

ROCKY VISTA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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# CLASS OF 2029

WHITE COAT CEREMONY  
THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2025

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# **RVU MISSION STATEMENT**

Rocky Vista University provides quality healthcare education while inspiring students to serve with compassion, integrity, and excellence.

# RVU CORE VALUES

- Collegiality:** Mutual respect, collaboration, and the open exchange of ideas advance mutual goals and facilitate individual growth.
- Compassion:** The willingness to be engaged with the needs of others.
- Diversity:** The recognition, reflection, and representation of individual differences within a community including, but not limited to culture, race, age, ethnicity or national origin, color, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, spiritual practices, political beliefs, mental and physical ability, socioeconomic status, individual life experiences, or other ideologies.
- Equity:** The implementation of unbiased policies and practices to ensure everyone has access to opportunities along with needs-based distribution of resources to obtain positive outcomes so that all individuals and groups may attain their full potential and no one is deprived regardless of identity, abilities, background, or socially determined circumstances.
- Excellence:** The commitment to exceed expectations in education.
- Inclusivity:** The dynamic process of creating a welcoming environment that increases awareness, knowledge, and empathetic understanding to enable individuals with diverse backgrounds, abilities, insights, and experiences to interact in an open, fair, respectful, equitable, and collaborative fashion.
- Innovation:** Delivering new and creative ways to provide healthcare education while consistently demonstrating compassion, integrity, and excellence.
- Integrity:** The quality of living a unified life in which one's convictions are well-considered and match one's actions, demonstrating fairness, honesty, sincerity, professionalism, and a consistent commitment to our mission, vision, and values.
- Service:** Through active service, we support one another and seek to meet the needs of the larger community.

# RVUCOM MISSION STATEMENT

To educate and inspire students to become highly competent osteopathic physicians and lifelong learners prepared to meet the diverse healthcare needs of tomorrow through compassionate service, relevant research, and innovative education.

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# RVUCOM VISION STATEMENT

To establish RVUCOM as a premier educational program providing excellent osteopathic physicians in the Mountain West.

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

RVU Land Acknowledgement Statement The Rocky Vista University community acknowledges that we live, study, and work on the homelands of Indigenous peoples, original stewards of these lands and their legacies. These legacies include but are not limited to their contributions to the fields of medicine, mathematics, government, military service, arts, literature, agriculture, and engineering. We honor the original stewards of the land by committing to the development of healthcare education initiatives and multirelational connections with Native American communities in Colorado, Utah, and Montana.

The tribal nations in Colorado are Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute (you-tuh), Apache (uh-pa-chee), Comanche (kuh-man-chee), Kiowa (kai-uhwuh), Lakota, Pueblo, Shoshone (shuh-show-nee) and the Navajo (Diné) people.

# PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Welcome to the Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine Class of 2029! As you begin your Osteopathic medical education, we value the opportunity to share this White Coat Ceremony with you and our loved ones. You will hear much about the White Coat's significance during the ceremony. To me, the significance of the ceremony is to make becoming a physician real, for each of you to understand the importance of your role in society as a future physician. The patients you will soon care for will expect excellence in patient care and medical knowledge. What will distinguish you as physicians and RVUCOM graduates, we hope, will be your excellence in integrity and professionalism. Those attributes, along with excellence in interpersonal and communication skills and mastery of Osteopathic principles and practices will make you sought after as residents and practicing physicians. Although graduation seems far away right now, the most successful medical students develop the attributes of excellence as a physician early in their medical education process.



The mission of Rocky Vista University is to provide quality healthcare education while inspiring students to serve with compassion, integrity, and excellence. We believe these qualities are within each of you. You have come to RVU after completing your undergraduate or graduate degree, during a challenging time in education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The perseverance you have shown will serve you well as you move through your medical education. The administration, faculty, and staff of RVU stand ready to teach and assist you in developing the necessary skills and personal attributes to become outstanding osteopathic physicians.

You are about to enter the medical profession at an exciting time of breakthroughs in knowledge and care, and I look forward to seeing the role you will play in those advances.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David G. Forstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)  
President and CEO of Rocky Vista University

# DEAN'S WELCOME

Congratulations and welcome to RVUCOM Class of 2029. For many of you, this week marks the culmination of what you have worked for and dreamed of since you got that first Fisher Price™ doctor set as a kid. For all of you, this will be one of the most important steps in your journey to finally become a practicing physician. The faculty and staff at RVU know well what it takes to transform you into a compassionate physician fueled with the knowledge and integrity to deliver excellent care—but that process takes teamwork. We hope the experiences of the past few days have convinced you that you are an essential member of this team.



When you put on the white coat today and raise your hand to recite the Oath, you will begin the process of consecrating your life to the service of humanity. By applying yourself in learning the art and science of Osteopathic medicine and committing to make the health of your patients your first consideration, you will begin that transformation from student to physician. The old saying 'the days are long and the years are short' truly applies to this path you've chosen. It will not be easy and the hours will be long, but if you work hard and learn well, the time will pass quickly and you will emerge a young physician prepared to enter any field of medicine you choose.

Finally, on behalf of all of us here at Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine, we wish to affirm that you belong here. You have chosen the right profession and, above all, you have chosen the right medical school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Ferrill DO". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Heather Ferrill, DO, MS, MEdL  
Dean of Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Vice President of Faculty Affairs

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Chris LaFontano, DO

After seeing the benefits of Osteopathic Medicine as a collegiate athlete, Dr. Christopher LaFontano knew that osteopathic medicine was the path for him. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree and a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from the University of New England. He then went to Michigan State University for his NMM/OMM residency program. Following his board certification, he worked in private practice at Denver Osteopathic Center for nearly 20 years. During this time, he also served as a Team Physician for the University of Denver.



Since coming to Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine (RVUCOM) in 2017, Dr. LaFontano has served as a course director for every course in the OPP curriculum, was Chair of the OPP department, and is now the Assistant Dean of Osteopathic Integration. In his new role as Assistant Dean of Osteopathic Integration, Dr. LaFontano will have clinical oversight of the Neuromusculoskeletal Medicine (NMM) residency programs for Colorado, academic oversight of RVUCOM Osteopathic Principles and Practice (OPP) department and serve as a resource for integration of OPP topics throughout all four years of the RVUCOM program.

After joining RVUCOM, he said that in residency, his two loves were working with athletes and teaching students. While in private practice, he had been able to work with athletes but was limited in his ability to teach. At RVUCOM, he will be able to teach, passing on the knowledge that his mentors passed on to him. Dr. LaFontano is excited to be a part of a university that promotes Osteopathic philosophies and promotes wellness -not only on campus, but in the community.

Dr. LaFontano is married to Julie LaFontano, also a DO, and together they have two beautiful daughters: Courtney and Lily. He enjoys traveling, reading, sports ("Go Pioneers and Spartans!"), and being with his family.

# WHITE COAT CEREMONY

## STUDENT DOCTOR PROCESSIONAL

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF PURPOSE

Heather Ferrill, DO, MS, MEdL  
Dean of RVUCOM

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

Nella Batah, OMS I

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER INTRODUCTION

Heather Ferrill, DO, MS, MEdL

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Chris LaFontano, DO  
Assistant Dean, Osteopathic Integration  
Assistant Professor, OPP

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WHITE COAT

Joseph Stasio, DO, FACOFP  
Chair, Department of Primary Care Medicine

## PRESENTATION OF THE WHITE COAT

## OATH

Kristin Putnam, DO  
Vice Chair, Department of OPP  
Assistant Professor of OMM

## CLOSING REMARKS

David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (dist.)  
President, CEO, Interim Provost, and CAO

## STUDENT DOCTOR RECESSIONAL

# CLASS OATH

WE THE CLASS OF 2029  
AT ROCKY VISTA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

## PLEDGE TO:

Provide compassionate, quality care  
to my patients;

Partner with them to promote health;

Display integrity and professionalism  
throughout my career;

Advance the philosophy, practice, and  
science of osteopathic medicine;

Continue life-long learning;

Support my profession with loyalty in  
action, word, and deed; and

Live each day as an example of what  
an osteopathic physician should be.

# THANK YOU

Medical education at Rocky Vista University has been a partnership between the school and the community of physicians who help impart their skills upon the next generation of physicians. There is no greater partner in this most worthwhile endeavor than the Denver Osteopathic Foundation. Born out of the closing of Colorado's most iconic osteopathic hospitals, Rocky Mountain Osteopathic Hospital, the Denver Osteopathic Foundation has been the standard bearer for promoting philanthropy and growth in our profession throughout Colorado and the Mountain West.

We are grateful for their work and support on behalf of our students and the University. The Foundation has provided scholarships and support in many ways to RVU. This year, we are especially grateful that they are providing the white coats that will be presented to our first-year students. In addition to the RVUCOM emblem, we are honored to have our students carry the Denver Osteopathic Foundation logo on their white coats as they enter the osteopathic profession and begin the process of becoming physicians.

Thanks again, Denver Osteopathic Foundation, for all you do for RVU.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Ferrill DO". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "DO" written in a slightly larger, more distinct font at the end.

Heather Ferrill, DO, MS, MEdL  
Dean of Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Vice President of Faculty Affairs

# ARNOLD P. GOLD FOUNDATION



“The Arnold P. Gold Foundation’s overarching goal is to create the Gold Standard in healthcare—compassionate, collaborative, and scientifically excellent care—to support clinicians throughout their careers, so the humanistic passion that motivates them at the beginning of their education is sustained throughout their practice.”

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The Arnold P. Gold Foundation for Humanism in Medicine is a non-profit organization that provides awards, fellowships, and scholarships to students of osteopathic medicine. The Foundation also created the Gold Humanism Honor Society, which honors senior medical students, residents, and professors who have demonstrated “excellence in clinical care, leadership, compassion, and dedication to service.” Students receive Gold Foundation pins at their White Coat Ceremony as a daily reminder to exhibit the values of humanism in medicine.

# Achieving New Heights in Medical Education

**Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine**  
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(303) 373-2008  
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