



College of Pharmacy UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

**Report to the
Texas Pharmacy Congress
November 17-18, 2025**

Arash Bashirullah Set to Join UHCOP as New Dean Jan. 1

Pending approval by the UH System Board of Regents, **Arash Bashirullah, Ph.D.**, has been named the next UHCOP dean, beginning Jan. 1, 2026.

Bashirullah currently serves as professor and associate dean for research and graduate education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Pharmacy, where he is also executive director of the Lachman Institute for Pharmaceutical Development.

A three-time Teacher of the Year, Kavli Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences and a Big Ten Academic Alliance–Academic Leadership Program Fellow, he has held leadership roles on numerous UW–Madison committees and task forces.



Bashirullah's research examines hormonal signaling regulation and intracellular lipid trafficking linked to neurodegenerative diseases, with work published in leading international journals.

He also serves as senior advisory edi-

tor for Genetics, the flagship journal of the Genetics Society of America.

Before joining UW–Madison, he completed postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Utah and Yale University. He earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Winnipeg and Ph.D. in biology from the California Institute of Technology.

Bashirullah succeeds F. Lamar Pritchard, Ph.D., R.Ph., who has led the college since 2009. College highlights of Pritchard's tenure include constructing a state-of-the-art academic/research building, setting college records in research funding and NAPLEX first-time pass rates, and securing eight endowed professorships and an endowed chair.

Cuny Receives \$3.96M NIH Grant to Combat Deadly Parasitic Infections

Gregory Cuny, Ph.D., Joseph P. & Shirley Shipman Buckley Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery, has been awarded a five-year, \$3.96 million National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases grant to develop urgently needed treatments for *Cryptosporidium* infections.



potential bioterrorism agent due to its ability to contaminate water supplies.

Cuny's multi-institutional team aims to target CDPK1, an enzyme essential for parasite survival, to develop new therapies. The drugs will be designed for

enterohepatic recycling, prolonging intestinal exposure while limiting systemic effects.

Caused by protozoan parasites *C. hominis* and *C. parvum*, *Cryptosporidium* kills more than 50,000 children under 5 each year and poses serious risks to immunocompromised adults. *Cryptosporidium* stands alone among the top four diarrheal pathogens with no effective treatments or vaccines.

The CDC classifies it as a

Project collaborators include UHCOP's **Ming Hu, Ph.D.**, and **Kevin Garey, Pharm.D., M.S.**, FASHP, FIDSA, FCCP, BCIDP; University of Washington's Wesley Van Voorhis, M.D., Ph.D.; and Tufts University's Saul Tzipori, DVM, Ph.D., DSc., FRCVS.

SIDP Recognizes Garey with Outstanding Mentor Award

Kevin Garey, Pharm.D., M.S., FASHP, FIDSA, FCCP, BCIDP, received the 2025 Outstanding Mentor Award from the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists during IDWeek 2025 Oct. 19-22, in Atlanta, Ga.

Garey began his mentorship journey by co-founding a two-year Infectious Diseases Pharmacy Fellowship at CHI St. Luke's Health–Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center in 2006 with fellow Professor Vincent Tam, Pharm.D., FIDSA, FIDP, BCIDP, and their Baylor St. Luke's colleagues.



Modeled after Garey's own fellowship experience, the program fosters independent, research-driven leaders. More than 50 infectious diseases pharmacists worldwide have graduated from the program.

In addition to mentoring Pharm.D. students, visiting scholars, and Ph.D. trainees, Garey continues to advise colleagues across academia and industry. In recent years, he also has offered a summer research experience for high school students.

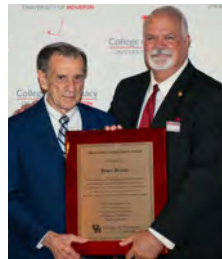
College Recognizes Ahmad, Biundo with Alumni, Achievement Awards

At the UHCOP 2025 Mading Society Induction & Dinner Sept. 26 in Houston, the college presented Shawn Ahmad, Pharm.D. ('18), R.Ph., with the Pharmacist Alumnus of the Year Award and Bruce Biundo, R.Ph. (B.S. '61), FACA, with the Meritorious Achievement Award.

Ahmad serves as pharmacist at Stone Gate Pharmacy in San Antonio and president of the UH Pharmacy Alumni Association. He has been active in the Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA) since his student days. He



was elected to the TPA Board of Directors in 2023 and now serves as treasurer of the Texas Pharmacy Foundation (TPF).



Now retired, Biundo has been a tireless supporter of pharmacy at the local, state and university levels. During his career in independent, chain and consulting pharmacy, he has held key leadership positions within the TPA, TPF, and TPA PharmPAC. At UHCOP, Biundo served as Dean's Advisory Council co-chair and Capital Campaign chair.

His past honors include TPA Pharmacist of the Year, R. Louis Rumsey PharmPAC Member of the Year, and UHCOP Pharmacist Alumnus of the Year.

PREMIER Center Co-hosted Houston-Harris County Drug Summit Focuses on Jail System

Nearly 400 representatives from law enforcement, health care, government, social services, and academia attended the Houston-Harris County Drug Summit Aug. 1 at UH.

Co-hosted by The PREMIER Center at UHCOP and the Houston-Harris County Office of Drug Policy, the summit focused on improving care transitions for individuals leaving jail and expanding the recovery workforce.

The event featured panel experts from Harris Health System, the Harris County Sheriff's Office, and the Houston Recovery Center, as well as a keynote by Douglas Ziedonis, M.D., MPH, of Striver Health Innovations.

Sponsored by multiple community partners, the summit fostered collaboration to strengthen justice and health system coordination and long-term recovery efforts.

UHCOP has been named a recipient of the Insight Into Academia magazine's 2025 Excellence in Mental Health and Well-Being Award, a national honor recognizing 70 institutions—including only two colleges of pharmacy—for their exceptional commitment to campus-wide mental health.

This recognition reflects the college's investment in emotional



well-being, student advocacy, faculty engagement, and institutional change.

These priorities have been consistently championed by UHCOP over the past decade, especially following the 2019 formation of a Student Wellness Advisory Council comprising students, faculty and administrators.

Student News

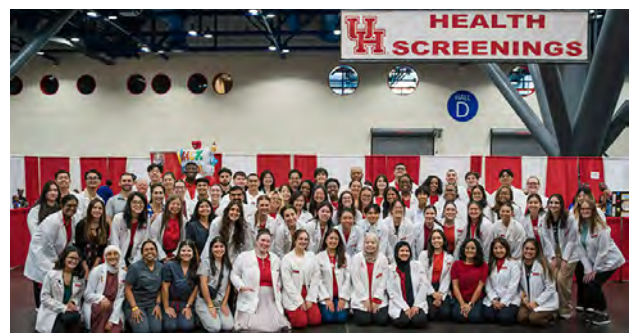
SNPhA, IPHO Chapters Earn National Honors

The UHCOP Chapters of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) and the Industry Pharmacists Organization (IPHO) recently secured national recognition for their chapters.

At the SNPhA National Conference Aug. 1-4 in Cincinnati, the UHCOP chapter won Chapter of the Year and six National Initiative Awards for Operation Immunization, Project Keepsake (chronic kidney disease awareness), Mental Health, Fighting Diabetes, Power to End Stroke/Smoking Cessation, and Remember the Ribbon (HIV/AIDS education).

Chapter members **Michael Crichlow** and **Khanh Nguyen** won the Kroger Clinical Skills Competition, with **Gia Tran** and **Ogechi Ngwakwe** named as finalists. In addition, **Crichlow** won Community Leader of the Year; **Ngwakwe** and **Victoria Briggs** were appointed 2025-26 National Bridging the Gap Chair and National Remember the Ribbon Chair, respectively; and five students earned national scholarships.

At the IPHO virtual Annual Meeting Sept. 4-7, the UHCOP Chapter received national community service/philanthropy "best practice" honors for its outreach event with the National Marrow Donor Program.



At the annual Houston Mayor's Back 2 School Fest Aug. 2, Pharm.D. students engaged in more than 1,300 educational encounters to support the health of Houston-area children and families. Students provided blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, immunization record reviews and educational outreach topics ranging from medication safety, exercise and nutrition to chronic kidney disease, stroke and cancer. Among the preceptors for the event were members of the UHCOP faculty and Gulf Coast Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

College Welcomes 5 New Faculty Members Across 3 Departments

Yibo Fan, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor, earned her M.D. and Ph.D. at China Medical University. She completed postdoctoral training at the University of Texas–MD Anderson Cancer Center in the Department of Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology and Cancer Biology.



Fan's research targets the molecular mechanisms driving gastric cancer progression and drug resistance. Using spatial transcriptomics, single-cell and bulk RNA sequencing, she created a detailed molecular map of the disease. She also developed genetically engineered and patient-derived models, enabling preclinical testing and advancing discovery-driven strategies to improve gastric cancer therapy.

Sai Sudha Koka, Ph.D., FAHA, R.Ph., associate professor, completed her master and bachelor of pharmacy degrees at Andhra University in India, Ph.D. in pharmacology and toxicology from Eberhard Karls University of Tuebingen in Germany, and postdoctoral training at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Koka studies how gut microbe-derived metabolites contribute to vascular dysfunction and inflammation in diabetic, obese, and aging populations using diverse experimental models. Her research is currently funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health and American Heart Association.

Fanfei Meng, Ph.D., assistant professor, completed postdoctoral training in immunoengineering at Purdue University after completing a joint Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Engineering program between Purdue and China Pharmaceutical University.



Meng pioneers nanomedicine and immunotherapy, developing nucleic acid therapeutics, immunostimulatory carriers, and nanoplateforms for cancer, sepsis, and metabolic diseases, including lipid nanoparticles for mRNA delivery and nanomedicine strategies to overcome immune-cold tumor resistance.

Tiansheng Wang, Pharm.D., Ph.D., assistant professor, earned his Ph.D. in epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he later completed a three-year postdoctoral fellowship under leading researcher Til Stürmer, M.D., MPH, Ph.D. He received his Pharm.D. and M.S. in pharmaceutical sciences from North Dakota State University.



Wang's research centers on evaluating the safety and effectiveness of medications by developing and applying causal inference and machine learning techniques to large-scale administrative health databases.

Ellen Yin, Pharm.D., BCCP, clinical assistant professor, earned her Pharm.D. from Purdue University College of Pharmacy and completed both PGY-1 and PGY-2 residencies at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center, specializing in cardiology pharmacy practice.



Most recently, she served as Pharmacy Manager for Medication Use and Formulary Management at the University of Texas Medical Branch, where she oversaw formulary operations across four campuses, led cost-saving initiatives and directed medication use evaluations. Yin's research interests include anticoagulation management in mechanical circulatory support devices and advanced heparin monitoring strategies.

Five faculty members have received promotions, effective Sept. 1: **Juliana Fernandez, Pharm.D. ('06)**, clinical professor; **Bin Guo, Ph.D.**, professor with tenure; **Divya Varkey, Pharm.D., M.S.**, clinical professor; **Joshua Wollen, Pharm.D.**, clinical associate professor; and **Mingfu Wu, Ph.D.**, professor with tenure.

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Hua Chen, M.D., Ph.D., professor, was awarded a \$846,528 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development grant for her project, "Using a Large Electronic Health Record Database to Characterize SSRI's Effect on Height Growth."

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Hanyue (Cathy) Liao, Ph.D. student, earned a Student Abstract Award at the 2025 American College of Clinical Pharmacology Annual Meeting Sept. 14-16 in Phoenix, Ariz., for her project, "Rational Dose Modification of Atorvastatin and Rosuvastatin in Obese Patients Post-Gastric Bypass Surgery."

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Samuel Ofili, Ph.D. student, was recognized with a Best Presentation Award at the International Conference on Pharmacy and Pharmacology ICPP 2025: XIX Oct. 23-24 in Houston for, "Examining the Association Between Quality of Life and Healthcare Expenditure Among Older Adults with Arthritis in the United States."

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Dipali V. Rinker, Ph.D., LPC, research assistant professor, received a \$250,000 Short-term Community-based Opioid Recovery Effort Grant from the Texas Opioid Abatement Fund Council for her

project, "From Screen to Support: HIV & Substance Use in Houston."

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MariVÍ Tejada-Simón, Ph.D., M.Ed., associate professor, recently completed her Fulbright Specialist assignment at Universidad Zamorano in Honduras.



UHCOP's research productivity moved the college up to spots to No. 25 from the prior year in National Institutes of Health funding in the recently released American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's fiscal year 2023-24 national research rankings. While UHCOP's ranking among all-source funding remained steady at No. 30 in the nation, the amount set a new record for the college at a little over \$15 million.

Recent Publications

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