



YALE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
Physician Associate Program

Commencement Ceremony

December 6, 2021



## PROGRAM

WELCOME &  
INTRODUCTION OF  
COMMENCEMENT  
SPEAKER

**Alexandria Garino, PhD, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Program Director*

COMMENCEMENT  
ADDRESS

**Rita Rienzo, MMSc, PA-C**  
*Alumni Engagement Manager*  
*Yale Physician Associate Program*

REMARKS &  
CONFERRAL OF  
DEGREES

**Nancy J. Brown, MD**  
*Jean and David W. Wallace Dean*  
*Yale School of Medicine*  
*C.N.H. Long Professor of*  
*Internal Medicine*

READING OF  
NAMES

**Elizabeth Roessler, MMSc, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Director of Didactic Education*

PROGRAM AWARD  
PRESENTATIONS

**Courtney Fankhanel, MMSc, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Director of Clinical Education*

**Rosana Gonzalez-Colaso, PharmD, MPH**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Director of Research Education*

STUDENT ADDRESS

**Robert Johnston, MA, Class of 2021**

STUDENT AWARD  
PRESENTATIONS

**Abner Arias-Olson, Class of 2021**  
**Chunie Johnson, Class of 2021**

OATH

**Class of 2021**

CLOSING

**David Brissette, MMSc, PA-C**  
*Assistant Professor*  
*Associate Program Director*

## HONORED GUESTS

**Nancy J. Brown, MD**

*Jean and David W. Wallace Dean of the Yale School of Medicine  
and C.N.H. Long Professor of Internal Medicine*

**Jessica Illuzzi, MD, MS**

*Deputy Dean for Education and Harold W. Jockers  
Professor of Medical Education  
Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and  
Reproductive Sciences*

**Rita Rienzo, MMSC, PA-C**

*Alumni Engagement Manager  
Yale Physician Associate Program*

## COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

**Rita Rienzo, MMSc, PA-C**  
*Alumni Engagement Manager*  
*Yale Physician Associate Program*

Rita Rienzo is the newly appointed Manager for Alumni Engagement at the Yale Physician Associate Program. Prior to undertaking this new role, she served as the Director of Clinical Education for the Program for 14 years.

Rita holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Fordham University in the Bronx, New York and a Master of Medical Science degree from the Emory University PA Program in Atlanta, Georgia, class of 1994. After graduation, she practiced Primary Care at an urban clinic in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Two years later, she decided to make a specialty change to Surgery and was accepted into the Yale/Norwalk Hospital Postgraduate Residency for PAs.

Upon graduation from the Residency in 1998, Rita joined the General Surgery Service at Yale New Haven Hospital where she practiced as a staff PA for several years and then served as the Manager of the Surgery PAs for several more years. In 2007, she was invited to join the faculty at the Yale Physician Associate Program as a Clinical Coordinator. There she had the opportunity to work closely with the second-year PA students as they navigated their clinical rotations, electives, and job searches. She retired from her position as the Director of Clinical Education in June of this year. It was the best job she could have imagined.

Outside of work, Rita serves as a volunteer with the Food Pantry of North Branford and with Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services in New Haven. She has also been elected as the incoming Secretary for the Connecticut Physician Assistant Foundation, which provides scholarships to PA students in the state.

In her new role as the Alumni Engagement Manager, Rita is delighted that she will have the opportunity to continue to be in contact with all of her former students.

## MASTER OF MEDICAL SCIENCE 2021

### **Abner Arias-Olson**

Bethel University, Bachelor of Science, Biological Sciences  
Thesis Title: *Drama Therapy as a Quality-of-Life Intervention for Persons with Dementia and Family Caregivers*

### **Rachel Blumel**

Weber State University, Bachelor of Science, Respiratory Therapy  
Thesis Title: *Accuracy of the "Thumb-Palm Test" in the Detection of Ascending Aortic Aneurysm Disease*

### **Isabel Burick**

University of Maryland, College Park, Bachelor of Science, Biological Sciences  
Thesis Title: *Computer Aided Diagnosis with Ultrasound to Improve Detection of Triple Negative Breast Cancer*

### **Hannah Carson**

University of California, Irvine, Bachelor of Science, Public Health  
Thesis Title: *Equity and Use of Telehealth Modalities Among People Living with HIV During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

### **Kathy Chen**

University of California, Berkeley, Bachelor of Arts, Molecular Biology, Cell Biology & Biochemistry  
Thesis Title: *Efficacy of Educational Seminars in Increasing Skin Cancer Screening in Asian Americans*

### **Jaime Conway**

Northeastern University, Bachelor of Science, Chemistry  
Thesis Title: *Tucked In: Weighted Blankets to Improve Sleep in Intensive Care Unit Patients*

### **Alecia Cunniff**

Villanova University, Bachelor of Science, Biology  
Thesis Title: *Recorded Maternal Song to Reduce Crying Duration in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome*

**Maria Dalzell**

Seattle University, Bachelor of Arts, Biology

Thesis Title: *Cost of Treatment Conversations Between Primary Care Clinicians and Patients Living with Diabetes*

**Kyle Deaver**

University of Vermont, Bachelor of Science, Environmental Studies

Thesis Title: *The Clinical Role and Activity of Advanced Clinicians in the Out-of-Hospital Environment*

**Brenden Feingerts**

University of California, Santa Barbara, Bachelor of Arts, History

Thesis Title: *Efficacy of QuikClot Combat Gauze When Used by Immediate Responders in a Simulated Gunshot Wound*

**Tyler Godek**

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bachelor of Science, Psychology/Public Health

Thesis Title: *Effects of Dialectical Behavior Therapy on Body Modification in Borderline Personality Disorder*

**Leanne Gonzalez**

Hunter College of the City University of New York, Bachelor of Arts, Human Biology

Thesis Title: *Culturally-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Bilingual Latinx with Depressive Symptoms*

**Veronica Guirguis**

Northeastern University, Bachelor of Science, Neuroscience

Thesis Title: *Vitamin E Alpha-Tocopherols to Prevent Recurrent Stroke in Patients with a Minor Neurovascular Event*

**Brittney Gunneson**

Sacred Heart University, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Behavioral and Emotional Changes Across COVID-19 School Experiences in Children and Adolescents*

**Linda Guo**

Pennsylvania State University, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Association Between Parity and Restless Legs*

*Syndrome in a Population of US Women*

**Ashley Harris**

University of Dayton, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Effect of Aerobic Exercise on Seizure Frequency in*

*Children with Comorbid Epilepsy and Migraine*

**Ariana Hartoonian**

California Baptist University, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Diet and Strength Training Interventions to Decrease*

*Insulin Resistance in Polycystic Ovary Syndrome*

**Dao Ho**

University of Missouri-Kansas City, Bachelor of Arts, Chemistry

Thesis Title: *Understanding Palliative Care Delivery in a Ugandan*

*Emergency Department and United States Emergency Department*

**Katrina Jimenez**

Florida International University, Bachelor of Science, Biological Sciences

Thesis Title: *Preventing Postpartum Preeclampsia with Low-Dose*

*Aspirin: A Randomized Controlled Trial*

**Chunie Johnson**

Brigham Young University, Bachelor of Applied Science,  
Exercise Science

Thesis Title: *A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study of Visual*

*Perceptions of Acral Lentiginous Melanoma*

**Robert Johnston★**

Central Washington University, Bachelor of Arts,

Anthropology

San Jose State University, Master of Arts,

Anthropology

Thesis Title: *Healthy Aging in Rural Guangdong Province, China*



**Carina Leggio**

Trinity College, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Efficacy of Rimegepant Plus Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide Monoclonal Antibody for Migraine*

**Jasmine Li**

Northeastern University, Bachelor of Science, Health Science

Thesis Title: *Impact of Social Isolation on Depressive Symptoms in Perinatal Women During the Coronavirus Pandemic*

**Megan McCauley**

Saint Michael's Collage, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Coronary Angiogram Plus Invasive Physiologic Tests in Women with Nonobstructive Coronary Dysfunction*

**Allison Miller**

University of Notre Dame, Bachelor of Science, Neuroscience

Thesis Title: *Complications of Bone Morphogenetic Protein-2 Use in Open Transforaminal Lumbar Interbody Fusion*

**Jenna Moscarelli**

Boston College, Bachelor of Science, Psychology

Thesis Title: *Guidelines for Influenza Vaccination Uptake in Pregnant Women: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial*

**Kevin Mugno**

Creighton University, Bachelor of Science, Exercise Science

Thesis Title: *Metformin and Statin's Effect on Prostate Cancer Risk in Diabetics with Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia*

**David Seth Murphy**

University of Nevada, Reno, Bachelor of Science, Immunology

Thesis Title: *Back to Basics: The Effects of Buffered Crystalloids on Mortality in the Setting of Severe Trauma*

**Monica Narsolis**

Loyola University Chicago, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *Video Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to Prevent Depression in Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease*

**Nicholas Nielsen**

Brigham Young University, Bachelor of Science, Microbiology  
Thesis Title: *Spiritual Direction Practice in Physician Associates*

**Madeline Perez**

University of California, Davis, Bachelor of Science, Biological Sciences

Thesis Title: *Sexual Function in Women Undergoing Risk Reducing Salpingo-Oophorectomy With or Without Hysterectomy*

**Samantha Quinn**

University of Maryland, College Park, Bachelor of Science, Public Health

Thesis Title: *The Effect of Doula Support on the Rate of Cesarean Section in Low-Risk Pregnant Black Women*

**Madeline Sadlowski**

University of Connecticut, Bachelor of Science, Pathology

Thesis Title: *Computerized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Adolescents and Young Adults with Substance Use Disorder*

**Stephanie Salas**

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Bachelor of Science in Education, Kinesiology

Thesis Title: *The Use of Surgical Prehabilitation to Augment Enhanced Recovery Protocols in Gynecologic Oncology*

**Peter Stampfel**

The State University of New York, Stony Brook, Bachelor of Science, Biology

Thesis Title: *The Effect of Plasma Levels of Matrix Metalloproteinase-9 on Intracranial Aneurysm Progression*

**Siena Tice**

Northeastern University, Bachelor of Science, Biological Sciences

Thesis Title: *Training Pediatricians to Support Families of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth*

**Elizabeth Togneri**

University of California, Los Angeles, Bachelor of Arts,  
Comparative Literature

Thesis Title: *Sudarshan Kriya Yoga and Alteration in Depression Severity and Default Mode Network Connectivity*

**Winifred Tung**

Rice University, Bachelor of Arts, Biochemistry and Molecular  
Biology

Thesis Title: *The Effects of Yoga Versus Mindfulness on Anxiety in Individuals with Parkinson's Disease*

**Thomas Vulaj★**

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bachelor of Science,  
Kinesiology

Thesis Title: *Early Use of Vaginal Progesterone and Cervical Pessary to Reduce Preterm Birth Rates in Twins*

**Annabelle Wilcox**

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Bachelor of Arts,  
Biology

Thesis Titles: *Navigating Barriers to Affording and Obtaining Insulin and Diabetes Supplies*  
*Racial Disparities in Diabetes Distress and Technology Use in Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes*

★ Pending the completion of all requirements

## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

(Selected by Yale PA Program Faculty)

### **Dr. John P. Hayslett Award for Overall Academic Excellence**

*\$1,000 monetary award*

This award was established in memory of the Physician Associate Program's former Medical Director. Dr. John Hayslett was the founding chief of the Section of Nephrology, a prolific scholar, educator, and champion of the PA profession. This award is presented to a student who achieved academic excellence through all phases of the curriculum, embraced extracurricular opportunities, and whose performance exemplified dedication to patient care.

### **Yale Physician Associate Program Leadership Award**

*\$1,000 monetary award*

The mission of the Yale Physician Associate Program is to educate individuals to become outstanding clinicians and to foster leaders who will serve their communities and advance the PA profession. We recognize that leadership can take many forms, including service to others and scholarship. This award is presented to the student who went beyond the academic requirements to motivate and inspire others.

## **AWARDS**

(Selected by the Class of 2021)

### **OUTSTANDING DIDACTIC COURSE AWARD**

for dedication and excellence in the classroom

**William Stewart, PhD**

*Professor of Surgery, Section Chief of Gross Anatomy*

### **OUTSTANDING PRECEPTOR AWARD**

for dedication and excellence in clinical education

**Joy Reyes, MD**

*Assistant Professor of Psychiatry*

### **OUTSTANDING CLINICAL SITE AWARD**

clinical rotation site that provides exemplary clinical teaching

**St. Mary's Primary Care**

### **JACK COLE SOCIETY AWARD**

for significant contributions in support of the PA profession

**Maria Dalzell, Class of 2021**

### **CLASS OF 2021 AWARD**

for support and dedication to the Yale PA Program  
and the Class of 2021

**Rosana Gonzalez-Colaso, PharmD, MPH**

*Assistant Professor, Director of Research Education*

## HONORS THESIS PROJECT RECIPIENTS

### **Kathy Chen**

*Efficacy of Educational Seminars in Increasing Skin Cancer Screening in Asian Americans*

### **Jaime Conway**

*Tucked In: Weighted Blankets to Improve Sleep in Intensive Care Unit Patients*

### **Alecia Cunniff**

*Recorded Maternal Song to Reduce Crying Duration in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome*

### **Maria Dalzell**

*Coast of Treatment Conversations Between Primary Care Clinicians and Patients Living with Diabetes*

### **Brittney Gunneson**

*Behavioral and Emotional Changes Across COVID-19 School Experiences in Children and Adolescents*

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*Effect of Aerobic Exercise on Seizure Frequency in Children with Comorbid Epilepsy and Migraine*

### **Ariana Hartoonian**

*Diet and Strength Training Interventions to Decrease Insulin Resistance in Polycystic Ovary Syndrome*

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*Healthy Aging in Rural Guangdong Province, China*

### **Carina Leggio**

*Efficacy of Rimegepant Plus Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide Monoclonal Antibody for Migraine*

### **Allison Miller**

*Complications of Bone Morphogenetic Protein-2 Use in Open Transforaminal Lumbar Interbody Fusion*

### **Monica Narsolis**

*Video Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to Prevent Depression in Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease*

### **Stephanie Salas**

*The Use of Surgical Prehabilitation to Augment Enhanced Recovery Protocols in Gynecologic Oncology*

### **Annabelle Wilcox**

*Navigating Barriers to Affording and Obtaining Insulin and Diabetes Supplies*  
*Racial Disparities in Diabetes Distress and Technology Use in Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes*

## CLASS OF 2021 OFFICERS

<b>Class Presidents</b>	Abner Arias-Olson Chunie Johnson
<b>Diversity and Inclusion Chairs</b>	Leanne Gonzalez Dao Ho
<b>Class Communicators</b>	Abner Arias-Olson Nicholas Nielsen
<b>Social Chairs</b>	Siena Tice Annabelle Wilcox
<b>AAPA Representatives</b>	Samantha Quinn Megan McCauley
<b>ConnAPA Representatives</b>	Veronica Guirguis Carina Leggio
<b>Volunteer/Community Outreach</b>	Monica Narsolis Ariana Hartoonian
<b>CT PAF Representative</b>	Hannah Carson
<b>GPSS Senator</b>	Rachel Blumel
<b>Wellness Chair</b>	Elizabeth Togneri
<b>Medical School Council Chairs</b>	Dao Ho Jenna Moscarelli



## PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE PROGRAM

### Faculty

**Alexandria Garino, PhD, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Program Director*

**Mark Perazella, MD**

*Professor of Medicine, Medical Director*

**David Brissette, MMSc, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Associate Program Director and Director of Admissions*

**Elisabeth Cuoco, MMSc, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Associate Director of Clinical Education*

**Courtney Fankhanel, MMSc, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Director of Clinical Education*

**Rosana Gonzalez-Colaso, PharmD, MPH**

*Assistant Professor, Director of Research Education*

**Elizabeth Roessler, MMSc, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Director of Didactic Education*

**Jonathan Weber, MA, PA-C**

*Assistant Professor, Associate Director of Didactic Education*

### Administrative Staff

**Chaunell Feliciano, MSN, MS, RN**

*Associate Director of Administration*

**Wynne Bottomley, BA**

*Curriculum Coordinator, Didactic Team*

**Marisol Britt, BA**

*Clinical Site Manager*

**Meridith Cayer, MS**

*Associate Director of Admissions, Registrar*

**Peg Gallagher, BS**

*Program Coordinator*

**Alison Garb, MBA**

*Program Analyst*

**Megan Pendagast, BA**

*Research Program Manager*

**Rita Rienzo, MMSc, PA-C**

*Alumni Engagement Manager*

**YALE PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE PROGRAM**  
**Professional Oath**

I pledge to perform the following duties with honesty and dedication:

- I will hold as my primary responsibility the health, safety, welfare and dignity of all human beings.
- I will uphold the tenets of patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence and justice.
- I will recognize and promote the value of diversity.
- I will treat equally all persons who seek my care.
- I will hold in confidence the information shared in the course of practicing medicine.
- I will assess my personal capabilities and limitations, striving always to improve my medical practice.
- I will actively seek to expand my knowledge and skills, keeping abreast of advances in medicine.
- I will work with other members of the health care team to provide compassionate and effective care of patients.
- I will use my knowledge and experience to contribute to an improved community.
- I will respect my professional relationship with the physician.
- I will share and expand knowledge within the profession.

These duties are pledged with sincerity and upon my honor.