



Stony Brook University



Stony Brook Medicine

**TO:** University Senate  
**FROM:** William Wertheim, MD, MBA  
Executive Vice President for Stony Brook Medicine  
**DATE:** March 2, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** SBM EVP Report

### ***ACADEMIC REPORT***

#### **20th Annual Women in Medicine and Science Research Day on March 11**

The 20th Annual Women in Medicine and Science Research Day takes place on Wednesday, March 11, from 8 am to 1:30 pm in the MART Auditorium and Hospital Pavilion, 4W-0101. Organized by the Renaissance School of Medicine (RSOM) Office of Faculty Affairs and the Group for Women in Medicine and Science, the event highlights the challenges women face in medical training, healthcare, science and research while also celebrating their remarkable achievements and discoveries. The program features a keynote by Lindsay A. Criswell, MD, MPH, DSc, Director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), and member of the National Academy of Medicine and the Association of American Physicians; a panel discussion, “Advocating Toward Leadership;” and abstract and poster presentations with awards.

#### **Inaugural Stony Brook Women’s Health Research Conference on Wednesday, March 25**

The Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Medicine invites researchers, clinicians, educators, students, community health partners and advocates to attend the Inaugural Stony Brook Women’s Health Research Conference on Wednesday, March 25, from 8 am to 4 pm at the MART Building. This full-day interdisciplinary event will spotlight innovative research at Stony Brook aimed at improving women’s health across the lifespan. Programming will include presentations from Stony Brook faculty and research teams, opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration, and a celebration of the intersection of science, art and community. Sponsored by the Research Conference/Workshop Seed Grant Program, the conference reflects a strong institutional commitment to advancing women’s health research. Space is limited, so be sure to [register using this link](#).

#### **Stony Brook Online Nursing Master’s Program Ranked in Top 10**

For the seventh straight year, the Stony Brook University School of Nursing (SON) earned a top-10 ranking by U.S. News & World Report for its online master's program. Ranked eighth nationwide for the second year in a row, Stony Brook is the highest-placing school in New York State. Programs are judged on key performance indicators, including engagement, faculty credentials and training, and peer assessment. More than 600 students are enrolled in one of 10 Master of Science programs offered at the School of

Nursing. Currently, all graduate programs are offered through distance education with on-site requirements.

### **Renaissance School of Medicine Rises in NIH National Rankings**

The RSOM rose 12 positions in national ranking for National Institutes of Health funding as compared with the 2023 fiscal year, reflecting a 46 percent increase in NIH awards and totaling \$70.7 million in funding. We continue to rank #1 among New York State public medical schools and in the top 40 among U.S. public institutions. RSOM investigators advanced basic, clinical and translational science with discoveries that reshaped paradigms, influenced clinical practice, appeared in high-impact journals, and generated new patents and commercialization. In November, we opened a 6,000-square-foot Clinical Trials Unit at Commack Advanced Specialty Care to expand access to trials; it is already supporting eight novel studies, including state-of-the-art research on cognition and gait. Amid unprecedented pressures on biomedical research, we thank our faculty, staff and trainees whose work continues to drive the RSOM's missions of research, education and patient care.

### **[Inaugural Occupational Therapy Doctorate Class Celebrated at White Coat Ceremony](#)**

Eighteen students at Stony Brook University marked the start of a new chapter in their professional lives, becoming the first cohort in the Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) program to receive white coats in a ceremony that marked both personal achievement and a shift in how the profession is being taught on Long Island. Hosted by the School of Health Professions and its Department of Occupational Therapy, the ceremony on January 30 in the Bauman Center for Leadership and Service honored the class as they formally entered the clinical phase of their training. In the audience were faculty members, university leaders and proud families who watched as each student was presented with a white coat.

In April 2024, the university announced it would convert its Master of Science program into a doctoral program. The new degree is the first public entry-level Occupational Therapy Doctorate on Long Island within the State University of New York system and only the second such program on Long Island overall. The three-year program follows a hybrid model that incorporates simulation modules, emerging technologies and telehealth training while reducing required time on campus.

### **[Stony Brook NCLEX Pass Rate Ranks Above National and Region Averages](#)**

Stony Brook University School of Nursing's National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) first-time pass rate outpaced national and regional averages in 2025. SBU baccalaureate graduates passed the NCLEX-RN exam at a rate of 91.03 percent—nearly 10 points higher than the national average and 13 points better than competitor nursing schools in New York State.

### **Dietetic Internship Program Earns Full Reaccreditation**

The Dietetic Internship Program, housed within the Nutrition Division that spans the RSOM and Stony Brook University Hospital, has earned continued full accreditation through June 30, 2033, following a comprehensive self-study and site visit that confirmed strong compliance with Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) standards. The seven-year term reflects the program's

steadfast commitment to preparing entry-level registered dietitian nutritionists to deliver high-quality medical nutrition therapy, food service management and health promotion programs.

### **RSOM Faculty inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha**

Six faculty members from the RSOM have been inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society for the 2025–2026 academic year. Founded in 1902, AOA is a national medical honor society that recognizes excellence in scholarship, leadership, professionalism and service in medicine. This year's RSOM faculty inductees are Paul A. Fisher (Toll Professorship), Professor and Vice-Chairman of the Department of Pharmacological Sciences; Michael Guido, Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology and Director of Vascular (Stroke) Neurology and Co-Director of the Cerebrovascular and Comprehensive Stroke Center; Alexandra Guillaume, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine and Director of Motility; Agnieszka Kowalska, Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology and Co-Director of the Neuro-Oncology Center; Brandon C. Ng, Assistant Professor of Medicine; and Jordan B. Slutsky, Clinical Associate Professor of Dermatology. Their induction reflects their sustained commitment to academic excellence, clinical distinction and mentorship within the medical community.

### **[Beatriz Makhouljian Selected for NONPF Faculty Leadership Mentoring Program](#)**

Beatriz Makhouljian of the School of Nursing has been selected for the prestigious National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) 2026-2027 Faculty Leadership Mentoring Program. Launched in 2014, the program utilizes a competency-based education model to support “early- and mid-career NP faculty in developing the leadership skills necessary to thrive in academic, clinical, community, and policy environments.” Selected participants attend and participate in learning sessions over 12 months that promote the program's five core domains: Lead Self, Engage Others, Achieve Results, Develop Coalitions, and Systems Transformation.

### **[Stony Brook University Faculty Named to 2026 Fellowship Class for SUNY Leadership Institutes](#)**

Susan Lee, Professor of Clinical Medicine and Medical Director of Stony Brook Primary Care, and Jennie Williams, Associate Professor in the Department of Family, Population and Preventive Medicine and Assistant Dean for Student Diversity, are among 29 fellows selected to the 2026 Fellowship Class for the SUNY Leadership Institutes. The competitive program brings together faculty and administrative professionals from across SUNY who are on leadership trajectories and committed to supporting student success and institutional excellence. Fellows participate in leadership development experiences that emphasize inclusion, equity and strategic impact in higher education, recognizing their proven leadership and dedication to advancing opportunities for students regardless of barriers.

### **Samita Heslin Receives AI TECHNOLOGIES Network Award**

Dr. Samita Heslin, Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine, Chief of the Division of Quality & Informatics, and Deputy Chief Medical Information Officer, has been named one of five recipients of the AI TECHNOLOGIES Network Awards in the inaugural AI TECHNOLOGIES CHAMPION Network, launched by the CAA Academic Alliance. Selected from nearly 400 applicants to join a 22-member cohort, Dr. Heslin was recognized for her leadership in applying artificial intelligence to improve

clinical quality, informatics and health system performance. Her work focuses on developing an AI and Digital Health education program for clinicians and trainees that emphasizes safe, effective and ethical use of AI in clinical care, including foundational literacy, real-world applications, implementation strategy and governance.

### **Anissa Abi-Dargham Receives Town of Brookhaven 2026 Women's Recognition Award**

Dr. Anissa Abi-Dargham, Chair of the RSOM's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health, has been selected as a recipient of the Town of Brookhaven's 2026 Women's Recognition Awards. The honor recognizes her outstanding service, leadership, and dedication to the community, reflecting the meaningful and lasting impact of her work in advancing mental health care, research, and advocacy. Presented by the Town of Brookhaven's Division of Women's Services, the award celebrates women who make a significant difference through commitment and compassion. Dr. Abi-Dargham and her fellow honorees will be recognized at a ceremony at Brookhaven Town Hall on Monday, March 23.

### **Social Work Students Featured in National Association of Social Workers Newsletter**

MSW student Nicole Paterson and BSW students Georgia Vourou and Kamilah Pasha were featured in the [fall/winter issue of Currents](#), the official newsletter of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) New York. Paterson and Vourou penned separate pieces focused on library social work in collaboration with Clinical Associate Professor Leah Topek-Walker. Pasha detailed the positive community impact that NASW-NY unification has had in her Student Voices piece.

### **Brian Sheridan Leads Research Team in Developing New Oral Cancer Vaccine**

A research team led by Brian Sheridan, Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, has demonstrated the effectiveness of a new oral cancer vaccine using a highly attenuated strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* to trigger a targeted immune response against colorectal cancer. In a study published in the *Journal for ImmunoTherapy of Cancer*, researchers show in a murine model that oral delivery of the engineered bacterium primes tumor-specific CD8 T cells directly within the gut without causing systemic infection or significant side effects. Unlike earlier intravenous *Listeria*-based approaches, this localized strategy generated a strong anti-tumor response in intestinal tissues and proved especially effective when combined with immune checkpoint inhibitors, significantly controlling tumors that were otherwise resistant to immunotherapy. The findings point to a promising new strategy to improve treatment options for advanced colorectal cancer and to inform the development of next-generation cancer vaccines.

### **[Clare Whitney to Present at 18th World Congress of Bioethics](#)**

Clare Whitney, Assistant Professor at the School of Nursing, was selected to present at the 18th World Congress of Bioethics to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in July 2026. Dr. Whitney's abstract, "Beyond 'Passing the Tissue Box: Navigating the Ethical Landscape of 'Empathetic Load' in Qualitative Research Through Compassionate Action," will receive a full oral presentation at the conference. According to the abstract, the presentation will focus on researchers "engaged in the relational work of qualitative data generation, and analysis," who can experience "adverse effects from the intensity of the emotional,

psychological, and relational labor involved, including secondary distress, vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion, and research-induced distress.”

### **Stony Brook Medicine Interdisciplinary Team to Present at the 2026 International Network for Healthcare Workforce Education (INHWE) Conference**

Jeanette Lukas, clinical associate professor, joined a Stony Brook Medicine interdisciplinary team to present at the 2026 International Network for Healthcare Workforce Education (INHWE) Conference. The presentation focused on how effective faculty collaboration enhances student experience and outcomes in interprofessional collaborative learning. Dr. Lukas presented alongside Maria Milazzo and Kelli Star Fox, Director of the Center for Interprofessional Innovation. In addition, Marie Yamamoto, an advanced standing MSW student, presented on the Interprofessional Education Policy Practice Pilot (IPE3P). Also present were other members of the IPE3P team, including Gabriella Pandolfelli, Program in Public Health; Bonnie Lipow, School of Dental Medicine; Haylee Hebenstreit, School of Social Welfare; and Erik Flynn, School of Health Professions.

### **Rajeev Rohatgi Appointed Northport VA Medical Center Chair of Medicine**

Dr. Rajeev Rohatgi, Professor of Medicine and academic nephrologist, has been appointed Chair of Medicine at the Northport VA Medical Center (VAMC). Board-certified in Internal Medicine and Nephrology, Dr. Rohatgi previously served as Chief of Nephrology at both the Northport VAMC and the James J. Peters VAMC in the Bronx, where he led clinical and academic programs supporting veterans’ care. His research focuses on renal physiology and the effects of hydrodynamic forces and lipids on kidney function, supported by federal and foundation grants and publications in prominent journals. Dr. Rohatgi earned a BA in Chemistry from the University of Chicago and his MD from New York University School of Medicine, and he completed his Internal Medicine residency and Nephrology fellowship at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. He was named a Fellow of the American Society of Nephrology in 2008, reflecting his sustained contributions to the field of nephrology.

### **Social Work Students Connect with Regional Communities Experiencing Homelessness**

Last month, Bachelor of Social Work seniors Hais Montville, Nia Owens, and Aziza Said, alongside Clinical Associate Professor Leah Topek-Walker, in collaboration with [The Long Island Coalition for the Homeless](#), participated in the annual Point-in-Time Count. Braving frigid temperatures, they visited hidden sites where individuals experiencing homelessness reside, offering essential supplies and resources while honoring each person’s dignity and autonomy. This hands-on experience allowed the students to apply core social work skills, deepen their understanding of housing instability on Long Island, and engage meaningfully with community members who may otherwise lack access to shelter.

### **Physical Therapy and National Dance Institute Host DREAM Project for Children**

More than 70 children from across the tri-state area united for the Dancers Realize Excellence through Arts and Movement (DREAM) Project at the National Dance Institute Jacques d'Amboise Center for Learning and the Arts. Led by Agnes McConlogue Ferro, the program paired children with and without disabilities, including Trisomy 21, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and rare genetic conditions, alongside

age-matched peers. Supported by a dedicated team of musicians, teaching artists, choreographers, and staff, DREAM emphasized not just movement, but connection, confidence, and participation. Physical Therapy students played a key role by helping scaffold movement and partnership, gradually empowering dancers and their peers to support one another as relationships formed. The program also welcomed returning alumni, including 2024 graduate Ashley Pav, who traveled from the Stony Brook area with a child she currently works with, underscoring the program's lasting impact. The performances were cheered on by families, friends, and supporters, including members of Stony Brook's LEND program and Dean Stacy Jaffee Gropack, celebrating a week defined by talent, courage, and heart.

### **Student-Led Resource Fair Provides Support to the Community**

School of Social Welfare student library interns recently hosted a community block party at the Mastic Moriches Shirley Library, providing food to over 100 community residents, along with clothing and personal care items. Community partners, including Suffolk County Department of Social Services, Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG), Cornell Cooperative, Big Brothers Big Sisters, LI Fair Housing, and the Suffolk County Minority Health Department, provided information and access to resources. Interns assisted attendees with applications and service referrals, while student volunteers helped distribute food and welcomed community members with dignity and care. Food was donated by the Undergraduate Social Welfare Alliance (USWA), student interns, Food Solidarity, and Dr. Professor Hebenstreit.

### ***CLINICAL REPORT***

#### ***AWARDS, ACCOLADES & NEWS:***

- For the fourth straight year, Stony Brook Medicine (SBM) has received the highest level of achievement from Healthgrades, as one of America's 50 Best for 2026. This achievement places Stony Brook Medicine among the top 1% nationwide for overall care excellence and is the only on Long Island to be ranked among America's 50 Best. Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook Southampton Hospital, and Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital are collectively assessed by Healthgrades and share the America's 50 Best Hospitals Award™.

SBM's achievement is based solely on what matters most: patient outcomes. To determine America's 50 Best Hospitals for 2026, Healthgrades evaluated risk-adjusted mortality and complication rates for more than 30 of the most common conditions and procedures at approximately 4,500 hospitals nationwide.

Healthgrades' analysis found that outcomes vary widely between the nation's highest- and lowest-performing facilities—and the gap is getting bigger. In fact, if all hospitals, as a group, performed similarly to America's 50 Best, on average, 209,081 lives could have been saved during the 2022-2024 study period. These findings illustrate the importance of choosing a facility with an established record of superior patient outcomes.

The Best Hospitals Award comes on the heels of receiving numerous specialty awards this past fall, underscoring Stony Brook's dedication to exceptional patient care. For 2026, SBUH was named as one of:

- America's 100 Best Hospitals for Stroke Care™ - the only hospital in New York State for 11 Years in a Row (2016-2026) and the only hospital on Long Island
  - America's 100 Best Hospitals for Cardiac Care™ - the only hospital on Long Island
  - America's 100 Best Hospitals for Coronary Intervention™
  - America's 100 Best Hospitals for Joint Replacement™ - the only hospital in Suffolk County
- In a major bipartisan victory for Stony Brook Medicine and public safety-net hospitals across the country, Congress has enacted legislation that protects critical Medicaid funding for hospitals that serve vulnerable populations.

This long-sought policy fix, championed by Rep. Nick LaLota, has now been signed into law by President Donald Trump. The new legislative language, which was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 7148), amends an unintended consequence of a formula change made in a prior Congressional appropriations bill that altered how Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments are calculated. Medicaid DSH payments are supplemental federal funds to support safety-net hospitals like Stony Brook, which serve a disproportionately high number of Medicaid, low-income and uninsured patients.

The formula change overlooked a critical patient population factor relied upon by state and federal authorities to determine Stony Brook's DSH allocation. As a result, this change sharply reduced critical federal support for Stony Brook, jeopardizing the financial stability of an institution that provides essential care to Long Island's most vulnerable patients.

This legislative victory marks the culmination of a concerted four-year effort to ensure that federal healthcare policy supports — rather than undermines — the mission of hospitals that serve those in greatest need.

The passage of this legislation reflects the success of sustained advocacy by Stony Brook's Office of Federal Relations in strong partnership with HANYS and a bipartisan coalition of stakeholders and lawmakers.

- Stony Brook University Hospital (SBUH) has been chosen by the Women's Choice Award® as one of the two best hospitals for breast cancer care in Suffolk County. SBUH is also ranked among the top 18 for all of New York.

Using clinical performance, patient satisfaction, accreditations and other stringent criteria, the Women's Choice Award selects the best Hospitals & healthcare facilities across America to help women make informed healthcare choices. Delia Passi, founder and CEO of the Women's Choice Award and a breast cancer survivor, said "I learned the hard way that where you choose to have your mammogram can have a profound impact on your outcome and experience. By letting women know which breast centers in their area are among America's best, we can reduce risk by helping them make better decisions and smarter health care choices."

- The Carol M. Baldwin Breast Care Center, at the Stony Brook Cancer Center, provides multidisciplinary care for noninvasive breast cancer, invasive breast cancer, metastatic breast cancer and recurrent breast cancer and other conditions of the breast. From diagnostic testing to evaluation to advanced, personalized, coordinated treatments, the center's expert team works in collaboration with the patient and their family to ensure personal needs and quality-of-life issues are addressed.

The surgical team at the Carol M. Baldwin Breast Care Center includes Dr. O'Hea, Anastasia Bakoulis, DO; Patricia Farrelly, MD; and Kelly R. Johnson, DO. Other Department of Surgery faculty at the center include Jason Ganz, MD; Tara Huston, MD; Sami Khan, MD; and Aleksandra Krajewski, MD, from our Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

- The Stony Brook Cancer Center announced that the Strohm Foundation has pledged a \$335,000 gift for an endowment to advance innovative cancer research and strengthen long-term support for scientific discovery.

This gift will be amplified through the New York State endowment match program and the Simons Infinity Investment, which will generate a total impact of \$1,005,000 for cancer research and the university's unrestricted endowment. This investment will fuel groundbreaking research and expand resources for future generations.

Edward Strohm, executive director of The Strohm Foundation, has been a longstanding advocate for expanding research into cancers affecting 9/11 first responders. His personal experience with a 9/11-related cancer has shaped the foundation's mission to increase awareness, accelerate research and support the communities most affected by exposures resulting from the World Trade Center attacks.

The Strohm Foundation's commitment continues to play a significant role in advancing studies focused on cancers disproportionately impacting first responders. The foundation, which recently fulfilled its previous \$100,000 commitment to Stony Brook Cancer Center research, has been particularly engaged in supporting Stony Brook Cancer Center's efforts to investigate the most prevalent cancers among those who served on and after September 11, 2001.

By investing in this work, The Strohm Foundation is helping drive research that will lead to new insights, stronger programs and improved outcomes for the communities most affected by cancer.

- Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among women, responsible for 1 in 3 deaths each year. Heart disease and stroke can affect women at any age, making it essential for women to understand their own risk factors and take the necessary steps to protect their heart health. Investing in heart health is important at every stage of life, and it is never too early or too late to start. On Friday, February 6, staff from Stony Brook University Hospital (SBUH) wore red in recognition of national #WearRedDay, joining organizations across the country to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease during American Heart Month. The annual observance honors those lost to heart disease, while spotlighting the proven actions individuals, families and communities can take to prevent it.

In conjunction with #WearRedDay, representatives from the American Heart Association presented SBUH with the Get With The Guidelines® – Heart Failure Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award, earned for the seventh consecutive year. This prestigious recognition is awarded to hospitals that consistently deliver care aligned with the latest, evidence-based clinical guidelines from the Heart Association.

The award further underscores the ongoing commitment of Stony Brook's Heart Failure and

Cardiomyopathy Center to deliver exceptional patient care. SBUH has been Joint Commission and AHA certified in Advanced Heart Failure since 2013 and Ventricular Assist Device care since 2011, signifying that the program meets the high, nationally recognized standards for safe, high-reliability heart failure and LVAD care, supported by specialized teams and outcomes-driven quality oversight.” SBUH has also earned the Healthgrades Five-Star Distinction for the Treatment of Heart Failure for the last 12 years, underscoring sustained excellence in clinical outcomes.

- Allison McLarty, MD, FACS; Stony Brook Medicine's Department of Surgery Chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, has been named the 2026 Health Care Heroes Lifetime Achievement Award winner by the Long Island Business News (LIBN). Dr. McLarty has previously been recognized by LIBN for her work with the Stony Brook Ventricular Assist Device Program.

The Health Care Heroes Awards were created by LIBN to honor and celebrate innovative and influential organizations and individuals who are making positive differences to the quality of health care on Long Island. In addition to the Lifetime Achievement award, other Health Care Heroes categories include Acupuncture Specialist, Advanced Practice Provider, Dental Specialist, Elder Care, First Responder, Health Care Innovation, Health Care Staff, Management, Mental Health, Nurse, Physician and Volunteer.

Dr. McLarty has been a Professor of Surgery in the Department of Surgery's Cardiothoracic faculty since 1997 and has been serving as division chief since November 2025. She is also the Associate Program Director for the General Surgery Residency program, Director of Mechanical Circulatory Support, Surgical Director of the Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) program, and leads the Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) program for short-term circulatory support for critically ill patients. She previously also held the position of Chief of Surgery at the Northport VA Medical Center and had led Stony Brook Medicine's multidisciplinary Lung Cancer Center.

After receiving her MD from Columbia University in 1988, she completed General Surgery residency training at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and then joined Stony Brook Medicine after her fellowship training in Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. At Stony Brook's Department of Surgery, she specializes in cardiac and thoracic surgery, and her clinical/research interests include ECMO, LVAD and aortic disease.

Dr. McLarty is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (FACS) and a member of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, the International Society of Heart and Lung Transplantation and the American Association of Thoracic Surgery. Her dedication to providing her patients with extraordinary care has earned her a number of awards and recognition, including: Brookhaven Health Person of the Year, Brookhaven Woman of the Year in Medicine, Brookhaven's Women's Recognition Award for Medicine, inclusion in the Guide to America's Top Surgeons (published by the Consumers' Research Council of America), the Village Times Herald's Woman of the Year in Health, Castle Connolly's Top Doctor list and Castle Connolly's Exceptional Woman in Medicine award.

The Health Care Heroes winners are selected by the editors of LIBN. The 2026 awards ceremony will be held in February at the Crest Hollow Country Club.

### **PERSONNEL UPDATES:**

- Dr. Lynn D. Blake, Ph.D. joined Stony Brook Medicine as our new Director of Clinical Research Compliance and Privacy. Dr. Blake has over a decade of experience in immuno-oncology and infectious disease research, regulatory affairs, and research compliance. Most recently, she served as the Research Compliance Officer and Institutional Biosafety Committee Chairperson at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, where she led institution-wide regulatory oversight and compliance initiatives, including IRB and IBC reviews, internal investigations, and federal agency liaison work. Her background includes:
  - Extensive leadership in clinical and translational research compliance.
  - Deep expertise in federal and state regulatory frameworks (NIH, FDA, USDA).
  - A strong track record in developing and delivering medical education and compliance training.
  - Multilingual fluency in Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and English.
  - A Ph.D. in Molecular Medicine and Biomedical Sciences from the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine, with additional degrees in Medical Biology and Forensic Science.

Dr. Blake's collaborative spirit and strategic insight will be instrumental in advancing our compliance programs and supporting our research mission. She will be working closely with hospital leadership, faculty, and research teams to ensure our practices align with ethical and legal standards.

### **SERVICE LINE UPDATES:**

#### **Emergency Medicine:**

- SBUH has taken delivery of our third Mobile Stroke Unit. The unit will be operational within approximately four to six weeks and will initially be placed in service in one of our two existing locations. It is anticipated that our new Riverhead base will be operational soon and all three units will be in service.

#### **Heart Institute:**

- The Advanced Specialty Care at Stony Brook (ASCSB) has opened a portion of Phase 2 cardiac testing. Two additional rooms are now open for routine stress treadmill testing and expansion of echocardiography space. The center for cardiac testing now has four echocardiography rooms, two routine stress treadmill rooms, a full-service Coumadin clinic and pre-surgical testing for cardiothoracic surgery and invasive cardiology procedure/surgeries. The Nuclear Cardiology space is scheduled to open in early March 2026.

#### **Neurosciences:**

- Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital (SBELIH) had its first Joint Commission Primary Stroke Center Certification survey on 2/4/26, following a recertification survey at Stony Brook Southampton Hospital (SBSH) on 2/3/26. Both facilities successfully completed their survey with SBSH achieving its recertification, and SBELIH obtaining its initial certification as a Primary Stroke Center. This designation as a Primary Stroke Center, once acknowledged by New York State, will enable Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response vehicles to bring suspected stroke patients in the region to SBELIH. SBELIH is in a waiting period at this time before an official announcement can be made to the community. Teams at all our hospitals work tirelessly to serve patients presenting

stroke symptoms and strive toward continuous quality improvement.

- The Department of Neurosurgery, in collaboration with the Department of Orthopedics, is continuing to standardize processes associated with spine surgery and spine care, including participation in the American Spine Registry (ASR). The ASR registry collects and benchmarks a variety of data elements, with the more unique being the Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs). The PROMs evaluate patient-centered health, functional ability, and quality of life following spine procedures. They are now being collected from neurosurgical patients, with Orthopedics preparing for the launch of the same process. These PROMs are collected at standardized intervals and will provide us with data pertinent to our patients' clinical recovery.

#### **Surgical Services:**

- For the fourth consecutive year, Long Islanders voted Stony Brook's Bariatric and Metabolic Weight Loss Program for the Best of Long Island. Leadership is proud of this interdisciplinary team, led by Director and Division Chief, Dr. Konstantinos Spaniolas.
- SBUH has completed the renovation of three Operating Rooms at SBUH, allowing for the return to operationalizing all 22 ORs for the first time in over a year. These large, integrated rooms have technology to support advanced imaging and robotics procedures and have made an immediate improvement for our team, faculty and patients.

#### **Women's/Children's Services:**

- Nicole Ciccione, RN, the new Pediatrics Nurse Manager, will be overseeing the Pediatric Acute units on the 6th and 7th floor of Stony Brook Children's Hospital. Nicole joins Stony Brook Children's Hospital after years of leadership experience at Cohen's Children's Pediatric Emergency Department and Critical Care Transport Team, NYU Long Island Community Hospital, and South Oaks Hospital. Nicole brings with her years of experience managing a wide variety of clinical settings and patient populations, leadership in developing quality programs, employee engagement programs, and patient safety initiatives and a professional interest in team building, performance management, and operational efficiency.
- Jamie Ryan, RN, our Pediatric Trauma Injury Prevention Coordinator, was awarded the 2025 NYS Division of the American Trauma Society Injury Prevention Distinction Award in recognition for her exhaustive work and excellence in keeping the kids in our community safe. Jamie has been an incredible asset to our Pediatric Trauma team for almost two years now and very quickly became an indomitable force for community education and outreach in Suffolk County.
- Stony Brook Children's Hospital is honored to be an American Trauma Society – NYS Division 2026 grant recipient. Our grant proposal focused on firearm injury prevention initiative with emphasis on safe firearm storage in households with children. In partnership with the Suffolk County Policy Department, Suffolk County Pistol Licensing Bureau, and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, households with children will be offered free firearm locking devices and safe storage education. Households will be identified during the pistol licensing and renewal process, and grant funding will be used to mail safety devices directly to applicants' homes. This program aims to reduce the risk of unintentional firearm injury and firearm access among children and adolescents through education, prevention, and improved safe storage practices.

- The Department of OBGYN is pleased to report that an additional \$1 million in grant funding has been awarded, aimed at decreasing the c-section rates across Suffolk County. In addition to current initiatives already underway, this funding will expand education and training related to VBAC (Vaginal Birth After C-Section) deliveries, increase access to simulation of complicated deliveries, and increase patient education programs available.

### **OPERATIONAL UPDATES**

- The Ronald McDonald House initiative is underway, with site work for utilities in its early stages. Stony Brook University Hospital's construction team is working closely with the Ronald McDonald House leadership to coordinate this important project, which will allow patient families to stay on hospital premises while their children are patients at Stony Brook Children's Hospital.
- The SBUH curtainwall project continues, as progress has been made with the completion of the 17S-Medical Intensive Care Unit. The fully rehabilitated unit is more spacious, to accommodate critically ill patients, while offering new headwalls for gases. The curtainwall project is approximately 75% completed.

### **Nursing:**

- The Stony Brook Cystic Fibrosis Team won two awards at the 2025 National Cystic Fibrosis Conference. The teams were recognized with Quality Improvement Awards for both Adult and Pediatric programs. The team includes Catherine Kier, MD, Teresa Carney, DNP, Barry Diener, MD, Aleksey Tentler, MD, Barbara Levya, RN, Emily Gallagher, PT, Amanda Buscetta, MH, Sany Corr, and Christopher Fierek.
- An abstract submitted by Nicole Abbene, RN, CNS and Patricia Doty, RN, Nurse Manager, was accepted for presentation at the 2026 Oncology Nursing Society Congress titled "Inpatient Safety-First Preventing Falls at Every Step."
- The Surgical Oncology Unit, 17 North, was awarded the American Association of Critical Care Nursing Silver Beacon Award for Excellence. The Beacon program was created in 2003 to facilitate and recognize unit-based improvements in clinical care. The Beacon Award for Excellence is designed for nursing units that showcase exceptional care under three program modules: Patient Outcomes, Work Environment and Nursing Workforce. This is the fourth SBUH unit to receive a Beacon Award.
- Karen Burgess, RN, Elvia Marique, RN, Ashley Duffner, RN, and Heather Soler, RN submitted an abstract that was accepted for poster presentation at the 2026 Perinatal Leadership Forum in Charlotte, Florida in November 2026. It is titled "Reduction of Pressure Injuries from EEG in the Neonatal/Infant Population."

### **Patient Experience:**

- Brooke Sandora, Patient Advocate for the Emergency Department, started this month to provide coverage from 10:00am-6:30pm to support patients and staff.

- A video highlighting The Stony Brook University Hospital Food Farmacy Volunteer Program was on Newsday.com to promote our collaborative volunteer, nutrition, and community outreach team.
- Nicole Rossol, Chief Patient Experience Officer presented “Best Practices Learned from A Health Equity Certification Journey” to The Executive Team at Cone Health in North Carolina.
- Mollie Schnepf, a student from Stony Brook University’s Master’s in Health Administration Program, joined the Division of Patient Experience this semester. Mollie will be reviewing the current state of the patient experience survey requirements for our Joint Commission disease specific certifications and conducting a needs assessment.
- Patient Advocacy collaborated with the Office of Development to streamline a new process to refer grateful patients for potential philanthropic engagement. The goal is to increase potential patient referrals during unit rounds.
- Patient Experience joined the Vizient Patient Experience Collaborative to focus on tools to implement and measure the new patient program focused on improving rest and recovery. The goal is to increase the HCAHPS measure regarding restfulness and create sustainable practice.
- Chaplaincy conducted 18 Code Lavenders this month to support staff on various units with situations related to bereavement, trauma, and workplace violence.