

Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center Training Navigator Newsletter

September 2024 Outreach Newsletter Volume 8

Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer
Center National Cancer Institute
(NCI) Training Navigator Program
Administrative Supplement

Have a question about a
cancer education or career
opportunity at UNMC?
Email Misty Pocwierz-Gaines
at misty.pocwierz@unmc.edu



Misty Pocwierz-Gaines, MA,
Lead Training Navigator,
UNMC



Erin Higgins
Assistant Training Navigator

Training Navigator Travels

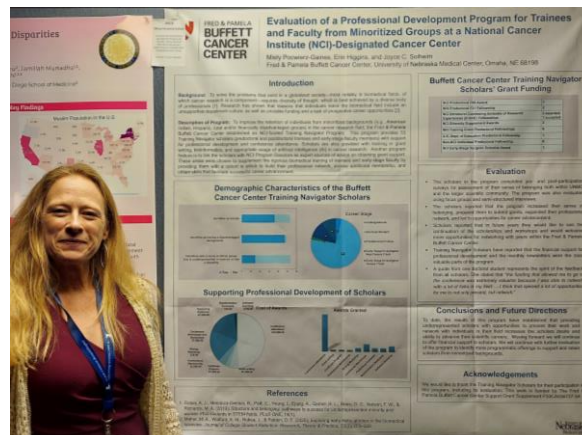


Misty Pocwierz-Gaines has
been busy this month with
one of her favorite
pastimes, traveling the
country telling people about
the great things that the

Training Navigator Scholars
have been achieving. In Los
Angeles, she met with the
NCI Training Navigator
Program Directors, Drs.
Revilleza (top left) and Wali
(right). At the International
Cancer Education Conference
in Lexington Kentucky, Misty



presented a
poster with
early outcomes
of the program.
Email her today
to schedule a
visit to your
campus to meet
with your
students.



Student Spotlight



Marcela Carvajal-Suarez works in the College of Public Health as an Outreach Project Specialist for the Center for Reducing Health Disparities and is currently working on her Doctorate degree in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research.

This summer, Marcela received the Suzanne and Ward Chambers Student Award to conduct

a project with researchers from the University of Udine in Italy. She spent this summer collecting data for the “exploratory study of health and well-being among livestock workers in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of Italy.” This data is being compared with outgoing data collection efforts in the Central States Region of the U.S. Marcela is grateful to be able to contribute to binational, cross-cultural, and comparative research to improve the lives of agricultural workers and producers in both the US and the northeastern region of Italy. Marcela is currently looking at opportunities to present the results of this research at conferences, which will allow her to share her novel findings with other scientists.



Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the twenty regions in Italy, and it is an important agricultural area of the country.

iCURE Pre-Application Webinar



Wednesday, October 2
2 PM CST

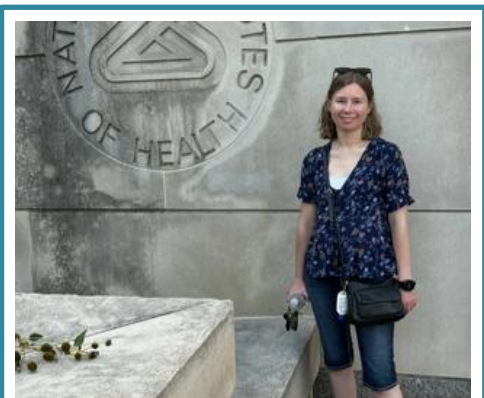
Follow this link or QR code to
register:

<https://bit.ly/iCUREwebinar2October>



Are you interested in learning more about the NIH's Intramural Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (iCURE)? There's an upcoming information webinar for those interested in learning more and/or applying. **iCURE has a post-baccalaureate program and a post-master's program, among others.**

Learn more about the iCURE program including eligibility requirements and the application process here: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/cche/innovative-programs/icure>



Katie Muilenburg completed her PhD at UNMC and joined the iCURE Program as a postdoctoral fellow at NCI in Fall 2024.

Application Timeline



Faculty Spotlight



Dr. Juan Santamaria is an Associate Professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology. In his own words, he fell in love with surgical oncology because of his “father, who is a medical oncologist in Panama [where I grew up]. As a teenager, I was able to go to his clinic and...observed cancer surgeries.” Being a surgical oncologist allows Dr. Santamaria to utilize a multi-disciplinary team approach that he finds exciting as it has “immediate ability to render a patient cancer-free.”

Dr. Santamaria’s work allows him to advance as a scientist as well as a surgeon. One of his academic aims is to prioritize “enhancing breast cancer care for minorities and increasing clinical trial participation among underserved populations.” To this aim, he founded The Nebraska Breast Health Navigation Program, which utilizes volunteers “who provide peer-to-peer support to patients and families. Lay Patient Navigators help identify and resolve barriers to health care and enable patients to understand treatment recommendations that reflect best care practices” and “facilitate communication and trust between patients and providers.”

Dr. Santamaria was recently appointed as the Assistant Director (AD) of Clinical Integration for Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) at the FPBCC, where he “will play a crucial role in working with the clinical trial program to increase the overall accrual and diversity of” patients. This year he also accepted The National Hispanic Medical Association’s Outstanding Chapter of the Year Award on behalf of the Nebraska Chapter. This award “honors vigorous leadership and...impact in improving health within the Hispanic community.” In accepting the award, Dr. Santamaria acknowledged the vision and hard work of Dr. Armando De Alba and Dr. Sara Bares, who founded the Nebraska Chapter, as well as the dedication and accomplishments of all Hispanic physicians at UNMC and in Omaha which demonstrate a “commitment to promoting and advancing Hispanic health in our community.”

Read more about the Nebraska Breast Health Navigation Program here:

<https://www.unmc.edu/cancercenter/outreach/nbhnp.html>

Read more about Dr. Santamaria and the other newly appointed ADs of COE here:

<https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2024/05/15/cancer-center-announces-new-community-outreach-leaders/>

Read more about the award from the National Hispanic Medical Association here:

<https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2024/04/18/nebraska-nhma-chapter-named-national-outstanding-chapter-of-the-year/>

[Information about Dr. Santamaria reported here was also included in the UNMC web site.]

Student Spotlight

Fred and Pamela Buffett Cancer Center



Contact Information:

Misty Pocwierz-Gaines

Lead Training Navigator
402-559-4092

misty.pocwierz@unmc.edu

Erin Higgins

Assistant Training
Navigator 402-559-7812

erihiggins@unmc.edu

Joyce Solheim

Project Leader
402-559-4539

jsolheim@unmc.edu

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Milton Busquets recently joined the lab of Dr. Jingwei Xie in the UNMC Department of Surgery as a Ph.D. student and is focusing his research on “applying tissue engineering concepts to cancer research.” More specifically, Milton’s research focuses on



“improving and innovating the pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC) patient derived xenograft (PDX) liver metastasis mouse model.” His research is focused on “understanding cell-biomaterial interactions” to “design the most suitable synthetic extracellular matrix that will serve as a transplantable patch to facilitate the migration and invasion of a PDAC PDX onto the liver of a mouse.”

Milton views the Training Navigator program as a great platform for staying up to date with important events and resources. He also appreciates how the program highlights the achievements of students doing cancer research. It helps him to “stay focused and motivated to continue pushing boundaries in science.” In the future, he plans to apply for funding opportunities and utilize other resources promoted and provided through the program. He plans on medical school after finishing his PhD with the hopes of becoming a physician-scientist.

