



# EXECUTIVE HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

**For Current and Aspiring  
Division Directors and Chairs**

January 30 - February 1, 2025  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Birmingham, AL

# EXECUTIVE HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

## January 30 - February 1, 2025

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Executive Healthcare Leadership Academy is a cutting-edge program crafted in partnership with the esteemed Society of Asian Academic Surgeons and the prestigious University of Alabama at Birmingham. This exclusive academy empowers surgeons to delve into their leadership aspirations and proactively shape their professional path. Through engaging interactive sessions and renowned guest speakers hailing from the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons, the UAB School of Health Professions, and the UAB Department of Surgery, participants will gain invaluable insights and actionable strategies to fortify their leadership prowess.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

This course is designed for current and aspiring division directors and chairs in academic surgery.

### LOCATION

The 2.5-day course will take place in the West Pavilion Conference Center located in the medical campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Located in the heart of downtown Birmingham, AL, UAB is near 5-star dining, Civil Rights museums, urban parks and plenty of breweries.

**Address - 615 18th Street South, Birmingham AL 35233**

**Enter via Patient Discharge loop off of 7th Ave. Staff will be at the doors to let you in.**

**This course has been made possible in part through the generous support of the Tanabe – Gadd Family Foundation and the SAAS Foundation.**



# COURSE AGENDA

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2025 | West Pavilion, Conference Room E

- 12 - 1 p.m.**      **Check In**
- 1 - 3:15 p.m.**    **Session 1: Developing Effective Leadership Skills**  
The Status of Asians in Leadership - Susan Tsai  
DISC Assessment - Tracy Wang  
Lost at Sea - Dan Chu  
Surgical and Secret Societies - Herb Chen, Eugene Kim  
Q&A
- 3:15 - 3:30 p.m.**    **Break**
- 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.**    **Session 2: Building Teams**  
Building Research Infrastructure - Ash Gosain  
Communications & Marketing - Marissa Keppley  
Social Media & Making an Impact - Jennifer Tseng  
Recruiting the Best Team - Jeff Matthews  
Q&A
- 5:30 - 6 p.m.**      **Break**
- 6 - 7:30 p.m.**      **Session 3: Dinner & Invited Speaker**  
Featured Speaker - Edward Barksdale

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2025 | West Pavilion, Conference Room E

- 7:30 - 8 a.m.**      **Breakfast**
- 8 - 10 a.m.**      **Session 4: Understanding Finance**  
Health Systems and the Bottom Line - Mary McDougal  
Funds Flow and Budgets - Nipun Merchant  
What the Payers Want - Sai Yendamuri  
Q&A
- 10 - 10:15 a.m.**    **Break**
- 10:15 - 12 p.m.**    **Session 5: Managing a Financial Crisis**  
Scenario 1 - Vikas Dudeja  
Scenario 2 - Paul Kuo  
Scenario 3 - Herb Chen
- 12 - 2 p.m.**      **Lunch (Speed Dating)**
- 2 - 5 p.m.**      **Session 6: Humans, Conflict, and Dealing with People**  
Christy Lemak, Ken Tanabe, Dev Desai, Sandra Wong
- 7 - 9 p.m.**      **Dinner - GM 705**  
705 Oak Grove Rd. Homewood, AL

# COURSE AGENDA

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025 | West Pavilion, Conference Room E

- 7:30 - 8 a.m.      **Breakfast**
- 8 - 10 a.m.      **Session 7: Getting the Job**
- Applying for the Job: Cover Letter and the Search Firm - Mitu Agarwal  
The Search Committee & Zoom Interview - Brenessa Lindeman,  
Greg Kennedy  
The Wish List - Allan Tsung  
Q&A
- 10 - 11:45 a.m.      **Session 8: Day-to-Day Team Management**
- Leading the Dreaded Meeting - Mary Killackey  
How to Delegate - Marissa Keppley, Danny Chu  
Health System Leadership Roles - Karl Bilimoria, Tom Varghese  
Q&A
- 11:45 - 12 p.m.      **Wrap Up & Course Evaluation**

## FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES



### **Herb Chen - Course Director**

Dr. Herb Chen is Chair of the Department of Surgery at University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Surgeon-in-Chief of UAB Hospital and Health System. He is a Professor of Surgery, Pediatrics, and Biomedical Engineering, and holds the Fay Fletcher Kerner Endowed Chair. He is the American Cancer Society MEN2 Thyroid Cancer Professor. Dr. Chen is the Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Surgery. He has held several leadership positions in major academic societies including President of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons Foundation, President of Association for Academic Surgery, President of the Society of Clinical Surgery, President of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons, and President of Surgical Biology Club II.



### **Christy Harris Lemak - Course Director**

Dr. Christy Harris Lemak is Professor in the Department of Health Services Administration, School of Health Professions and Deputy Director, Marnix E. Heersink Institute for Healthcare Innovation, Heersink School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She teaches and conducts research in the areas of health care leadership, with an emphasis on how leadership and organizational factors can lead to high performance.



### **Suresh "Mitu" Agarwal**

Dr. Suresh "Mitu" Agarwal is a professor of surgery and chief of trauma and critical care surgery at the Duke University School of Medicine, where he has been a member of the faculty since 2017. Agarwal's clinical practice as a trauma surgeon encompasses all areas of acute care surgery, including chest and chest wall injuries, and focuses on the management of ventilated patients. His research interests include social justice through healthcare, including the effects of opiate abuse and socioeconomic disparity. He serves as an at-large director for the SAAS Foundation.



### **Karl Bilimoria**

Dr. Karl Y. Bilimoria is a surgical oncologist, researcher, and physician executive at Indiana University. He is the Chair of the Department of Surgery and the Jay L. Grosfeld Professor of Surgery (tenured). He is also the Vice President for Surgical Quality for the Indiana University Health system. He is past President of the Association for Academic Surgery and the Surgical Outcomes Club, and he has been a part of the leadership for several other national organizations in surgery and oncology. He has mentored more than 50 surgical research fellows and junior faculty. He was awarded Mentor of the Year by Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine in 2020 and has been listed by Becker's as one of the "Top 50 Experts Leading the Field of Patient Safety" in the U.S. Dr. Bilimoria previously had a variety of executive leadership roles for the Northwestern Medicine 11-hospital health system in Chicago, particularly focusing on quality and innovation.



### **Edward Barksdale**

Dr. Edward M. Barksdale, Jr., is Professor of Surgery at the University of Chicago and the Chief Surgical Officer of the Chicagoland Children's Health Alliance (CCHA). Most recently he was the Robert J. Izant, Jr. MD Professor and Surgeon-in-Chief at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital/University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve School of Medicine (CWRUSOM) (2007-24). An All-American Athlete and honors graduate of Yale University (1980), Dr. Barksdale received his medical degree from Harvard University (1984). He completed a residency in General Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital (1991) and fellowship training in Pediatric Surgery at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati (1994). Tenured Professor of Surgery at University of Pittsburgh and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (1994-2007).

Barksdale currently works at the nexus of academia, clinical surgery, medical education, public health and social justice as a passionate advocate for child health and healthcare. He endeavors to invest his academic, clinical and service efforts to inspire individuals and transform communities at the precipice of hope. In Cleveland, he has been devoted to building programs to address health disparities, particularly in fragile populations of children. His life, leadership and career have been guided by strong values he learned from family and community growing up in Lynchburg, Virginia during the dynamic 1960s.



### **Daniel Chu**

Dr. Daniel I. Chu is Professor and Division Director of the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed his undergraduate at Yale and medical school at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. After residency at Boston University Medical Center, he completed a colon and rectal surgery fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. As a double-board certified colorectal surgeon, he specializes in the spectrum of colorectal disease including inflammatory bowel disease, colorectal cancer, diverticular disease, and anorectal disorders. His NIH-funded research interests focus on identifying, understanding, and reducing health disparities in surgery with particular attention to health literacy.



### **Danny Chu**

Dr. Danny Chu is a Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery at University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM), the Director of Cardiac Surgery at Veterans Affairs Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and the Chair of the Clinical Competency Committee for the Integrated 6-year Thoracic Surgery Residency of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at UPSOM. He currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of Vascular Medicine and Research and serves as an editorial board member of over 15 peer-review journals (including The American Journal of Cardiology, JAMA Surgery, The Annals of Thoracic Surgery, and World Journal of Surgery).



### **Dev Desai**

Dr. Dev M. Desai is the Chief of Pediatric Transplantation at Phoenix Children's Hospital and a Professor of Surgery at the University of Arizona in Phoenix. He is a member of several professional organizations, including just being elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), which governs all organ donation and transplantation policy in the United States. He has also served on the board of directors of the American Board of Surgery, and as a member of the American College of Surgeons, the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, the International Pediatric Transplant Association, the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons, and the American Surgical Association.



### **Vikas Dudeja**

Dr. Vikas Dudeja is Professor with tenure, James P. Hayes Endowed Professor and Director of Division of Surgical Oncology at University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Dudeja's clinical practice is focused on taking care of patients with hepato-pancreatico-biliary diseases. Currently, he is the initiating PI on two clinical trials evaluating novel drugs in patients with pancreatitis. His research efforts has been funded by grants from National Institute of Health (NIH), Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense and various society grants.



### **Ash Gosain**

Dr. Ankush Gosain is the Surgeon-in-Chief of UVA Health Children’s Hospital, Division Chief of Pediatric Surgery in the Department of Surgery at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and Physician Executive of Fortify Children’s Health, which is Virginia’s first Clinically Integrated Network (CIN) dedicated to children. Dr. Gosain serves on the Executive Councils of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons (President), the Society of University Surgeons (Secretary), the Surgical Research Committee of the American College of Surgeons (Chair), and the Surgical Biology Club II (Board of Directors). He is an elected member of the Society of Clinical Surgery (Treasurer) and the American Society for Clinical Investigation, platforms which he uses to advocate for the Surgeon-Scientist phenotype.



### **Greg Kennedy**

Dr. Greg Kennedy graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine and received his PHD in cancer biology from the University of Wisconsin where he also completed his general surgery training. He completed a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. He is currently the John H. Blue Chair of General Surgery and the Executive Vice Chair of the Department of surgery at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. Greg has served as the President of the Society of University Surgeons and the Recorder of the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract.



### **Marissa Keppley**

Marissa Cabrera Keppley, MBA, is a surgical administrator and communications professional with nearly 15 years of experience in the healthcare industry. Currently serving as the Communications and Administrative Director for the Department of Surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, she brings a wealth of expertise in effectively promoting healthcare services and managing complex communication initiatives – including producing and launching the nation’s first CME-accredited podcast.



### **Mary Killackey**

Dr. Mary Killackey is the Robert & Viola Lobrano Professor and Chair of Surgery and Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics at Tulane University School of Medicine. She was appointed Chair of Surgery in May 2016 and since that time has exponentially grown the department in all missions. In recognition of her leadership, she was accepted into the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine fellowship in 2017. Later that year, she was inducted into AOA Medical Honors Society and in 2019, elected to the Leonard Tow Gold Humanism Society. Since 2017, she is the Inaugural Faculty Lead of the Tulane Professionalism Program. Currently, she is a recipient of Fellows in Leadership Award from the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and is also participating in Leading Organizations to Health with the Association of American Medical Colleges.



### **Eugene Kim**

Dr. Eugene Kim is Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where he is the Director of the Division of Pediatric Surgery and Vice Chair of the Department of Surgery. Dr. Kim is recognized for his expertise in pediatric surgical oncology, and he maintains a basic science research laboratory which is focused on mechanisms of metastasis and recurrence in high-risk neuroblastoma. Dr. Kim is the Immediate Past President of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons and is also a Past President of the Association for Academic Surgery, where he is committed to issues of racial and gender equity in academic surgery.



### **Paul Kuo**

Dr. Paul C. Kuo is Professor of Surgery and Assistant Dean for Research Program Development at the University of South Florida, Morsani College of Medicine; Professor of Information Systems and Decision Sciences at the University of South Florida Muma College of Business, and ACOS/Chief of Research and Development, Bay Pines VA Healthcare. Dr. Kuo was deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as a member of the 697th FST/GHOST Team in 2017 and again with the 909th FST in 2019, and currently serves as chief surgeon of the 909th FRSD. Dr. Kuo is a founding member and past president of SAAS.



### **Brenessa Lindeman**

Dr. Brenessa Lindeman is an Associate Professor and Vice Chair of Education in the Department of Surgery, and Assistant Dean for Graduate Medical Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. A native of eastern Kentucky, she graduated summa cum laude from the University of Louisville and Alpha Omega Alpha as the Founder's Medalist at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. At UAB, she also serves as the Section Chief and Fellowship Director for Endocrine Surgery. She is a Councilor for the American Board of Surgery, General Surgery Board Director, and Associate Member of the ACS Master Surgeon Educators. Her research interests are in development and assessment of competency in surgical trainees, including Entrustable Professional Activities.



### **Jeffrey B. Matthews**

Dr. Jeffrey B. Matthews is the Distinguished Dallas B. Phemister Professor of Surgery, Chair of the Department of Surgery, and Surgeon-in-Chief of The University of Chicago Medicine. Dr. Matthews is a gastrointestinal surgeon and leading authority on the surgical treatment of diseases of the pancreas, bile ducts, and liver. He serves on the Editorial Board of eleven prestigious surgical and scientific journals and is Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of the Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery. He is the past Chair of the Surgery Residency Review Committee of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. He is a senior Director of the American Board of Surgery, and past President of the Society of Surgical Chairs, the Society of University Surgeons and the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract (SSAT).





### **Mary McDougal**

Mary McDougal, MPA, is the Executive Administrator for the Department of Surgery at the UAB Heersink School of Medicine. Mary came to UAB from Virginia Commonwealth University, where she led teams working to establish the Sheltering Arms Institute, a 114-bed freestanding rehabilitation hospital. Mary is an active member of the Association of Academic Surgical Administrators serving on the finance committee. Mary received her undergraduate degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, and received a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Seattle University.



### **Nipun Merchant**

Dr. Nipun B. Merchant holds the Alan S. Livingstone Chair in Surgical Oncology and is Professor of Surgery, Vice Chair of Surgical Oncology Services and Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology in the Department of Surgery at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. At the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, he serves as the Associate Director of Translational Research, Surgeon-in-Chief of the oncology service line. He is also the PI of a T32 training grant in Surgical Oncology and is the author of over 200 peer reviewed publications. He is a past president of SAAS.



### **Ken Tanabe**

Dr. Ken Tanabe serves as Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School and Chief of the Division of Gastrointestinal and Oncologic Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. He has served in many leadership positions including Deputy Clinical Director of the MGH Cancer Center, PI of NCI T32 training grant, Director of the MGH Surgical Oncology Research Laboratories, service on NIH and DoD study sections and programmatic panels, and leadership on editorial board of several journals. He has mentored several faculty to their first NIH awards. Dr. Tanabe's varied career experiences include running a translational cancer research laboratory, clinical service line development, drug development via sponsorship of FDA INDs, restructuring of faculty compensation plans, and international hospital network development.



### **Susan Tsai**

Dr. Susan Tsai is a Professor of Surgery and Division Chief in the Division of Surgical Oncology, Department of Surgery at the Ohio State University. She completed her medical school education and general surgery residency at the University of Michigan. During residency, she completed a clinical research fellowship at the Surgery Branch of the National Cancer Institute. After residency, she completed a Surgical Oncology Fellowship at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and also received a Master's in Clinical Investigation from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She previously was at the Medical College of Wisconsin, where she helped to lead the LaBahn Pancreatic Cancer Program. During her time there, she established an integrative biorepository and established an investigator initiated trial program for patients with operable pancreatic cancer.



### **Jennifer Tseng**

Dr. Jennifer Tseng is the James B. Utley Professor of Surgery at Boston University. She is a highly regarded surgical oncologist and gastrointestinal surgeon, whose practice encompasses the upper gastrointestinal tract. She has published more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles on reducing surgical risk, cancer biomarkers, and on developing models for cancer treatment sequencing strategies. Tseng is a founding member and Council - Past President of SAAS.



### **Allan Tsung**

Dr. Allan Tsung is Chair of Surgery at the University of Virginia where his goal is to expand the field of surgery, strengthen the institution, and most importantly, shape and inspire faculty, residents, and students to make outstanding contributions in clinical care, research, and education. Dr. Tsung's work has generated 300+ published peer-reviewed manuscripts in leading scientific journals and has a long track record of funding as Principal Investigator on multiple NIH and society grants. Dr. Tsung is the past president of the Society of University Surgeons, Society of Asian Academic Surgeons and current Secretary of the Society of Clinical Surgery. He also participates in leadership roles in several other important academic surgical organizations, such as the Society of Surgical Oncology, the Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association, and the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases.



### **Tom Varghese**

Dr. Thomas Varghese, Jr., is the Chief, Section of General Thoracic Surgery at the University of Utah; Chief Value Officer (Ambulatory and Inpatient) at the Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI); Associate Chief Medical Quality Officer at Huntsman Cancer Hospital; and a Professor (Tenure-track) in the Department of Surgery at the University of Utah School of Medicine. He is the Director of the newly launched HCI-IMPACT (Innovative Medical Practices Advancing Care Transformation) Center, and helped create the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Strong for Surgery program. Dr. Varghese has held leadership positions in several prominent professional organizations including the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, and Society of University Surgeons (SUS). He is the 2024-2025 President of SUS.



### **Tracy Wang**

Dr. Tracy S. Wang is a Professor of Surgery, Vice-Chair of Strategic and Professional Development, and Chief of the Section of Endocrine Surgery in the Department of Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin (Milwaukee, WI). She leads the Department's CAPTAINS (Career Advancement and Professional Training Academy IN Surgery) course. Dr. Wang has published over 150 peer-reviewed manuscripts and book chapters. She is on the Executive Council for the International Association of Endocrine Surgeons and is the immediate past-Treasurer of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons. She is a past-President of the Society of Asian Academic Surgeons. She also serves as an Associate Editor for the American Journal of Surgery and on the Editorial Boards of World Journal of Surgery, Surgery, and the Journal of Surgical Research.



### **Sandra Wong**

Dr. Sandra L. Wong is the dean of Emory University School of Medicine. She also serves as the chief academic officer for Emory Healthcare. Wong is among the most widely recognized health services researchers in academic surgery, with an extensive record of research funding and more than 250 peer-reviewed studies to her credit. She has held leadership positions in several prominent professional organizations including the Society of Surgical Oncology, the Society of University Surgeons and the Society of Surgical Chairs. She also is an editorial board member of the Journal of the American College of Surgeons and the Journal of Surgical Oncology, a deputy editor for Annals of Surgical Oncology, and an associate editor for Annals of Surgery. Wong has been honored with numerous medical student and resident teaching awards. She is the first female dean of the Emory University School of Medicine in university history.



### **Sai Yendamuri**

Dr. Sai Yendamuri serves as a Professor of Oncology and Chair of Thoracic Surgery at the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center (RPCCC). He is a surgeon scientist with a busy practice in complex thoracic surgical oncology. Dr. Yendamuri is regionally and internationally known for his clinical expertise. He also serves as the Director of the Thoracic Surgery Research Laboratory at RPCCC. His research focuses on the role of obesity on lung cancer initiation and progression. Through this lens, his team explores the metabolic regulation of lung cancer initiation as well the corresponding immune response. Dr. Yendamuri has been continuously funded by the NIH for over 12 years and has received grant support from DoD and several foundations. He has published 200 peer reviewed manuscripts and 7 book chapters. He is a graduate of the MBA program for Executives (Major in Strategic Management) from the Wharton School of Business and serves as CEO of RPCI Oncology, P.C, the care network of RPCCC. He also serves as the Chief Strategy Officer and Senior Vice President of Business Development and Outreach at RPCCC.