

## Upstate Breaks Ground on State-of-the-Art Upstate Pathology Institute

Upstate Medical University officials broke ground July 7 on a new, state-of-the-art, 109,000-square-foot clinical pathology laboratory facility, known as the Upstate Pathology Institute. The new facility will consolidate and modernize Upstate's Pathology Department, positioning it for future growth, improved efficiency, and expanded regional service that drone operations will facilitate.

The Institute will be located adjacent to Upstate Bone and Joint, home of Upstate Orthopedics, and will centralize Upstate's sprawling pathology services into a single location.

Upstate's pathology services currently operate across 55,000 square feet in five separate floors in three different buildings on Upstate's downtown Syracuse campus.

The new three-story building, scheduled to open spring 2027, will bring together services including the Core Laboratory, Microbiology Lab, Histology, Immunohistochemistry (IHC), Cytology, Electron Microscopy, Bone Marrow, Hematopathology, Cytogenetics, Flow Cytometry, Molecular Lab, Bioinformatics and Digital Pathology, and more. The building will also include

teaching, conference, and employee support spaces, as well as areas for drone and courier specimen transport.

"This new Institute will transform the practice of pathology and help us meet the increasing demand for our services with greater efficiency and set a standard for laboratory science," says Upstate Medical University President Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS '79, Alan and Marlene Norton Presidential Chair. "This expansion enhances our academic mission, supports patient care across the region, and reinforces Upstate's commitment to being a leader in innovative, accessible, and high-quality healthcare."

The facility will feature advanced molecular diagnostics, which is the core of precision and personalized medicine and fuses it with advanced digital imaging and artificial intelligence. Telepathology capabilities will expand access to the large region Upstate Pathology serves.

Upstate recently executed a first-of-its-kind drone operation in preparing for the new facility, which will include a drone bay for recharging and maintenance of the transport drones into the national airspace.

The new facility will aid in the preparation of anticipated growth by Upstate's Pathology Department as it plans for increases in analysis volume and regional service reach. Already, more than half of the lab's services are provided to clients outside of Onondaga County. The facility's strategic location near the intersection of Route 90 and the future Route 81 will further enhance delivery and logistics capabilities, including the innovative use of drone technology for specimen transport.



Michel Nasr, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Pathology (above right and speaking), leads the ground-breaking celebration for the new Upstate Pathology Institute.



## Dana Mihaila, MD, PhD, Named Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education

**D**ana Mihaila, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of cell and developmental biology and neurology, has been named associate dean for undergraduate medical education at the Norton College of Medicine.

In this role, Dr. Mihaila oversees all aspects of undergraduate medical education, with a focus on medical science inquiry, compassionate care, research opportunities, community engagement, and social justice. She ensures that the educational program complies with all accreditation standards, manages the educational office staff and budget, and is responsible for the delivery of the curriculum and student assessment.

She had served as interim associate dean for undergraduate medical education since July 2024.

In addition to her role as associate dean, Mihaila continues to hold several other key positions, including director of Upstate's Anatomical Gift Program, which

facilitates the donation of human bodies for teaching, research, and training purposes.

Mihaila's educational research focuses on neuro-anatomy and its clinical applications, with particular emphasis on sensory and reflex pathways of the central nervous system. Her work, published in *Anatomical Science Education*, expands her scope to include applied anatomical research—specifically investigating the presence and persistence of SARS-CoV-2 in human cadavers—demonstrating her interest in integrating neuroanatomy with public health and forensic science.

Among her many professional affiliations, she is a member of the International Association of Medical Science Educators, the American Association of Clinical Anatomists, and is also a member of the Academy of Upstate Educators.



Dana Mihaila, MD, PhD

## Upstate Physicians Honored by Onondaga County Medical Society

**U**pstate physicians were prominent among honorees during the 2025 Onondaga County Medical Society Annual Service Awards Ceremony.

Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS '79, the Alan and Marlene Norton Presidential Chair, received the Distinguished Service Award. His career at Upstate spans more than four decades, with service as a faculty member, department chair, interim dean, president, author, and researcher. As president, Dr. Dewan oversees the region's largest employer, with more than 13,000 employees and an economic impact of \$3.2 billion, nearly double the impact measured in 2008. Dewan's many honors include being named a Distinguished Life Fellow by the American Psychiatric Association and earning SUNY's highest faculty honor as a Distinguished Service Professor.

Kaushal Nanavati, MD, an Upstate family medicine physician, received the Carrie Lazarus Contribution to Community Wellness Award. Dr. Nanavati serves in multiple roles at Upstate, including director

of integrative medicine and survivorship and assistant dean of wellness. He is also the author of the *CORE 4 of Wellness* book series, which explores how nutrition, exercise, stress management, and spiritual wellness contribute to overall well-being.

Sanaea Bhagwagar, an MD/PhD student at Upstate, was honored with the Jerry Hoffman Advocacy Service Award. Her research centers on neurodegeneration and mitochondrial biology, and she is currently pursuing her PhD in the laboratory of Xin Jie Chen, PhD, in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Beyond her academic work, Bhagwagar has contributed to publications focused on neurodegenerative disease mechanisms, equity in medical education, and emerging learning technologies.

Alumna Ruth Hart, MD '80, a retired emergency room physician who teaches medical humanities at Upstate, was honored for Physician Service to the Medical Society.



Mantosh Dewan, MD, HS '79



Kaushal Nanavati, MD



Sanaea Bhagwagar



Ruth Hart, MD '80

## Upstate Student Receives Harvey Milk Award for Student Leadership

Lianne De La Cruz '26, a medical student at Upstate Medical University, has been named the recipient of the second annual SUNY Harvey Milk Award for Student Leadership. This scholarship honors the legacy of Harvey Milk, a State University of New York at Albany class of 1951 alumnus and LGBTQIA+ rights champion and recognizes an exceptional upper-level student who dedicates their time to growing LGBTQIA+ inclusiveness on their campus. The award will provide De La Cruz \$2,000 to help fund her education and continue her mission.

De La Cruz's dedication to creating trauma-informed, identity-affirming mental health care for members of the LGBTQIA+ community is underscored by her work with The Rural and Underserved Service Track (TRUST), where she led educational initiatives about the LGBTQIA+ patient population for future healthcare providers. She is a queer, Latina, first-generation graduate, and a child of immigrants.

De La Cruz also works to strengthen allyship and community engagement as she did in previous roles as philanthropy and outreach chair for Upstate's Spectrum organization, and as co-chair of the Latino Medical Student Association's mentorship program. She promotes education and visibility in LGBTQIA+ mental health on a national level as medical student committee chair for the Association of LGBTQ+ Psychiatrists.

"I am so honored to be this year's recipient of the SUNY Harvey Milk Scholarship Award for Student Leadership," says De La Cruz. "Coming from a community that remains persistent in the face of oppression and uncertainty, it is the work of Harvey Milk and other activists that highlights the collective resilience and inspires me every day."



Lianne De La Cruz '26

## Career Advisory Network Dinner



Norton College of Medicine students had the opportunity to chat with local physicians in different medical specialties, many of them alumni, at the annual Career Advisory Network Dinner, held February 4. For information on becoming a mentor, visit [medalumni.upstate.edu/career-mentor](http://medalumni.upstate.edu/career-mentor)