

WIDENING IMPACT IN MEDICINE AND SCIENCE (WIMS) NEWSLETTER

WIMS MISSION STATEMENT

To champion the advancement, visibility, and fair recognition of faculty within the College of Medicine at The Ohio State University by fostering empowerment, advocacy, and encompassing growth. Through WIMS, we inspire meaningful success by cultivating a welcoming and transformative academic environment where all faculty are valued, supported, and equipped to thrive.

SUPPORT WIMS

To support the advancement of faculty in the College of Medicine, please donate to the Academic Advancement Fund for WIMS (Fund number 315293) at The Ohio State University or [donate to WIMS through the donation web page](#).

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REFLECTIONS FROM DR. EUGENE OLTZ



EUGENE OLTZ, PHD

Professor and Chair, Microbial Infection & Immunity
The Ohio State University College of Medicine

A WINDING PATH, AND WHY THAT'S A GOOD THING

I get asked often how I ended up in the leadership positions I've held. It's a fair question. If you look at my CV, you might think there was a master plan — one that took me from a chemistry lab at Columbia to chairing a department at OSU. There wasn't. What there was: curiosity, a willingness to say yes to the right things, and more than a few stellar trainees and mentors along the way. My path started in mathematics, until I completely tanked a class called "Infinite Series" as a sophomore. That humbling experience pushed me toward chemistry, where I earned a Ph.D. solving a 70-year-old problem about how sea squirts store unusual forms of vanadium in their blood.

I landed in immunology through a seminar I gave in graduate school on molecules involved in allergic responses — and, fortuitously, through connections my PhD advisor had in the field. I've spent the better part of my career since then studying how immune cells develop and how their gene regulatory programs go wrong in cancer and autoimmunity.

What have I learned along the way?

Career passions evolve. What you want to study changes. The roles you want to play in your broader community change, too.

Serendipity matters more than people admit. Don't let opportunities slip away. But — equally important — don't say yes unless you can genuinely prioritize the time to do it well. Saying yes and not coming through doesn't open doors. It closes them.

Find good mentors and allies. You'll likely need more than one, because different mentors bring different strengths — writing, science, networking, advocacy, or simply wise counsel.

Be a good mentee. Check your ego at the door. What you think you need and what you actually need are often different things. A good mentor will tell you which is which.

Where did all of this lead?

One thing that quietly became a passion was helping colleagues write the grants and papers that would get funded and published. I didn't set out to be a faculty developer. But the work of helping a colleague sharpen a grant application or reframe a manuscript turned out to be some of the most satisfying work I did all week. That passion grew — and eventually led me to become Vice Chair for Faculty Development at Washington University in St. Louis, a role I never anticipated and one that profoundly shaped how I think about leadership.

Mentorship, faculty development, service to professional societies, serving as Editor-in-Chief of a major journal in my field — together, these experiences sparked a desire I hadn't originally imagined: to build something beyond the four walls of my own lab. That trajectory brought me to Ohio State in 2019, where I was given the opportunity and the resources to chair the Department of Microbial Infection & Immunity and help elevate its national and international standing through strategic hiring of outstanding scientists.

But it doesn't stop there. It comes full circle.

You build something, you hire people, and then your most important job becomes ensuring their success. For me, that has meant developing a formal team mentoring program, creating venues for conversations about science and careers, and maintaining a genuine open-door policy — for faculty, staff, and trainees alike. One size does not fit all in mentorship. The best thing you can do is listen, advise, and when someone needs a connection or perspective you can't provide, help them find the person who can.

So: let your passions evolve. Stay open to the roles you're meant to play in your community. And when you step into leadership, remember that the most meaningful change happens when you use the authority you've been given on behalf of others. Identify barriers specifically. Address them concretely. Do it through the ordinary rhythms of leadership — hiring decisions, salary reviews, grant feedback, listening sessions. It doesn't require a grand gesture. It requires showing up, consistently, for the people counting on you.

— *Gene Oltz, Ph.D.*

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACCOLADES HIGHLIGHTS

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN ACADEMIC MEDICINE (ELAM) AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN HEALTHCARE (ELH) FELLOWS

Dr. Amal Amer, MD, PhD, professor of Microbial Infection and Immunity and vice chair for Translational Research; **Dr. Kristy Townsend, PhD**, professor of Neurological Surgery and associate dean for Research Operations and Compliance; **Dr. Beth Kozel, MD, PhD**, professor of Pediatrics, and **Dr. Rebecca Wallihan, MD**, clinical professor of Pediatrics, both from Nationwide Children's Hospital, were selected as Fellows for the 2025-26 Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) cohort at Drexel University.

Dr. Courtney Collins, MD, associate clinical professor of Surgery, and **Dr. Amy Kerger, DO**, associate clinical professor of Radiology, were selected as Fellows for the Executive Leadership in Health Care (ELH) cohort at Drexel University.

ELAM and ELH are *prestigious programs* designed for senior-level leaders in academic medicine who demonstrate high potential for advancement in executive leadership roles.

DAWN ALLAIN, MS

Dawn Allain, MS, genetic counselor and clinical professor of Internal Medicine received the Ohio State University Office of Academic Affairs alumni award for distinguished teaching.

JACLYN CACCSE, PHD

Dr. Jaclyn Caccese, PhD, associate professor in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, received the *Early Career Distinguished Scholar Award* from Ohio State's Enterprise for Research, Innovation and Knowledge (ERIK). The award recognizes assistant professors and early-career associate professors who demonstrate strong potential to make significant contributions to both Ohio State and their field for years to come.

MEGAN E. CONROY, MD

Dr. Megan E. Conroy, assistant professor of Internal Medicine, Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, was awarded the *2026 College of Medicine Professor of the Year*, as selected by the graduating Class of 2026.

ASHLEY KRULL, PHD

Dr. Ashley Krull, PhD, associate director of Cell Therapy Manufacturing and Engineering and assistant professor of Internal Medicine was elected regional Vice President elect for the International Society for Cell and Gene Therapy (ISCT).

LEON MCDOUGLE, MD, MPH, FAAFP

Dr. Leon McDougale, MD, MPH, FAAFP, professor of Family and Community Medicine has been named one of three recipients of the 2026 National Humanism in Medicine Medal from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation. This prestigious honor recognizes Dr. McDougale's efforts to improve health care access and outcomes for all communities and his commitment to creating opportunities for students pursuing biomedical and behavioral science careers.

JESSICA MERLIN, MD, PHD

Dr. Jessica Merlin, MD, PhD, professor of Internal Medicine has been elected to serve a four-year term as a committee member of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)'s Helping to End Addiction Long-term Initiative Multi-Disciplinary Working Group, beginning in July. In this role, she will help accelerate scientific solutions to the overdose epidemic.

Note: WIMS Members are underlined in Faculty Accolades and Accomplishments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

WIMS WELCOME/WELCOME BACK 2026

TUESDAY AUGUST 18, 2026, FROM 4:00 – 7:00 PM

WIMS will be hosting its annual Welcome/Welcome Back Event in person on **Tuesday, August 18th. Please join us from 4:00 – 7:00pm** at The Faculty Club as we kick off the academic year for an early evening of networking with WIMS leaders and members. [Click here to RSVP by August 4.](#)

WIMS EMERGING RESEARCHER AWARD WINNER

JESSICA KROK-SCHOEN, PHD

Congratulations to Dr. Jessica Krok-Schoen, associate professor in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, on receiving the inaugural WIMS Emerging Researcher Award 2026. This award supported Dr. Krok-Schoen's presentation of original research on "The Effects of an online diet and exercise intervention for older cancer survivors on self-efficacy, self-regulation, and quality of life" at the 2026 meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine.



WIMS FACULTY ADVOCATE AWARD WINNER

CAROL BRADFORD, MD, MS, FACS

Congratulations to Dr. Carol Bradford on receiving the WIMS Faculty Advocate Award 2026. Dr. Bradford is the Former Dean of the College of Medicine at The Ohio State University and current Interim Dean and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs at the

University of Minnesota Twin Cities. This award recognizes a College of Medicine faculty member who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the success and



advancement of faculty by: 1) championing faculty advancement and professional development; 2) fostering environments in which all faculty feel welcomed, valued, and empowered to succeed; 3) leading initiatives that support the advancement of their field, organization, or community; and 4) addressing/correcting barriers to faculty advancement.

2026 BUCKEYE SHING STARS

This recognition is given to early to mid-career faculty who warrant recognition for any of the following and are nominated by their departmental leadership:

- Exceptional role models for trainees
- Dependable and trustworthy, providing formal or informal support to peers and colleagues
- Contribute to building community
- Involved in service to their division, department, or the university
- Participate in or create educational activities or curriculum development
- Provide consistent trainee precepting

Congratulations to the 2026 Buckeye Shing Star recipients!

Anne Sullivan, MD

Dawn Chandler, Ph.D.

Kyla Driest, MD, MEd

Benjamin Prince, MD MSCI

Amythest Gauthier, MD

Nancy Liao, MD

Skyler Kalady, MD

Lisa Ulrich, MD

Joshua Watson, MD

Eleonora Sikic-Klisovic, MD

Tahagod Mohamed, MD

Tasha Posid, PhD

Hazem Ghoneim, PhD

Chiemezie Amadi, MD

Rohini Kadle MD

Matthew Avernarius, PHD

Dionisia Quiroga, DO, PhD

LEARN MORE ABOUT WIMS

WIMS IS...

A dedicated OSUCOM faculty organization that champions the advancement, visibility, and fair recognition of faculty by fostering empowerment, advocacy, and encompassing growth. We inspire meaningful success by cultivating a welcoming and transformative academic environment where all faculty are valued, supported, and equipped to thrive.

WHAT DOES WIMS DO?

- Advocate for faculty growth and success
- Identify and reduce barriers
- Support promotion and leadership
- Provide resources for mentorship, sponsorship, and career development
- Improve the health and well-being of all faculty
- Foster a positive culture and environment
- Learn more: [Ohio State WIMS](#)

WHY JOIN WIMS?

- Exclusive or early access to events and programming.
- Opportunities to meet mentors, colleagues, collaborators, and friends.
- Support WIMS in advocating for programs and policies that advance faculty success.
- Learn about resources, workshops, and trainings on campus and locally that will benefit your professional development.
- Membership Options - General Member, Committee, Alumni.
- Joining is easy and FREE. Scan the QR code or visit the [WIMS membership link](#)



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