



EXECUTIVE HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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

January 22 - 24, 2026

University of Alabama at Birmingham
Birmingham, AL

EXECUTIVE HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

January 22 - January 24, 2026

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 UAB Marnix E. Heersink Conference Center of the Altec/Styslinger Genomic Medicine & Data (ALGEN) Building, which is located in the medical campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Nestled in the heart of downtown Birmingham, AL, UAB is near 5-star dining, Civil Rights museums, urban parks and plenty of breweries.

Address - 701 19th Street South, Birmingham AL 35233

Staff will be at the front doors, across the street from the UAB School of Dentistry, to let you in and guide you to the meeting location.

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 22, 2026 | Marnix E. Heersink Conference Center, ALGEN Building

- 12 - 1 p.m.** **Check In**
- 1 - 3:15 p.m.** **Session 1: Developing Effective Leadership Skills**
DISC Assessment - Tracy Wang
360s and Coaching - Greg Kennedy
NASA Exercise - Sai Yendamuri
Time Efficiency - Dan Chu
Q&A
- 3:15 - 3:30 p.m.** **Break**
- 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.** **Session 2: Negotiating for Yourself and Your Team**
Overview - Herb Chen
Prisoners - Sophie Dream
Oranges - Susan Tsai
Ultimate - Sharon Lum
Auction - Fiemu Nwariaku
Q&A
- 5:30 - 6 p.m.** **Break**
- 6 - 7:30 p.m.** **Session 3: Dinner & Invited Speaker**
Embracing Disability and Sensory Accessibility: Building Accessible Environments in our Workplace and Community - Michele Kong

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2026 | Marnix E. Heersink Conference Center, ALGEN Building

- 7:30 - 8 a.m.** **Breakfast**
- 8 - 10 a.m.** **Session 4: Understanding Finance**
The Language of Finance and Budgets - Mary McDougal
Funds Flow - Nipun Merchant
PNLs and Faculty Comp - Amir Ghaferi
Scenarios - Marissa Keppley/Vikas Dudeja
Q&A
- 10 - 10:15 a.m.** **Break**
- 10:15 - 12 p.m.** **Session 5: Getting the Job**
The Role of the Search Firm - Flip Jaeger
Interviews: Zoom and On Campus - Mary Killackey
The Vision Talk - Tom Chi
Q&A
- 12 - 2 p.m.** **Lunch: Networking and Mentoring Sessions**
- 2 - 4 p.m.** **Session 6.1: Conflict and Dealing with People**
Background - Christy Lemak
Scenarios - Ken Tanabe, Dev Desai, Mitu Agarwal
- 4 - 5 p.m.** **Session 6.2: The Role of AI**
Ashleigh Allgood
- 7 - 9 p.m.** **Dinner - Lapeer Steak & Seafood**
2308 1st Ave S, Birmingham, AL 35233

COURSE AGENDA

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025 | Marnix E. Heersink Conference Center, ALGEN Building

7:30 - 8 a.m. Breakfast

8 - 10 a.m. Session 7: Getting Noticed in Academic Surgery

What Societies Should I Join - Brenessa Lindeman
When to Say Yes and When to Say No - Kasper Wang
Should I Get an MBA - Tom Varghese
Allyship - Ed Barksdale
Q&A

10 - 11:45 a.m. Session 8: Building Infrastructure

Research - Ash Gosain
Building the Right Culture - Jeff Matthews
Mentoring - Lillian Kao
Q&A

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. Dr. Chen also serves as the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for the the UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine. 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 the Vice President for the SAAS Foundation.



Ashleigh Allgood

Ashleigh Allgood is a faculty member in the Department of Health Services Administration at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. An early adopter of artificial intelligence, she focuses on its practical applications to simplify and enhance personal and professional workflows. She has delivered workshops on how faculty and leaders can use AI tools to streamline tasks, improve efficiency, and support their academic and professional goals. With over a decade of experience in quality improvement and process redesign, Ms. Allgood is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Medical Sociology. Her research examines trust as a social construct and its role in shaping healthcare outcomes. She is dedicated to helping healthcare professionals embrace emerging technologies to make their work more efficient and manageable.



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). 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.



Thomas Chi

Dr. Thomas Chi is Professor and Chair for the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Department of Urology where he also holds the Anton J. Bueschen, M.D., Endowed Chair in Urologic Surgery and Research. He graduated as a President's Scholar from Stanford University and earned his medical degree from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and his MBA from the Wharton School of Business. He completed urology residency and fellowship in Endourology and Laparoscopy at UCSF. He was previously Professor and Vice Chair of Urology at UCSF, where he was Chief of Urology Subspecialty and co-director of the Endourology Fellowship. He served UCSF Health as Medical Director of the Parnassus Outpatient Surgery Center and as Ambulatory Executive Medical Director for Surgical Subspecialties.



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.



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.



Sophie Dream

Dr. Sophie Dream is an Associate Professor and Chief of the UAB Section of Endocrine Surgery. She completed her fellowship in endocrine surgery at the University of Alabama in 2019 served as section chief of the section of endocrine surgery in the department of surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) and program director for the Medical College of Wisconsin Comprehensive Endocrine Surgery Fellowship prior to coming to UAB. Her clinical practice focuses on the surgical treatment of benign and malignant disorders of thyroid, parathyroid, and adrenal glands. She pioneered thyroid radiofrequency ablation and grew the non-surgical thyroid intervention program at MCW.



Vikas Dudeja

Dr. Vikas Dudeja is the E. A. Crowell Jr. Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery at University of Iowa Health Care. He received his medical degree from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in India and completed his General Surgery residency at the University of Minnesota. In 2015, he completed fellowships in Complex General Surgical Oncology and Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary (HPB) Surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. Dr. Dudeja is a respected leader in academic surgery, holding national leadership roles including President-Elect for the Association of Academic Surgery.



Amir Ghaferi

Dr. Amir Ghaferi is a Professor of Surgery with Tenure, the President and CEO of the Physician Enterprise, and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin. In these roles, he leads the enterprise strategy for establishing and advancing a regionally integrated and aligned medical group operation. He is accountable for identifying opportunities to develop new and innovative patient centered care delivery models to support the commitment to national leadership in quality, safety, value, and the patient experience.



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.



Lillian S. Kao

Dr. Lillian S. Kao is the Jack H. Mayfield, M.D., Chair in Surgery for the McGovern Medical School and also serves as Director for the Division of Acute Care Surgery. After completing a seven-year undergraduate and medical school program at the University of Michigan, Lillian did her residency at the University of Washington. The focus of her research is to improve disparities of care. "I have found that the key is to align your clinical work with your research in order to be the best surgeon you can be. You've also got to know yourself, and recognize your strengths and limitations."



Greg Kennedy

Dr. Greg Kennedy graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine and received his Ph.D. 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. Kennedy is the Chief Medical Officer of the Cancer Service Line for the Unity Point Health System in Des Moines, Iowa. Known for his national leadership, Kennedy has served as the President of the prestigious Society of University Surgeons and is currently President 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 Executive Administrator of Urology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, she brings a wealth of expertise in effectively promoting healthcare services, leading key administrative operations, 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.



Philip “Flip” Jaeger

Philip “Flip” Jaeger is a consultant in Spencer Stuart’s Healthcare and Education & Social Impact practices. He has deep experience building the leadership teams of healthcare organizations—especially academic medical centers and national professional organizations. Flip’s work is informed by a broad view of healthcare enterprise growth, and the leadership required to enable organizations to innovate and thrive.



Michele Kong

Dr. Michele Kong is a Professor in the UAB Department of Pediatrics. She is the Director of PICU research, as well as Director of the Sensory Program. She holds the Children’s of Alabama Endowed Professorship in Critical Care. She is an NIH funded investigator, and leads several clinical trials, including her own R01 with a research portfolio focused on understanding the role of protease dysregulation in the pathogenesis of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) lung disease and acute lung injury in children. In addition, Dr. Kong is the co-founder of KultureCity, an international non-profit that focuses on disability inclusion.



Brenessa Lindeman

Dr. Brenessa Lindeman is a 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. Dr. Lindeman 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. She is also the current president of the Association for Academic Surgery.



Sharon Lum

Dr. Sharon Lum is Chair of the Department of Surgery at Loma Linda University Health. She is a Professor of Surgery in the Division of Surgical Oncology and has been a dedicated breast surgeon for more than 20 years. A graduate of Harvard College and Washington University School of Medicine, Lum trained in general surgery at Oregon Health and Sciences University, where she completed an American Cancer Society Clinical Research Fellowship. She enjoys mentoring surgeons in clinical and health systems research and how to create their own leadership journeys.



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.



Fiemu Nwariaku

Dr. Fiemu Nwariaku is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery at the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine at the University of Utah. He also holds the Helen Lowe Bamberger Colby Presidential Endowed Chair in Health Sciences at the University of Utah. Nwariaku specializes in endocrine surgery and has a keen interest in caring for patients with diseases of the thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal and pancreas and is at the forefront of breakthroughs in robotic surgery and minimally invasive surgery. His training is broad and diverse including medical school at the University College Hospital in Nigeria, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, where he completed a residency and fellowship prior to serving as a faculty member and executive vice chair in the Department of Surgery.



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.



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 was the 2024-2025 President of SUS.



Kasper Wang

Dr. Kasper Wang is the Robert M. Filler Chair of Paediatric Surgery, Head of General and Thoracic Surgery at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), and Professor of Surgery at the University of Toronto Temerty Faculty of Medicine. He received his education at Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Dr. Wang received his general surgery training at Stanford University and his paediatric surgery training at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He subsequently stayed on as faculty at CHLA and the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, where he practiced the full breadth of paediatric general, neonatal, thoracic, and oncologic surgery.



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.



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.

COURSE ALUMNI

Gina Adrales	Jennifer H. Kuo
Tania Arora	Victoria Lai
Diego Avella	Byrne Lee
Diego Avella Patino	Joseph Lopez
Abigail Beard	Aarti Mathur
Avi Bhavaraju	Harveshp Mogal
Carlos Chan	Gezzer Ortega
Judy Chen	Prakash Pandalai
Daniel Chu	Mayur B Patel
Jashodeep Datta	Sameer Patel
Kim de la Cruz	Bartley Pickron
Sophie Dream	Roy Phitayakorn
Vikas Dudeja	Andrei Radulescu
Monica Dua	Chantal Reyna
Oliver Eng	David Row
Young Erben	Mihir Shah
Joseph Fernandez-Moure	Eduardo Smith Singares
Annabelle Fonseca	Naveenraj Solomo
Samir Gadepalli	Stacy Tanaka
Sabha Ganai	Arul Thirumoorthi
Krista Haines	Quoc-Dien Trinh
Young Hong	Panos Vardas
Lyen Huang	Jiping Wang
Haejin In	Russell Woo
Hee Soo Jung	Sai Yendamuri
Faraz Khan	Kay Yoon-Flannery
Emily Keung	Y. Nancy You
Joseph Kim	David Yu
Deepak Krishnan	Esther Yung
Moshim Kukar	Jessica Zagory