

# News Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **TTUHSC's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Hosts 37th Student Research Week**

Student researchers from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) participated in the 37th Student Research Week Feb. 26-28. Organized by the TTUHSC Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Student Research Week is an opportunity for TTUHSC student investigators to showcase their work and hear presentations from distinguished national speakers related to the year's theme.

The Department of Cell Physiology and Molecular Biophysics hosted the 2025 event. The Student Research Week committee chose "Let's Get Biophysical" as the theme for 2025. A playful twist on the 1980s song "Let's Get Physical," the theme highlights the host department's focus on biophysical techniques, particularly in membrane protein research, and emphasizes the use of biophysical methods to explore membrane proteins.

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences students Megan Skains and Nghi (Skyler) Tran served as co-executive directors for 2025. Other officers included Alexis Rodriguez (vice director of marketing), Caezaan Keshvani (vice director of poster competition) and Philip Antwi-Adje (vice director of operations).

Skains said 80 abstracts were submitted for 2025, which is an increase from last year. The committee also continued its lightning talk sessions, a feature that was added to Student Research Week last year. An extra lightning talk session was added for 2025 due to high demand.

"Each year, we see an increase in the number of abstract submissions, and this year was no exception," Skains said. "Additionally, we had a notable rise in lightning talk submissions, reflecting both the growing interest in the event and the high quality of the research being presented."

For the lightning talks, Skains said more than 40 students expressed interest and 12 were selected to present, highlighting the competitive and dynamic nature of the event.

"We also had an increase in vendors with 22 participating in the vendor show," Skains added. "This was a great opportunity for students and faculty to see products and services offered by different biotech companies."

Keynote speakers for 2025 included Daniel L. Minor Jr., Ph.D., a professor working in the Cardiovascular Research Institute and the Departments of Biochemistry and Biophysics, and Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology at the University of California, San Francisco; and Rajini Rao, Ph.D., a professor of physiology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Minor's research focuses on the structure, chemical biology and biogenesis of ion channels and exploring the origins of toxin resistance mechanisms. Rao, a long-standing advocate for women in science, centers her research on the role of ion transporters (including secretory pathway Calcium ATPases and endosomal sodium-hydrogen exchangers) in human disorders ranging from cancer to neurodegeneration.

The annual poster competition is a highlight of every Student Research Week, and there were 80 entries for the 2025 contest. Winners in the Student Research Week Poster Competition for 2025 included:

**Lorenz O. Lutherer, M.D., Ph.D., Clinical Research Award**

Kailin Opella

**Undergraduate Division (Sponsored by CISER):**

1st Place: Elizabeth Jeffrey

2nd Place: Eli Heath

**Medical Education:**

1st Place: Tiva Kasemsri, M.D.

Academic Excellence Award: Josue Del Castillo

**Clinical Research (Division I)**

1st Place: Aisha DeSouza

2nd Place: Neha Prathivadi

**Clinical Research (Division II)**

1st Place: Sai Pranathi Bingi

2nd Place: Katelyn Lunini

3rd Place: Rishi Patel

**Bench/Basic Research I**

1st Place (Bette B. Chilton Award): Javaria Baig

2nd Place: Sofia Altamirano

**Bench/Basic Research II**

1st Place: Abdul Shaik

2nd Place: Kseniia Orobets

3rd Place: Amanda Garcia