

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

School of Medicine Columbia

University of South Carolina

School of Medicine Columbia Office of Research Newsletter

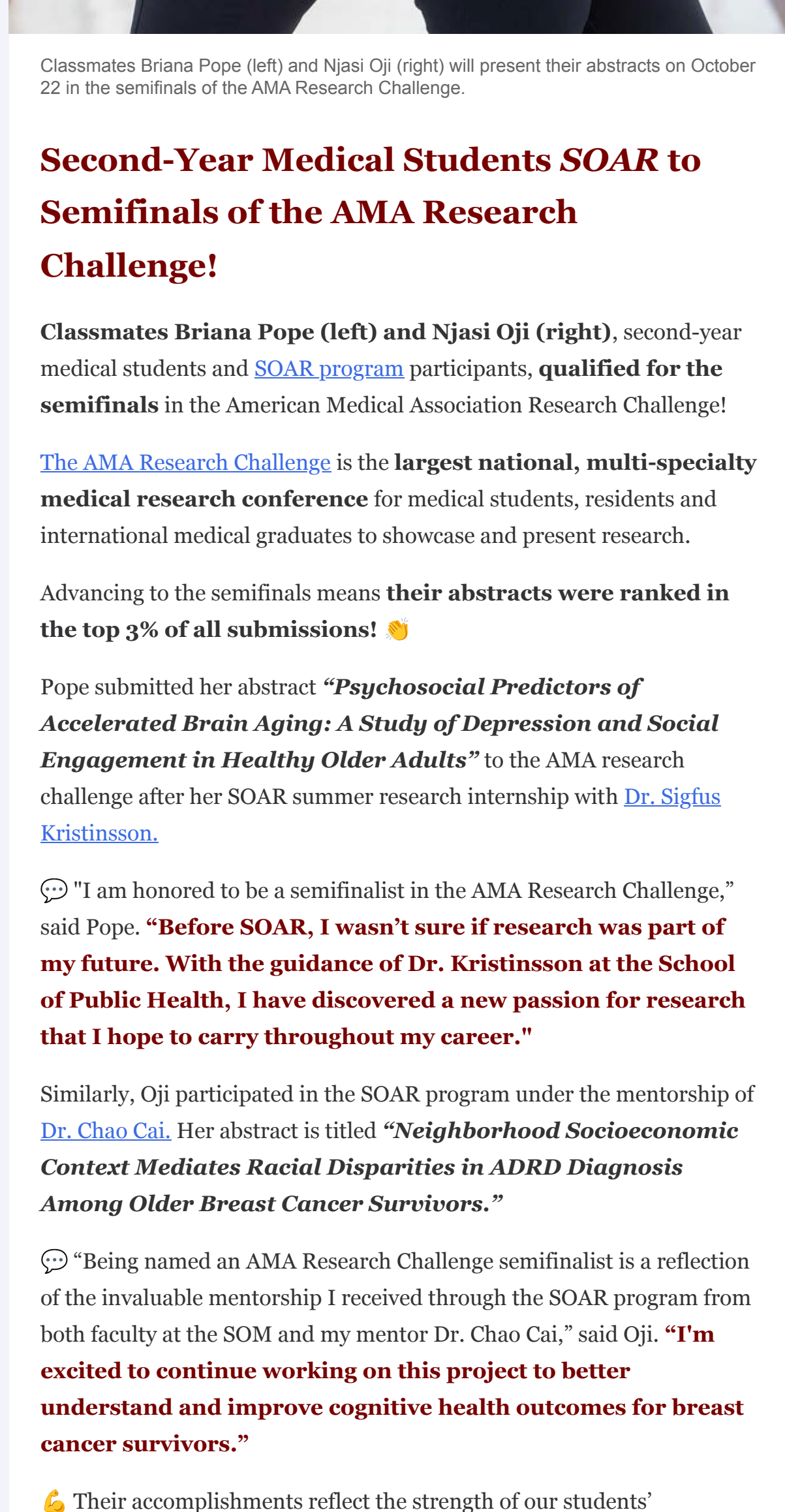
By SOMC Office of Research • Oct 01, 2025

Smart Brevity® count: 5.5 mins...1509 words

👋 Welcome to the second edition of the Research Roundup where we share important updates and research news to keep you in the know.

In this edition, learn about our SOAR students' accomplishments, NIH highlighted funding areas, a new program to advance resident research, and more!

Research Spotlight



Classmates Briana Pope (left) and Njasi Oji (right) will present their abstracts on October 22 in the semifinals of the AMA Research Challenge.

Second-Year Medical Students *SOAR* to Semifinals of the AMA Research Challenge!

Classmates Briana Pope (left) and Njasi Oji (right), second-year medical students and [SOAR program](#) participants, **qualified for the semifinals** in the American Medical Association Research Challenge!

[The AMA Research Challenge](#) is the **largest national, multi-specialty medical research conference** for medical students, residents and international medical graduates to showcase and present research.

Advancing to the semifinals means **their abstracts were ranked in the top 3% of all submissions!** 🏆

Pope submitted her abstract *“Psychosocial Predictors of Accelerated Brain Aging: A Study of Depression and Social Engagement in Healthy Older Adults”* to the AMA research challenge after her SOAR summer research internship with [Dr. Sigfus Kristinsson](#).

💬 “I am honored to be a semifinalist in the AMA Research Challenge,” said Pope. **“Before SOAR, I wasn’t sure if research was part of my future. With the guidance of Dr. Kristinsson at the School of Public Health, I have discovered a new passion for research that I hope to carry throughout my career.”**

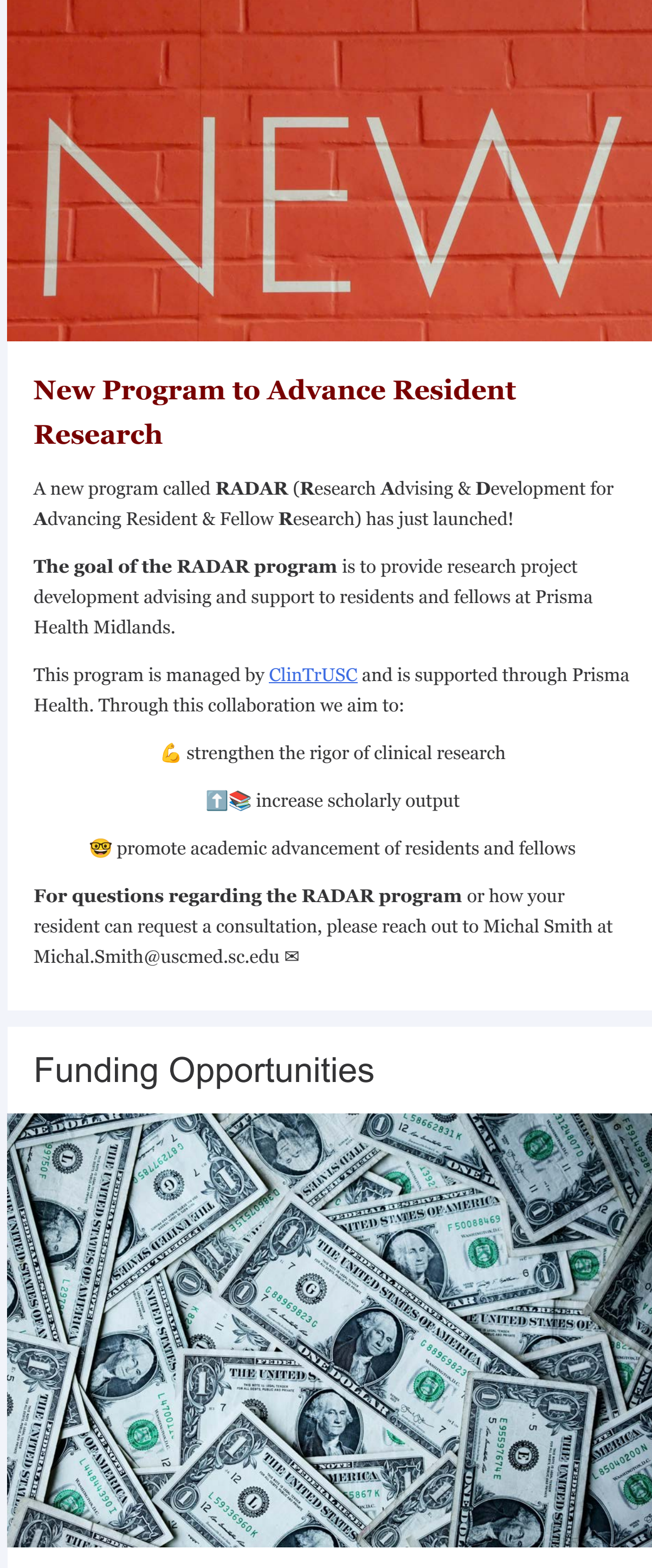
Similarly, Oji participated in the SOAR program under the mentorship of [Dr. Chao Cai](#). Her abstract is titled *“Neighborhood Socioeconomic Context Mediates Racial Disparities in AD/DR Diagnosis Among Older Breast Cancer Survivors.”*

💬 “Being named an AMA Research Challenge semifinalist is a reflection of the invaluable mentorship I received through the SOAR program from both faculty at the SOM and my mentor Dr. Chao Cai,” said Oji. **“I’m excited to continue working on this project to better understand and improve cognitive health outcomes for breast cancer survivors.”**

👏 Their accomplishments reflect the strength of our students’ dedication, the value of strong mentorship, and the exciting future of research at the SOMC.

Both students will present their abstracts during a virtual symposium on **October 22 to compete for the grand prize!** 🏆

🎉 Let’s congratulate Briana and Njasi on their success in making it to the semifinals and wish them the best in their upcoming competition! 🍀



SOAR Student Places in Poster Competition at SCNA Conference 🏆

Harshitha Visikamalla, a second year medical student and [SOAR Program](#) participant, recently presented her work at the [South Carolina Neurological Association](#) (SCNA) Conference in September.

Here abstract and poster titled *“Reduced White Matter Tract Integrity is Related to Tip-of-the-Tongue Phenomena”* placed **2nd** in the conference poster competition! 🏆

“**Participating in SOAR** this summer gave me the opportunity to explore the research side of medicine while applying the clinical knowledge I’ve gained in medical school,” said Visikamalla. **“Presenting at the SCNA conference was an incredible honor, and I am very grateful for the mentorship and support I received from Dr. Bonilha and the ABC lab.** I am looking forward to completing this project, sharing our findings, and continuing to pursue research opportunities that will shape me into a more well-rounded physician.”

🎉 Let’s congratulate Harshitha on this amazing accomplishment! 🍀



Publication Alert 📰

USC alum and SOMC faculty **Dr. Anna L. Hoppmann**, together with colleagues from Prisma Health, the University of South Carolina, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, **recently published a study** in *Blood Advances* exploring how neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) influences survival in children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Analyzing data from more than 17,000 children nationwide, the team found that kids from the lowest-SES neighborhoods had a **55% higher risk of death** than those from the highest-SES neighborhoods. Strikingly, this survival gap persisted even years after treatment—well into survivorship.

🔍 The research reveals that while medical advances have raised overall survival rates for childhood leukemia, **where a child grows up still has a powerful impact on long-term outcomes.** These findings point to the importance of long-term, community-focused strategies to support vulnerable patients beyond frontline therapy.

👉 Read the full article [here](#).

Programs & Initiatives



New Program to Advance Resident Research

A new program called **RADAR** (Research Advising & Development for Advancing Resident & Fellow Research) has just launched!

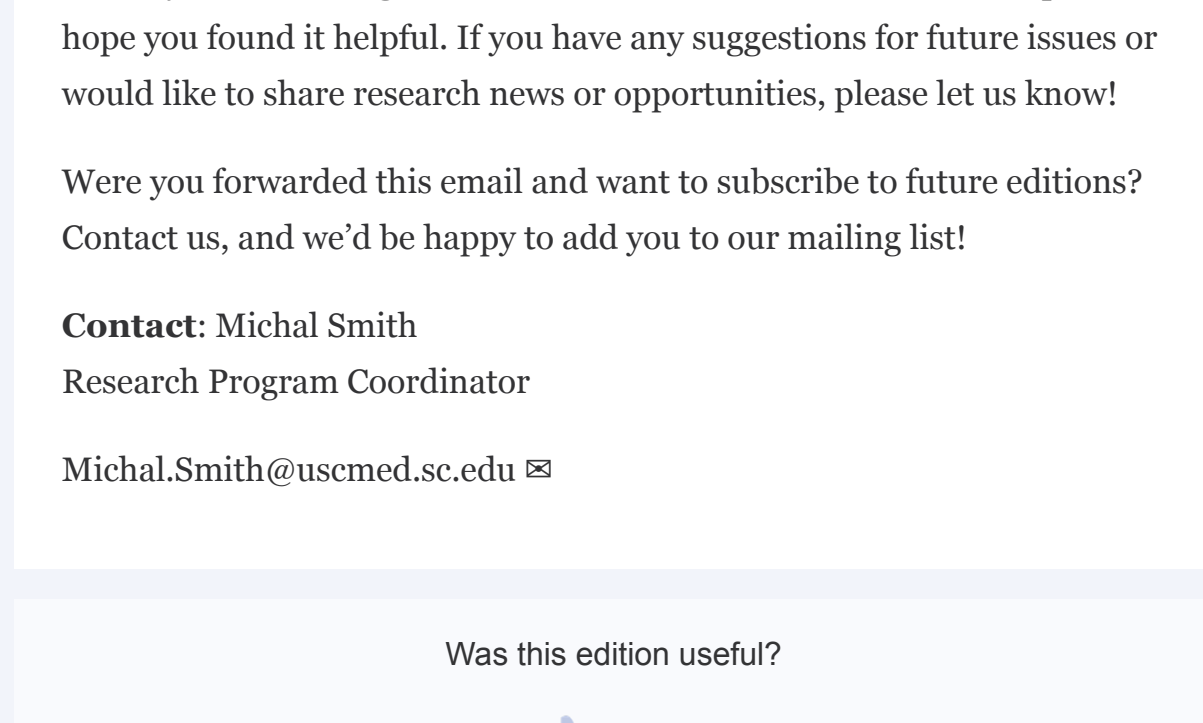
The goal of the RADAR program is to provide research project development advising and support to residents and fellows at Prisma Health Midlands.

This program is managed by [ClinTruSC](#) and is supported through Prisma Health. Through this collaboration we aim to:

- 👉 strengthen the rigor of clinical research
- 📖 increase scholarly output
- 🎓 promote academic advancement of residents and fellows

For questions regarding the RADAR program or how your resident can request a consultation, please reach out to Michal Smith at Michal.Smith@uscmed.sc.edu 📧

Funding Opportunities



Join the Internal Competition to Apply for the Duke Endowment's Health Care & Family Wellbeing Grants

The Offices of the Vice President for Research and Corporate & Foundation Relations are pleased to invite internal applications for the **Duke Endowment, Health Care Division & Child & Family Wellbeing Division**.

👉 Review the [limited submission page](#) for more details.

📅 Internal deadline of **Wednesday, October 6, 2025 at 5 p.m.**

❓ For questions, contact **Jennifer McCormack**, Assistant Vice President of Corporate and Foundation Relations, University Development.

📧 mccormjn@mailbox.sc.edu or ☎ 803-777-5076.

NIH Highlighted Funding Opportunities

When beginning your next investigator-initiated application, consider the following **NIH highlighted topics**.

The areas of science described below are **of interest to the listed NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices**.

👉 [Research on the Transition from Pediatric to Adult Health Care](#)

- The adverse consequences of failure of transition from pediatric to adult health care systems are life-altering.
- This topic encourages applications aimed at linking health care transition practices to improved health and well-being outcomes for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.

👉 [Understanding the Impact of Immune Function on Neurocognition and Substance Use Disorder Risk Across the Lifespan](#)

- There is a major knowledge gap in understanding 'systems' level mechanisms or models that describe how substance use disorder risk factors and exposures influence immune function, behavioral and neural responses to inflammation, and the interactions between them across the lifespan.
- This research topic is particularly timely because there are few explanatory theories or computational models of the relationship between the immune system, behavioral and neural responses.

Upcoming Conference & Events

Prisma Health Education & Research Institute Showcase

Prisma Health celebrates selected research and scholarly activity annually at the Prisma Health Education and Research Institute Showcase.

📅 Save the Date: **Friday, November 7, 2025**

📍 **Pastides Alumni Center**
900 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201

👉 Register for the conference [here](#).

This continuing learning opportunity hosts a scientifically diverse spectrum of basic and clinical research and quality improvement activities aligned with Prisma Health priorities and goals.

Refine Your Skills

Harness the Power of AI with Monthly Hands-on Workshops

With support of the Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing and the Office of Vice President for Research, the AI Institute will launch **AI-Roundtable and AI-ification**, a new monthly workshop series designed to help you harness the power of AI in your research, teaching, and projects.

These sessions are intended to bring hands-on experience to all researchers and practitioners of AI/ML.

📅 **When:**

- **Friday, October 3, 2025-** Basic data manipulation and visualization in Python
- **Friday, November 21, 2025-** Cluster Analysis & PCA
- **Friday, January 16, 2025-** Decision Trees and Random Forests
- **Friday, February 6, 2026-** Artificial Neural Networks
- **Friday, March 6, 2026-** Applied LLM
- **Friday, April 3, 2026-** Topic selected by the participants

📍 **Where:** AI Institute, Room 529, 1112 Greene St 5th Floor, Columbia, SC 29208

👉 Save the dates and [reserve your spot now!](#)

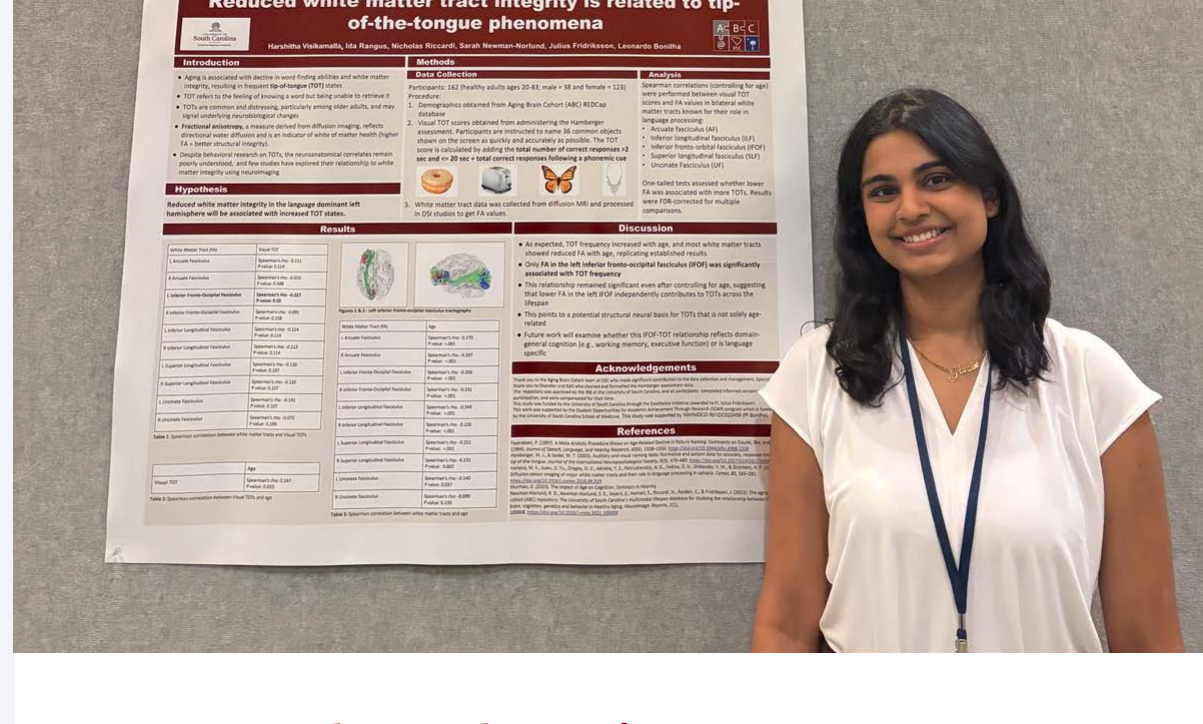
Make the Most of Your ChatGPT Access with DataCamp

The University of South Carolina now offers ChatGPT access to all faculty, staff and students through their USC logins. 🍀

Make the most of this access with [DataCamp's intro training course](#), free for all faculty and staff.

[Learn more](#) about how to access DataCamp and how your colleagues are using the platform to develop new skills. 🍀

Action Items



Stay Informed

In order to receive the **most recent research news**, make sure you are [subscribed](#) to the Research Newsletters from the VPR's office!

🔧 **Training Tuesdays:** receive a run-down of new research-related training and professional development opportunities.

💰 **Funding Fridays:** receive information on the latest limited submissions, internal grants and other research funding opportunities.

Thursdays you will receive a **weekly research update** newsletter for updates that do not fall into the categories listed above.

Reviewers Needed!

Reviewers are needed for the [Prisma Health Education & Research Institute Showcase](#).

- Only one set of reviews will be conducted.
- Reviews will be performed electronically/virtually.
- For more information and to sign-up, click [here](#). 🍀

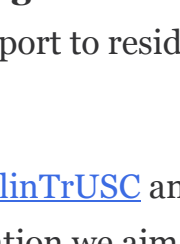
Thank you for reading this month's issue of the *Research Roundup*! We hope you found it helpful. If you have any suggestions for future issues or would like to share research news or opportunities, please let us know!

Were you forwarded this email and want to subscribe to future editions? Contact us, and we'd be happy to add you to our mailing list!

Contact: Michal Smith
Research Program Coordinator

Michal.Smith@uscmed.sc.edu 📧

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