

2021

Presidential
AWARDS

UT Health
San Antonio



2020 Presidential Award Recipients

Clinical Excellence

Ramin Poursani, MD
Professor/Clinical
Department of Family and
Community Medicine
Long School of Medicine

Shafqat Shah, MD
Associate Professor/Clinical
Division of Hematology-Oncology
Department of Pediatrics
Long School of Medicine

Edward F. Wright, DDS, MS
Professor
Department of Comprehensive Dentistry
School of Dentistry

Teaching Excellence – Sustained

Michael Geelhoed, DPT, PT
Associate Professor and
Director of Clinical Education
Department of Physical Therapy
School of Health Professions

Omid B. Rahimi, PhD
Associate Professor
UT Distinguished Teaching Professor
Director of Human Anatomy Program
Department of Cell Systems and Anatomy
Long School of Medicine

Temple A. Ratcliffe, MD, FACP
Associate Professor/Clinical
Division of Hospital and General Medicine
Long School of Medicine

P. Renee Yew, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Molecular Medicine
Long School of Medicine

Teaching Excellence – Emerging

Elizabeth Reed Hanson, MD
Associate Professor/Clinical
Division of General Pediatrics
Department of Pediatrics
Long School of Medicine

Luke A. Newton, MD
Associate Professor and Chief
Division of
General Obstetrics and Gynecology
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Long School of Medicine

Annette Occhialini, MD
Assistant Professor
Department of Cell Systems and Anatomy
Long School of Medicine

Distinguished Service to the Institution

Norma Martínez Rogers,
PhD, RN, FAAN
Professor, Office for Faculty Excellence
School of Nursing

Employee Excellence

Julie Collins, BA
Director of Communications for Study
Promotion and Dissemination
Department of Psychiatry
and Behavioral Sciences
Long School of Medicine

Thea K. Lyssy, MA, PMP, CQIA
Director of Accreditation,
Compliance and Quality Improvement
Office for Undergraduate
Medical Education
Long School of Medicine

Natalina Martinez, MBA
Director of Finance and Administration
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Norman Mendez, BS
Operations Manager
Greehey Children's
Cancer Research Institute
Long School of Medicine

D.J. Smith
Special Events Coordinator
Office of the Dental Dean
School of Dentistry

Team Excellence

UT Health Cranial
Remolding Program
Department of Neurosurgery

Darren J. Poidevin, CLPO
Clinical Program Director
Team Leader
Department of Neurosurgery
Long School of Medicine

Jim P. Brookshier, MPO, CLPO
Cranial Remolding Specialist
Department of Neurosurgery
Long School of Medicine

Monica Garcia
Referral Coordinator Senior
Department of Neurosurgery
Long School of Medicine

Debbie Rose
Physician Relations Specialist Senior
Department of Marketing,
Communications and Media

Marissa Velez
Referral Coordinator Senior
Department of Neurosurgery
Long School of Medicine

Distinguished Senior Research Scholar

Charles P. France, PhD
Robert A. Welch Distinguished
University Chair in Chemistry
Professor
Department of Pharmacology and
Department of Psychiatry
Long School of Medicine



Presidential Awards

April 14, 2021

Welcome

President Henrich

Presentation of Awards

Employee Excellence in Service

Team Excellence

Teaching Excellence

Clinical Excellence

Distinguished Research Scholar

Distinguished Service to the Institution

Award Closing



A Message from the President

Every day it is an honor for me to lead UT Health San Antonio. Today, I am especially proud to recognize you—the men and women who make our university one of the nation's finest academic health science centers. As recipients of the Presidential Awards, you represent exceptional achievement in your fields. Through your creativity, perseverance and leadership, you elevate our university as a beacon of hope for the sick, the exciting home of healing discoveries and a stimulating environment for students. For the 2021 Presidential Awards, special emphasis was given to recognize faculty and staff whose commitment to excellence enabled them to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic while simultaneously meeting the goals of our missions. 2021 Presidential Award winners made noteworthy and distinctive contributions to UT Health San Antonio by modeling our core values and serving our missions of education, research, patient care and community engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

William L. Henrich, MD, MACP
President and Professor of Medicine



2021 Presidential Award Recipients





The Presidential Employee Excellence in Service Award honors UT Health San Antonio employees who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the university. They have made noteworthy and distinctive contributions to UT Health San Antonio by modeling our core values and serving our missions of education, research, patient care and community engagement. In developing new processes or improving existing ones, these individuals have significantly improved productivity and cost savings for the university.



Jennifer Cerecero, MS, CHP, LMP
Director, Radiation Safety, Office of Environmental Health and Safety

Ms. Cerecero is a founder of the Staff Emergency Fund, leader of the Staff Advisory Council and active in directing our COVID-19 response. Her actions during the pandemic allowed EVERY employee to return to campus safely and to have timely and important communication when working from home. She developed databases to ensure open email communication and to organize results of on-campus coronavirus testing, and helped train physicians and others on the safe use of personal protective equipment.

– Beth Wueste, MAEd, C-TAGME Associate Program Director,
 Director of Academic Programs, Pediatric Residency Program



Albert Contreras, SHRM-CP, PHR
Manager, HR Service Delivery, Office of Human Resources

Mr. Contreras had been in his new role as manager of HR service delivery for only five months when the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift in focus. He led the creation and implementation of work-from-home resources such as guidelines, webinars and other educational tools while providing assessments, support and managing COVID-related emergency leave. During this time, he recruited and hired 12 professional staffers. In short, Mr. Contreras has demonstrated what it means to be exceptional.

– Saralynn Mose, Office of Human Resources



Stephanie R. Gutierrez, BA
Program Coordinator-Senior, Office of Undergraduate Medical Education, Long School of Medicine

Ms. Gutierrez's core strengths include innovation and persistence, qualities she brought to many successful student-focused programs, including Global Health, the Center for Clinical Ultrasound Education and the MD/MPH program. As Long-CO Project Coordinator, she consistently innovated and adapted to the needs of more than 250 student volunteers and the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. She created scheduling programs, training manuals, a website and infographics, all duties that "exceeded expectations" and will provide a blueprint for the future.

– Drs. Barbara Taylor, Joshua Hanson and Deborah Conway, Office of Undergraduate Medical Education



Ellen Nystrom, BA

Director, Veteran Services and Financial Aid, Office of Financial Aid

Ms. Nystrom successfully administered the CARES Act student emergency financial aid program in spring 2020. In order to award \$772,901 to 750 students facing financial hardship and disruption from COVID-19, Ms. Nystrom led the design, development and implementation of an electronic application and award review process, constantly collaborating with institutional partners to make sure the process fully met legislative standards. She developed the system from scratch and was continuously engaged with the U.S. Department of Education regarding updates.

– John Kaulfus, EdD, Chief Student Affairs Officer and Title IX Director, Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs



Elizabeth Walton

Clinical Information System Analyst-Senior, UT Health Physicians Administrative EPIC Practice Management

Mere days after the COVID-19 pandemic began, Ms. Walton built, tested and deployed automations, codes and edits swiftly and carefully to process expenses for COVID testing, specimen collection and telemedicine screening. This was done over and above her extensive IT duties, often requiring after-hours and weekend work, and in collaboration with her peers as well as operations staff. The enormous effort she put into minimizing the negative revenue impact of COVID-19 is nothing short of heroic.

– Susan Hilgers, Director, Clinical Information Systems (EPIC)



Within the Employee Excellence in Service category, the Presidential Team Excellence Award provides an opportunity to recognize an entire team of faculty, staff and students for exemplary contributions and outstanding collaboration that have resulted in accomplishments which fully honor the mission, core values and vision of UT Health San Antonio.

COVID-19 Clinical Trials Response Team

This team, with the incredible dedication of its members to improving the health of COVID-19 patients, has had a remarkable record of success. Under the leadership of Ms. Tragus, 44 team members and researchers from infectious diseases, pediatrics, anesthesia, trauma surgery and other departments effectively managed complex regulatory and clinical trials in partnership with University Health to provide trial opportunities and potentially life-saving therapies to patients with COVID-19. Results from these trials have been felt by patients around the world.

– Thomas F. Patterson, MD, FACP, FIDSA, Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases, Professor of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine



Robin Tragus, MSN, RN
Clinical Research Nurse Supervisor
Department of Medicine/Infectious Diseases
Team Leader

Azaneth Arellanes, BS	Wanda Haynes, RN, BSN	Bryan Reilly
Meyad Baghezza, BA, CIP	Patricia Heard, BA	Celeste Rodriguez, MPA
Rose Ann Barajas	Elizabeth Hooks, JD	Patricia Sallee, MPAS, PA-C
Jason Bates, MBA	Heta Javeri, MD, MPH	Joseph Schmelz, PhD
Ruth E. Berggren, MD	Emmanuel Luna, MAA	Rachel Schofield
Jason, Bowling, MD, FIDSA	Cristina Morales, BSBA	Irma Scholler, MSN, RN
Maria Irma Castro	Laura Najvar, BS	Lynda Schrack, BA
Gabriel Catano	Abdelhameed Nawwar, MD	Ruth Serrano Pinil, MD
Divya Chandramohan, MD	Brandie Otten	Bridgette Soileau, MA
Jose Coba, MD	Thomas F. Patterson, MD, FACP, FIDSA	Kimberly Summers, PharmD
Tyler Curiel, MD, MPH	Jan E. Patterson, MD, MS	Barbara Taylor, MD, MS
Mark DeRosa	Jonathan Polanco, BA	Robert Villarreal, MS
Danielle Dixon, DO	Hilda Pomroy, RRT, BS, CCRC	Brandi Weaver, BA
Rukevwe Ehwareme, MD		
Manuel Endo, MD		
Janet Garza, RN, BSN	Philip Ponce, MD	

*Not all team members are pictured.



COVID-19 Rapid Response Testing Team

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this 24-member team took seriously the urgency to plan, develop and validate an entirely new, accurate test for the virus. Using rapid planning and development, the team based at the South Texas Reference Laboratories in the Department of Pathology established partnerships with University Hospital, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, outside vendors and others with medical, operational and regulatory expertise. They converted medical school labs for testing, acquired necessary equipment and showed outstanding collaborative skills.

– Bradley Brimhall, MD, MPH, Professor, Medical Director for Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine



Marjorie David, MD
Assistant Professor/Clinical
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
Team Leader

Lauren Chesnut Ansaldo, HT (ASCP)
Steven Dallas, PhD
Hongxin Fan, MD, MS
Kristin Fiebelkorn, MD
Wieslaw Furmaga, MD, STRL
Victor Garcia, BS, MLS (ASCP)
Weijing He, MD, MSc
Sheila Kane, BS, CG (ASCP)
Bethany Landry, BS, MLS (ASCP)
Rick Marciniak, BS, CG (ASCP)
Barbara Mermella, BS, MLS (ASCP)
Kristine McAshan

James Mele, PhD
David Montes, BS, MB (ASCP)
Guillermo Nunez, BS, MS, MLS (ASCP)
Hoja Patterson, BS, MLS (ASCP)
Kathy Planto, BS
Diego Prieto
Anthony Silvia, BS, MLS (ASCP)
Josie Stoeve, BS, MT (ASCP)
Elizabeth Thompson, BS, MLS (ASCP), STRL
Kumari Vadlamudi, BS, MT (ASCP)
Nathan Wiederhold, PharmD, BA



*Not all team members are pictured.

Environmental Health and Safety Team

Early evaluation of the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic enabled 21 team members from Environmental Health and Safety and other departments to quickly assess requirements to keep the campus safe and act accordingly. Round-the-clock support included town hall presentations, guidance on use of masks and respirators, air sampling in dental bays, review of research protocols and acquisition of personal protective equipment, including after-hours PPE vending machines. Designs for an innovative sterilizing chamber enabled the School of Dentistry to reopen in May 2020.

– Jennifer Cerecero, MS, CHP, LMP, Director, Radiation Safety, Office of Environmental Health and Safety



Michael A. Charlton, PhD, CHP, LMP, CIH, CSP
Assistant Vice President
Office of Risk Management and Safety
Team Leader

Rebecca Bloodworth, MPH, CHMM
Emmanuel Buabeng
Jennifer Cerecero, MS, CHP, LMP
Marcos Chavez
David Guerrero, CSP
Mary Guerrero-Munoz, MA, CNMT
Mandy Hinojosa
Ernest Hinojosa
Dorothy Macias
Bud M. Martin, CFI, CFPE

Tanya A. Mazzucca
Griselda Melendez, MS
Krissy Ramirez
Erica Rincon, CHMM
Hope Robinson
Kate Saucke
Amanda Sullivan
Dennis Tyll
Carl Wellington, CFI, CFPE
Michelle Zavala





The Presidential Teaching Excellence Award is presented to outstanding full-time faculty members who exhibit the finest principles in education. They possess extensive knowledge of their subject material, maintain an awareness of current developments and incorporate examples from recent literature or clinical experience in the classroom. These faculty members have distinguished themselves not only through teaching methods in the classroom, but also by serving as role models and mentors to students outside class. They have made a significant contribution to the education and development of future health care professionals.



A.J. Carpenter, MD, PhD

*Professor/Clinical and Program Director
Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Long School of Medicine*

After a distinguished career in the Air Force culminating as a lieutenant colonel and chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Dr. Carpenter joined UT Health San Antonio in 2002. She shows great patience and humility in teaching residents how to perform heart surgery and is largely responsible for recruiting female faculty and residents. She was one of the first program directors to volunteer her residents to support the Graduate Medical Education cross-department deployment during the COVID-19 surge.

– John Calhoon, MD, Professor and Chair, President's Council Chair for Excellence in Surgery, Director, UT Health Pediatric Heart Center



Brian L. Mealey, DDS, MS

*Professor and Graduate Program Director
Department of Periodontics, School of Dentistry*

The COVID-19 pandemic brought great turmoil to our periodontics program, but Dr. Mealey devised a plan to move third-year residents safely and swiftly through their final two months of instruction with success and without missing a day. After 21 years in the Air Force, including leadership positions at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Dr. Mealey is known as a tireless mentor who directs the graduate program and clinic while implementing disinfection and PPE guidelines for all clinics at the School of Dentistry.

– Angela Palaiologou-Gallis, DDS, MS, Professor and Assistant Director, Graduate Periodontics



Haley Nation, PhD

*Assistant Professor/Clinical
Department of Cell Systems and Anatomy, Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Nation is a rare and talented educator who loves her craft, is devoted to her students and always strives for excellence. She did not hesitate to plan, organize and direct a course in dental anatomy when she arrived on our campus just two months after earning her doctoral degree. Demonstrating her creativity, she asked to teach anatomy courses to medical students and used innovative techniques to transition cadaver dissection units to virtual formats during the COVID-19 pandemic.

– Christi A. Walter, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Cell Systems and Anatomy



Meredith Quinene,
DHSc, MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA

*Assistant Professor
Department of Physician Assistant Studies
School of Health Professions*

Dr. Quinene's teaching ability and dedication to students are evident by every department measure. She is simply the example of what a physician assistant educator should be. Her caring, compassionate leadership in education is key to preparing our students for their chosen vocation. Within 48 hours of the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home order, she transformed the PA didactic curriculum to virtual online and blended formats to ensure students could achieve learning outcomes and remain on schedule for graduation.

– Paul B. Allen Sr., DSc, MPAS, PA-C, FAAPA, Associate Professor,
Program Director and Chair, Department of Physician Assistant Studies



Heidi J. Worabo,
DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP

*Associate Professor/Clinical
School of Nursing*

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the School of Nursing's Family Nurse Practitioner program transitioned to online, modified skills learning and clinical experiences under Dr. Worabo's excellent leadership. She created a virtual pediatric clinical simulation for 47 students, attended numerous webinars on telehealth competencies and developed a graduate clinical partnership while taking steps to ensure San Antonio's refugee population gained access to the coronavirus vaccine.

– Sara L. Gill, PhD, RN, IBCLC, FAAN, Professor and Associate Dean for
Graduate Studies



The Presidential Clinical Excellence Award honors full-time faculty of UT Health San Antonio who provide clinical services as part of their appointments. These clinicians have distinguished themselves through exemplary and sustained expertise, and they represent the very finest in quality patient care. By building relationships with patients, family members, professional colleagues, residents, students and staff, these awardees demonstrate collaborative teamwork, independent leadership and compassionate care.



Jason E. Bowling, MD, FIDSA

*Associate Professor/Clinical, Division of Infectious Diseases
Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine*

Dr. Bowling has a national reputation for expertise in infection control and hospital epidemiology, antimicrobial stewardship, outpatient parenteral antibiotic therapy, emergency preparedness and, now, COVID-19. First and foremost, he is a skilled and compassionate clinician who has provided reasoned approaches in these often tense and chaotic times, not only alleviating fear but fostering an extremely safe workplace environment. His proficiency was influenced by his early career research on the Ebola and H1N1 swine flu pandemics.

– Thomas F. Patterson, MD, FACP, FIDSA, Professor and Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine



Laura Novak, OTD, OTR, BCG

*Assistant Professor/Clinical, Department of Occupational Therapy
School of Health Professions*

When COVID-19 first appeared, Dr. Novak was able to quickly pivot her clinical activities for dementia patients away from in-person visits to telehealth, allowing her to remain connected with patients and their families in a safe and interactive way, thus providing a continuum of care. She showed leadership by maintaining a strong commitment to service through the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) as well as nationally through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

– Matthew M. Anderson, PhD, Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs, School of Health Professions



Raj Sehgal, MD

Associate Professor/Clinical and Section Chief of Hospital Medicine (VA), Department of Medicine, Long School of Medicine

Already a leader in clinical care and problem solving at Audie Murphy Veterans Administration Hospital, Dr. Sehgal showed truly heroic efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on, Dr. Sehgal saw the storm that would be arriving and began to prepare. He assigned himself first to the VA's COVID unit to provide direct care to patients and worked tirelessly to formulate a surge plan that left colleagues feeling safe, prepared, organized and hopeful throughout the experience.

– Gregory D. Bowling, MD, FHM, FACP, Associate Professor of Medicine, Interim Chief of Hospital Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, Long School of Medicine



Cindy Sickora, DNP, RN

*Professor/Clinical, Howard & Betty Halff Endowed
Professorship in Nursing Excellence for Patient Care
Vice Dean of Practice and Engagement, School of Nursing*

Dr. Sickora led the efforts for the COVID-19 hotline that received more than 10,000 phone calls in a six-month time period and on-campus testing at the School of Nursing. She also played a key role in the reopening of patient clinics by organizing specimen collection across multiple departments for analysis by third-party laboratories in advance of dental and surgical procedures. Dr. Sickora was helpful, cooperative and informative as she powered through these efforts and worked with diverse groups.

– Jan E. Patterson, MD, MS, MACP, FACP, FIDSA, FSHEA, CHCP, Professor of Medicine/Infectious Diseases and Pathology, Associate Dean for Quality and Lifelong Learning, Clinical Safety and Effectiveness Course Director



Luis C. Yepes, DDS, MS

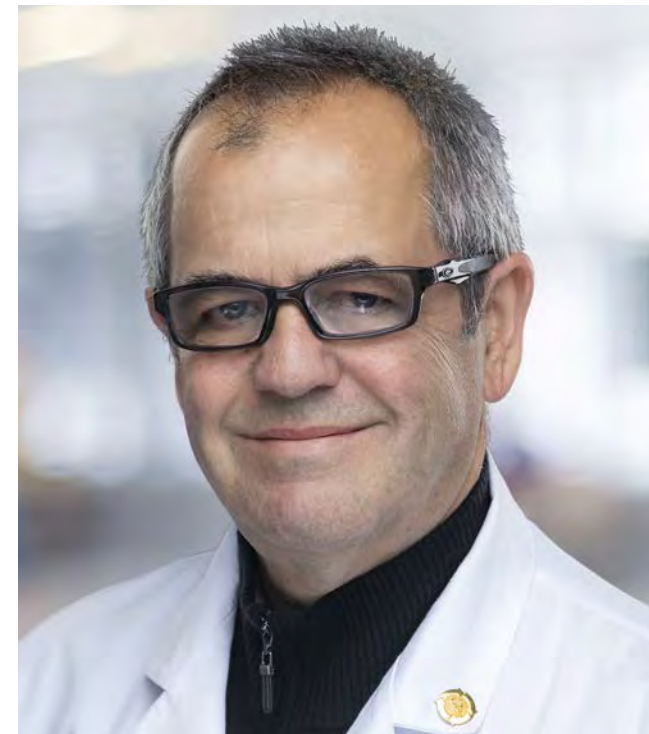
*Assistant Professor/Clinical, Department of
Comprehensive Dentistry, School of Dentistry*

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all dental clinic operations, but Dr. Yepes was critical in creating a resident rotation to cover seven days a week and all emergencies at the Advanced General Dentistry Clinic. Dr. Yepes and his team never skipped a beat while providing a safe environment for patients and providers. Demonstrating that he was always willing to give of his time, knowledge and experience to inspire others, Dr. Yepes motivated his team to achieve their fullest potential in this crisis.

– Adriana Segura, DDS, MS, Professor, Interim Chair of the Department of Comprehensive Dentistry, Associate Dean for Academics, Faculty and Student Affairs



The Presidential Distinguished Research Scholar Award represents the very best in academic achievement. This award honors an individual who exhibits superior scholarship and maintains the highest standards of professionalism. This award also recognizes significant contributions to theory, research and practice, a national or international reputation, a sustained record of extramural support, and major additions to scientific literature and health advancement.



Thomas F. Patterson, MD, FACP, FIDSA
*Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases
Professor of Medicine, Department of Medicine
Long School of Medicine*

Recognized as one of the leading experts in medical mycology in the world, Dr. Patterson's work is highly relevant and has important implications for global health. For example, he has had a hand in the development and testing of virtually every new antifungal drug which has been approved for patient use. Dr. Patterson was the lead infectious disease specialist in the initial trials of the antiviral agent remdesivir, which has become the standard treatment for seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

– W. Brian Reeves, MD, FACP, FASN, Professor and Chair, Department of Medicine



The Distinguished Service to the Institution Award honors a UT Health San Antonio employee who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to the university. Through dedication of time, talent and leadership, the individual serves as a role model and mentor to students and colleagues. The award recipient has made major contributions to the growth and development of UT Health San Antonio and the education of the next generation of health care professionals who will serve San Antonio, South Texas and the world.



Robert Leverence, MD, FACP

*Professor of Medicine and Chief Medical Officer
UT Health Physicians, Long School of Medicine*



As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, Dr. Leverence took the role of an orchestra conductor directing instruments in perfect harmony. He led the way in developing protocols to test facilities, staff and patients for two hospitals, the School of Nursing, the Primary Care Center and Infection Control. He also established daily video calls as informative and reassuring “fire-side chats” with leaders from UT Health San Antonio, University Health, Veterans Administration and Bexar County Medical Society, as well as city and county governments.

– Carlos A. Rosende, MD, FACS, Executive Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs, Long School of Medicine, Executive Director, UT Health Physicians, Professor of Ophthalmology

PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Martha Acosta, PhD, PT, GCS
Sylvia Botros-Brey, MD, MSCI
David Kadosh, PhD
Karen B. Troendle, BA, DDS, MPH
Cynthia Wall, PhD, MSN, APRN, PCNS-BC, CNE

PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH SCHOLAR AWARD COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Kyungeh An, PhD, RN, FAHA
Tiffani Burgin, DMSc, MPAS, PA-C
Andrea Giuffrida, PhD
Jean X. Jiang, PhD
Nikita Ruparel, PhD, DDS, MS
David S. Weiss, PhD

PRESIDENTIAL CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD COMMITTEE

Jacqueline Mok, PhD (non-voting chair)
Sylvia Leal-Castañon, MD
Autumn D. Clegg, EdD, OTR, CBIS
Ahmed Sabbah, DDS, PhD
Maria Saldiva, FNP
Mark K. Sparkman, MD

PRESIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE AWARD COMMITTEE

Jessica Perez, MS (non-voting chair)
Mary Bradley, MLA
Linda Lopez-George, MA
Mabel R. Hernandez
Diana Medina
Rebecca A. Mendez
Jeremy Mercier
Samantha Montalvo
Michelle Montoya-Mendoza
Bonnie Moreno, BA
Reuben Pinkson
Amber A. Sharp, MBA, CPA
Jeanie Paradise
John Turner, MEd



UT Health
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