

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY
2025 ANNUAL REPORT





DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY LEADERSHIP

Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.

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Vice Chair, Finance and Administration

William Hawkins, M.D.

Vice Chair, Clinical Affairs

Christian Streck, M.D.

Vice Chair, Education

Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.

Vice Chair, Research

Heather Evans, M.D., MS

Vice Chair, Veterans Affairs

David Mahvi, M.D.

Vice Chair, Faculty Development

Sharee Wright, M.D.

Vice Chair, Healthcare Disparities Education and Cultural Dexterity

Andrea Abbott, M.D., MSCR

Vice Chair, Well-being and Personal Development

Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS

Vice Chair, Innovation

Joseph Scalea, M.D.

Vice Chair, Entrepreneurship

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The Department of Surgery would like to thank the many individuals, especially our leadership, whose collective efforts have helped to complete this year's annual progress report. Additionally, we would like to thank those who are featured within these pages for their continued service to MUSC and contributions to this publication.

Editor, Creative and Production Manager: Lauren Hooker

Photographers, Contributing Writers and Proofreaders: Diego Torres Farjado, Brennan Wesley, Scott Garrand, Rebekah Davis, and Ivy Keller

Graphic Designer: Courtney Irvin, *Studio C*

Our people are at the heart of all we do to always put patients first. Pictured on the cover are some of our amazing faculty, staff and trainees.





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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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Over the past decade, the MUSC Department of Surgery has grown not only in size and scope, but in spirit. What began as a vision to strengthen our programs and expand access to high-quality surgical care has evolved into a new era of growth—one defined by innovation, teamwork, and a culture that empowers every member of our community to lead with purpose.

Building on the strong foundations established by leaders before us, we have continued to advance the Department of Surgery’s mission through collaboration and shared commitment. Our progress has been powered by people: the dedicated faculty, staff, and trainees who strive daily to deliver compassionate, world-class

care; the grateful patients and families whose generosity fuels discovery and education; and the partners and donors who share our belief that surgical innovation can transform lives across South Carolina and beyond.

Together, we have redefined what collaboration looks like in academic medicine—bridging disciplines, embracing new technologies, and investing in education that prepares the next generation of surgeon-scientists. The Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center, increased investments in research and implementation science, the statewide Surgical Quality Collaborative, and new initiatives such as dedicated research tracks across all residency programs, an advanced surgical simulation center, and expanded training pathways all reflect this shared commitment to continuous improvement and impact.

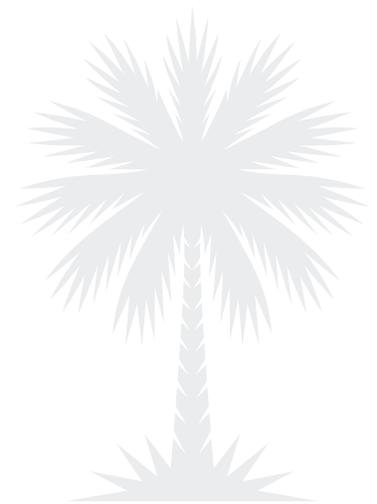
Perhaps the most meaningful transformation, however, has been cultural. We are a department that values curiosity as much as technical skill, innovation as much as excellence, and teamwork as much as leadership. This culture—built on trust, mentorship, and gratitude—has become our greatest strength.

As we look ahead, our mission remains clear: to advance surgical care through innovation, education, and collaboration, while honoring the patients and partners who make this journey possible. With their continued support, and the passion of our extraordinary teams, the future of surgery at MUSC has never been brighter.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Baliga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Prabhakar Baliga, M.D., FACS
R. Randolph Bradham, M.D., Endowed Chair in Surgery
Chair, Department of Surgery
Medical University of South Carolina





GUIDING THE FUTURE

A Decade of Transformational Leadership in the Department of Surgery

Guided by a decade of transformational leadership, the MUSC Department of Surgery has grown in people, programs, and partnerships—advancing innovation, expanding statewide care, and building a culture that empowers excellence.



*Building on the strong foundation established by past Department of Surgery leaders—including **Fred Crawford, Jr., M.D.**, Distinguished Chair Emeritus; MUSC President **David J. Cole, M.D.**, former Chair; and **David B. Adams, M.D.**, Distinguished*

University Professor Emeritus and former Interim Chair—the department entered a period of accelerated growth beginning in 2015.

During this time, teams across the Department of Surgery expanded clinical capabilities, strengthened training programs,

and advanced a culture grounded in collaboration, innovation, and professional development. The result has been a cohesive and resilient department—one that navigates an ever-evolving healthcare landscape while maintaining a clear focus on compassionate, patient-centered care.

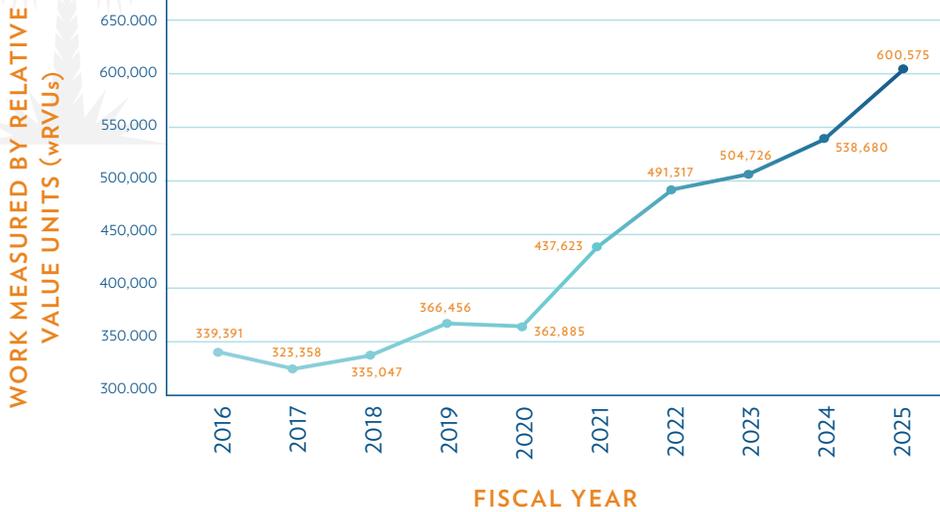
New initiatives in minimally invasive surgery, heart and vascular care, transplantation, and surgical innovation improved both patient outcomes and institutional expertise. Investments in resident education and strategic faculty recruitment further strengthened the department’s mission to develop future surgical leaders committed to excellence in clinical care, research, and teaching.



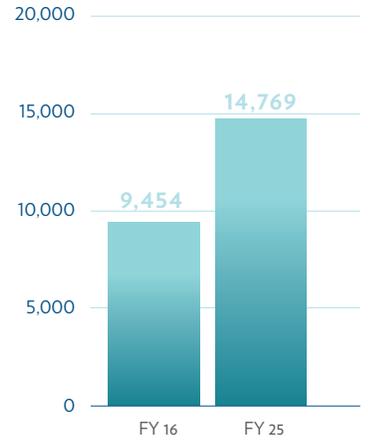
“The past decade of growth for the Department of Surgery stands as a testament to Dr. Baliga's leadership. MUSC has become a rising star nationally, and the excellence of the department—in teamwork, academic depth, and clinical care delivery—plays a major role in this success.”

-MUSC President David J. Cole, M.D.

Department of Surgery 10 Year Clinical Growth



Growth Snapshot: SURGICAL CASES



“Prabhakar was one of my earliest recruits as a relatively new department chairman. He has been a “winner” from day one—never satisfied with the status quo and always working to make transplant surgery and MUSC better. He has been an outstanding department chair who consistently stays out of the limelight.”

-Fred A. Crawford, M.D., *Chair Emeritus*

Over the past decade, new division chiefs and program directors infused fresh expertise and vision into nearly every specialty, boosting the department’s clinical and academic impact. Within the scope of ten years, the clinical faculty grew by 67%, contributing to a significant rise in surgical volume.

These new leadership roles led to significant advancements, particularly in heart and vascular care. Under the leadership of **Marc Katz, M.D., MPH**, the cardiac program became a statewide leader, while **Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D.**, introduced innovative technologies and hybrid techniques in vascular surgery. In 2019, burn surgeon **Steven Kahn, M.D.**, joined the department as Chief of Burn Surgery, and under his leadership, the MUSC Health South Carolina Burn Center opened in 2020. Within five years, the Burn Center achieved ABA Burn Verification for both adults and children.

We employ broad-based outreach to ensure a widely talented and competitive applicant pool, ensuring all qualified individuals are considered regardless of background. The number of women surgeons and Ph.D. scientists in the department has grown from 10 to 35—a 250% increase—reflecting a profound cultural transformation that has strengthened excellence, innovation, and representation across the department.

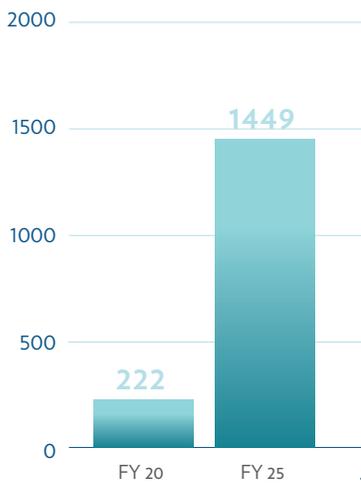
Additionally, the South Carolina Surgical Quality Collaborative (SCSQC), established in 2015, has played a crucial role in improving the quality and value of general surgical care statewide. Under the leadership of **Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.**, **Mark Lockett, M.D.**, and other key faculty, the SCSQC has contributed to significant improvements in surgical outcomes, underscoring the department’s commitment to quality surgical care beyond MUSC’s walls.



2016 → 2025

MUSC Health expanded its footprint from one hospital in 2016 to 18 hospitals across four regional health networks, covering all 46 counties in the state by FY25. Our surgical faculty now provide expanded care throughout the state, improving access to high-quality surgical expertise for all South Carolinians.

Growth Snapshot: ROBOTIC PROCEDURES



552% Increase in Robotic Surgery Over the Past 5 Years

Simultaneously, MUSC Health’s investment in robotic surgery has significantly advanced clinical capabilities. Under the leadership of **Rana Pullatt, M.D.**, clinical director of bariatric and robotic surgery, MUSC offers robotic surgery across all applicable surgical specialties, reinforcing our commitment to innovation and cutting-edge care.

Beyond clinical excellence, the department has launched several initiatives that have greatly advanced patient care, addressed societal challenges, fostered innovation, and prepared the next generation of surgical leaders. Major programmatic expansions include the Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program, led by **Ashley Hink, M.D., MPH**, the Global Surgery Program, led by **Mike M. Mallah, M.D.**, the Future Surgical Leaders Program developed by **Cynthia Talley, M.D.**, the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center, led by **Arman Kilic, M.D.**, and the Surgical Simulation Suite, led by **Douglas Cassidy, M.D.**

To further support all these initiatives, the department introduced new leadership roles focusing on disparities education and cultural dexterity, led by **Sharee Wright, M.D.**, personal development and well-being, led by **Andrea Abbott, M.D., MSCR**, and faculty development, led by **David Mahvi, M.D.** These efforts ensured that the department not only thrived clinically but also nurtured a sense of community and individual growth.



"Building a culture of collaboration and support was just as important as expanding our clinical work. When people feel valued and empowered, innovation follows."

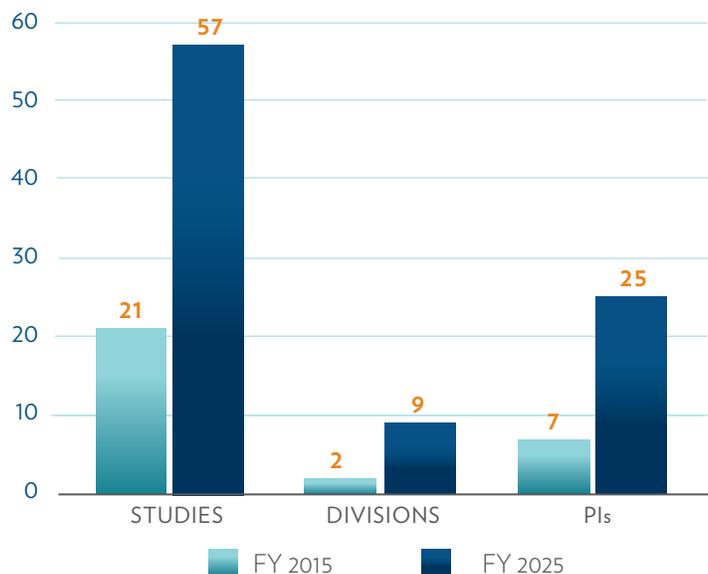
-Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.

A Culture of Innovation and Research

The Department of Surgery’s commitment to a culture of innovation and inquiry has been a cornerstone of its success. Research and innovation flourished with significant growth in clinical trials, increased investment in research, and an expansion in cellular therapy.

The Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center has become a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, advancing AI, predictive modeling, prototyping, and outcomes research in surgery. This year, the department created a dedicated space for the Surgical Innovation Center, further promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and fostering an environment of continuous learning.

10 YEAR COMPARISON OF CLINICAL TRIALS



At the Forefront of Training

Our residency and fellowship programs offer an unparalleled training experience. In 2020, under the leadership of **Cynthia Talley, M.D.**, the education division launched the Future Surgical Leaders Program, a first-of-its-kind surgical residency training program in the U.S. Three years later, the program expanded to include the added dimension of the Pathways Program to aid trainees in developing their academic niche. The program positions residents and fellows to not only have competence as surgeons but also as professionals. Additionally, our surgical education programs have expanded to include dedicated research years across all residency programs, strengthening the pipeline of future surgeon-scientists.



Expanding the Department's Footprint

MUSC's Department of Surgery is not only recognized as a leading academic surgical program but has also grown its influence locally, regionally, and nationally. Several faculty members have assumed pivotal leadership roles across the MUSC Healthcare System. By stepping into their respective leadership positions, these faculty members contribute to the ongoing growth and innovation of the MUSC Healthcare system.



Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D., was appointed Associate Chief Medical Officer for Surgical Services in the MUSC Health Charleston Division.



Laura Hollinger, M.D., has been appointed Secretary of the MUSC Medical Staff Medical Executive Committee.



Sharee Wright, M.D., was named Senior Associate Dean for Pathways in the College of Medicine.



Heather Evans, M.D., MS, now serves as Chief of Surgery at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center.



Mark Lockett, M.D., was named Chief Quality Officer for MUSC Health Charleston.



Cynthia Talley, M.D., was named Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education and Continuing Medical Education and the ACGME Designated Institutional Official in the College of Medicine.

Nationally and internationally, the department's impact has grown with faculty appointments to the presidencies of prestigious organizations, including:



Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.
Halsted Society
President 2026



Evert Eriksson, M.D.
Chest Wall Injury Society
President 2026



Rana Pullatt, M.D.
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
President-Elect 2026, President 2027



Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS
Inflammatory Breast Cancer-International Consortium
President 2026

THE HEART OF OUR SUCCESS: A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Over the past decade, the Department of Surgery has reached new heights through a strong culture of collaboration, innovation, and shared purpose. Its success is rooted in the collective efforts and unwavering contributions of individuals across every level of the department. From groundbreaking research to transformative clinical care, each achievement reflects a deep commitment to excellence and teamwork. The dedication and collaboration of our faculty, staff, trainees, patients, and partners continue to drive progress and

strengthen the department's impact.

This work is further supported by the steadfast generosity of our donors. Over the past decade, donor support has created lasting opportunities that continue to shape the department's future, including the establishment of **five endowed chairs** and more than **\$17 million** to support clinicians, researchers, and trainees—providing essential resources to advance innovation and improve patient outcomes.



Barbara Stuart Christie, (pictured with Aaron Lesher, M.D.) created the Barbara Stuart Christie Surgical Resident Research Endowment.



Bob Richards (pictured with his wife, Kathy) received a lifesaving kidney transplant and has established several gifts to enhance living donor education and research efforts.



Bruce Elliott, M.D., and Jay Robison, M.D., established the Elliott-Robison Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery; Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D., (center) is honored as the inaugural chairholder.



Jon van Heerden, M.D., created the Jon van Heerden Fund for General Surgery Loupes to support resident education.



Harvey Schiller, Ph.D., (pictured with Arman Kilic, M.D.) donated \$1M to the Department of Surgery to establish the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center.



Prabhakar Baliga, M.D., and Everett German, a supporter of the Living Donor Institute, celebrate the Lee Patterson Allen Transplant Immunobiology Lab's opening.



"I have always marveled at the rising trajectory that the MUSC Department of Surgery has taken from the days of Frederick Kredel, the first full-time professor of surgery, to Fred Crawford, the one who boldly aligned the department with President James B. Edwards' aspirations for making MUSC a world class institution, to our current chair, Prabhakar Baliga, who has made the department one which is recognized by surgical leaders all over as a top program in education, research, and clinical care. MUSC surgery is no longer a hidden gem. With Dr. Baliga's perseverance, patience, and wisdom, the department is now a shining jewel in American surgery."

-David B. Adams, M.D.

Distinguished University Professor Emeritus

WHERE INNOVATION MEETS COLLABORATION

The Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center Opens



The MUSC Department of Surgery marked a major milestone this year with the opening of the new space for the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center. Established in 2021 through a generous gift from Brigadier General **Harvey W. Schiller, USAF (Ret.), Ph.D.**, and his wife, Marcia, the Center is led by **Arman Kilic, M.D.**, a nationally recognized expert in artificial intelligence. The center is built around three core pillars: surgical artificial intelligence, clinical trials and outcomes research, and human centered design.



“Having these pillars in one centralized location and in close physical proximity allows for internal collaboration, streamlining of projects, and shared resources and expertise,” said Kilic.

Expanding Outcomes Research

While the Department of Surgery is known for its excellence in translational and basic science research, it has expanded its focus to strengthen outcomes research and implementation science, disciplines dedicated to ensuring proven interventions are effectively integrated into everyday clinical practice. With input from Vice Chair of Research **Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.**, Associate Vice Chair of Clinical Research **David J. Taber, Pharm.D., MS**, and Director of Research Administration **Morgan Overstreet, MSc**, the team set out to define what a surgical outcomes research environment should look like in the department.

“With the new space, we’re now creating an environment for our outcomes and health services research to succeed,” said Taber.

“Our department is filled with talented surgeon scientists, many of whom are just beginning to build their careers.” On average, it takes more than a decade for a proven intervention to move from clinical trial to widespread practice. Taber noted that implementation science helps bridge that gap, ensuring that effective solutions reach patients more quickly and equitably.

Strategically located near the department’s surgical simulation center and educational facilities, the center provides a collaborative environment where faculty and trainees can exchange ideas and develop innovative solutions to some of surgery’s most pressing challenges.

“As we evaluate the infrastructure essential to expanding our research mission, this investment in our physical space underscores the abundance of resources now available and just steps away from our trainees’ workspace,” said Ruddy.

“It’s meant to spark cross-fertilization,” adds Baliga. “We want students and young professionals to engage with this space, to grab a coffee and encounter innovation as part of their daily environment.”

With the opening of the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center, the anticipated growth of implementation science, and all residency programs now having dedicated research tracks, the MUSC Department of Surgery is building a model for how discovery, collaboration, and patient-centered innovation can redefine the future of surgical care in academic medicine.

“This center is about putting great minds in the same room – the shared energy and spontaneous collaboration it can foster is invaluable.”

-Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.

Surgical Simulation Suite Elevates Resident Training

The Department of Surgery's new Surgical Simulation Suite, located next to the resident workspace, features advanced trainers for laparoscopic, robotic, endoscopic, microscopic, and open surgery. It also houses an OR da Vinci Simulator and serves as the SAGES FLS and FES testing center, supporting both classroom and small-group learning.

Douglas Cassidy, M.D., Director of Surgical Simulation for the MUSC General Surgery Residency Program, advocates for simulation-based learning to improve technical skills, communication, situational awareness, and team dynamics. "Simulation training enhances patient safety," he notes. "The center's 24/7 accessibility is a key feature. If it's not accessible, it won't be used. Residents work long hours, and having simulators in one location helps facilitate their training."

Since its launch, the center has become integral to resident education. General surgery residents participate in weekly two-hour sessions—about 40 per academic year—beginning with the ACS and APDS standardized curriculum, covering core skills like tissue handling and suturing. Mid-level residents advance to laparoscopic and robotic procedures, while simulation-based interprofessional training strengthens teamwork in trauma and clinical trial scenarios. Other residency programs, including cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, also utilize the space.

Beyond scheduled sessions, residents often use the center during off-hours to practice independently or teach peers, promoting leadership, collaboration, and mastery of skills. Cassidy highlights the goal of proficiency in open, laparoscopic, and robotic surgery, ensuring residents are prepared for any clinical setting.

"The residents have access to models, instruments, and sutures at any time," Cassidy notes. "They can refine their skills in a simulated setting so that when they perform procedures in the OR, it's not the first time they're doing them—they're building on mastery."

By combining expert guidance, hands-on practice, and constant accessibility, MUSC's Surgical Simulation Center is transforming surgical education, ensuring residents are well-prepared, confident, and versatile for the future of surgery.

“



The new simulation space has given us a comfortable, secure place to practice skills that we have to use under pressure in the operating room or while providing procedural care. We have been able to learn as a group and independently by having dedicated equipment and accessibility at all hours of the day, which is so important for us with our tight schedules.

-Meredith Taylor, M.D.

”



“

The surgical simulation center has been a great asset to my training. Having convenient access to a space where I can regularly practice skills such as endoscopy and open skills has greatly improved my confidence and preparedness in the operating room. The hands-on simulation education run by Dr. Cassidy and readily available resources have been incredibly valuable in supporting my development as a surgical resident.

-Stephany Kim, M.D.

”

This is Surgery

In the MUSC Department of Surgery, our strength goes beyond technical expertise, academic achievement, and operational excellence. While we are proud of the skill and dedication that define our clinical, research, and administrative work, what truly sets our department apart is our culture. By valuing one another as people—not just professionals—we create an environment where collaboration thrives and our collective work is stronger.



Together, we are more than a group of skilled individuals. We are a connected, committed team whose culture enhances our work and supports the patients and communities we serve.

“

We are not just growing in numbers – we are growing in impact. The future of surgery for our patients is more innovative, more responsive, and more resilient.

-Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.

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Growth Snapshot:
PHYSICIANS AND PH.D. RESEARCHERS

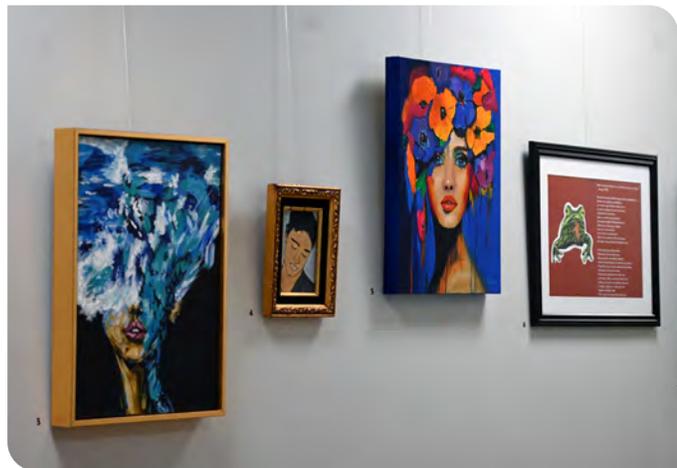
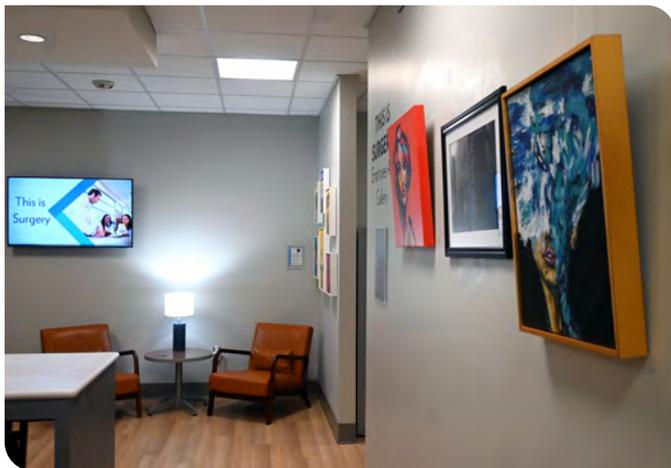


The Art of Surgery

Surgery has long been described as both a science and an art. Beyond knowledge and precision, it requires creativity, intuition, and skilled hands. Inspired by this idea, the Department of Surgery unveiled an employee art gallery that highlights the creative spirit across our team.

Open to all members of the department, the gallery invites individuals to share artwork that reflects their interests, perspectives, and talents beyond daily work. By showcasing these pieces, we gain a deeper appreciation for one another and the varied experiences that shape our department.

This space encourages connection and conversation, offering opportunities to see colleagues in a new light while reinforcing the role creativity plays in collaboration and problem-solving. The gallery reflects our broader culture—one that values people as whole individuals and recognizes that craftsmanship and creative expression strengthen our collective work.



Featuring Local Artists

In addition to the Employee Art Exhibition, the Department of Surgery also showcases local artists in the Surgical Innovation space to celebrate the unique and interesting communities we are honored to serve.

Currently, we are displaying artwork by local artists Arun Drummond and Michelle Lawanda.



Michelle Lawanda



Arun Drummond



Arun Drummond

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Hongjun Wang, Ph.D., Receives \$1.5M NIH Award

Dr. Wang's NIH award provides the second phase of support for her innovative exploratory and development research activities initiated under the NIH UG3 award for her STEMCAP-1 pain study for patients with chronic pancreatitis.

JULY



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Officially Opens New Surgical Simulation Lab

The simulation suite, strategically located adjacent to the resident workspace, features surgical trainers in laparoscopic surgery, robotic surgery, endoscopy, microscopic surgery, and surgical equipment.

SEPTEMBER

Prabhakar Baliga, M.D., Elected President of the Halsted Society

Dr. Baliga was elected President of the Halsted Society, one of the nation's most preeminent surgical societies, for the 2025-26 term and will preside over the Society's centennial celebrations at the 100th Annual Meeting.



NOVEMBER

AUGUST



Barry Gibney, D.O., Honored with Endowed Chair

Dr. Gibney was honored with the Carolyn E. Reed, M.D., Distinguished Endowed Chair in Thoracic Surgical Oncology. Endowed Chairs are among the highest academic awards universities can bestow on a faculty member.

OCTOBER

MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital Ranked No. 2 in Nation for Cardiology and Heart Surgery

The Pediatric & Congenital Heart Center at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital ranked No. 2 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's 2024-2025 Best Children's Hospitals survey.



DECEMBER



Arman Kilic, M.D., Named National Co-PI on Global LVAD Study

Dr. Kilic has been named a National Principal Investigator on a global first-of-its-kind TEAM-HF study, sponsored by Abbott Medical Devices, that seeks to improve clinical outcomes in patients with worsening heart failure.

This is how we're Changing What's Possible



Rana Pullatt, M.D., Elected President of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

The ASMBS is the world's leading organization dedicated to advancing the science, practice, and education of metabolic and bariatric surgery. He assumes the role of Vice President starting July 2025, President-elect in July 2026, and President in July 2027.

JANUARY

Laura Hollinger, M.D., Named Secretary of Medical Executive Committee (MEC)

Dr. Hollinger has been named to the MUSC Medical Staff Medical Executive Committee, where she will serve for six years and progress through officer roles, including Vice President and President.



MARCH



John van Heerden, M.D., Named an ACS Icon of Surgery

Dr. van Heerden was named an ACS Icon of Surgery — one of the most prestigious honors bestowed by the ACS in recognition of extraordinary contributions to surgical education, practice, and mentorship.

MAY

FEBRUARY

Evert Eriksson, M.D., Appointed President of the Chest Wall Injury Society

Dr. Eriksson leads the CWIS, which plays a vital role in shaping the future of the field by fostering collaboration, research, and mentorship among leading clinicians and investigators.



APRIL



Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D., Receives \$2.8M NIH R01 Award

Dr. Mehrotra's NIH award aims to improve the anti-tumor T cell function and immunotherapy response by targeting immunosuppression mediated by myeloid-derived suppressor cells.

JUNE

Surgical Innovation Center Opens

The MUSC Department of Surgery celebrated a major milestone with the official opening of the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center—a physical and symbolic hub for advancing research, technology, and collaboration in surgical science.



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This year, several faculty members assumed key leadership roles within the Department of Surgery and across the broader university and health system. Each brings invaluable expertise, a commitment to excellence, and a passion for advancing MUSC's mission in patient care, education, and research.



Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS

*Professor of Surgery, Vice Chair of Innovation
Director for Scientific Program Integration at HCC*

Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., M.S., joins MUSC in a dual role as Professor of Surgical Oncology and Vice Chair of Innovation in the Department of Surgery, and as Director for Scientific Program Integration at Hollings Cancer Center. Her research spans programmed cell death, functional genomics, and tumor immunology with a translational focus across oncology and surgical sciences.



Daniel Holena, M.D., MSCE

Chief, Division of Acute Care Surgery

Daniel Holena, M.D., MSCE, a nationally recognized trauma and acute care surgeon, joins MUSC as Chief of the Division of Acute Care Surgery. Board-certified in both General Surgery and Surgical Critical Care, Holena previously served as a trauma/acute care surgeon at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin and as Director of Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin.



Laura Hollinger, M.D.

Secretary, MUSC Medical Staff Medical Executive Committee

Laura Hollinger, M.D., has been appointed Secretary of the MUSC Medical Staff Medical Executive Committee (MEC), a vital governance body that ensures the medical staff functions effectively, aligns with institutional goals, and upholds the highest standards in patient care and safety. In addition to her leadership in MEC, Hollinger continues her impactful work as Medical Director of the Pediatric ECMO Program and as a dedicated educator and clinician.



Arman Kilic, M.D.

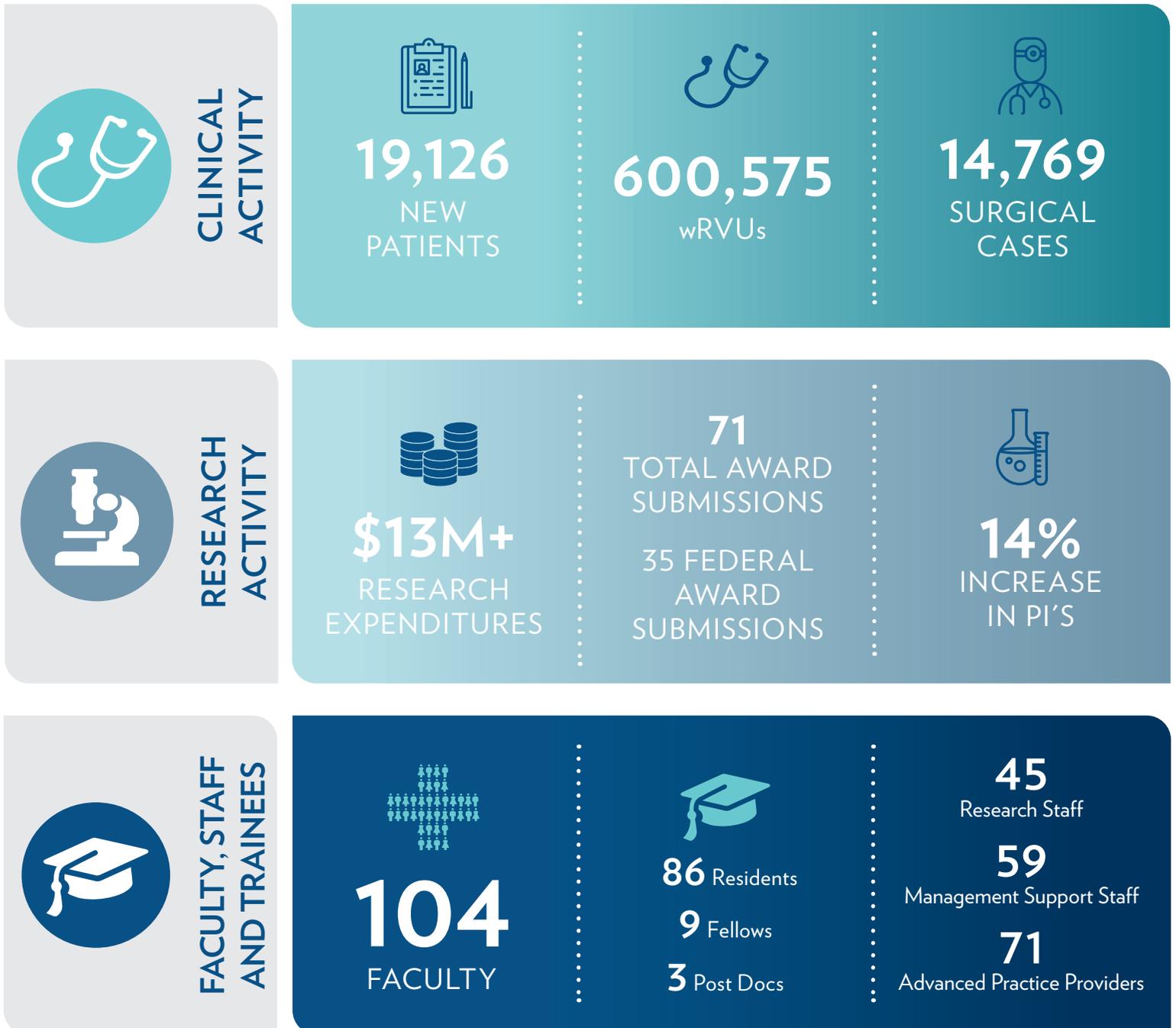
*Chief, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery
Chief, MUSC Health Heart and Vascular Integrated Center for Clinical Excellence*

Arman Kilic, M.D., has assumed dual leadership roles as Chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Chief of the Heart and Vascular Integrated Center for Clinical Excellence at MUSC Health. These positions reflect his expertise and vision for advancing heart and vascular care across the region. Under his leadership, MUSC aims to expand access, drive innovation, and further solidify its national standing in cardiothoracic surgery through strategic collaboration with vascular surgery and cardiology.

FY 2025

BY THE NUMBERS

Our commitment to providing the highest level of compassionate patient care, best-in-class training for the next generation of surgical leaders, and cutting-edge clinical, basic science and translational research are Changing What's Possible for our patients.



NEW FACULTY FY 2025



Brittany Bankhead, M.D., MS
Acute Care, Trauma Surgery



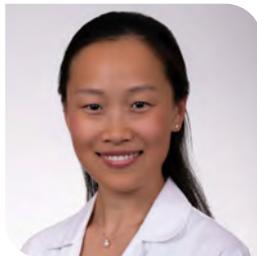
Quynh Chu, M.D.
Thoracic Surgery



Diego di Sabato, M.D.
Transplant Surgery



Adria Johnson, M.D.
Burn Surgery



Chun Li, M.D.
Vascular Surgery



Kannan Samy, M.D.
Transplant Surgery



Matteo Trezzi, M.D.
Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery

NEW FACULTY RECRUITS FY 2025



Tara Barry, M.D.
Transplant Surgery



Walker Blanding, M.D.
Cardiothoracic Surgery



Alisa Blumenthaler, M.D.
Surgical Oncology



Cassandra Clift, Ph.D.
Vascular Surgery -
Research



Hugh Dennis, M.D.
Cardiothoracic Surgery



Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS
Surgical Oncology -
Research



Cyrus Feizpour, M.D.
Colorectal Surgery



Daniel Holena, M.D., MSCE
Acute Care, Trauma & Burn
Surgery



Ryan King, M.D.
Vascular Surgery



Timothy Legare, M.D.
Vascular Surgery



Marissa Mayor, M.D.
Cardiothoracic Surgery



Donna Mullner, M.D.
Plastic & Reconstructive
Surgery

PROMOTIONS



Colleen Donahue, M.D.
Associate Professor



Arman Kilic, M.D.
Professor



Rupak Mukherjee, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
with Tenure



Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.
Professor with Tenure



Shelly Ringer, M.D.
Clinical Professor



Adam Tanious, M.D., MMSc
Associate Professor

GROWTH IN CLINICAL CARE



MUSC Burn Team

New Status Confirms SC Burn Center meets 'Highest Standards of Care'

Just five years after opening, the MUSC Health South Carolina Burn Center has earned verification status from the American Burn Association. That puts it among 40 other burn centers in the U.S. and Canada that have verification for both pediatric and adult burn care. **Steven Kahn, M.D.**, Chief of Burn Surgery and medical director of the Burn Center, emphasized the significance of the recent verification. He called it a testament to his team's dedication to delivering the highest-quality, patient-centered burn care.

MUSC Health Awarded Highest Rating for Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery

MUSC Health has earned a distinguished three-star rating from The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) for its patient care and outcomes in coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) procedures. The three-star CABG Composite Quality Rating, which denotes the highest category of quality, places MUSC Health Cardiac Surgery among the elite for heart bypass surgery in the United States and Canada.



Walker Blanding, M.D., Marc R. Katz, M.D., MPH, Lucas Witer, M.D., Nicolas Pope, M.D., Arman Kilic, M.D., and Sanford Zeigler, M.D.



Kevin Roggin, M.D., leads the pancreatic cancer surgical team.

MUSC Named Center of Excellence for Pancreatitis, Pancreatic Cancer

Fighting pancreatic disease takes more than one kind of expertise – and at MUSC Health and MUSC Hollings Cancer Center, it's all found under one roof. Surgeons, oncologists and researchers work side-by-side to deliver the most advanced and comprehensive care available. That care was recently recognized by the National Pancreas Foundation. The foundation redesignated MUSC Health as a Center of Excellence for pancreatitis and, for the first time, designated MUSC Hollings Cancer Center as a Center of Excellence for Pancreatic Cancer.

New MUSC Health Dialysis Access Institute – Charleston

Adam Tanious, M.D., MMSc, has been appointed Medical Director of the new MUSC Health Dialysis Access Institute–Charleston, which provides a centralized process for the care of all dialysis patients at MUSC Charleston as well as in the greater Charleston area. The Institute aims to enhance and preserve human life both within South Carolina and beyond. Since opening, services have expanded, with care offered at MUSC Health West Ashley Medical Pavilion, Ashley River Tower, Rutledge Tower, and Main Campus hospitals. Dr. Tanious works alongside his vascular partners, **Drs. Korepta, Legare, and Li**, who have partnered with the interventional radiology team, led by **Drs. Yamada and Gayed**, to expand the ability of the Dialysis Access Institute to treat all patients in the greater Charleston area.



Adam Tanious, M.D., Medical Director, with Mariah Lieberman, PA-C, Lead Dialysis Access APP

Nationally Ranked in Pediatric Cardiology and Heart Surgery – Again!

The Pediatric & Congenital Heart Center at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital has once again earned national recognition in U.S. News & World Report’s 2025–2026 Best Children’s Hospitals survey, ranking No. 4 in the nation for Cardiology & Heart Surgery. The MUSC Health Pediatric and Congenital Heart Center also achieved a remarkable No. 2 national ranking in outcomes, marking another year of exceptional results.

It’s a remarkable achievement — one that reflects the talent, dedication, and teamwork of our pediatric cardiothoracic surgeons, the entire Pediatric and Congenital Heart Program Team, and our truly exceptional statewide network.



Matteo Trezzi, M.D., Mino Kavarana, M.D., Lloyd “Mac” Felmy, M.D., and Scott Bradley, M.D.



Colorectal surgeons Maggie Westfal, M.D., MPH, Thomas Curran, M.D., MPH, Virgilio George, M.D., and Colleen Donahue, M.D.

MUSC Hollings Cancer Center Reaccredited by NAPRC

MUSC Hollings Cancer Center has earned re-accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC), recognizing the center’s commitment to providing the best possible care for patients with the disease.

The accreditation is a quality improvement program of the American College of Surgeons — one that reflects the talent, dedication, and teamwork of our colorectal surgeons and multidisciplinary teams at the Hollings Cancer Center.

Leaders in Complex Aortic Surgery

The MUSC Health Aortic Center, led by cardiothoracic surgeon Sanford Zeigler, M.D., and vascular surgeon Ryan King, M.D., is among an elite few in the country with a collaborative, highly specialized team comprised of vascular surgeons and cardiothoracic surgeons who work side by side on complex aortic arch and thoraco-abdominal repair. This multidisciplinary team approach is the key to success in complex aortic surgeries. MUSC Health is South Carolina’s only program to offer complex surgeries for certain types of aortic aneurysms and aortic dissection. The program has seen steady growth, with referrals across the Southeast. Most patients are referred to MUSC by vascular or cardiac surgeons across South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.



Cardiothoracic surgeon Sanford Zeigler, M.D., and vascular surgeon Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D., in an aortic surgery.

HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES EDUCATION & CULTURAL DEXTERITY



Sharee Wright, M.D., Vice Chair of Disparities Education and Cultural Dexterity, has developed a three-pronged strategy to expand access and strengthen the workforce: education, surgical exposure, and community outreach. These initiatives foster awareness, opportunity, and connection—driving meaningful, sustainable change within the department and the communities it serves.

HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES EDUCATION

Micro-learning sessions were designed to help faculty better recognize and understand the disparities that exist among the patients we serve. The goal was to create space for open, thoughtful discussions within each division—encouraging reflection, shared learning, and concrete steps toward more equitable care. By fostering awareness and understanding within our surgical teams, we strengthen our ability to deliver compassionate, patient-centered care that meets the needs of every individual we serve. These conversations not only build stronger teams but also directly contribute to reducing inequities in surgical outcomes across our state.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Left to right: Tamara Butler, Ph.D., Lisa M. Collins, Sharee Wright, M.D., Sean Haley, M.D., and Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.

Last spring, the department hosted a Grand Rounds panel session featuring **Tamara Butler, Ph.D.**, Executive Director of the Avery Research Center, **Lisa M. Collins**, Chief, Wassamasaw Tribe of the Varnertown Indians, and **Sean P. Haley, M.D.**, Director of the CARES Clinic. The Grand Rounds sparked an important discussion on embracing culture and community in surgical practice. Building on this momentum, Dr. Wright organized three clinical outreach initiatives in St. Stephens and North Charleston. These events provided surgical teams with opportunities to engage with rural and regional populations, deepening our assessment of community health needs and reinforcing the department's commitment to providing comprehensive clinical access and high-quality care to all patients across the region.

Surgical Care Exposure

The department hosted its second cohort of a paid summer internship for students who have limited opportunities to gain exposure in the medical field. Two students were chosen to participate in the program, which serves as a pathway to improve medical school admission. Along with OR and clinic shadowing, the students also scribed and assisted with clinical trial data entry. The program continues to expand opportunities across all divisions, aiming to give local students broad exposure to medical careers and cultivate a highly skilled workforce dedicated to meeting the clinical and healthcare needs of our state.



WELL-BEING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



This year, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) launched a well-being program designed to enhance workplace culture and support the health and happiness of its team members. Well-Being Leads from colleges and departments across the health system were selected to represent their colleagues and serve as advocates for wellness. **Andrea Abbott, M.D., MSCR**, Vice Chair of Well-being, and Personal Development was chosen to represent the Department of Surgery.



Residents enjoying the Ice Cream Social on the MUSC Greenway.

One of the key outcomes of this initiative has been the creation of the Well-Being Collective, a centralized online hub designed to provide easy access to resources, tools, and programs that support workplace well-being. In addition, the campus now offers dedicated well-being spaces, including the Wellbeing Rejuvenation Stations on the downtown campus.

Among the many offerings available through the Well-Being Collective are Stress First Aid programs, personalized skill-building opportunities for both individuals and teams, and “Living Your Best Work-Life” programming, which provides actionable strategies for achieving balance. These initiatives are designed to give every member of our community the support they need to thrive both personally and professionally.

This year also marked the launch of the GROSS (Getting Rid of Stupid Stuff) program, an exciting new initiative designed to empower employees and learners to identify inefficiencies and propose creative solutions that drive meaningful change. This program is all about improving our workplace systems, processes, and practices—ultimately enhancing safety, quality, and work-life balance. Everyone is encouraged to submit their ideas directly to **Andrea Abbott, M.D.** at abbottan@musc.edu.

GROWTH THROUGH CONNECTION

Within the Department of Surgery, we continue to foster connection and fellowship through events such as our beach bonfire, Popsicles on the Greenway, hot chocolate bar, and annual Holiday Party. These activities strengthen our team’s well-being and help create a stronger sense of belonging.



Staff enjoying some time together at an Ice Cream Social on the Greenway



Hot Cocoa and Coffee for Residents after Grand Rounds

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT



David Mahvi, M.D., vice chair of Faculty Development, says every clinician faces challenging moments that can take a significant emotional toll. These challenges can sometimes feel isolating, especially when seeking support feels like an added burden. Three years ago, the department

launched the Peer-to-Peer Support Program to address this gap and provide a proactive and accessible way for clinicians to discuss difficult experiences, whether personal or professional.

The program has been well-received, offering a confidential and non-judgmental space for faculty members to discuss unexpected outcomes, stress, and other challenges. Since its inception, we've helped numerous faculty members navigate these moments. The process is straightforward: One of the faculty from the Peer-to-Peer team personally reaches out to clinicians when I sense they could benefit from the program, connecting them with the right peer supporter from our team. While the program is not intended to offer counseling, we do provide referrals to additional resources when necessary.

As the program has grown, we have expanded it to include surgical residents who serve as peer supporters for their colleagues. This initiative has provided a unique opportunity for residents to give back and support their fellow trainees.

In particular, Mallorie Huff, M.D., a senior resident, has stepped up to lead the peer support efforts for residents. This has allowed us to offer a tailored, resident-to-resident support model, which has been particularly effective in addressing the challenges faced by those earlier in their careers.



Looking ahead, we are excited to expand the program further. This year, we are piloting a new initiative aimed at supporting later-career faculty, including those who may be transitioning out of active practice. Research shows that many senior surgeons experience isolation as they near retirement, which can impact both their professional and personal lives. To address this, we are introducing low-key, no-agenda breakfast gatherings where older surgeons can meet, share experiences, and build connections in a relaxed environment. We hope this will provide a supportive space where these individuals can connect on both surgical and non-surgical topics.

Through these ongoing efforts, we aim to continue fostering a culture of wellbeing within our surgical community, ensuring that no one feels they have to face these challenges alone.



William Hawkins, M.D., and his wife, Michelle, enjoy catching up with Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D. at the annual Holiday Party



The Oyster Roast is a fan favorite at the annual Holiday Party



Transplant surgeon John McGillicuddy, M.D. and his wife, Ana Guarino, at the annual Holiday Party

MUSC GLOBAL SURGERY PROGRAM

The MUSC Global Surgery Program, led by **Mike M. Mallah, M.D.**, was launched with a bold mission: to redefine how healthcare professionals, trainees, and communities engage with surgical care globally. In less than three years, it has grown into one of the most dynamic global surgery programs in the country. In 2024 alone, we achieved significant milestones: expansion across specialties, ACGME-approved international rotations, and national recognition for innovation, education, and collaboration.



PATIENT CARE

9

International Partnerships

2000+

International Cases

EDUCATION & TRAINING

20+

Trainees in International Locations

150+

Medical Students Engaged

5

International Students hosted at MUSC

RESEARCH

7

Book Chapters

7

Journal Publications

22

Presentations

MAP KEY

- Where We Currently Go
- Where We Have Hosted Trainees From
- Where We Will Be Going in the Near Future
- Where We Aspire to Have a Presence (Within 10 Years)

MUSC HEALTH TURNING THE TIDE VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

MUSC's Turning the Tide Violence Intervention Program (TTVIP), led by **Ashley B. Hink, M.D., MPH**, and **Christa Green, MPH**, has served patients, families, the community, and MUSC Health care team members and trainees since July 2021. In October 2025, TTVIP was awarded a second \$100k grant from Everytown for Gun Safety's Support Fund. This funding sustains TTVIP's novel early violence intervention initiative in partnership with MUSC's Pediatric Primary Care Clinic, which expands services to youth 12-18 years old who are at high risk of experiencing community gun violence.

With critical support obtained, innovative partnerships within our health system and throughout the community, and an unwavering dedication to our patients and families, we are proud to be turning the tide against community violence in the greater Charleston area and serving as the only evidence-based hospital violence intervention program (HVIP) in South Carolina.

TURNING THE TIDE TURNS 4!

June marked 4 years of TTVIP implementation. In total, Turning the Tide's patient reach includes:

580 Violently injured patients supported

52 High risk patients supported

69 Patients provided direct mental health services

186 Eligible patients enrolled in long-term wrap-around services

PATIENT CARE

175

Patients Served

131

Violently Injured (48% TTVIP enrollment rate)

43

High Risk (63% TTVIP enrollment rate)

EDUCATION & TRAINING

24

Presentations to MUSC provider teams, students and trainees

10

Presentations to local, regional and national audiences

3

Student projects supported

RESEARCH

2

Research Projects Underway

Comprehensive evaluation of TTVIP

Study of healthcare utilization after firearm injury



OUR INFLUENCE GOES BEYOND THE CLINIC



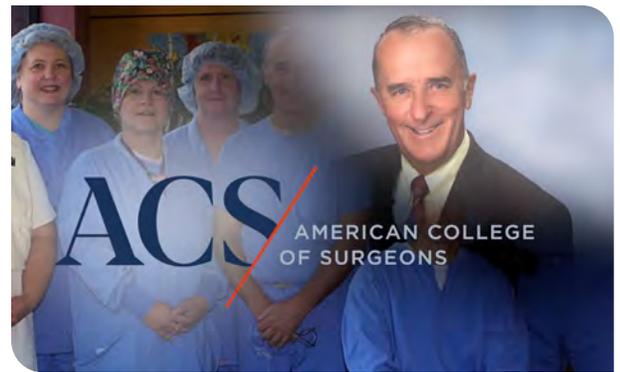
SHIKHAR MEHROTRA, PH.D., HONORED WITH VALUES IN ACTION IMPACT AWARD

Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D., was recognized by President David J. Cole, M.D. and First Lady Kathy Cole, as the Impact Award winner during this year's Values in Actions Award Ceremony. The MUSC Values in Action Impact Award is a special, rare honor given to individuals who have had an exceptional and unique impact on MUSC and the greater community.

The Impact Award recognizes those who embody the institution's five core values—compassion, innovation, integrity, collaboration, and respect—with outstanding dedication.

JON VAN HEERDEN, M.D., HONORED AS AN ACS ICON OF SURGERY

After a remarkable career at the Mayo Clinic, Jon van Heerden, M.D., brought his passion for teaching to MUSC. For the past 20 years, he has generously shared his time, talent, and wisdom with our trainees, residents, and faculty. His mentorship has shaped countless surgical careers, and we are deeply grateful for his enduring dedication to the MUSC family. This fall, he was honored as an ACS Icon of Surgery, and the Department of Surgery congratulates Dr. van Heerden on this remarkable and well-deserved honor!



To watch the video honoring Dr. van Heerden, visit youtube.com/watch?v=Q67IKTyfttM

TEDxCHARLESTON

This spring, we were once again honored to have two of our faculty present talks during TEDxCharleston:



Yulia Gavrilova, Ph.D.

"Transforming Burn Recovery through Mental Health"



Joseph Scalea, M.D.

"Four Reasons to Live"

TEDxCHARLESTON EDITOR'S PICK AWARDED TO JOSEPH SCALEA, M.D.



Nationally recognized transplant surgeon and health care entrepreneur Joseph Scalea, M.D., has achieved a significant milestone. His TEDxCharleston talk, "Four Reasons to Live," delivered this

past April at TEDxCharleston, was selected as an Editor's Pick – a distinction awarded to less than 0.1% of all TEDx talks.

GROWTH IN RESEARCH

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHAIR



This is an exciting time to do research in the MUSC Department of Surgery. Over the past ten years, we have grown to incorporate novel aspects of investigation, thereby expanding how our studies can impact and elevate patient care. Health services research has found a centralized home in SORIN, where providers can access the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center's expertise in human-centered design, implementation science, and clinical trial support. The basic science laboratories have sustained funding in a difficult climate, and the growth of the Clean Cell facility has accelerated opportunities in investigator-initiated clinical trials.

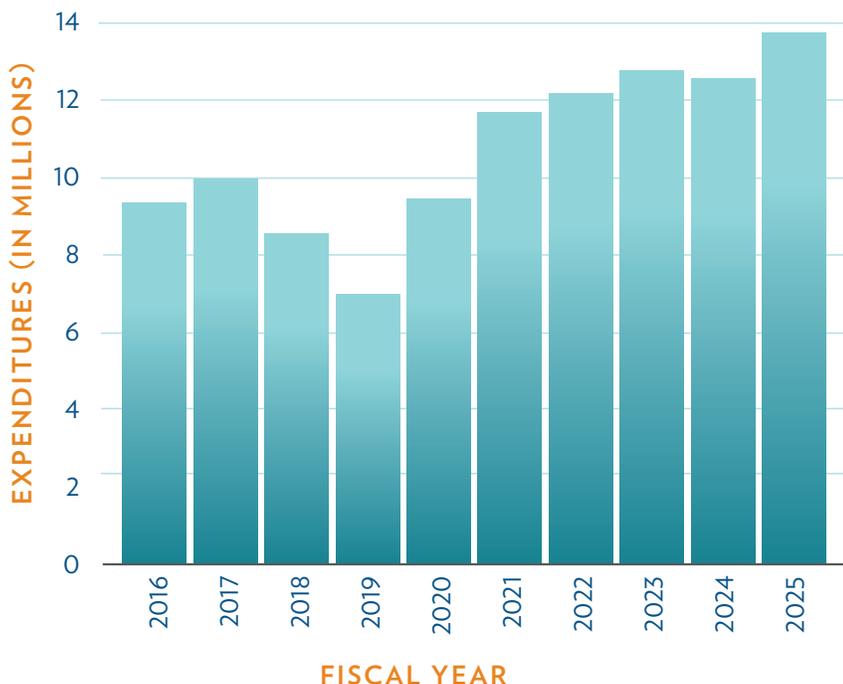
This growth has been driven in large part by strategic investments in our greatest internal resource—our faculty. Additionally, over the past year the department has successfully recruited two Ph.D. investigators in high-impact fields and has finalized plans to centralize benign tissue and blood banking from our surgical patients.

Our expanding faculty interest in research and in training the next generation of surgeon-scientists has also propelled the growth of Surgery Research Recognition Day, leading to another record year for abstract submissions in 2025. We also launched the Kredel-Springs Research Symposium in the past year to provide another forum for celebrating resident research achievements.

The interdependent growth of mentor-mentee research initiatives has also fostered development of 7-year training tracks among our residency programs. From the moment they arrive at MUSC, these scientists-in-training engage in the Surgeon Scientist Pathway to acquire investigative skills and join a peer scientist community which has grown steadily since its inception in 2022. Among Ph.D. scientists trained by our surgical faculty, we are proud to recognize trainees who have chosen to obtain faculty positions within the department to advance translational investigations and the mission of our department.

Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.
Vice Chair of Research

10 YEAR GROWTH IN RESEARCH EXPENDITURES



47% Increase in Research Expenditures Over the Past 10 Years

New Research Scientists Support Basic and Translational Research



Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS joins MUSC in a dual role as Professor of Surgical Oncology and Vice Chair of Innovation in the Department of Surgery, and as Director for Scientific Program Integration at Hollings Cancer Center. Dr. Devi comes to MUSC from Duke University. Her

research spans programmed cell death, functional genomics, and tumor immunology with a translational focus across oncology and surgical sciences. Dr. Devi is particularly interested in developing multi-scale disease models integrating cellular, spatial, and computational technologies and follows the guiding philosophy of the cyclical framework, ensuring that scientific innovation is grounded in patient and community needs.



Cassandra Clift, Ph.D. joins MUSC as an Assistant Professor of Vascular Surgery. Dr. Clift is a cardiovascular extracellular matrix biologist utilizing mass spectrometry techniques to evaluate cardiac valvular and vascular pathologies, therapeutic biomaterials,

and engineered cardiovascular disease models. She received her Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina in the Department of Cell and Molecular Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics and was a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital. At MUSC, she will investigate the role of N-glycosylation in extracellular vesicle mediated signaling in EV-ECM and EV-cell interactions.

FACULTY RESEARCH AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS



Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D., received two new prestigious NIH R01 NCI Awards totaling \$5.8M. Mehrotra was awarded \$3M for his study *Dissecting the Mechanism for Transient ER Stress-Induced Anti-Tumor T Cell Response*. The study uses carbon monoxide (CO)-induced transient ER stress as an ex vivo immunomodulatory strategy to trigger mitochondrial reprogramming and attaining long-term tumor control upon adoptively transferring tumor reactive T cells. The second study entitled *Targeting S1P-ACC Axis to Overcome MDSC Suppression*, was awarded \$2.8M and aims to improve the anti-tumor T cell function and immunotherapy response by targeting immunosuppression mediated by myeloid-derived suppressor cells (MDSCs) through sphingosine kinase 2 and sphingosine 1-phosphate metabolism and signaling.

Mehrotra also received the Hollings Cancer Center Team Science Award, with CO-PIs **Abirami Sivapiragasam, M.D.**, and **Ozgur Sahin, Ph.D.**, for their research: *Improving the treatment landscape of TNBC by biomarker-guided novel therapies*.



Hongjun Wang, Ph.D., received a prestigious \$1.5M NIH UH3 award, which provides the second phase of support for the innovative exploratory and development research she began under the NIH UG3 award for her STEMCAP-1 pain study for chronic pancreatitis patients to evaluate the safety and efficacy of an infusion of donor-derived mesenchymal stem cells to relieve chronic pain.

Wang's VA basic science grant was also renewed for another four years in FY25. The title of this BL R&D grant is *"hAAT-engineered Mesenchymal Stem Cells for the Treatment of Chronic Pain."* The overall objective of this study further explores the mechanism of protection of a novel stem cell therapy in a pre-clinical rodent model of painful chronic pancreatitis in pain relief and inflammation reduction and explores their potential translation to human therapy.



Nancy DeMore, M.D., is PI on the MUSC Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) NIH T32 Award for \$2.8M, which began on July 1, 2025. The major goal of the MSTP is to train the next generation of physician-scientists who will choose a career that will integrate both the basic and clinical sciences to improve human health and treat diseases.

DeMore serves as PI on several Hollings Cancer Center awards in FY25. These include the Hollings Entrepreneurial Science Pilot Award for *"Reprogramming the Tumor Microenvironment in TNBC: Synergistic Potential of IVT-8086 and TAM-Modulating Agents"* (\$50,000); the Hollings Cancer Center Shark Tank Award for *"SFRP2 Serum Biomarker for Screening and Diagnosis of Breast Cancer"* (\$25,000); and a Hollings Clinical Trial titled *"Phase 1A Window of Opportunity Trial of Cannabinoids for Breast Cancer Patients"* (\$77,503).

New Vascular Dialysis Access Research



Adam Tanious, M.D., serves as PI on several vascular dialysis access device projects. His current funding includes a grant from SCTR for the creation and distribution of a tool used during vascular access surgery. He has an Academic Matching Grant from the SCRA/Zucker Institute for Innovation and Commercialization of the product made by his company Anchor Medical — co-founded

and co-created with one of the vascular chief residents, **Ryan Gedney, M.D.**

Tanious has received three fellowship and residency grants from Medtronic, Inc., which has provided support for three residents to pursue dedicated research years in vascular surgery, with two of them being funded to pursue and receive a Master of Medical Sciences in Clinical and Translational Research.

Matthew Anderson, M.D., PGY-Research Surgeons Resident Research Scholarship Honored with the Association of VA



Matthew Anderson, M.D., received a one-year \$25,000 award available to general surgery or surgical subspecialty residents with a faculty mentor who is a VA surgeon. He received this

award for his project entitled *Targeting Biomechanical Signaling in Aortic Stiffness*. **Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.**, is Anderson's mentor on the project.

Heather Holman Honored with the NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award



Heather Holman, M.D./Ph.D. candidate and graduate assistant in the MUSC Cardiovascular Lab has been awarded the prestigious F-31 NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service (F31) Award. The F31 is a mentored research training award granted to graduate students

conducting research under the guidance of their mentor. Holman's primary mentor is **Jeffrey Jones, Ph.D.**, Professor of Surgery, whose research focuses on the effects of stress-induced signaling in aortopathies. Additionally, Holman is co-mentored by vascular surgeon and Vice Chair of Research **Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.**

MENTORSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The division is proud to highlight the importance of mentorship through the success of several research faculty members who completed their training at MUSC and have since advanced into independent academic roles within the institution. Their progression from postdoctoral fellows to faculty members exemplifies the division's dedication to cultivating scientific talent and fostering a collaborative, mentorship-driven research environment.



From left: **Paramita Chakraborty, Ph.D.**, Mentor **Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D.**, and **Seung Choi, Ph.D.**

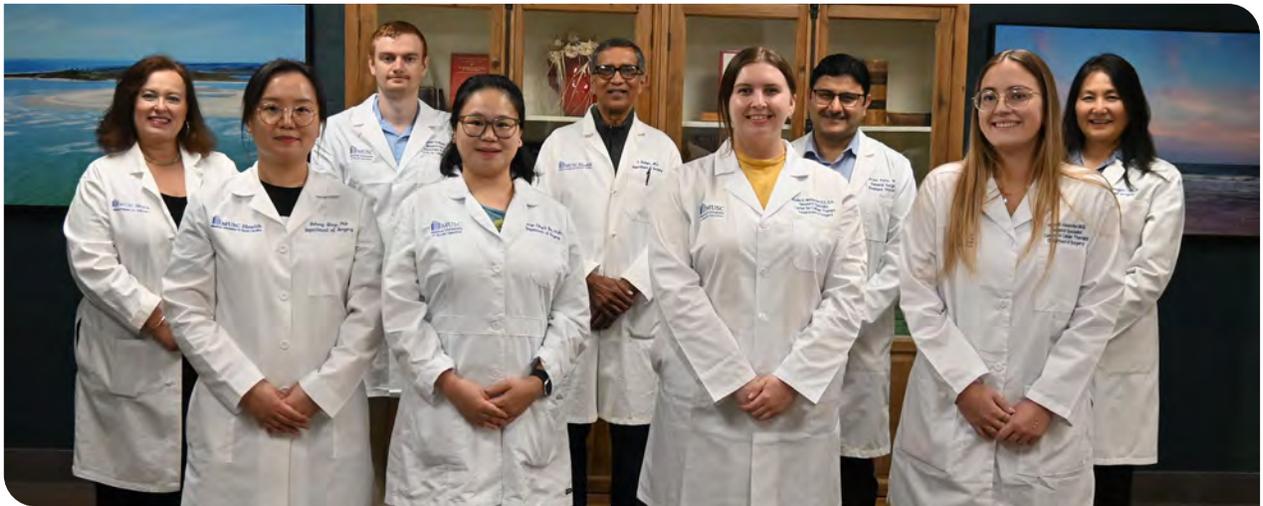


From left: Mentor **Hongjun Wang, Ph.D.**, with **Wenyu Gou, Ph.D.**

Seung Choi, Ph.D., and **Paramita Chakraborty, Ph.D.**, both mentored by **Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D.**, have continued as faculty members within the Mehrotra Lab.

Similarly, **Wenyu Gou, Ph.D.**, mentored by **Hongjun Wang, Ph.D.**, has transitioned to a faculty position within the Wang Lab.

CENTER FOR CELLULAR THERAPY



From Left to Right: Tara F. Duke, MLS (ASCP)^{CM}, Inhong Kang, Ph.D., Ronald Smithwick, MS, Wenyu Gou, Ph.D., Prabhakar Baliga, M.D., Sadie McKenzie, BS, Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D., Hannah Alexander, MS, Hongjun Wang, Ph.D.

Expanding Capacity, Advancing Discovery

The MUSC Center for Cellular Therapy facility, currently housed in the MUSC Department of Surgery, will be joining the newly created Integrated Center for Cellular Therapy (ICCT), with the goal of becoming a leading program in the country. The cGMP facility will be expanded to six certified suites as part of this initiative. The facility's treatment capacity will rise as a result of this expansion. The construction of a new on-campus facility at Cannon Place Park will be slated to open early 2027.

Our scientists are investigating cellular therapies for diseases with few or no available treatments.

- A novel approach utilizing locally produced, enhanced chimeric antigen T-cell receptor (CAR-T) cell therapy to target specific B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphomas, offering improved efficacy at a reduced cost compared to standard treatments.
- Islet cell autotransplantation procedure for patients with chronic pancreatitis is a specialized treatment only available at a limited number of medical centers in the United States.
- The use of mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs) in treating patients represents a promising novel intervention to many indications, including but not limited to, lupus, type 1 diabetes and pain.
- An innovative clinical trial using MSCs that aims to reduce or eliminate the need for insulin in type 1 diabetes (T1D).



As a recently diagnosed T1D patient, this trial has been life changing. I have been able to better understand my disease, how it affects my body, and the future of T1D treatments. The staff and doctors welcomed me and immediately made me feel so comfortable. Thanks to the hard work and dedication put into this research, I have hope that the cure is closer than ever!"

*-Sarah Hastings, type 1 diabetes patient
and MSC clinical trial participant*



HARVEY AND MARCIA SCHILLER SURGICAL INNOVATION CENTER

Significant strides have been made in advancing the mission of the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center. With a stronger focus on cross-functional collaboration, the center is fostering innovation through its core pillars: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Surgical Outcomes Research and Innovation Nucleus (SORIN), and Human-Centered Design (HCD).



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The Surgical Innovation Center AI hub provides advanced hardware for medical research and analysis. This includes Ubuntu-based servers and high-performance GPUs, such as 4 NVIDIA A100s, 3 L40S, and 3 A6000s, to support fine-tuning large language models and other advanced analyses. New this year, software developed at the Innovation Center is actively in use and has been adapted to streamline clinical care processes.

In FY24, the AI hub hosted an awards competition, with four research proposals being accepted. The awards provide internal funding to surgical faculty to develop the necessary preliminary data to support extramural grant applications and/or commercialization efforts. Each of last year's award winners achieved notable outcomes, including conference presentations, podium talks, preliminary data supporting grant applications, or manuscript submissions. This year, three new projects were awarded.



Kate Engelhardt, M.D., MS
Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Streamline the Shared Decision-Making Process for Patients with Stage I Lung Cancer



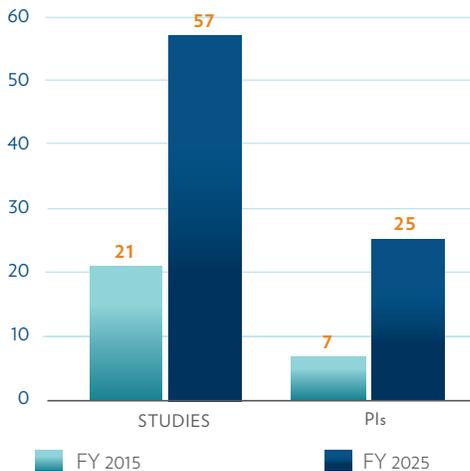
Kevin Hughes, M.D.
Using Large Language Model Chatbots to make germline cancer genetics information available to patients and providers



Kannan Samy, M.D.
Intelligent Decision Support for Modernizing the Organ Donation Process

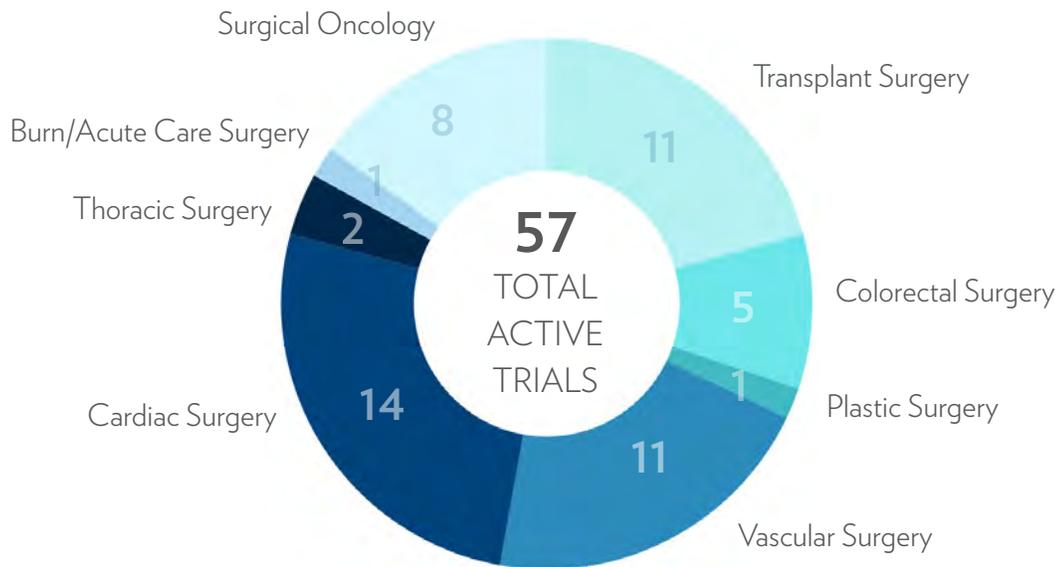
SURGICAL OUTCOMES RESEARCH AND INNOVATION NUCLEUS (SORIN)

SORIN is the hub for clinical trials and outcomes research. It has recently expanded its focus to health services research and implementation science, disciplines dedicated to ensuring proven interventions are effectively integrated into everyday clinical practice. By emphasizing outcomes, value, and quality improvement, health services research and implementation science play critical roles in shaping patient care and advancing standards across academic surgery. The Department of Surgery has seen significant growth in clinical trials over the past ten years.



Clinical Trials Team Meeting

2025 CLINICAL TRIALS BY DIVISION



HIGH IMPACT CLINICAL TRIALS



Arman Kilic, M.D., has been named a national PI on a global first-of-its-kind study sponsored by Abbott Medical Devices that seeks to improve clinical outcomes in patients with worsening heart failure. Additionally, he is the PI on the INNOVATE Trial with Brio Health Solutions. The INNOVATE Trial is a high impact clinical study evaluating a new LVAD for advanced heart failure.



Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D., is PI on the Zenith® Fenestrated+ Endovascular Graft Clinical Study, a high impact clinical trial that is evaluating the safety and effectiveness of the ZFEN+ graft for treating complex aortic aneurysms, specifically those involving one or more major visceral arteries.



Brittany Bankhead, M.D., and David Mahvi, M.D., faculty mentors to two teams in the Spring Design Expo, meet with Doug Hamilton, HCD Program Architect, and Joshua Kim, MS

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN

The Human Centered Design Program partnered with a new cohort of eight teams from Georgia Tech. The Capstone Design Expo showcases Georgia Tech's graduating seniors as they present their innovative projects designed and built during the Capstone Design Course. Mentored by MUSC faculty, the teams worked on medical technology projects ranging from an innovative cauterization device to a lung transportation system, to a device addressing the damage caused by children swallowing button batteries.

Novel Electronic Health Record Software Aims to Reduce Physician and Staff Workload

Kevin Hughes, M.D., and **Bernice Huang, M.D.**, partnered with **Jihad Obeid, M.D.**, MUSC Endowed Chair for Biomedical Informatics Associated with Clinical Effectiveness & Patient Safety, **Julie Henderson** and **Armando Gonzalez**, computer scientists at Charleston Southern University, and **Andrew Disharoon** of the Zucker Institute, to develop LAMPER, (Large Language Model Patient Summarizer), a software product that aims to filter through and streamline the EHR data.

LAMPER was presented at the Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Institute's Human Centered Design Demo Day and has garnered interest from Saltgrass Capital, a venture capitalist firm. The spinout company will be called Synopsis. The team has received funding from a Hollings Cancer Center grant and support from the MUSC Human Centered Design Program, the Zucker Institute for Innovation Commercialization, the MUSC Office of Innovation, and the MUSC Health Solutions Team.

GROWTH IN EDUCATION

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHAIR



This year has been one of remarkable growth and continued excellence in surgical education. Across our residency and fellowship programs, we are expanding opportunities, elevating training experiences, and preparing our graduates to lead in every setting—from academic medicine to community practice.

Our match results once again reflect the strength of our programs and the exceptional caliber of our trainees. We are immensely proud of our residents and fellows who are continuing their journeys in competitive fellowships and leadership positions across the country—and of those choosing to remain in South Carolina to advance care within the MUSC Health system.

Our training infrastructure continues to grow in alignment with MUSC’s OneMUSC strategic vision and its aspirational goal to be among the nation’s top 20 academic health systems within 20 years. We have expanded our community rotations to include MUSC Florence (July 2025) and MUSC Orangeburg (January 2026), providing residents with early exposure to community-based surgery within the Regional Health Network. These experiences strengthen our statewide impact and encourage our graduates to build their careers here in South Carolina.

New program milestones this year include the addition of a Critical Care Fellow in the new Burn Track and the expansion of our Plastic Surgery Residency, which now welcomes two residents per year. Each of these developments represents our commitment to innovation in education and to meeting the evolving surgical needs of our state.

We were also proud to welcome back several of our own graduates, **Dr. Walker Blanding** (Cardiothoracic Surgery), **Dr. Ryan King** (Vascular Surgery), and **Dr. Donna Mullner** (Plastic Surgery), whose return reflects the enduring strength of our training environment. Looking ahead, **Dr. Andy Cole** will rejoin us in 2026 after completing his fellowship, continuing a growing tradition of alumni returning to contribute to MUSC’s mission.

Our collective progress—through new programs, visionary leadership, and a culture of mentorship—reflects the heart of who we are. We are not only training outstanding surgeons; we are building a future surgical workforce for South Carolina and beyond.

*Chris Streck, M.D.
Vice Chair of Education*

AT A GLANCE: FY 25 BY THE NUMBERS

Our residency and fellowship programs offer an unparalleled training experience focusing on clinical excellence and patient-centered care. We offer a robust career development and mentorship program, integrated into Surgical Grand Rounds, didactics, journal clubs, and research opportunities.

2,618

Resident Applications Received

1,887 General Surgery
143 Vascular Surgery
330 Plastic Surgery Integrated
91 Plastic Surgery Independent
167 Cardiothoracic Surgery

4

ACGME-Accredited Surgical Residency Programs

86

Current Interns and Residents

5

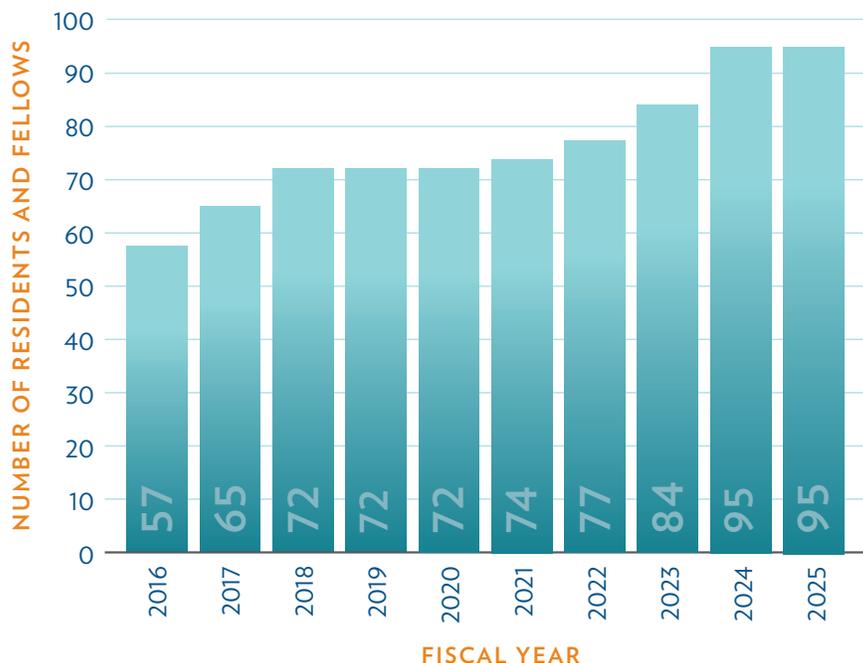
Fellowship Programs

2 ACGME-Accredited Fellowship Programs
3 Non-ACGME Fellowship Programs

9

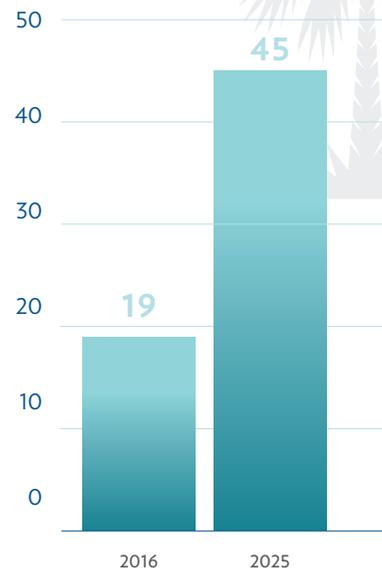
Fellows

10 YEAR PROGRAM GROWTH AND EXPANSION



65% Increase in Education Enrollment Over the Past 10 Years

Growth Snapshot: WOMEN IN RESIDENCY



Our surgical residency enrollment reflects national trends, with women comprising 47% of our current trainees.

ADVANCING LEADERSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Our Fundamentals of Surgical Leadership Program provides residents at every level with the tools to lead with confidence, integrity, and purpose. Interns began the year exploring topics such as clinical population health outcomes, financial planning, effective communication and documentation, and their evolving role as teachers. PGY-2 and PGY-3 residents have focused on life management, public health, professionalism, and collaborative peer mentorship—skills that strengthen both their clinical and operational effectiveness. PGY-4 and PGY-5 focus on transition to practice, including how to identify a professional fit and negotiate for the position, understanding organizational integrity and professional excellence, and how AI may impact their practice.

Our Surgical Pathways programs have also launched with great enthusiasm for some of our newer pathways. Current 2025-26 offerings include:

- **Surgical Scientist Pathway** – Dirk van der Windt, M.D., Ph.D., Mary Kate Bryant, M.D., MSCR, and Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.
- **Global Surgery Pathway** – Mike M. Mallah, M.D.
- **Education Research Pathway** – Douglas Cassidy, M.D., and Colleen Donahue, M.D.
- **Entrepreneurship Pathway (“The Startup of You”)** – Joseph Scalea, M.D., Brittany Bankhead, M.D., and Aaron Cunningham, M.D.

These pathways are optional for all residents, designed to enrich their skill sets and prepare them for high-performance careers in academic surgery and clinical leadership.

“Beyond the scalpel, the true education of a surgical resident lies in cultivating the mind. To forge a complete surgeon is to train a scientific innovator, a compassionate global citizen, an inspiring educator, and a visionary entrepreneur. It is through this expansion of skills that they learn not only to heal the patient in front of them, but to improve healthcare for all.”

-Chris Streck, M.D.

NEW SURGICAL SIMULATION SUITE ENHANCES TRAINING

The new surgical simulation suite has hosted more than 40 sessions since it opened in September 2024. The simulation space features surgical trainers in laparoscopic surgery, robotic surgery, endoscopy, and microscopic surgery, as well as surgical equipment to practice open surgical skills and techniques. The main OR DaVinci Simulator is also in this simulation space. The skills lab serves as our residents' SAGES FLS and FES testing center and is utilized for classroom and small-group learning. The center is adjacent to the resident workspace, making it accessible to the residents on a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week basis.



Douglas Cassidy, M.D., Director of Surgical Simulation, working with residents in the simulation lab

Distinguished Visiting Lecturers

The Education Division hosts lectures delivered by nationally and internationally recognized experts in their respective fields.

- **Gilbert R. Upchurch, Jr., M.D.** – Edward M. Copeland III and Ann & Ira Horowitz Chair Professor of Vascular Surgery, University of Florida
- **Mitchell C. Posner, M.D.** – Thomas D. Jones Distinguished Service Professor, Vice Chair of Cancer Services, University of Chicago Medicine
- **Shanda H. Blackmon, M.D., MPH** – Executive Director of the Baylor Medicine Lung Institute and Olga Keith Weiss Endowed Professor of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine
- **Herbert Chen, M.D.** – Chair, Department of Surgery, and Surgeon-in-Chief, University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Health System
- **Allan Kirk, M.D.** – David C. Sabiston Jr. Professor of Surgery, Duke University School of Medicine
- **Megan Baker, M.D.** – Chief Operating Officer, Roper St. Francis Healthcare
- **Michael Maddaus, M.D.** – Professor Emeritus of Surgery, University of Minnesota Medical School
- **Christina Bailey, M.D.** – Associate Professor of Surgery, Vice Chair of Education, Vanderbilt University
- **Joseph Bavaria, M.D.** – Brooke Roberts–William M. Measey Professor of Surgery and Vice Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Surgery, University of Pennsylvania

SOUTH CAROLINA & NORTH CAROLINA ACS ANNUAL MEETING



Allison Frederick, M.D., and Arjun Patel, M.D., celebrating their top honors

The 2025 SC/NC Chapter of the American College of Surgeons Annual Meeting was more than a conference—it was a celebration of 50 years of surgical excellence, mentorship, innovation, and community in the Carolinas, as both chapters celebrated their 50th year.

This year, two of our residents took top honors.

- **Allison Frederick, M.D.**, won first place in the General Surgery Competition and second place in the Trauma Competition.
- **Arjun Patel, M.D.**, won third place in the Trauma Competition.

RESIDENT RESEARCH EXPANSION

To train the next generation of surgeon-scientists, the program encourages residents to spend one to two years conducting research by working in a lab or earning an advanced degree. In FY-25, our resident research opportunities expanded to include dedicated research tracks for each of our programs, providing more opportunities for our trainees to become the next generation of Surgeon-Scientists to lead the path forward in advances in healthcare.



Allison Frederick, M.D., PGY-Research, presenting during Surgery Research Recognition Day

SURGERY RESEARCH RECOGNITION DAY AND ERIC R. FRYKBERG, M.D., LECTURE



Surgery Research Recognition Day Program Leadership with invited lecturer Allan Kirk, M.D. (center)

Surgery Research Recognition Day showcases the exceptional research work in which our residents, medical students and graduate students participate. It is also an opportunity to learn from world-class experts during the annual Eric R. Frykberg, M.D. Lecture. This year, **Allan Kirk, M.D.**, the David C. Sabiston, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Surgery at Duke University School of Medicine, was the invited Eric R. Frykberg, M.D. Lecturer.

Award Winners:

- **Chi-Chi Do-Nguyen, D.O.** – Best Basic Science Presentation (includes clinical research, quality improvement)
- **Zach Sollie, M.D.** – Best Health Services Presentation (includes basic science, translational)
- **Eric Klipsch, M.D.** – Best Poster Presentation
- **Richard Shi, M.D.** – Yarbrough Award



GRADUATION

The 2025 graduation dinner, hosted by Dr. Baliga and coordinated by the Department of Surgery's Education Team, was a heartfelt celebration of achievement, resilience, and the enduring spirit of mentorship. The Graduation Ceremony was not just an end—it was a launchpad. Our 17 new graduates now step confidently into their futures, bolstered by years of dedication, the mentorship of faculty, and the unshakable support of loved ones.



To see our list of graduates and learn about the next steps in their careers, visit musc.edu/surgery/alumni

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY AWARDS CEREMONY

The Department of Surgery recognizes our exceptional faculty and trainees for their outstanding educational achievements, patient care, and research during our annual awards ceremony. The department was honored to have **Megan Baker, M.D.**, as our guest lecturer.



Scan the QR code to see the full list of honorees



GOLDEN APPLE AWARD WINNERS



Maggie Westfal, M.D., MPH

Medical Student Advisor Award and Clinical Preceptor Excellence in Teaching Award



Mike Deal, M.D., PGY-4

Clinical Preceptor Excellence in Teaching Award

ACUTE CARE SURGERY

Surgeons in the **Division of Acute Care Surgery** deliver comprehensive acute care surgery services, with dedicated expertise in trauma, burn care, emergency general surgery, and surgical critical care. Our multidisciplinary team provides rapid, high-level care for critically ill and injured patients—any time, any day.

Professor and Chief

Daniel Holena, M.D., MSCE

Professors of Surgery

Bruce Crookes, M.D.

Evert Eriksson, M.D.

Heather Evans, M.D., MS

Stephen Fann, M.D.

Steven Kahn, M.D.

Stuart Leon, M.D.

E. Douglas Norcross, M.D.

Cynthia Talley, M.D.

Associate Professors of Surgery

Ashley Hink, M.D., MPH

Alicia Privette, M.D.

Brittany Bankhead, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery

Adria Johnson, M.D.

Mike M. Mallah, M.D.

Rohit Mittal, M.D.

ACUTE CARE SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

Following a national search, **Daniel Holena, M.D., MSCE**, has been selected as the new Chief of the Division of Acute Care Surgery in the Department of Surgery.

In his new role, Dr. Holena will oversee clinical operations, education, and research initiatives, driving innovation and advancing MUSC's mission to deliver high-quality, high-acuity surgical care across the state and beyond.

The Department of Surgery extends its deepest gratitude to **Bruce Crookes, M.D.**, for his many years of exceptional leadership, unwavering dedication, and visionary guidance as Chief of the Division of Acute Care Surgery.

As Dr. Crookes transitions to his new leadership role in the SC Surgical Quality Collaborative, his vision and commitment to excellence will no doubt continue to elevate surgical care across the state.

CLINICAL AND ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

- **Bruce Crookes M.D.**, co-led the AAST Robotic Training Program for Acute Care Surgery fellows (ROBO-TRACS) program.
- **Evert Eriksson, M.D.**, served as principal investigator on seven publications this year. His research was featured prominently at the Chest Wall Injury Society (CWIS) Annual Meeting. In recognition of his leadership and contributions to the field, Eriksson was named President of CWIS for the 2025–2026 term.
- **Steven Kahn, M.D.**, Chief of Burn Surgery, led the team that established the South Carolina Burn Center, based at MUSC Health in Charleston, which opened in 2020. This year marked a milestone—The Medical University of South Carolina Health's Burn Center received prestigious verification from the American Burn Association.
- **Alicia Privette, M.D.**, Program Director of the MUSC Surgical Critical Care Fellowship, has successfully expanded the program with the approval of a third fellowship position. This new slot is specifically designed to offer dual certification in both Burn Surgery and Surgical Critical Care within the traditional one-year fellowship format.
- **Brittany Bankhead, M.D.**, continues to represent the division on the national stage as Chair of the Associate Membership Committee in the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma, which includes over 850 early-career trauma surgeons.

RESEARCH

- Total trainees mentored in research: **37**
- Total presentations: **7**
- Total publications: **18**
- Total number of active research projects: **71**
- Total number of funded grants: **10**

BY THE NUMBERS

11%

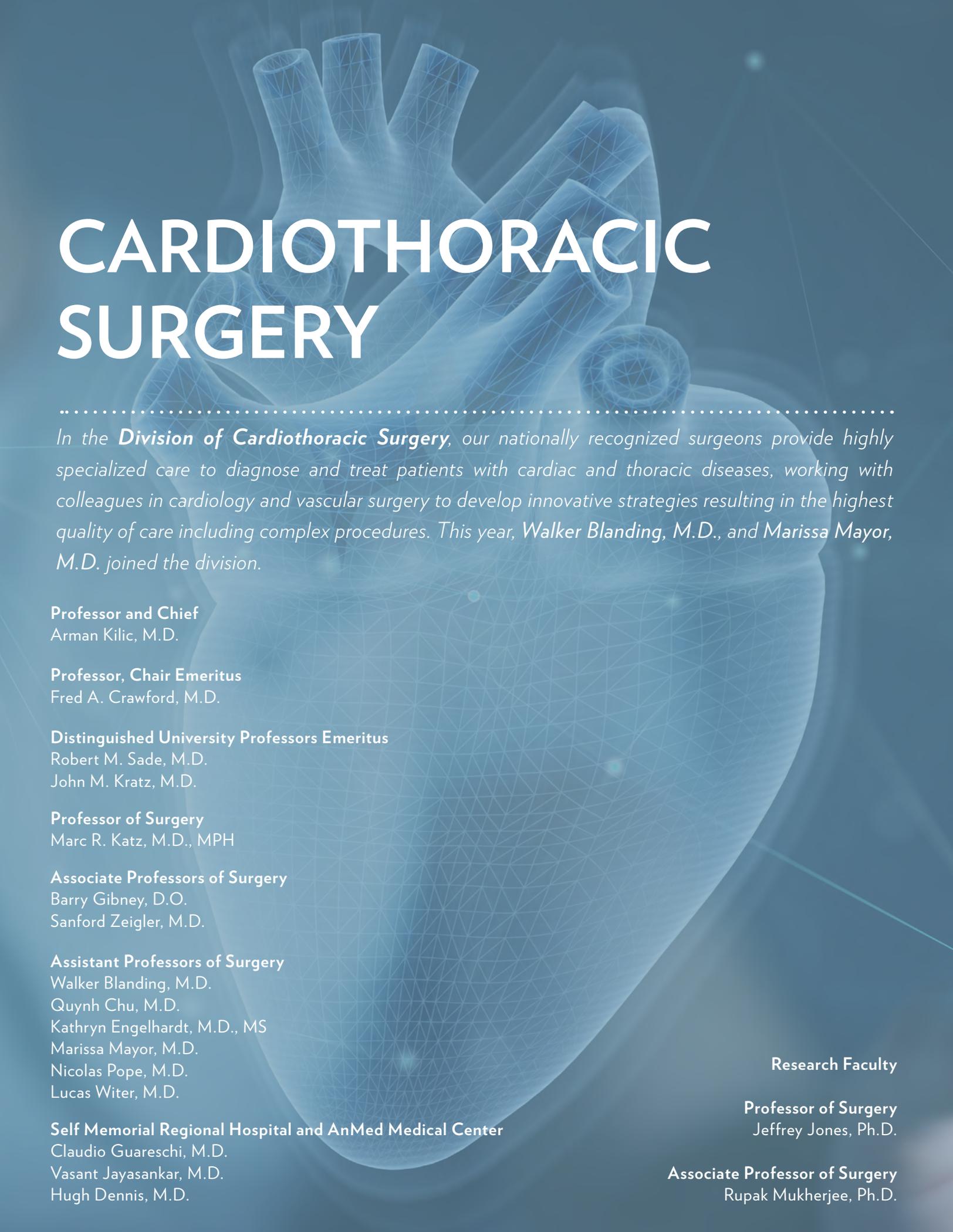
Increase in
Inpatient Encounters

2,374

Surgical Cases

10%

Increase in
Robotic Cases



CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

*In the **Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery**, our nationally recognized surgeons provide highly specialized care to diagnose and treat patients with cardiac and thoracic diseases, working with colleagues in cardiology and vascular surgery to develop innovative strategies resulting in the highest quality of care including complex procedures. This year, Walker Blanding, M.D., and Marissa Mayor, M.D. joined the division.*

Professor and Chief

Arman Kilic, M.D.

Professor, Chair Emeritus

Fred A. Crawford, M.D.

Distinguished University Professors Emeritus

Robert M. Sade, M.D.

John M. Kratz, M.D.

Professor of Surgery

Marc R. Katz, M.D., MPH

Associate Professors of Surgery

Barry Gibney, D.O.

Sanford Zeigler, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery

Walker Blanding, M.D.

Quynh Chu, M.D.

Kathryn Engelhardt, M.D., MS

Marissa Mayor, M.D.

Nicolas Pope, M.D.

Lucas Witer, M.D.

Self Memorial Regional Hospital and AnMed Medical Center

Claudio Guareschi, M.D.

Vasant Jayasankar, M.D.

Hugh Dennis, M.D.

Research Faculty

Professor of Surgery

Jeffrey Jones, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery

Rupak Mukherjee, Ph.D.

CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

In FY25, the cardiac surgery program earned a three-star rating—the highest possible—from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) for excellence in coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) outcomes, placing MUSC Health among the nation’s elite centers.

The 2025–2026 *U.S. News & World Report* recognized MUSC Health as “High Performing” in Aortic Valve Surgery, Heart Bypass Surgery, Heart Failure, and Lung Cancer Surgery. Additionally, the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) recognized the heart transplant program for exceptional outcomes.

The aortic center, a collaboration between cardiac and vascular surgery, continues to grow in scope and volume of complex procedures offered to patients in the region.

The advanced heart failure program continues to be one of the busiest programs in the United States with exceptional outcomes.

Reaching a major procedural milestone, the cardiac surgery and cardiology teams recently completed their 2,000th transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR)—cementing MUSC Health’s position as one of the region’s most experienced and South Carolina’s busiest TAVR centers.

The robotic cardiac surgery program continues to expand. We now have four robotically trained cardiac surgeons, offering minimally invasive options that reduce recovery time and improve patient outcomes.

EDUCATION

- **Nicolas Pope, M.D.**, was named Program Director of the Cardiothoracic Residency Program, providing leadership and oversight for the six-year integrated training program.

INNOVATIONS IN RESEARCH

The Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery is the busiest clinical trials division in the Department of Surgery, with 16 ongoing clinical trials.

- **Sanford Zeigler, M.D.**, was inducted into the MUSC Chapter of the National Academy of Inventors in recognition of a patented device he co-developed with colleagues, which provides a new option for aortic arch repair in patients with aneurysms.

BY THE NUMBERS

20%

Increase in
Heart Transplants

35%

Increase in
Lung Transplants

26%

Increase in Aortic
Procedures

COLORECTAL SURGERY

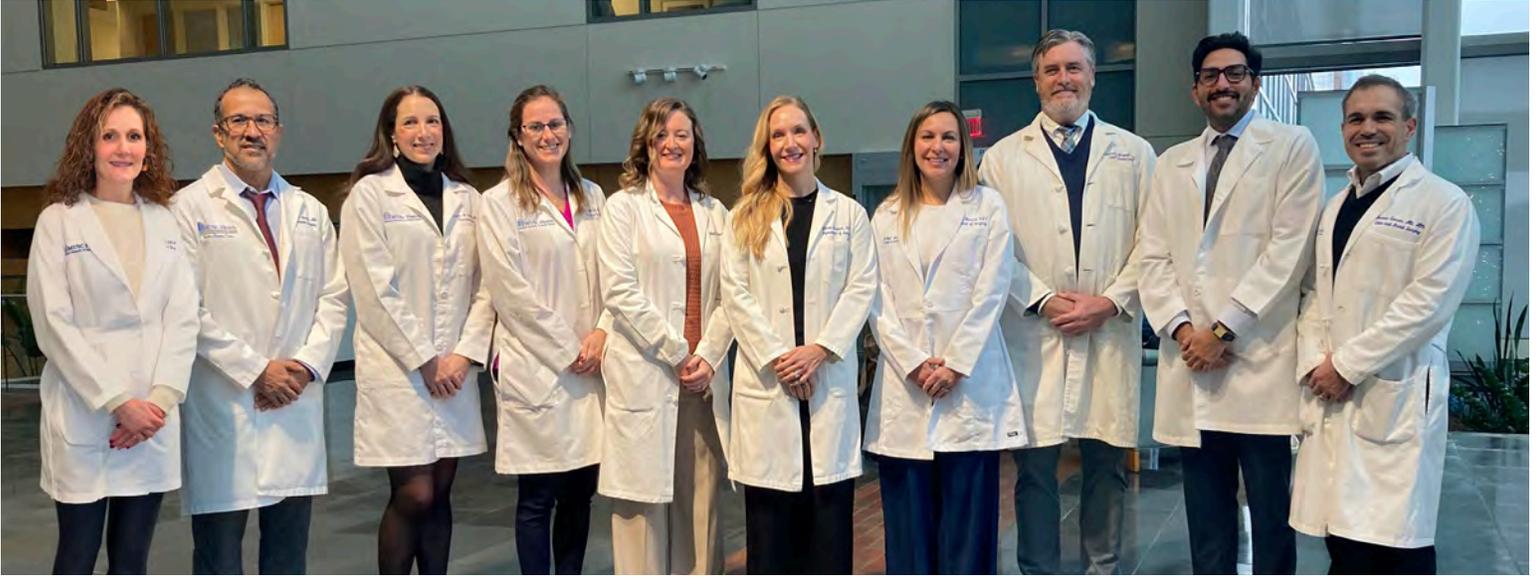
The **Division of Colorectal Surgery** is nationally and internationally recognized for its pioneering efforts and extensive experience in minimally invasive surgery, including state-of-the-art laparoscopic and robotic procedures for colorectal cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. Our team lends a unique depth and breadth of experience to a wide range of benign and malignant diseases of the lower GI tract. This year, colorectal surgeon **Cyrus Feizpour, M.D.**, joined the division.

Professor and Chief
Virgilio George, M.D.

Associate Professors of Surgery
Thomas Curran, M.D., MPH
Colleen Donahue, M.D.
Pinckney J. Maxwell IV, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Cyrus A. Feizpour, M.D.
Maggie Westfal, M.D., MPH

COLORECTAL SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

The Colorectal Surgery team collaborates with multidisciplinary teams at the Hollings Cancer Center to deliver world-class care for patients with colon and rectal cancer. This year brought several milestones: MUSC Health was ranked high performing in colon cancer in the 2025–26 U.S. News & World Report rankings, and Hollings Cancer Center earned reaccreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC), reaffirming its status as a Rectal Cancer Center of Excellence.

Thomas Curran, M.D., MPH, and **Maggie Westfal, M.D., MPH**, are integral to MUSC's Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), which has achieved significant success providing multidisciplinary care under the leadership of gastroenterologist **Erin Forster, M.D.** The PCMH unites a comprehensive team and centralizes care to ensure a seamless experience, serving as a key resource for complex IBD cases.

Pinckney J. Maxwell IV, M.D., specializes in sacral neuromodulation, the gold standard for refractory fecal incontinence. Outcomes are impressive, with over half of patients achieving full continence and nearly all achieving significant improvement. This year also marked expansion, with new outreach clinics in West Ashley and Murrells Inlet.

Karen Anderson, PA-C, works closely with the surgical team and leads the colorectal cancer survivorship program. She reports new innovations in CRC surveillance include tumor-informed ctDNA molecular residual disease (MRD) with new reflex testing to tissue-free MRD analysis, useful in cases where tissue is unavailable or not adequate for testing. MRD positive results are strongly prognostic of cancer recurrence and predictive of adjuvant chemotherapy benefit, improving timely and personalized treatment decisions.

RESEARCH

- **Drs. Curran** and **Forster**, in collaboration with translational scientists **Drs. Mindy** and **Amy Engevik**, were awarded a Poster of Distinction at the 2025 Digestive Disease Week for their research on IBD-associated colorectal cancer.
- **Drs. Westfal, Forster**, and **Curran** received a podium presentation at the 2025 American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress for their work demonstrating that care through the PCMH was associated with a decreased likelihood of unplanned surgeries.

EDUCATION

- **Colleen Donahue, M.D.**, serves as the General Surgery Program Director
- **Maggie Westfal, M.D., MPH**, serves as the 4th year Student Curriculum Program Director.

BY THE NUMBERS

52%

Increase in
Robotic Surgeries

18%

Increase in New
Patient Encounters

7,746

Outpatient
Encounters

GENERAL, FOREGUT AND METABOLIC SURGERY

.....

*The **Division of General, Foregut and Metabolic Surgery** is nationally and internationally recognized for its surgical expertise and multidisciplinary approach to caring for patients in need of weight loss surgery. This year, Newsweek named the MUSC bariatric team one of America's Best Weight Loss Clinics and Centers. The Bariatric Surgery program is a Robotic Center of Excellence and a certified center for observation for Robotic Bariatric Surgery. This year, the bariatric team merged with the general surgery team to provide more comprehensive care.*

Professor and Chief
Rana Pullatt, M.D.

Professors of Surgery
T. Karl Byrne, M.D.
Bruce Crookes, M.D.
Stuart Leon, M.D.
Stephen Fann, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Mary Kate Bryant, M.D., MSCR
Douglas Cassidy, M.D.

GENERAL, FOREGUT & METABOLIC SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

The department is expanding the general surgery program and strategically transitioned three highly experienced general surgeons, **Bruce Crookes, M.D.**, **Stephen Fann, M.D.**, and **Stuart Leon, M.D.**, into the division to streamline services in general, bariatric and foregut care. Advances in care within the division include incorporating new technologies in the OR to allow for optimized outcomes for anti-reflux surgeries, offering advanced minimally invasive surgeries like transcystic common bile duct exploration and robotic approaches to complex abdominal wall reconstruction.



And, as MUSC Health is expanding bariatric care across the statewide network, **Rana Pullatt, M.D.**, an internationally known expert on bariatric surgery, is sharing his expertise to assist the MUSC Florence and Lancaster bariatric surgery groups. Pullatt, who serves as the president-elect of the ASMBS, has represented MUSC with numerous invited lectures across the globe this past year. Most recently, he chaired the robotic surgery session at the IFSO World Congress, which attracts a global audience of 3,000 attendees. In 2025, he was also honored by the Obesity Surgery Society of India with the Honorary Life Membership of the Society.

RESEARCH

- **Douglas Cassidy, M.D.**, is PI on the Association for Surgical Education grant on *Developing and Implementing a National Curriculum for Robotic Surgery Emergency Undocking*.
- **Mary Kate Bryant, M.D., MSCR**, is PI of a project presented by **Allison Frederick, M.D., PGY-Research**, at the 2025 ASMBS Conference, accepted as one of the top abstracts of the meeting.

EDUCATION

- Golden Apple Excellence in Teaching nominations: **Douglas Cassidy, M.D.**, was nominated for Teacher of the Year; **Mary Kate Bryant, M.D.**, was nominated for Clinical Preceptor Excellence in Teaching
- **Douglas Cassidy, M.D.**, was named Associate Program Director for the General Surgery Residency Program in addition to his role as Director of Surgical Simulation
- **Mary Kate Bryant, M.D., MSCR**, was named the Director of the Surgery M&M Conference and Co-director Surgeon Scientist Pathway

BY THE NUMBERS

42%

Increase in
Inpatient Encounters

460

Robotic Cases

1,248

New Patients

ONCOLOGIC, HPB AND ENDOCRINE SURGERY

The **Division of Oncologic, HPB, and Endocrine Surgery** provides comprehensive surgical care for patients with gastrointestinal cancers, HPB malignancies, benign and malignant breast diseases, endocrine tumors, melanoma, soft tissue tumors (sarcoma), and other rare tumors. Our surgeons are at the forefront of minimally invasive techniques for cancer surgeries that improve precision and reduce the surgical impact on patients.

Professor and Chief

Kevin Roggin, M.D.

Distinguished University Professor

David Mahvi, M.D.

Professors of Surgery

President David J. Cole, M.D.

Denise Carneiro-Pla, M.D.

William Hawkins, M.D.

Kevin Hughes, M.D.

Mark Lockett, M.D.

Rochelle Ringer, M.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery

Andrea Abbott, M.D., MSCR

Assistant Professors of Surgery

Alisa N. Blumenthaler, M.D.

Bernice Huang, M.D.

Tara Grahovac, M.D.

Adjunct Professor of Surgery

Jon van Heerden, M.D.

Research Faculty

Professors of Surgery

Nancy Klauber-DeMore, M.D.

Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS

Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D.

Hongjun Wang, Ph.D.

ONCOLOGIC, HPB AND ENDOCRINE SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

The Division of Oncologic, HPB and Endocrine Surgery experienced another year of remarkable growth and innovation. We completed our first year since implementing the Next Day Access Program for patients with abdominal and HPB malignancies, which provides patients with expedited evaluation for cancer care. More than 165 patients (23% of all new patients) chose expedited access to our surgical team. The division credits the outstanding efforts of staff leaders including **Kelsey Cook, RN**, **Courtney Pittman, RN**, and **Sydney Waterhouse, RN**, whose coordination ensures a seamless, patient-centered experience.

The program's success has inspired Hollings Cancer Center to adopt enhanced access as a priority for all cancer patients.

Our programs continue to receive extramural distinction for the outstanding care and quality. The National Pancreatic Foundation recognized our pancreatic cancer and adult pancreatitis programs as Centers of Excellence. Our breast cancer program recently received accreditation by the ACS National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers and recognized our team as an ACS Surgical Quality Partner.

This year also saw expansion in the division's team, with **Alisa Blumenthaler, M.D.**, joining as Assistant Professor in Breast Surgery and **Gayathri Devi, Ph.D., MS**, joining as Professor of Surgery and Vice Chair of Innovation. We are pleased to announce the recruitment of two stellar abdominal surgical oncology/HPB surgeons: **Katharine Caldwell, M.D.**, (Washington University) and **Alex Thomas, M.D.** (UPMC), who will both join our team next summer.

EDUCATION

Division faculty continue to lead by example in professional development and mentorship. **Andrea Abbott, M.D., MSCR**, was accepted into the prestigious ELAM (Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine) class of 2025–2026, recognizing her commitment to advancing leadership and diversity in academic surgery.

The division also supports a strong educational mission through resident training, interdisciplinary collaboration, and initiatives that promote equitable access to surgical education. **Bernice Huang, M.D.**, serves the department's Education Program as Medical Student Clerkship Director.

RESEARCH

Division faculty achieved major research milestones this year. **Hongjun Wang, Ph.D.**, **Shikhar Mehrotra, Ph.D.**, **Nancy-Klauber DeMore, M.D.**, and **Kevin Hughes, M.D.**, all secured significant external funding, as detailed in the research section of this report. Building on the success of the Next Day Access Program, the division also launched an outcomes study led by **Kylie Duckworth (MUSC MD class of 2026)**, to assess the program's impact.

BY THE NUMBERS

27%

HPB Increase in Inpatient Encounters

15%

Increase in Breast Surgical Cases

11%

Endocrine Surgery wRVU Increase

PEDIATRIC SURGERY

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*Our nationally recognized pediatric surgeons in the **Division of Pediatric Surgery** collaborate with best-in-class experts in pediatric anesthesia, emergency medicine, ICU, and other pediatric subspecialists to provide high quality family-focused care for complex pediatric surgical conditions.*

Professor and Chief
Christian Streck, M.D.

Professor Emeritus
H. Biemann Othersen, Jr., M.D.

Professors of Surgery
Robert Cina, M.D.
Aaron Leshner, M.D., MSCR
Dennis Vane, M.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery
Laura Hollinger, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Aaron Cunningham, M.D.
Rohit Mittal, M.D.

PEDIATRIC SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS!

The Division of Pediatric Surgery extends our deepest gratitude to **Robert Cina, M.D.**, for his outstanding service and many contributions over his 17-year tenure. Dr. Cina has been an integral part of our team, most recently serving as Professor of Surgery and Director for Pediatric Surgical Quality at the Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital at MUSC—where, under his leadership, the hospital achieved ACS Children's Surgery Verification in 2022, meeting the highest standards of pediatric surgical care. In January, Dr. Cina begins an exciting new chapter as Division Head of Pediatric Surgery at Denver Children's Hospital at the University of Colorado. We thank him for his dedication and leadership, and we wish him continued success as he advances his career and continues to impact the field of pediatric surgery.

ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia (CDH) Program Excellence

Laura Hollinger, M.D., institutional principal investigator for the International CDH Study Group Registry, presented MUSC's CDH patient data to key stakeholders at Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital, where she reported that our outcomes compete with the best in the world when benchmarked against our peers, despite increased patient disease complexity. These data have driven key evidence-based guidelines shifts in our clinical care paradigm for prenatal care, postnatal resuscitation, and the provision of ECMO in CDH patients.

Pediatric Trauma Leadership and Innovation

Christian Streck, M.D., served as Guidelines Chair for the Pediatric Trauma Society, leading the effort to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma (AAST) and the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (ACS COT). Under Dr. Streck's leadership, the team also developed three new evidence-based guidelines this year: massive transfusion, thoracic imaging, and venous thromboembolism prophylaxis.

RESEARCH

- **Aaron Cunningham, M.D.**, serves as principal investigator for the MUSC Division of Pediatric Surgery within the Pediatric Surgical Oncology Collaborative—a network of 60 children's hospitals across North America dedicated to advancing research in rare diseases. Since joining, the division has participated in studies to investigate the growing rate of colorectal cancer in adolescents and young adults, and to explore the treatment of pneumatosis intestinalis in children with cancer.

EDUCATION

- **Aaron Cunningham, M.D.**, was named the General Surgery Residency Associate Program Director for Curriculum Development.

BY THE NUMBERS

286%

Increase in
Robotic Surgeries

6%

Increase in Inpatient
Surgical Cases

7,663

Encounters

PEDIATRIC CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

*In the **Division of Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery**, our nationally renowned surgeons work with a multispecialty team at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital to deliver the highest level of care and support to our patients ranging from infancy to adults. Our team treats the full spectrum of heart disorders, from the common and simple to the rare and most complex.*

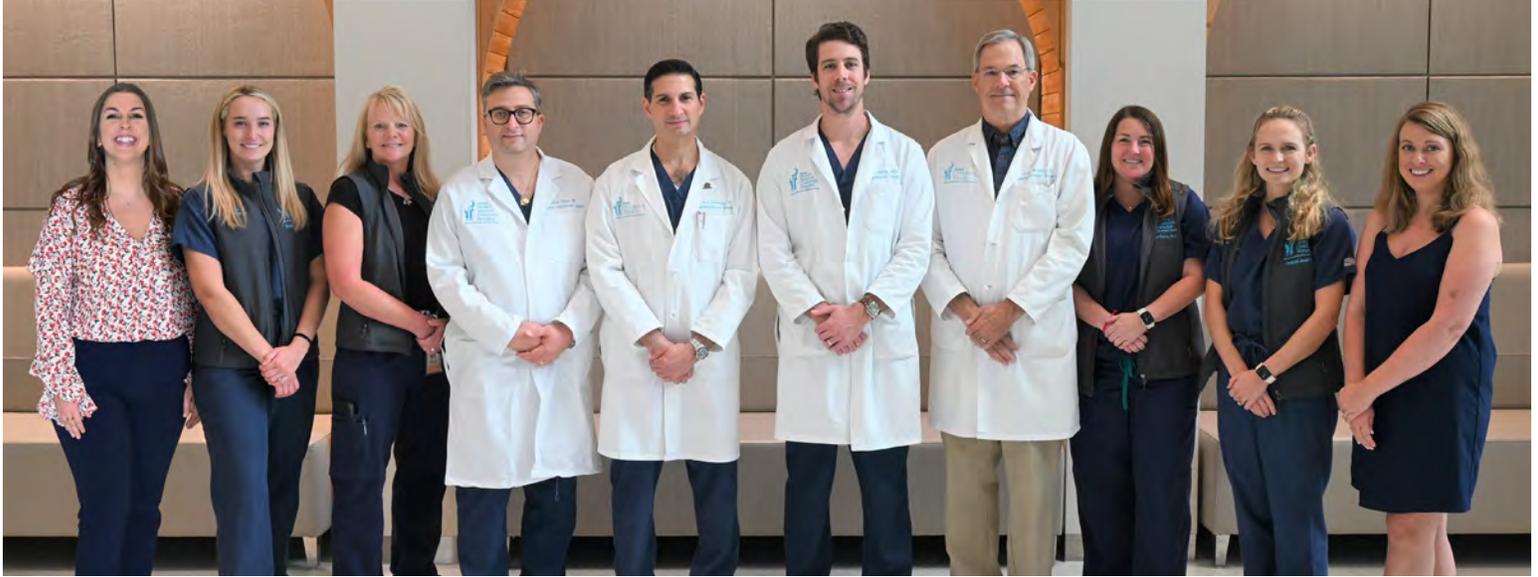
Professor and Chief
Minoo Kavarana, M.D.

Distinguished University Professor
Scott M. Bradley, M.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery
Matteo Trezzi, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Surgery
Lloyd "Mac" Felmly, M.D.

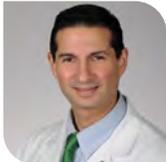
PEDIATRIC CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



CLINICAL CARE EXPERTISE

MUSC has launched a new robotic congenital heart surgery program led by **Mac Felmly, M.D.** Under the mentorship of adult robotic cardiac surgeon **Marc R. Katz, M.D., MPH.**, Dr. Felmly and **Jennifer Flynn, PA**, are performing minimally invasive robotic congenital repairs in older children and teens. When done robotically, procedures for congenital heart defects, such as atrial septal defect closures, can be performed through small incisions without a sternotomy. This approach offers significantly faster recovery, fewer activity restrictions, and greater independence so patients can return to daily life more quickly.

RESEARCH



M. Kavarana

Minoo Kavarana, M.D., and **Matteo Trezzi, M.D.**, are part of a collaborative research program with Clemson University's bioengineering team to advance development of Clemson's Expandable Valve™, a patent-pending pediatric heart valve designed to grow with infants and children. Built with three elastic leaflets mounted on a novel expandable stent, the valve can be increased from approximately 12 mm to 22 mm through minimally invasive balloon expansion as a child grows, addressing a major limitation of current fixed-size prosthetic valves.



M. Trezzi

Supported by seed funding from the Emerson Rose Heart Foundation, the project has progressed into preclinical testing, with plans for the first piglet implant studies this year, forming a symbiotic partnership in which Clemson provides engineering innovation while MUSC leads the surgical, translational, and experimental evaluation.

EDUCATION

Kenichi Okamura, M.D., has completed the Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship and is now participating in the Cardiothoracic Heart Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support Fellowship.

BY THE NUMBERS

15%

Increase in RVUs

#4

Ranked Program
Nationally
(2025-2026 Rankings)

57%

Increase in
Inpatient Encounters

PLASTIC, RECONSTRUCTIVE & HAND SURGERY

.....

*The **Division of Plastic, Reconstructive and Hand Surgery** offers the full spectrum of plastic surgery including hand surgery, reconstructive surgery, pediatric plastic surgery, lymphedema, breast reconstruction, and microsurgery as well as cosmetic surgery and aesthetic services. Our surgeons combine deep expertise with the latest techniques to provide exceptional care.*

Associate Professor and Chief
M. Lance Tavana, M.D.

Professors of Surgery
Milton Armstrong, M.D.
Fernando Herrera, M.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery
Kevin Delaney, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Gabriel Klein, M.D., MSCR
Donna Mullner, M.D.
Isis Scomacao, M.D.

PLASTIC, RECONSTRUCTIVE & HAND SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

The Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery is a leader in microsurgical techniques for treating lymphedema—a condition that can affect daily life by causing heaviness, pain, and limited movement in an effected limb. Gabriel Klein, M.D., and Isis Scomacao, M.D., specialize in microvascular reconstruction and offer Lymphaticovenous Anastomosis (LVA) as a minimally invasive treatment option.

LVA is considered super-microsurgery, as it requires an operating microscope to connect tiny lymphatic vessels to nearby veins. This creates a new pathway for lymph fluid to drain, thus bypassing the damaged or obstructed part of the lymphatic system. The procedure typically requires 3–6 small incisions and most patients are able to return home the same day. The surgery has also become part of breast cancer care, to prevent lymphedema in patients with high stage cancer requiring removal of lymph nodes.

MUSC is currently the only center in the state of Carolina, and one of only a few in the Southeast offering this treatment.

BY THE NUMBERS

11%

Increase in
Inpatient Encounters

12%

Increase in
hand wRVUs

2,916

New Patients

WELCOME, NEW FACULTY



Donna Mullner, M.D., joined MUSC as an Assistant Professor of Surgery after completing her training in hand and upper extremity surgery at the University of Kentucky.



Rion Tapp, M.D., joins the faculty August 1, 2026. Tapp is the first fellow to complete the postgraduate microsurgery non-GME fellowship.

EDUCATION



Brianna McLaughlin, M.D., MUSC Plastic Surgery Independent Residency Chief, matched into the University of Miami Hand Surgery Fellowship.

TRANSPLANT SURGERY

Surgeons in the **Division of Transplant Surgery** are nationally recognized leaders in transplantation, working side-by-side with nephrologists, hepatologists, immunologists, interventionalists and radiologists to provide the most comprehensive patient care in the region. As we continue to expand across the state, providing greater access to our specialized care, we now have clinics in Columbia, Greenville and Florence.

Professor and Chief
Steven Hanish, M.D.

Professors of Surgery
Chair Prabhakar Baliga, M.D.
John McGillicuddy, M.D.
Joseph Scalea, M.D.

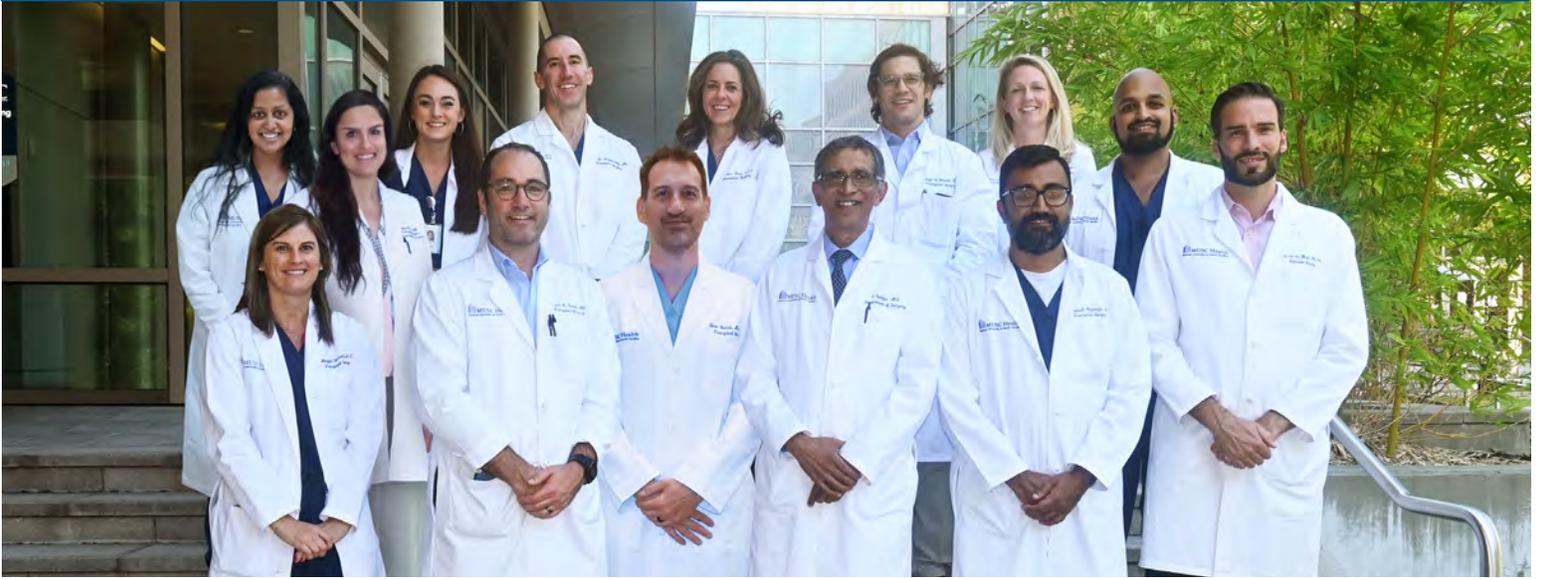
Associate Professors of Surgery
Diego di Sabato, M.D.
Santosh Nagaraju, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Tara Barry, M.D.
Kannan Samy, M.D.
Dirk van der Windt, M.D., Ph.D.

MUSC - Lancaster
Assistant Professors of Surgery
Ahmad Alqassieh, M.D.
Ammar Mahmood, M.D.

Research Faculty
Professors of Surgery
David Taber, Pharm.D., MS
Yuan Zhai, M.D., Ph.D.

TRANSPLANT SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

Better Outcomes for Patients with End-Stage Liver Disease

This year marked a major milestone in liver transplantation with 196 liver transplants completed, driven by significant programmatic growth following the adoption of normothermic perfusion technology in FY24. This innovative approach extends the viable preservation window far beyond what cold storage allows. As a result, transplant teams gain critical flexibility—more time for transport, assembling the surgical team, and managing complex logistics. It also enables the retrieval of organs from greater distances without compromising quality.

The benefits extend to the surgical team as well. With greater scheduling flexibility and fewer intraoperative complications, the use of normothermic perfusion supports a more predictable, less urgent workflow—ultimately enhancing team well-being and operational efficiency.

Living Donor Liver Program Launches

Diego Di Sabato, M.D., Surgical Director of Liver Transplantation, led the initiative to develop a robust Living Donor Liver Transplant Program for both adult and pediatric patients. Collaborating with multidisciplinary teams—including MUSC Health’s Transplant Oncology practice and the Pediatric Liver Transplant Program—the initiative successfully launched in September 2025. Living donor programs significantly reduce transplant waiting times and lead to better long-term outcomes for recipients, as living donor livers experience shorter periods without blood supply and have demonstrated higher long-term survival rates compared to deceased donor livers.

RESEARCH

- **Yuan Zhai, Ph.D.**, *Group 1 innate lymphoid cells protect liver transplants from ischemia-reperfusion injury via an interferon gamma-mediated pathway*, *American Journal of Transplantation*, Volume 25, Issue 5 (May 2025); selected as an Editor’s Choice article.
- **David J. Taber, Pharm.D.**, Invited to present *Burdens of Therapy: AST’s National Patient Survey of Unmet Immunosuppressant Needs* as the opening plenary session at the World Transplant Congress.
- **Kannan Samy, M.D.**, Recipient of a Harvey and Marcia Schiller Surgical Innovation Center award for his proposal: *Intelligent Decision Support for Modernizing the Organ Donation Process*.

EDUCATION

- **Dirk van der Windt, M.D., Ph.D.**, Co-leader of the Future Surgical Leaders Surgeon Scientist Pathway in the Division of Education Pathways Program.

BY THE NUMBERS

233%

Increase in
Liver Transplants

59%

Increase in wRVUs

14%

Increase in
New Patients

VASCULAR SURGERY

The **Division of Vascular Surgery** provides advanced vascular care encompassing the full range of medical optimization, open surgery and the latest endovascular techniques. This year, the team expanded to include Ryan King, M.D., Timothy Legare, M.D., and Cassandra Clift, Ph.D.

Professor and Chief
Ravi Veeraswamy, M.D.

Professors of Surgery
Thomas E. Brothers, M.D.
Jean Marie Ruddy, M.D.

Associate Professors of Surgery
Lindsey Korepta, M.D.
Adam Tanious, M.D., MMSc
A. Sharee Wright, M.D.

Assistant Professors of Surgery
Ryan King, M.D.
Timothy Legare, M.D.
Chun Li, M.D., MPH
J. Chadwick Tober, M.D.

Research Faculty
Assistant Professor of Surgery
Cassandra L. Clift, Ph.D.

VASCULAR SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS



ADVANCES IN CLINICAL CARE

Leaders in Aortic Surgery

MUSC Health is one of the highest-volume aortic centers in the United States. Our multidisciplinary team of vascular and cardiac surgeons brings deep expertise in the management of complex aortic disease, including aneurysms, dissection and occlusive disease. Through participation in leading-edge clinical trials, MUSC Health continues to advance innovative surgical techniques and improve patient outcomes.

Pioneers in Peripheral Arterial Disease

MUSC Health's team of vascular surgeons are pioneers in managing critical limb ischemia, the most advanced stage of peripheral artery disease (PAD). We offer the latest technologies to improve blood flow, promote wound healing, and reduce limb pain associated with PAD. Through the Vascular Surgery Division, patients also have access to innovative clinical trials and advanced treatment techniques. In addition, MUSC Health features a comprehensive Varicose Vein Center, providing a full spectrum of care for venous disease.

Centralizing Dialysis Access Care

The newly established MUSC Health Dialysis Access Institute – Charleston centralizes care for all dialysis patients at MUSC Charleston and across the greater Charleston area.

NEW FACULTY

- **Ryan King, M.D.**, Vascular surgeon specializing in complex endovascular aortic care.
- **Timothy Legare, M.D.**, Vascular surgeon focusing on peripheral arterial disease and hemodialysis.
- **Cassandra Clift, Ph.D.**, Basic science researcher, driving increased research infrastructure within vascular surgery.

RESEARCH

- **Adam Tanious, M.D., MMSc**, is part of a multi-specialty team recently awarded a patent for a novel aortic stent graft and he has been inducted into the MUSC Chapter of the National Academy of Innovators alongside one of the vascular Chief Residents, Dr. Gedney.

EDUCATION

- **Lindsey Korepta, M.D.**, has been named Program Director for the Vascular Surgery I-6 Program.

BY THE NUMBERS

25%

Increase in
wRVUs

23%

Increase in
Surgical Cases

9%

Increase in
New Patients

Development Director Jenna Brown Joins MUSC



The MUSC Department of Surgery is extremely pleased to welcome **Jenna Brown**, a nationally recognized development director, to the MUSC Department of Surgery.

Brown serves as the MUSC Director of Development supporting Surgery, Orthopaedics, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and Emergency Medicine. A seasoned development professional, she brings a track record of advancing mission-driven organizations through strategic fundraising, community partnerships, and donor engagement.

Before joining MUSC, Brown served as the National Director of Development for the Spina Bifida Association of America, where she led nationwide fundraising initiatives to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by Spina Bifida. She also served as Director of Development at Camp Rise Above and worked as a development consultant, helping nonprofits build sustainable philanthropic programs.

As a native Charlestonian, she is deeply committed to strengthening the health and well-being of her community. Her daughter, Harper, has been a lifelong patient at MUSC, making this work especially personal and meaningful. For Brown, serving MUSC is a full-circle moment that has deepened her appreciation for compassionate care, innovation, and the power of philanthropy to create lasting impact.

In her work, she believes in meeting every family, patient, and donor where they are—with empathy, respect, and a shared vision for healthier tomorrows. She is inspired daily by the resilience of those facing health challenges and is honored to help advance MUSC’s mission of excellence in patient care, education, and discovery right here in her hometown.

Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society ACS Reception

Originally founded in 1974, the Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society brings together alumni of MUSC’s surgery residency programs, fellows, and Department of Surgery faculty. Under the leadership of **Aaron Lesher, M.D., MSCR**, the Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society continues to champion meaningful networking and foster a strong sense of camaraderie across generations of surgeons.

This fall, we were thrilled to host a dinner during the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress—an evening filled with the kind of conversations that remind us why our community is so special. It was an inspiring opportunity to gather, reconnect, and celebrate the shared legacy that unites us.

The annual American College gathering gives alumni across the country an opportunity to gather with MUSC Surgery faculty and current residents. Thanks to Dr. Baliga for hosting this wonderful gathering!



Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society dinner gathering at the ACS

Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society Launches Podcast Series



Chair Prabhakar Baliga, M.D., takes time to chat with Aaron Leshner, M.D.



Robert Sade, M.D., Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, shares his experiences with Aaron Leshner, M.D.

MUSC Surgery Sessions is our newest way to honor the remarkable faculty and alumni whose expertise, passion, and innovative spirit have shaped the MUSC Department of Surgery—and their respective surgical fields. Over the past year, we have released seven podcasts, with new episodes posting every few weeks, each one offering a chance to hear personal stories, reflections, and insights directly from those who helped build our rich surgical legacy.

We invite you to join us on this journey as we capture and preserve our history through the voices of some of the true giants in surgery. You can listen to all of our current podcasts on our website.



William Rambo, M.D., his wife, Lydia Engelhardt, M.D., in the podcast studio with Aaron Leshner, M.D.

To listen to episodes of the MUSC Surgery Sessions Podcast, please scan the QR code.



SUPPORT THE FUTURE OF SURGERY



The Department of Surgery relies on the financial support of our alumni and friends to train the next generation of surgeons. We invite you to partner with us by contributing to the Department of Surgery Curtis P. Artz Alumni Fund.

Every gift, no matter the size, is crucial in supporting our trainees' future.

To donate to the Department of Surgery Curtis P. Artz Alumni fund, scan the QR code.



50TH POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN SURGERY

APRIL 16-19, 2026
MUSC DRUG DISCOVERY BUILDING

Celebrating 50 Years of Surgical Education Excellence



We're thrilled to announce the return of one of the nation's longest-running continuing medical education courses in general surgery — the 50th Postgraduate Course in Surgery! Following a brief hiatus, we're excited to say: it's back — and better than ever. We've redesigned the program to create an enhanced experience you won't want to miss, scheduled during one of the most beautiful times of the year to visit Charleston—April 16–19, 2026. This year's milestone course will feature fresh new elements, including half-day morning sessions conveniently held on the MUSC campus, and specially curated Charleston-inspired afternoon activities just for our group.

A Weekend of Surgical Education, Culture, and Connection: Schedule of Events

Thursday Evening: All attendees are welcome to join us for a warm and relaxed Welcome Reception at our host hotel, the Emeline. Join us for an evening of casual conversation and connection before the course begins.

Friday & Saturday: We begin the day with dynamic morning sessions from our invited speakers and MUSC faculty, followed by curated opportunities to discover Charleston. The MUSC Department of Surgery's Curtis P. Artz MUSC Surgical Society has organized several experiences designed especially for our group. Options include:

- The South of Broad Houses and Gardens Tour—a 2.5-hour exploration of history, architecture, and garden artistry in Charleston's most storied neighborhood.
- The Charleston Strolls walking tour, focusing on Charleston's history and culture.
- The International African American Museum and the Gibbes Museum of Art.

Saturday Evening: Don't miss our Black-Tie Alumni Dinner at the Charleston Country Club, a venue chosen with care, as many of our graduates celebrated their own milestone graduation dinners there. We're excited to welcome you back for an evening that combines tradition, elegance, and the timeless charm of Charleston.

Sunday Morning: The course concludes on Sunday with a half-day academic session on the MUSC campus, leaving you plenty of time to return home refreshed and ready to begin the week.

Book Your Stay Where History Meets Luxury

If there's one place that embodies Charleston's timeless charm, it's Church Street. Lined with historic homes and centuries-old churches, it offers a glimpse of the city's quiet grace. This year, we invite you to experience it firsthand. Reserve your stay at our host hotel, the Emeline, a boutique hotel nestled on Church Street and enjoy the beauty of one of Charleston's most iconic settings.

To reserve your stay, use this online booking link:
MUSC 2026 Department of Surgery Postgraduate Course



Emeline Reception Area



Surgeons and trainees walk along the path by the MUSC Drug Discovery Building



Charleston Country Club

Reserve Your Spot Today!

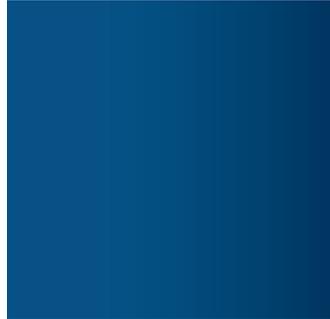
Register now to secure your place. Don't miss out on this opportunity to engage with fellow colleagues, stay abreast of the latest advances in surgery, and celebrate 50 years of surgical excellence!

For more information and to register, visit <https://bit.ly/50thPostgraduateCourse> or scan the QR Code



Gratitude

To serve patients is our greatest privilege.



It is an honor to care for you and your families.

Your Gift is Changing What's Possible

By giving to the MUSC Department of Surgery, you support our dedicated surgeons, researchers and clinical staff who thrive on providing the best and most compassionate care for our patients, are leaders in innovations in research and clinical outcomes, and are committed to excellence in education – preparing the future surgeons today for the challenges of tomorrow.

*We invite you to become part of this mission with your own promise to support MUSC's surgical programs.
To donate to the MUSC Department of Surgery, scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/giving-muscsurgery>*





DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Charleston, SC 29425-5500

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