development Award is a travel grant supporting the attendance of a faculty member within 5 years of their first appointment at the Surgical Investigators' Course at the Academic Surgical Congress. The recipient of this award serves a two-year committee on the Scholarships Committee.

2015	Peter Chang, MD – Beth Israel Deaconess
2016	Daniel I. Chu, MD – University of Alabama at Birmingham
2017	Ching-Wei David Tzeng, MD – M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
2018	Eric Sheu, MD – Brigham and Women's Hospital
2019	Aslam Ejaz, MD – The Ohio State University
2020	Emily Keung, MD - The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
2021	Priya Dedhia, MD, PhD - The Ohio State University
2022	Lily Cheng, MD - Texas Children's Hospital
	Mihir Shah, MD - Emory University
	Annabelle Fonseca, MD - University of South Alabama
2023	Syed Nabeel Zafar, MD - University of Wisconsin – Madison
2024	Zhi Ven Fong, MD – Mayo Clinic Arizona
2025	Raja Narayan, MD, MPH – Loma Linda University
2026	Thuy Tran, MD – University of California, Irvine

Esther Tsai Sugg Research Award

The Esther Tsai Sugg Research Award is granted to the highest scoring abstract submitted by a SAAS member as either first or senior author to the annual Academic Surgical Congress.

2015	Chris Goodenough, MD (Presenting author)
	Michael Liang, MD (Senior author)
	University of Texas – Houston
2016	Jason Castellanos, MD (Presenting author)
	Nipun Merchant, MD (Senior author)
	University of Miami
2017	Syed Nabeel Zafar, MD (Presenting author)
	Nabil Wasif, MD (Senior author)
	Howard University
2018	Daniel ("Brock") Hewitt, MD, MPH (Presenting author)
	Anthony Yang, MD (Senior author)
	Northwestern University
2019	Apoorve Nayyar, MD (Presenting author)
	Kristalyn Gallagher, DO (Senior author)

	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
2020	Aaron Baer, MD (Presenting author)
	David Shibata, MD (Senior author)
	University of Tennessee, Memphis
2021	Sourav Bose, MD, MBA (Presenting author)
	William Parenteau, MD (Senior author)
	Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia
2022	Vivek Pamulapati, MD (Presenting author)
	Karen Ho, MD (Senior author)
	Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago
2023	Taylor Lee BS (Presenting author)
	Lily Cheng, MD (Senior author)
	Texas Children's Hospital, Houston, TX
2024	Radhika Rastogi, MD (Presenting author)
	Zequan Yang, MD (Senior author)
	University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
2025	Sarah Peiffer, MD (Presenting author)
	Alice King, MD (Senior author)
	Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX
2026	Abhiram B Kannan, MBBS (Presenting author)
	Vikas Dudeja, MBBS (Senior author)
	University of Alabama at Birmingham

SAAS Annual Meeting Travel Award

The SAAS Annual Meeting Travel Award is a travel grant, awarded to the first author of the highest scoring abstract submitted by a SAAS member to the annual meeting.

2016	Julie Goswami, MD (Presenting author)
	Allan Tsung, MD (Senior author)
	University of Pittsburgh
2017	Michael Fenlon, MD (Presenting author)
	Kasper Wang, MD (Senior author)
	Children's Hospital of Los Angeles
2018	Zhi-Ven Fong, MD (Presenting author)
	Motaz Qadan, MD, PhD (Senior author)
	Massachusetts General Hospital
2019	C. Ann Vitous, MD (Presenting author)
	Amy Pasithorn Suwanabol, MD (Senior author)
	University of Michigan
2021	Serena Day, MD (Presenting author)
	Benzon Dy, MD (Senior author)

	Mayo Clinic
2022	Jaewon Lee, MD (Presenting author) Paola Guerrero, MD (Senior author) UT MD Anderson/Cedars Sinai
2023	Jeremy Chang, MD (Presenting author) Colin P. Kenny, MD (Senior author) University of Iowa
2024	Yanghee Woo, MD (Presenting author) City of Hope
2025	Thinzar Lwin, MD (Presenting author) City of Hope
2026	Brandon Toliver, MD (Presenting author) Hisakazu Hoshi, MD (Senior author) University of Iowa

ASA – SAAS Surgical Leaders Fellowship Grant

This award is sponsored by the American Surgical Association and SAAS to provide funds to travel to an ASA member's home institution for a shadowing experience of being a surgical leader in academic surgery. A SAAS member will be selected every other year, on even years.

2020	Tracy Wang, MD, MPH - Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
2022	Ankush Gosain, MD, PhD, MBA - UT Memphis
2024	Sai Yendamuri, MD, MBA - Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center
2025	Jennifer Kuo, MD, MS – Columbia University
2026	Michael Yeh, MD – University of California, Los Angeles

Mid-Career Award

The SAAS Mid-Career Award is a grant supporting the attendance of a faculty member to the Society of University Surgeons' (SUS) Mid-Career Academic Surgery Professional Development Course. This grant was made possible by a generous contribution from Past President Dr. Tracy Wang. The recipient of this award serves a two-year committee on the Scholarships Committee.

2022	Hop Tran Cao, MD - The University of Texas – M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Romeo Ignacio, MD - University of California – San Diego Chee-Chee Stucky, MD - Mayo Clinic Arizona
2023	Jiping Wang, MD, PhD - Brigham and Women's Hospital/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
2024	Christy Chai, MD - Baylor College of Medicine

2025	Jeffrey Velotta, MD - Kaiser Permanente
2026	Samir Gadepalli, MD, MS, MBA – University of Michigan

SAAS – SUS Leadership Agility Program Scholarship

Sponsored by SAAS in partnership with the Society of University Surgeons, this award funds the tuition to the annual Society of University Surgeons (SUS) Leadership Agility Program. The Tseng Family Award, endowed by Dr. Jennifer Tseng, provides the annual SAAS contribution for this award.

2019	Linwah Yip, MD - University of Pittsburgh
2022	Romeo Ignacio, MD - University of California, San Diego
2023	Russell Woo, MD – University of Hawai'i
2024	Kim de la Cruz, MD - UVA Health
2025	Tejal Brahmbhatt, MD – Cedars-Sinai

SAAS – AWS Resident Research Travel Award

Sponsored by SAAS in partnership with the Association of Women Surgeons (AWS), this award funds a $1000 travel grant supporting attendance of a surgical resident trainee at the SAAS Annual Meeting.

2022	Connie Shao, MD – University of Alabama at Birmingham
2023	Areeba Saif, MD - UTHealth Houston McGovern Medical School
2024	Priyanka Chugh, MD - Boston University/Boston Medical Center
2025	Chuner Guo, MD, PhD – Stanford University
2026	Kristin Goodsell, MD - University of Washington

AWS - SAAS Joint Sponsored Travel Award

Sponsored by AWS and SAAS, this award funds a $750 travel grant supporting attendance of a resident at the AWS Annual Conference.

2023	Gopika SenthilKumar, MD, PhD – Medical College of Wisconsin
2024	Jyi Cheng Ng, MD – Mayo Clinic
2025	Sonal Swain, MD - Weill Cornell Medical College
2026	Nicole Lin, MD – New York Medical College

Local Hosts

David A. Gerber, MD - David A. Gerber, MD, is the Christian R. Holmes Professor and Chair with tenure in the Department of Surgery at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and the Chief of Surgical Services at UC Health in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Clinically he has expertise in solid organ transplantation and liver cancer including the integration of navigation technology into minimally invasive surgery procedures. Throughout his career he has been involved in translational research focusing on cell biology and tissue engineering with an emphasis on the relationship of the matrix/environment that supports the growth and differentiation of select stem cell populations into functional tissues.

Dr. Gerber has received >25 basic science grants including extramural funding from the National Institutes of Health, the American Liver Foundation, the Roche Organ Transplant Research Foundation, the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, and the American College of Surgeons. He has been principal investigator or co-investigator of >40 industry-sponsored clinical trials focusing on advancing patient outcomes in transplantation and hepatocellular carcinoma. He has published >200 peer reviewed publications, and several book chapters in the areas of transplantation, stem cell biology, regenerative medicine and liver cancer. In addition, he has received two patents and has given over 100 national and international presentations in healthcare and biotechnology. He has received numerous honors and awards including selection as a James IVth International Traveling Fellow, recipient of an ASTS Presidential Award, UNC Healthcare Hero and a HEROES award for alumni from Cornell University. He has also received multiple teaching awards throughout his career.

His extracurricular activities in national and international organizations include selection as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, Fellow of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and Diplomate in the American Board of Surgery. He is an elected member in the American Surgical Association, the Southern Surgical Association and the Halsted Society and is an active member in several transplant and surgical societies. He currently serves on the boards of UC Health, UC Health Systems and UC Physicians. In 2026 he was appointed to serve on the editorial board of *JAMA Surgery* and he was elected as a member of the James IVth Association of Surgeons, an international organization of surgeons in academia. In 2010 he was appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the Advisory Committee on Transplantation. In 2019 the Governor of North Carolina appointed him to serve as a member of the License to Give Trust Fund Commission. He has also served on both UNOS' and the OPTN's Board of Directors and the Board of Directors for HonorBridge, the OPO in central and eastern NC. During his time in North Carolina, he was part of the group of founders that launched the SECU Family House at UNC Hospitals, a home away from home for patients and their families, and he subsequently served as a board member.

Dr. Gerber has spent two decades as an entrepreneur focusing on translational research/implementation science involving novel devices in transplantation and surgery. He serves as

the Chief Medical Officer of BMI OrganBank, a company developing ex-vivo organ perfusion/preservation technologies. He has served in multiple roles for other biotechnology companies including serving on the Scientific Advisory Board of Pathfinder Therapeutics, Inc. where he assisted during their acquisition by Analogic Corp., a global medical device company. He is a clinical advisor to Excelerate Health Ventures, a life sciences investment fund. While on faculty at UNC he designed and implemented a course on “Entrepreneurship in Life Sciences” to introduce the concepts surrounding biotechnology commercialization into academia and he served as a founding member of the UNC Healthcare Innovation Council. In 2026 he was selected as the recipient of the University of Cincinnati’s Faculty Entrepreneurship Award.

Dr. Gerber is a retired Colonel in the US Air Force Reserve Medical Corps with an Adjunct Professorship at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU). In 2013, he received the Clinical & Academic Grand Master Special Experience Identifier Award from the Office of the Surgeon General in the USAF. In 2020, the Secretary of Defense authorized the award of the Defense Meritorious Service Medal be awarded to Dr. Gerber, the military's highest joint service decoration and the highest non-combat award. He completed the US Air Force’s Combined Senior Leadership Course, the 3-year Air War College program with a focus on Strategic Decision Making and Leadership and a one-year program in Deloitte’s Physician Leadership Academy.

He previously served as the George F. Sheldon Distinguished Professor with Tenure at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Vice-Chair of the Department of Surgery at UNC from 2016-2023 and Executive Medical Director of the UNC Healthcare Center for Transplant Care and Jason Ray Transplant Clinics. During his time at UNC he served on Faculty Council, the Faculty Executive Committee that oversees faculty governance for the University of North Carolina and the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee. Dr. Gerber was a member of UNC School of Medicine’s Academy of Educators and from 2012-2023 he was the Chair of the university’s Institutional Conflicts of Interest committee.

Dr. Gerber was born in NY and graduated with a B.S. from Cornell University and received an M.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. He completed general surgery training at Emory University in Atlanta, GA including a post-doctoral fellowship in Transplantation Immunology. Following this, he was a clinical transplant fellow at the Starzl Transplantation Institute at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Daniel Ostlie, MD - Daniel Ostlie, MD, is the Surgeon-in-Chief and Senior Vice President for Surgical Services at Cincinnati Children's, a nonprofit, comprehensive pediatric health system. As a leader in research, education, patient care, advocacy and innovation, Cincinnati Children's was ranked #1 in U.S. News & World Report's 2023-2024 list of best children's hospitals in the nation and is the #2 recipient of pediatric research grants from the National Institutes of Health. In this role, he oversees 100 surgeons across nine divisions with the Department of Surgery. He also plans, directs, implements and coordinates technical and clinical operations for surgical services, including perioperative services, and provides leadership in strategic planning for Cincinnati Children's.

Dr. Ostlie received his bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota and his medical degree from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine. He completed his residency in general surgery at Mayo Clinic Arizona from 1995 to 2000, during which time he also spent one year as a research fellow at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK. After general surgery residency, he completed his pediatric surgery fellowship and surgical critical care fellowship at Children's Mercy Hospital, Kansas City, MO. He joined the faculty there upon completion of his training and during his 12 years with the institution, he rose through numerous leadership roles including vice chair of the Department of Surgery and program director of both the Pediatric Surgery Residency and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship.

Prior to joining Cincinnati Children's, Dr. Ostlie served as Surgeon-in-Chief and Chair of Surgery at Phoenix Children's Hospital, and Surgeon-in-Chief at American Family Children's Hospital in Madison, WI.

Dr. Ostlie remains clinically active with special interest in minimally invasive surgery, chest wall abnormalities, and foregut/esophageal surgery. He continues his academic focus primarily in outcomes research. He has been instrumental in the establishment of two multi-institutional consortia focusing on the development of research to expand the knowledge surrounding rare pediatric surgical conditions. He has authored more than 225 peer-reviewed publications, 20 book chapters, and is the editor of two books. He has served as the Pediatric Editor of the *Journal of Laparoendoscopic and Advanced Surgical Techniques* and is the current Editor of *Seminars in Pediatric Surgery*.

Local Hosts

Sameer H. Patel, MD, Local Arrangements Chair - Sameer H. Patel, MD, FACS, FSSO, is currently an Associate Professor in the University of Cincinnati Department of Surgery, Division of Surgical Oncology. He is fellowship trained in surgical oncology and specializes in the management of complex pancreatic, hepatobiliary, peritoneal surface, gastroesophageal, and soft tissue malignancies. As an academic surgeon, Dr. Patel's research focuses on the role of mitochondrial potassium channels in pancreas cancer and chemotherapy sequencing in advanced appendiceal cancer.

Alexander Bondoc, MD, Local Arrangements Chair – Alexander Bondoc, MD is currently an Associate Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital where he is also the Surgical Director of the Liver, Kidney, and Intestinal Transplant Programs as well as the Living Donor Program. Fellowship trained in both Pediatric Surgery and Abdominal Transplantation, he specializes in abdominal transplant surgery, hepatopancreaticobiliary surgery, as well as pediatric dialysis access and vascular surgery.

Dr. Bondoc's research endeavor investigates the molecular mechanisms of hepatoblastoma pathogenesis, specifically tumor cell subtypes and their roles and interactions. Clinically, Dr. Bondoc is interested in the use of indocyanine green as an adjunct to improve visualization in pediatric HPB, vascular surgery, and laparoscopic and robotic surgery.

Speakers

Kui and Wai Fong Keynote Lectureship

The Kui and Wai Fong lectureship honors all parents who have supported the careers and success of academic surgeons.

Victor Garcia, MD, FACS, FAAP

Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics
University of Cincinnati School of Medicine

Dr. Victor Garcia was the Founding Director of Trauma Services at Cincinnati Children's, founded the African American Injury Prevention Initiative, which morphed into the global Buckle Up for Life Program, supported by North American Toyota, co-founded the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence, the non-profit CoreChange, and the for-profit WaterFields LLC all as efforts to reduce injury as the leading cause of death among children. He has devoted decades to understanding why health disparities disproportionately exist, vary, persist, and how best to eliminate them. He embraces Rudolf Virchow's concept that socioeconomics and spatial context interact to affect the patterning of inequality we as citizens and healthcare providers see in our personal and professional lives.

A graduate of the West Point Military Academy, Dr. Garcia subsequently trained in Pediatric Surgery as a Fellow at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia under Drs. C. Everett Koop and Louise Schnaufer. He subsequently was the Chief of Surgery at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center prior to his arrival in Cincinnati.

His compass is that medicine is as much a social science as a biological science and politics as nothing but medicine on a grand scale. He sees his role as not only to treat disease but to effectively address the causes of medical and surgical diseases.

Growing up in an economically depressed and impoverished area of New York City influenced Dr. Garcia's view that his responsibility as a physician must go beyond treatment to prevention. And to prevent required understanding the 'causes of causes' and who and what is 'spinning the web.'

Dr. Garcia's experience with unintentional and intentional injuries - gunshot wounds among children, preterm births, infant and maternal mortality among minorities and the poor, excess mortality and years of potential life lost among the pediatric and adult population in Cincinnati, led to his appreciating the limitations of conventional thinking- point in time and process improvement interventions -to making sense of chaos theory, seemingly intractable disparities as misunderstood outcomes of complex adaptive system of systems with underappreciated implications for simulation, modeling, policies and prevention.

Kuo Family Lectureship

The Kuo Family Lectureship was endowed by past SAAS President Paul C. Kuo, MD, MBA, to recognize and pay tribute to his family. This annual lectureship has often featured innovative talks by speakers who have been outside of medicine. This has included: Joanne Chang, Chef and Co-Owner of Flour Bakery + Café; Debbie Lum, Filmmaker (Documentary-Try Harder!); Jason Kalirai, PhD, Mission Area Executive for Civil Space in the Space Exploration Sector of the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory (APL); and Patricia Park, Author of *Re Jane*, *Imposter Syndrome & Other Confessions of Alejandra Kim*, and *What's Eating Jackie Oh?.*

Bobby Mukkamala, MD

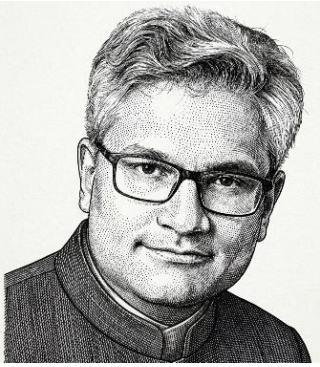
Immediate Past President
American Medical Association

Dr. Bobby Mukkamala [Mu-Kom-A-lah], a board-certified otolaryngologist—head and neck surgeon—in private practice in his hometown of Flint, Michigan, is the immediate past president of the American Medical Association.

A passionate advocate for public health, Dr. Mukkamala is deeply committed to creating a more sustainable health system that better supports physicians and more effectively serves the needs of people and communities.

Dr. Mukkamala joined AMA's Board of Trustees in 2017 and has been active in the AMA and organized medicine since residency. He is a past Michigan representative to the AMA Young Physicians Section, and a past recipient of the AMA Foundation's "Excellence in Medicine" Leadership Award. After completing his residency in Chicago, he returned to Flint to set up a private practice dedicated to addressing urgent health needs of the community. He now shares an office with his wife, Dr. Nita Kulkarni, an obstetrician-gynecologist. Dr. Mukkamala previously served as chair of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint where he guided its focus on funding projects to reduce the effects of lead in children. Today, he continues to serve on the foundation's committee board as it now works to increase high-quality early education opportunities for children. He also co-chairs efforts of the CRIM fitness foundation to incorporate mindfulness in its efforts to improve community health. And recently joined the board of the CS Mott Foundation headquartered in downtown Flint but doing work across the world to build a just, equitable and sustainable society.

Presidential Keynote Lecture: Moral Injury



Sunil Geevarghese MD, MSCI, FACS, MAMSE

Medical Director, Transplant Perioperative Services
Professor of Surgery, Biomedical Engineering, Radiology and Radiological Sciences
Division of Hepatobiliary Surgery and Liver Transplantation
Vanderbilt Health

As the son of distinguished career educators, proud Indian immigrants from the 1950-60s, Dr. Geevarghese has followed in the "family business." Recognizing a gap in perioperative resident education, he devised the Educational Time-Out method to formalize preoperative goal setting at the end of the surgical time-out and to provide postoperative feedback using the SIMPL-OR app. Given the rising tide of burnout among healthcare providers, he founded the Vanderbilt Resilience Rapid Response Team, a specially trained team that facilitates early recognition and support. A founding member of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS) Wellness Committee, he helped develop the ASTS Peer Support Network, designed to assist members who have suffered adverse events. This model of peer support has now been extended to other surgical societies such as the AHPBA, the American Head and Neck Society, APSA, SESC, SAGES and EAST. He also began ASTS efforts in surgical ergonomics for transplant fellows based on exercises he co-created for Vanderbilt general surgery residents.

He has lectured for two decades at Vanderbilt Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Management and Engineering. His research into moral injury has garnered national attention with visiting professorships at over 20 US institutions in the last 5 years including most recently the 10th Annual Rienhoff Lecture of Johns Hopkins and the 3rd Annual Hutson Lecture of the University of Miami. For his work in surgical resident education, he received the Dr. Robert S. McCleery Master Teacher Award in 2017, Vanderbilt's highest honor in surgical education. His dedication to the transplant surgical experience of medical students and residents through recruitment, research, and mentorship was recognized with the inaugural 2020 ASTS Pipeline Award. He was inducted as a Member of the Southern Surgical Association in 2023 and the Academy of Master Surgeon Educators of the American College of Surgeons in 2025.

He is active nationally in numerous roles with ASTS, AHPBA and he serves as Treasurer of the SESC. Married to Dr. Liby John Geevarghese, a staff psychiatrist at the Nashville VA Hospital, they have three children and have called Nashville home for over 30 years. In his free time, he enjoys family, travel, and horology.

Professional Development Session: High-Performance Leadership in Academic Surgery: Why Validation Matters

Navneet Sandhu, Psy-D, MPH, PMH-C - Dr. Navneet Sandhu, PsyD, MPH, PMH-C, is a California based clinical psychologist and national speaker with over 15 years of experience focused on the mental health and well-being of health care professionals, including trainees, physicians, and surgeons, and executive administrative leadership. Her work focuses on how leadership structures, professional identity transitions, and the culture of academic medicine shape mental health, well-being, performance, and long-term career sustainability.

Dr. Sandhu holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and a Master of Public Health, along with a certification in Perinatal Mental Health. Her clinical work is dedicated to supporting individuals in cultivating healthier professional environments, ones that promote both psychological well-being and sustainable, effective leadership in health care settings.

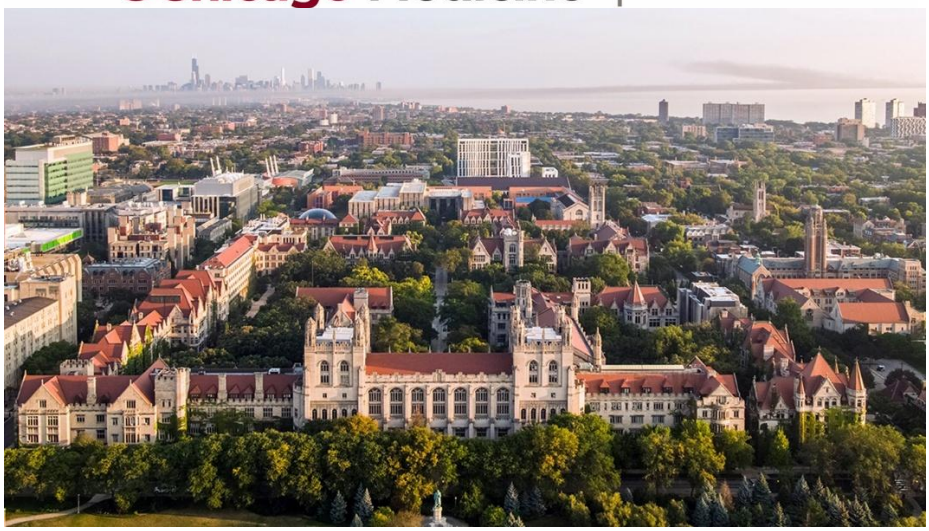
Tejal Brahmbhatt, MD, President - Tejal S. Brahmbhatt, MD, FACS, is an Associate Professor of Surgery and serves as the Medical Director and Fellowship Director of Surgical Critical Care at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He completed his internship at Washington University in St. Louis, followed by a General Surgery residency at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. He then pursued a Fellowship in Traumatology, Emergency General Surgery, and Surgical Critical Care at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. In addition to his medical training, Dr. Brahmbhatt holds advanced doctoral training in music theory and composition, with a focus on the post-Romantic era Russian style and consults for several film production companies in the U.S. and abroad. His clinical research, supported by BARDA and industry sponsorship, focuses on the application of artificial intelligence in point-of-care ultrasound, innovations in surgical education, the psychological stressors of trauma surgical practice, and optimizing trauma and emergency surgery resource allocation in the context of diminishing healthcare resources.

Victoria Lai, MD, MS - Victoria Lai, MD, MS, FACS, is a fellowship trained endocrine surgeon at MedStar Washington Hospital Center and Assistant Professor of Surgery at Georgetown University Medical Center. Her academic interests focus on the survivorship experience of patients with thyroid cancer.

Upcoming Meetings

Local Host: Thomas Read, MD, Chair, Department of Surgery
Local Arrangements Chairs: Dylan Goto, MD and Reid Sakamoto, MD

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
UChicago Medicine
Department of Surgery



September 6-8, 2028
Local Host: Jeffrey Matthews, MD, Chair, Department of Surgery
Local Arrangements Chairs: Yalini Vigneswaran, MD and Chelsea Dorsey, MD

American Journal of Surgery (AJS)

Official Publication of the
Society of Asian Academic Surgeons

https://www.americanjournalofsurgery.com/

For everyone who was accepted for presentation, we would like to invite you to submit an abstract-associated manuscript for consideration for publication in the American Journal of Surgery (AJS), the official journal of SAAS. AJS submissions will close on Friday, ***November 13, 2026****.*

The submission website for this journal is located at: https://www.editorialmanager.com/ajs/default2.aspx

To ensure that all manuscripts are correctly identified for inclusion, it is important that authors select the name of the special issue when they upload their manuscripts ***VSI: SAAS 2026.***