

**MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

Class of 2026

Commencement Ceremony

Friday, May 8, 2026



OUR VISION

Achieving new heights in medical education.



OUR MISSION

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

Share Your Celebrations by posting on social media using **#RVUGradUT**

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear MSBS Class of 2026, families, faculty, and members of the RVU community,

Today is a celebration, not only for the students, but for everyone who has played a foundational role in their lives. They would not be here today if not for your love and support.

Graduates, thank you for the trust you have placed in us. You have worked hard and have overcome obstacles to be one step closer to achieving your professional goals. We look forward to seeing the wonderful things you will accomplish.

As you transition from RVU Students to Alumni, please express gratitude to those who have helped you on your journey – your family, friends, faculty, and staff – all of whom stood with you to cheer you on during the good times, as well as those challenging moments, and now share the sense of pride and accomplishment with you. Also remember that you are always a part of the RVU Family. Never stop learning, growing in mind, body and spirit and becoming an integral member of the communities you will serve.

We look forward to your future accomplishments and know that you will make us proud!

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Forstein".

David A. Forstein, DO, FACOOG (Dist.)
President and CEO

Interim Provost and Chief Academic Officer,
Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

RVU

MEET THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Francina Towne, PhD

MSBS Program Director and Professor of Immunology

Dr. Francina Towne, PhD, serves as the Program Director of the Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences (MSBS) program at Rocky Vista University. She earned her PhD in Immunology from The University of Colorado and has spent more than 15 years teaching in graduate biomedical science programs that prepare students for successful entry into medical and other healthcare professional schools. She has led the MSBS program at RVU for nearly a decade.

At RVU, Dr. Towne provides leadership for the MSBS program across campuses, overseeing the program's academic framework and supporting students as they prepare for careers in healthcare. During her tenure, she has guided the continued development and growth of the program while strengthening pathways that support student success in transitioning to professional healthcare programs. The program has a strong track record of student success, with 97% of its 388 graduates over the past nine years accepted to MD, DO, PA, or DPT programs.

Dr. Towne loves teaching immunology and remains actively engaged in mentoring students and advising future applicants to medical and other health professional programs. She is deeply committed to preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Dear Graduates,

As Chair of the RVU Board of Trustees, and on behalf of the full Board, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on reaching this incredible milestone. Your dedication, resilience, and compassion have prepared you to make a profound impact on the world of medicine.

As you step into this next chapter, I encourage you to continue learning, leading, and inspiring those around you. The Board of Trustees and I are immensely proud of your achievements, and we look forward to the meaningful contributions you will make in the years ahead.

Wishing you continued success and a career of purpose and service.

Michele Chulick

Michele Chulick, MBA, BSN
Chair, Board of Trustees

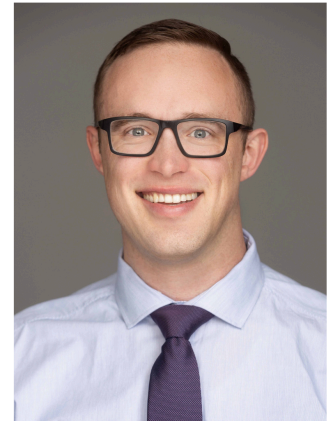
RVU

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Talon Harris, DO, MS **RVUCOM Graduate**

Talon Harris is a board-certified physician in Family Medicine with obstetrics. He was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was lucky enough to marry his first-grade crush, and together they have three wonderful children.

He completed his undergraduate degree in Health Promotion and Education at the University of Utah. In 2019, he became a proud graduate of the Masters of Biomedical Sciences program at RVU in Colorado, where he was honored as Student of the Year.



Like many of the graduates here today, Dr. Harris began his journey in medicine through this very program. He went on to attend Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Southern Utah, where he served as a peer mentor lead for the inaugural Utah MSBS class of 2021, helping guide students who were following the same path he once walked.

He graduated from medical school in 2023 and matched into his dream specialty of Family Medicine in Skagit County, Washington. He is now in his final year of residency at Skagit Regional Health, where he was voted Intern of the Year and currently serves as Lead Resident.

Dr. Harris will graduate from residency in June 2026 and has signed on with Family Care Network to continue serving the community in Skagit County, practicing full-spectrum family medicine with osteopathic manipulative medicine and obstetric privileges - caring for patients and families across generations.

Outside of medicine, he enjoys spending time outdoors with his family, trail running, kayaking, and baking bread from freshly ground wheat. As a graduate of this very program, Dr. Harris' journey is a powerful reminder that the path that begins in this program can lead to extraordinary places.

MSBS FACULTY & STAFF

BRIANNA BUFFINGTON
Administrative Assistant

BENJAMIN BROOKS, PHD
Professor, Biomedical Sciences
Clerkship Director of Research

AN DANG, PHD
Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

JENSEN FISHER, MLIS, AHIP
Assistant Director, Research Library Services
Assistant Professor, Medical Humanities

ASHLIE FRANK
Program Coordinator

IAN GEORGE, PHD
Chair, Anatomical Sciences
Assistant Professor, Anatomy

RICARDA HALLSTRAND, PHD
Professor, Microbiology

DAWNETT HANN
Program Coordinator

TONY HARPER, PHD
Associate Professor, Anatomical Sciences

MELISSA HENDERSON, PHD, MED
Vice Chair, Biomedical Sciences
Professor, Biomedical Sciences

JUSTIN HILL, DC
Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

CHRISTINA LEWIS, PHD
Associate Professor, Physiology

RACHEL LINGER, PHD
Professor, Pharmacology

ELIZABETH MOFFETT-GEORGE, PHD
Assistant Director, MSBS Program
Associate Professor, Anatomical Sciences

JANNA OAKES, PHD
Vice Provost, Academic Quality & Accreditation
Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness
Associate Professor, Medical Humanities

KELLY OSTROFSKY, PHD
Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

AMBERLY REYNOLDS, PHD, MS
Vice Chair, Anatomical Sciences
Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

JOEL ROBERTS, MD
Assistant Director, MSBS Program
Associate Professor, Physiology

JILLA SABETI, PHD
Associate Professor, Pharmacology

BRIAN SCHWARTZ, PHD, MLIS
Associate Dean, Frank Ritche
Ames Memorial Library
Professor, Medical Humanities

AMANDA SMOLINSKY, PHD
Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

JANÉE TERWOORD, PHD
Assistant Director, MSBS Program
Associate Professor, Physiology

BRAD THORNOCK, PHD, MPH
Professor, Medical Humanities

FRANCINA TOWNE, PHD
MSBS Program Director
Professor, Immunology

HOLLY TURULA, PHD
Associate Professor,
Microbiology and Immunology

LON VAN WINKLE, PHD
Professor, Medical Humanities

QING ZHONG, MD, PHD
Professor, Pharmacology

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

PROCESSIONAL

NATIONAL ANTHEM
Samuel Majka, OMS I

INVOCATION
Amberly Reynolds, PhD, MS
Vice Chair and Assistant Professor, Anatomical Sciences

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENT OF PURPOSE, AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S CHARGE
Francina Towne, PhD
MSBS Program Director and Professor of Immunology

CLASS PRESIDENT ADDRESS
Brenan Cash

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Talon Harris, DO, MS

CLASS AWARDS
Janée Terwoord, PhD
Assistant Director, MSBS Program and Associate Professor of Physiology

PRESENTATION AND HOODING OF THE MSBS CLASS

CONFERRAL OF MSBS DEGREE AND TASSEL CEREMONY
David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (Dist.)
President, CEO, Chief Academic Officer, and Interim Provost

CLOSING REMARKS
David Forstein, DO, FACOOG (Dist.)

RECESSIONAL

MSBS CLASS OF 2026 AWARDS

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The MSBS President's Award recognizes a graduate who embodies the University's core values of collegiality, compassion, diversity, equity, excellence, inclusivity, innovation, integrity, and service.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARD

The MSBS Academic Excellence Award recognizes a graduate who has demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, intellectual curiosity, and meaningful engagement in the learning environment.

HUMANITARIAN AWARD

The MSBS Humanitarian Award recognizes a graduate who exemplifies the qualities of graciousness and humility, advocates for social justice, and works for the betterment of all members of their community.

SERVICE AWARD

The MSBS Service Award recognizes a graduate who has demonstrated involvement, leadership, and contributions to service efforts.



MASTER OF SCIENCE IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES UTAH CLASS OF 2026

LORI ABBAS

Bachelor of Science
Arizona State University

CHAOJIAN HE

Bachelor of Science
Pennsylvania State University

FIYINFOLUWA ADEBOYE

Bachelor of Science; Biochemistry
University of Illinois

BRANDEN JACKSON

Bachelor of Science
Southern Utah University

HYRUM ASHTON

Bachelor of Science; Health Science
Utah Valley University

AUSTIN JOHNSON

Bachelor of Science; Microbiology
Brigham Young University

SWOPNIL BHUJEL

Bachelor of Science
Baylor University

CYRIL JONNAKUTI

Bachelor of Science
Grand Canyon University

BRENAN THOMAS CASH

Bachelor of Science;
Agriculture, Food & Life Sciences
University of Arkansas

CONNOR KARL KARRASCH

Bachelor of Science;
Molecular Microbiology and Immunology
University of Nevada

NICHOLAS CASSERA

Bachelor of Science
University of Florida

FRANCES J. KIM

Bachelor of Science
New York University

DUSTY GARDNER

Bachelor of Science; Health Science
Idaho State University

WILLIAM LISTON

Bachelor of Science
Saginaw Valley State University

BRAXTON HALL

Bachelor of Exercise Science
Utah Valley University

OMAR MERCADO SOTO

Bachelor of Science;
Molecular Biology and Physiology
California State University of Long Beach

CHARLES HALL

Bachelor of Science
University of Connecticut

AUBREY NICHOLE NELSON

Bachelor of Science; Psychology
University of Utah

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES - CLASS OF 2026

CAMRYN NESIBA

Bachelor of Science; Biomedical Sciences
Colorado State University

ALEXA NIPALES

Bachelor of Science; Biological Sciences
University of Nevada

FAREED SAYEGH

Bachelor of Science; Biological Studies
University of Nevada

ABIGALE SCHNOOR

Bachelor of Science
University of Oregon

ASHLEY GINNI SILVA

Bachelor of Biological Sciences
Brigham Young University

COLE BENJAMIN TANNER

Bachelor of Science; Emergency Management
Pacific Union College

HANNAH WEBB

Bachelor of Science
Springfield College

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

As the Rocky Vista University (RVU) Alumni Association enters an exciting period of growth, there are many ways for alumni to reconnect and contribute to the RVU community. Whether you're interested in sharing your expertise or helping shape the future of the association, we invite you to get involved:



Update Your Information.

Join the Alumni Leadership.

Contribute to Future Initiatives.

The Rocky Vista University (RVU) Alumni Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2012, is dedicated to building a vibrant alumni community that fosters lifelong connections, professional growth, and a strong bond with RVU.

We support RVU's mission through mentorship, networking, and continuing education opportunities such as webinars and alumni panels. Each year, we award service-based scholarships to incoming students, reinforcing RVU's values of service and community.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to creating meaningful ways for alumni to give back and help shape the next generation of healthcare professionals.



ROCKY VISTA UNIVERSITY UTAH, UNLIKE ANYWHERE ELSE.