

Department of Surgery News

March 2026



Letter From the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

March madness is upon us! While you are likely thinking of NCAA basketball (congratulations to the UC San Diego women's team for their second straight appearance in the Division 1 tournament!), I am instead referring to Match Day. Match Day, which our department looks forward to every March, is the day when medical students learn where they will spend the next three to seven years in specialty training. For the residency programs in our department, Match Day is the end of a process that includes reviewing hundreds of applications (e.g., general surgery had over 1,400), in-person or Zoom interviews of up to 90 applicants, and the submission of a rank preference list.

The Match is one of the most important annual events for an academic surgery department. Matched applicants bring new energy and ideas and deliver state-of-the-art care to our patients. Given that our

residency programs last five to seven years, our residents become family and influence the culture of our department. We are excited to announce our new class of 12 extraordinary residents in cardiothoracic, general, plastic and vascular surgery. I am eager to see the impact they will have within our department. Please join me in welcoming our new team members.

In this month's newsletter, we also take the time to highlight Yuan Chen, PhD, chief of the Division of Surgical Sciences, whose team discovered a new drug capable of blocking a protein involved in many different types of cancers. Their discovery is now being used in a cancer-related clinical trial at Moores Cancer Center. Translating science discoveries from the laboratory into clinical research is essential to advancing patient care and central to our mission. Furthermore, it is an overarching goal and crowning achievement for a faculty member to discover a new treatment and successfully bring it to the clinical arena.

This month's Q&A is with Shanglei Liu, MD, MAS, from the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, who discusses his transition from engineering to medicine and the advantages of speaking both "languages" to advance medical technologies. His dual background uniquely positions him to bridge the gap between innovation and clinical application, accelerating the development of solutions that directly improve patient care.

As always, we are excited to share these features and many more in this month's newsletter. Your support and engagement with the department remain critical to the success of our missions and are highly appreciated.

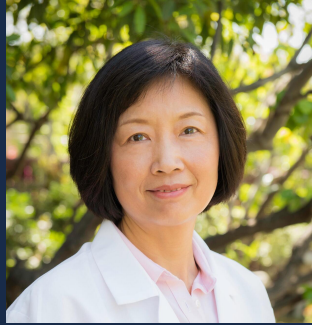
Sincerely,



Bryan Clary, MD, MBA

Marshall J. Orloff Family Endowed Chair
Professor and Chair, Department of Surgery
UC San Diego Health Sciences
Surgeon-in-Chief, UC San Diego Health

Behind Every Breakthrough with Yuan Chen



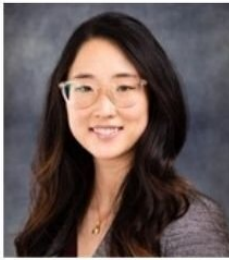
Yuan Chen, PhD, and team previously found that blocking a protein involved in SUMOylation, called the SUMO E1 enzyme, could potentially suppress colorectal and other cancers. Now, a UC San Diego team is conducting a clinical trial to test if a pill that can block this protein can be an effective treatment for people with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and other cancers.

[Read about Chen's discovery and the clinical trial](#)

Featured News

Match Day

The UC San Diego Department of Surgery is excited to welcome our incoming class of residents! Meet the interns who matched to our cardiothoracic, general, plastic and vascular surgery programs.



Esther Sue Choi
Cardiothoracic Surgery
Pennsylvania State University



Katherine Chen
General Surgery
UC San Diego



Marek Harris
General Surgery
Howard University



Nosheen Moosvi
General Surgery
University of Pennsylvania



Luke Newell
General Surgery
Northwestern University



Vina Le Nguyen
General Surgery
Johns Hopkins University



Alisha Poudel
General Surgery
UC San Diego



Laura Tincknell
General Surgery
King's College London



Han Yin
General Surgery
UCSF



Dominic Alessio
Plastic Surgery
Wayne State University



Ananya Shah
Plastic Surgery
University of Colorado



Nishita Vootukuru
Vascular Surgery
Rutgers University



Anh Nguyen donated her kidney and part of her liver with the help of transplant surgeon Gabriel Schnickel, MD, MPH. Her story was featured in CBS 8's America's 250: Red, White & You spotlight.

[Watch Anh Nguyen's CBS 8 spotlight](#)

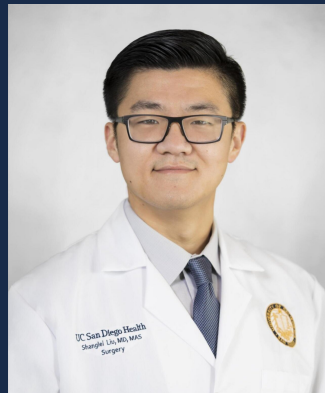


Romeo Ignacio, MD, spoke to the San Diego Union-Tribune about rising e-bike-related pediatric trauma injuries.

[Read Ignacio's thoughts on e-bike trauma](#)

Surgical Spotlight: Shanglei Liu

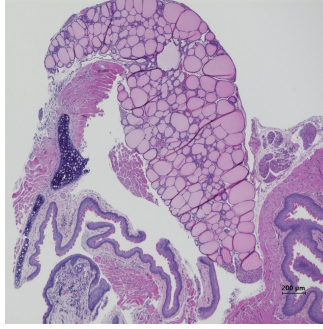
Shanglei Liu, MD, MAS, is an assistant professor of surgery and an affiliate professor in the Department of Bioengineering. A practicing colorectal surgeon and surgeon-engineer, Liu has spent most of his academic and clinical career at UC San Diego, where he develops surgical robots in close collaboration with the Jacobs School of Engineering and researches fluorescence imaging of colon cancer at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center.



[Read the Q&A with Shanglei Liu](#)

Science Discoveries and Recent Publications

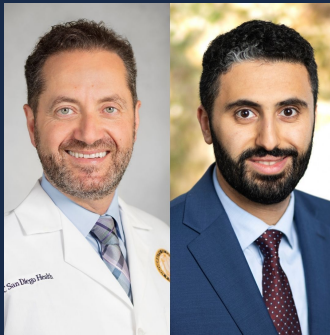
Our faculty are highly productive and actively disseminate new discoveries relevant to understanding and improving the management and treatment of surgical disease.



Surgically removing thyroid cancer is challenging, and incomplete resection can lead to tumor recurrence. Now, Michael Bouvet, MD, and team have successfully used a sprayable fluorescent probe to highlight thyroid tumors for easier removal in mice. The new probe could improve surgical precision in humans in the future. [Read more](#)

[Our publications](#)

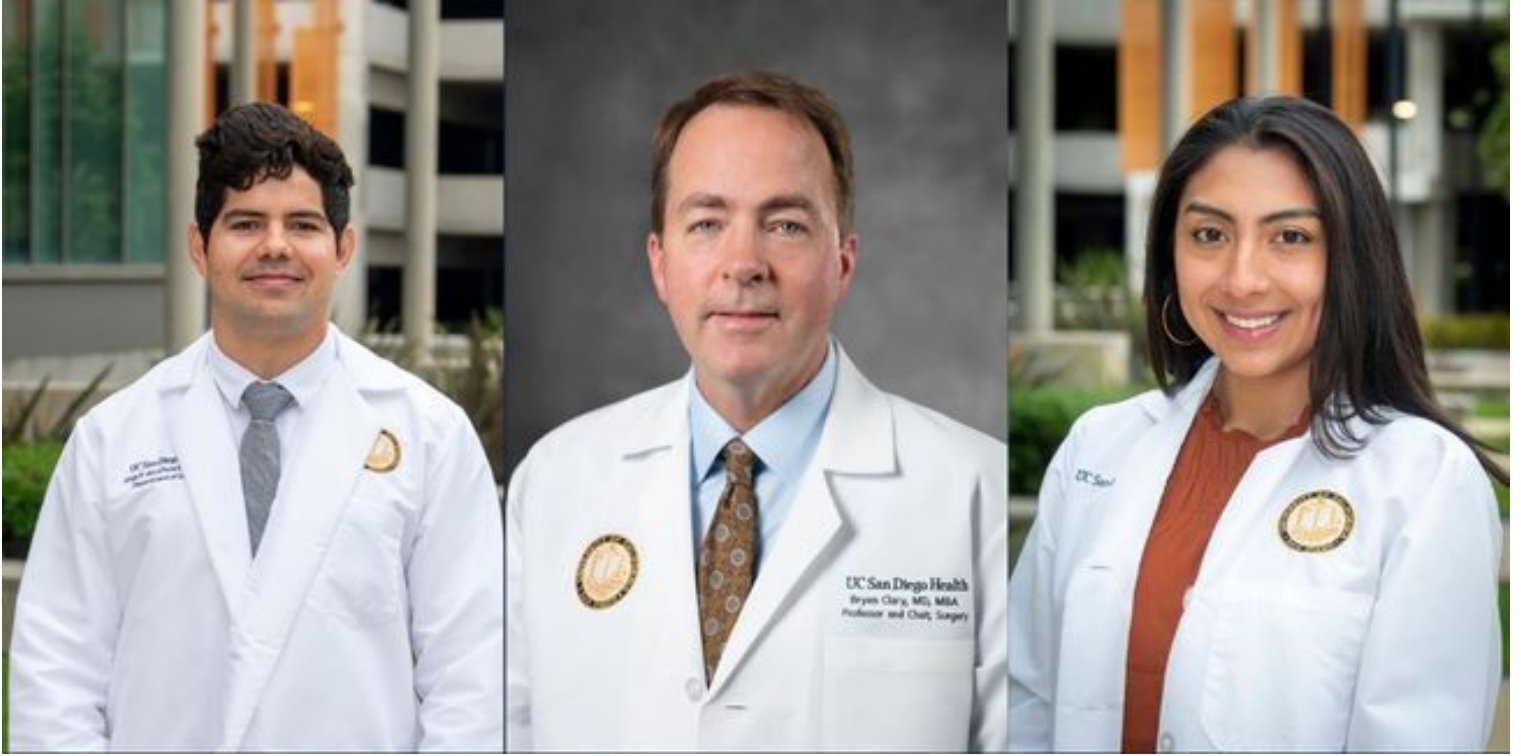
Clinical News



Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) awards UC San Diego Health highest national rating for quality

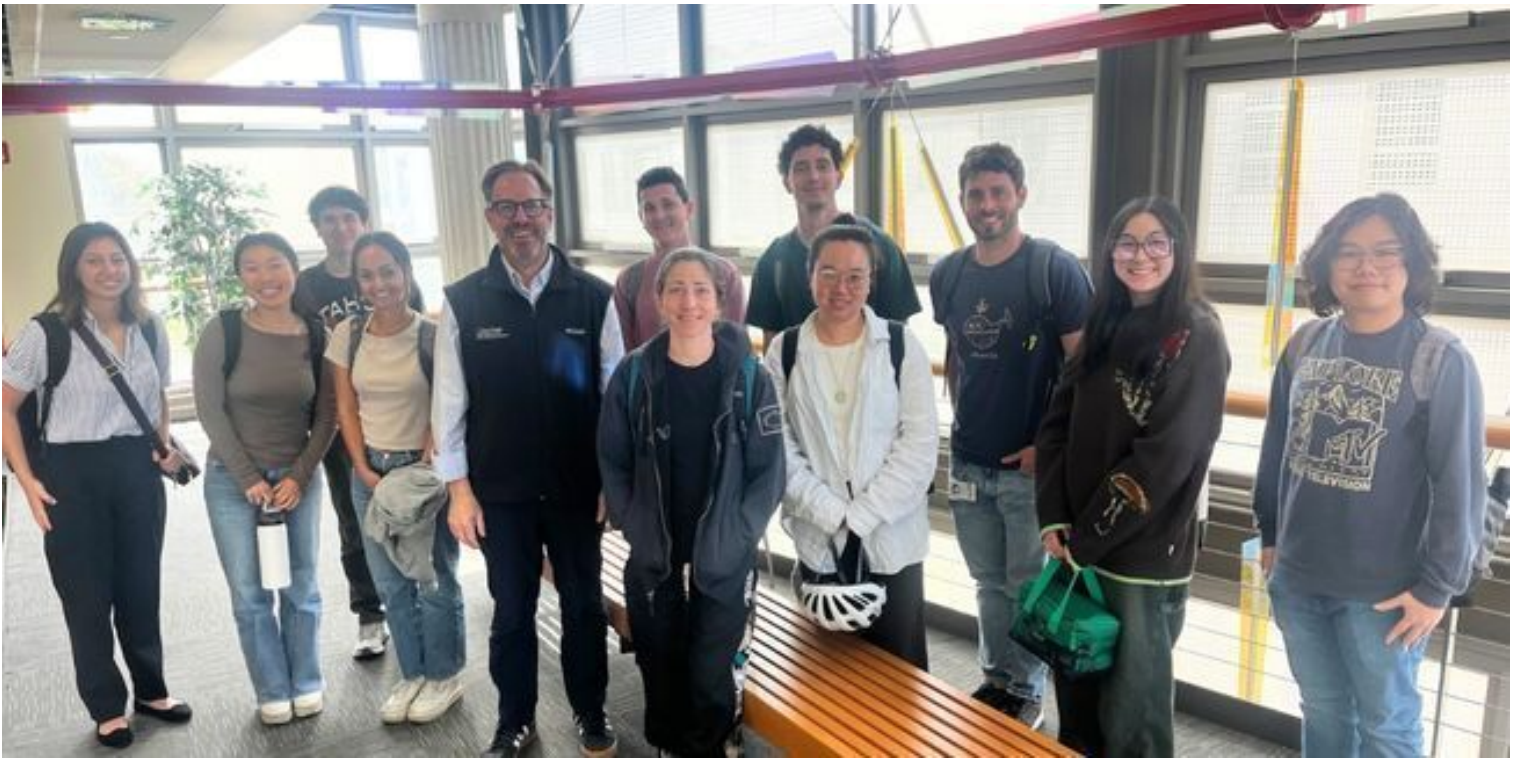
This three-star rating rewards exceptional performance in the SVS Patient Safety Organization Vascular Quality Initiative. The effort, led by Mahmoud Malas, MD, MHS, and Ahmed Abdelkarim, MD, reflects the vascular team's commitment to making UC San Diego a national leader in vascular care quality.

Training News



The Department of Surgery visits Imperial High School

Bryan Clary, MD, MBA, along with general surgery residents Jorge De La Torre, MD, and Ruth Laverde, MD, shared their paths to surgery with Imperial High School students.



Jason Sicklick speaks to UC San Diego graduate students

Jason Sicklick, MD, spoke to graduate students in the UC San Diego Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program about personalized precision oncology.



Noopur Gangopadhyay visits Division of Plastic Surgery

Noopur Gangopadhyay, MD, is a plastic surgeon and associate professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Gangopadhyay gave two lectures on pediatric microsurgery and leadership development, and led a hands-on microsurgery lab.



Sean Perez to present at American College of Surgeons webinar

Sean Perez, MD, general surgery resident, will present his work on preference cards at an upcoming American College of Surgeons webinar on April 8 at 1 p.m. PT.

Center for the Future of Surgery

Ryan Broderick, MD, gave a "lunch and learn" talk to UC Riverside surgery residents. He also joined their training lab, led by Marcos Michelotti, MD, assistant professor at Loma Linda University and UC San Diego minimally invasive surgery fellowship alumnus.

The center also hosted a REIMAGINE DCD in action workshop with transplant surgeons from across the country.



Alumni Spotlight



Sean Li, MD, completed his plastic surgery residency at UC San Diego in 2022. Following that, he completed a microvascular reconstructive surgery fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania. Li is now an assistant professor in the Penn Medicine Division of Plastic Surgery and chief of the Section of Plastic Surgery at Chester County Hospital. He is also actively pursuing a master's in business administration from the University of Pennsylvania.

“My time at UC San Diego shaped me in ways that extend far beyond surgical training. What I appreciated most was the culture of mentorship: our faculty pushed us technically, but also modeled professionalism, humility and composure in difficult moments. The operative experience was rigorous, and the graduated autonomy we were given forced growth, but what stays with me most are the conversations outside the OR. The early-

morning post-call meals, shared frustrations and small victories created bonds between us co-residents that felt less like coworkers and more like family. There was a sense that we were all in it together, and that camaraderie made even the hardest stretches meaningful.

Serving as president of the San Diego Housestaff Association during residency was another defining experience. With the support of mentors and co-residents alike, I learned how to advocate, lead and think beyond myself. UC San Diego gave me not just technical skill, but confidence, resilience, leadership experience and a deep appreciation for mentorship.”

Events



Save the date: 14th Annual Surgery Research Symposium with Keynote Speaker David Hackam, MD, PhD

Date: May 12, 2026

Time: 4 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Where: Scripps Seaside Forum

The REIMAGINE Podcast

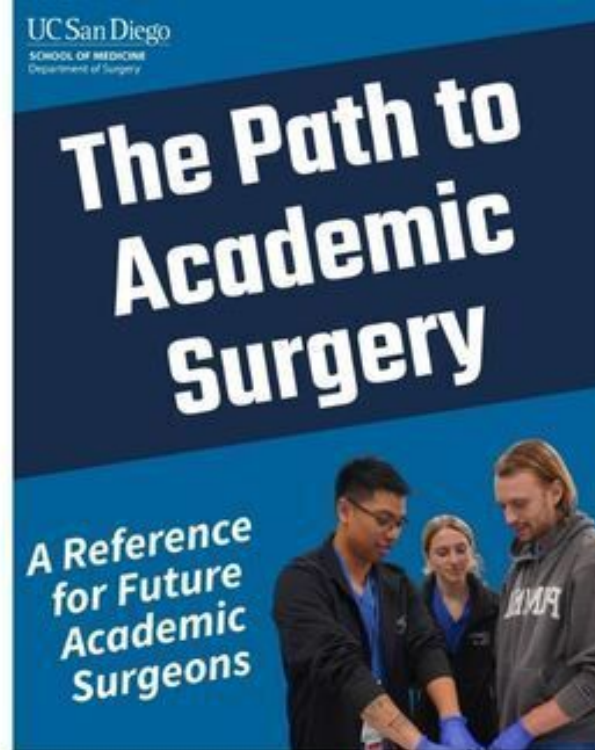


A conversation series that explores what it means to care, give and be transformed by our connections with others in the transplant community.

This month, listen to conversations about the ethics in transplantation and decisions to donate.

[Listen to the podcast](#)

As Seen on Social Media



The Path to Academic Surgery

Learn about the steps to becoming an academic surgeon. [Read the book](#)



I'm This Close...

In anticipation of Match Day, we highlighted how close our future matches were to everything UC San Diego has to offer. [See the post](#)

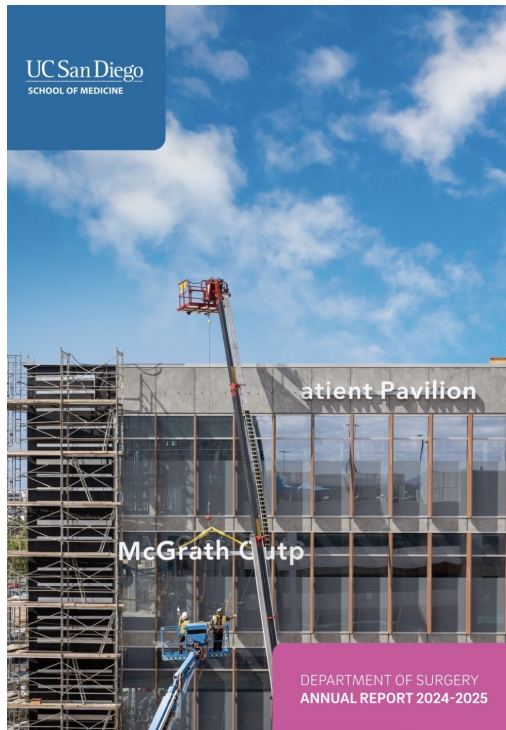
Support the Future of Surgery



Triton Giving Day is on April 29, 2026. Every gift, no matter the size, is crucial in advancing our mission at the Department of Surgery.

[Donate](#)

Annual Report



Our 2024-2025 annual report features the inspiring patient stories, educational highlights and research breakthroughs in the Department of Surgery. Read all about our accomplishments and triumphs from the past year.

[Read our Annual Report](#)

Recent Job Listings

- [JPF04432 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Colorectal Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Project Scientist - Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In-Res, Adjunct\) Thoracic Organ Procurement and First Assistant Surgeon](#)
- [Philanthropic Officer - Surgery - 135682](#)
- [Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In-Res, Adjunct\) Transplant Surgery/Surgical Oncology](#)



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About the Department of Surgery

The Department of Surgery at UC San Diego prides itself on delivering state-of-the-art, nation-leading clinical care to the diverse communities of Southern California and beyond. We are dedicated to transforming the lives of future patients through groundbreaking research and shaping the next generation of surgeons and leaders through our exceptional training programs. These training programs are a key reason UC San Diego Health hospitals rank among the top twenty nationwide and why our School of Medicine is recognized as a leader in research and medical education.

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