

Upstate Earns Prestigious R2 Carnegie Classification for High Research Activity

Upstate Medical University has been officially designated a Carnegie R2 (Research 2) institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education (ACE), a distinction that recognizes the university's significant research achievements and trajectory.

The 2025 Research Activity Designations mark a major milestone for Upstate, placing it among 139 institutions nationwide recognized as "High Research Activity" universities. The new R2 designation reflects more than \$53 million in research expenditures during fiscal year 2023 and the awarding of 22 research doctorates in the 2022–2023 academic year.

The Carnegie Foundation updated how they classify research institutions in 2025, an effort to "make the Carnegie Classifications more reflective of the wide range of higher education institutions across America and how well they serve their students," according to the organization.

"This designation underscores the incredible momentum we've built," says Dave Amberg, PhD, vice president for research at Upstate. "Upstate Medical University has been on a fantastic research growth trajectory for the last several years, leading to a more than doubling of our research expenditures. This accom-

plishment would not have been possible without the efforts of our highly accomplished research faculty and the support they receive from my staff in Research Administration."

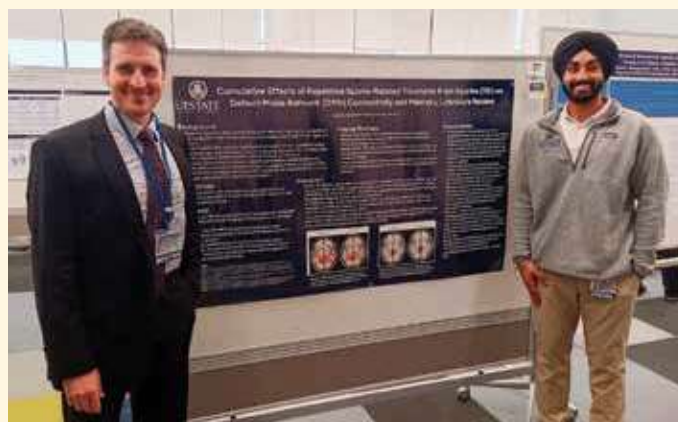
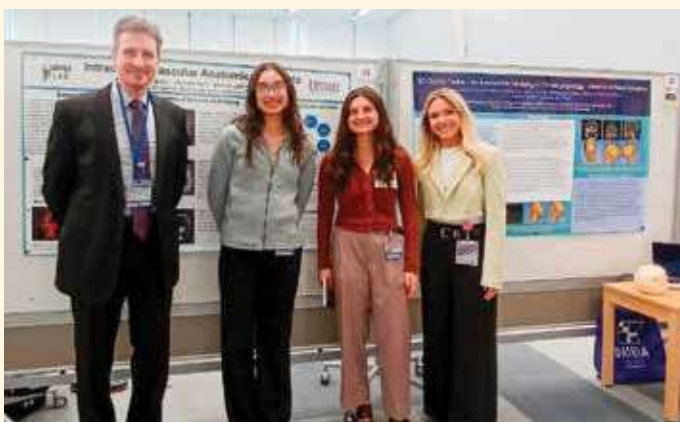
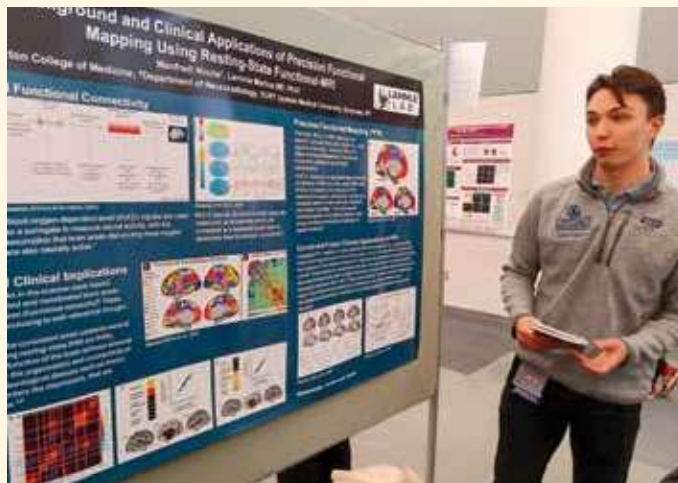
In the last year alone, Upstate researchers have:

- Participated in a groundbreaking pediatric cancer trial
- Learned more about how glaucoma, the leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide, develops
- Embarked on projects to learn more about difficult-to-treat brain tumors
- Created new tools to study actin, the most abundant protein in the body
- Helped develop AI systems to shed light on how Alzheimer's disease develops

The R2 classification highlights institutions with high research spending and doctorate production, placing Upstate within a national community of universities contributing cutting-edge scholarship and innovation. It is especially significant for an academic medical center.

Spotlight on Student Research

Nearly 100 students participated in the Charles Ross Memorial Student Research Day, held March 12. The annual event provided an opportunity for student researchers in the College of Graduate Studies, Norton College of Medicine, College of Health Professions, and College of Nursing to highlight their work. The event included oral presentations, a keynote address, and poster session.



Upstate Medical University Graduates 161 New Physicians

Upstate Medical University conferred 406 degrees and certificates on new graduates during Commencement May 4 from all four Upstate colleges: Graduate Studies, Health Professions, Medicine, and Nursing.

Upstate President Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS '79, presided over the ceremonies with assistance in awarding the degrees by the college deans: Mark Schmitt, PhD, Graduate Studies; Katherine Beissner, PT, PhD, Health Professions; Lawrence Chin, MD, Norton College of Medicine; Tammy Austin-Ketch, PhD, College of Nursing.

The Norton College of Medicine awarded 172 degrees: 156 doctor of medicine and 15 master of public health degrees and one public health certificate. Three students received both an MD and MPH degree, and two students were awarded MD/PhD degrees.

The College of Graduate Studies awarded 23 degrees, including eight in biochemistry and one master's degree.

The College of Health Professions awarded 164 degrees: 53 bachelor of science, eight bachelor of professional studies, 67 master of science, and 36 doctorate of physical therapy.

The College of Nursing awarded 42 degrees and certificates: 19 doctorate in nursing, six master of science, 15 bachelor of science degrees, and two post-graduate certificates.

Katelyn K. Jetelina, MPH, PhD, founder and publisher of "Your Local Epidemiologist" and a former senior scientific consultant at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gave the commencement address and received an honorary degree.



Upstate President Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS '79; honorary degree recipient and Commencement speaker Katelyn K. Jetelina, MPH, PhD; SUNY Trustee Eunice Lewin; and Upstate Council member Gwynn Mannion



Medical Alumni Foundation Board President Barbara Anne Morisseau, MD '98, and her daughter, Serena G. Schmitt, MD '25

Jetelina is an epidemiologist, data scientist, and a skilled scientific communicator, with expertise in health outcomes among vulnerable populations, diffusion of innovations in diverse community settings, stakeholder engagement, and scientific communication and knowledge translation.

She previously has served as director of population health analytics at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, as an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) and as scientific advisor to the White House.

Over the past decade, Jetelina has conducted research on topics with vulnerable populations exposed to violence: victims of child abuse, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, gun violence, and police officers. Her e-newsletter "Your Local Epidemiologist" has grown to serve an international audience of more than 200,000 subscribers.

As part of her research portfolio, she has developed interventions using smart and personal technology and analyzed "big data" from health systems. Her current research interests are improving health access and outcomes for vulnerable populations, characterizing social factors related to healthcare quality outcomes, scientific communication, and combating misinformation and disinformation.

Gregory Conners, MD, MBA, MPH, Honored With Prestigious AAP Pediatric Emergency Medicine Award

Gregory Conners, MD, MBA, MPH, chair of the Department of Pediatrics and executive director of Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, is the 2025 recipient of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Emergency Medicine's Jim Seidel Distinguished Service Award.

This prestigious national award—the highest honor presented by the AAP Section on Emergency Medicine—recognizes physicians who have made outstanding and lasting contributions to the field of pediatric emergency medicine (PEM). Often referred to as the PEM "Hall of Fame," the award celebrates a career of exemplary service, leadership, and innovation.

Named in honor of the late James S. Seidel, MD, PhD, FAAP, the award is given to a leader who embodies the same spirit of tireless advocacy, education, and impact. Dr. Conners joins a select group of individuals whose work has shaped the evolution of pediatric emergency medicine nationwide.

Conners has had a distinguished career in pediatric medicine and academic leadership. He has authored or co-authored approximately 100 peer-reviewed papers, 20 book chapters, and a peer-reviewed textbook. He has served on the editorial boards of three professional jour-

nals and is a fellow of both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Emergency Physicians.

He is also a member of the American Pediatric Society and past chair of the International Group on BS/MD Programs. He has long been a contributor to faculty development, pediatric leadership, and quality improvement initiatives.

In addition to his leadership post in pediatrics and with Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, Conners serves as an attending physician in the Upstate Pediatric Emergency Department.

Conners joined Upstate in March 2019, from Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinic, University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Medicine, where he served in a variety of roles, including associate chair of pediatrics and director of the Division of Emergency Medicine.

Conners earned his bachelor's degree from Amherst College, his MD from Stony Brook School of Medicine, and holds MPH and MBA degrees from the University of Rochester. He completed his residency in pediatrics and fellowship in pediatric emergency medicine at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC.



Gregory Conners, MD, MBA, MPH

Upstate Ranked Among Best in Nation for Pediatric Care

Money magazine has ranked Upstate University Hospital as the 17th Best Hospital for Pediatric Care in the country, and the second best in New York state.

Pediatric services are provided by Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, which features more than 100 pediatric specialists in more than 40 specialties.

The hospital offers a comprehensive range of services, including inpatient care in areas such as general pediatrics, pediatric surgery, hematology/oncology, and the region's only pediatric intensive care unit (PICU). It also offers a comprehensive range of ambulatory services, including primary care and several nationally recognized specialty medical care programs.

Additionally, Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital serves as the region's only ACS-verified Level 1 Pediatric Trauma and Burn Center.

"We are honored to be recognized among the nation's top pediatric hospitals," says Gregory Conners, MD, MBA, MPH, chief of pediatrics and executive director of Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. "This achievement reflects the dedication of our team and the trust our community places in us. We remain committed to providing exceptional care and advancing pediatric medicine."



FAST FEET. Medical student John Monroe '27 ran the Boston Marathon on April 19 in 3 hours, finishing 4,843 out of 28,284 runners, landing in the 17th percentile. The race was his third marathon, each completed during his time at Upstate. His first marathon was in October of his MS1 year and ended in heat stroke, followed by a second marathon in April 2024, which was a Boston time qualifier at 2:50.

Alicia Pekarsky, MD '02, F'09, Honored for Work With Abused Children



Alicia Pekarsky, MD '02, F'09

Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital physician Alicia Pekarsky, MD '02, F'09, was honored with the Catharine Senska-Haas Distinguished Service to Abused Children Award, given to an individual who has demonstrated exemplary dedication in the care, treatment, or investigation of child abuse. Among her many roles serving children, Dr. Pekarsky is co-medical director of the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center in Syracuse.

"Dr. Pekarsky has dedicated the past 20 years to providing exceptional care and unwavering support to the children of Onondaga County," says McMahon Ryan Executive Director Erin Bates. "Her expertise, compassion, and commitment are deeply felt by our multidisciplinary team and the families who rely on her care. It is truly an honor to celebrate Dr. Pekarsky for her years of service, dedication, and advocacy."

Pekarsky was one of the first physicians in the country to be certified in child abuse pediatrics. After completing her pediatric residency in 2005 at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, she returned to Upstate and completed a three-year fellowship in child abuse pediatrics, a new subspecialty approved by the American Board of Pediatrics in 2006.

She is currently an associate professor at Upstate Medical University as well as the director of Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital Child Abuse Pediatrics Division, co-medical director of the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center and program director for the Upstate child abuse pediatrics fellowship.

Scott Albert, MD '04, HS'11, Named Director of Upstate Breast Care Program



Scott Albert, MD '04, HS '11

Scott P. Albert, MD '04, HS '11, has been named director of the Breast Care Program at Upstate Medical University. He is also an assistant professor of medicine.

The Upstate Breast Care Program offers on-site imaging and routine, preventative or complex care for breast disease.

Dr. Albert served at Upstate from 2013 to 2017 and held numerous roles, including as chief of the Division of Breast Endocrine and Plastic Surgery and Breast Program leader. He also served as associate program director for the surgery residency program. He most recently served as a surgeon at St. Joseph's Health Hospital.

Albert is board-certified in complex general surgical oncology, which is granted to surgeons who have completed advanced training and demonstrated expertise in

the field of surgical oncology, specifically focusing on patients needing complex cancer surgeries or with rare or unusual cancers.

Albert has lectured and written on topics such as breast cancer, melanoma, and thyroid diseases and has been published in numerous publications, such as *Critical Care Medicine*, *Annals of Surgical Oncology* and the *Journal of Surgical Research*, among others.

Albert was a general surgery resident and surgical research fellow at Upstate, before completing a surgical oncology fellowship at Ohio State University. His honors include the Humanitarian Award from the Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Fund.