

Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG) Program of Excellence Award Winners

Excellence in Innovation

Uniformed Services University School of Medicine

FMIG Operation

The USU Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG) operates in a unique academic and military environment. As the interest group at the nation's only military medical school, our structure is shaped by our distinct curriculum and clinical training model. At USU, medical students begin clinical clerkships in January of their second year. Students then spend much of their education rotating at military hospitals across the country and around the world and return several times per year to USU's campus to receive military training, education in humanism, and clinical skills development. As a result, our FMIG is primarily led by first- and early second-year students before they depart for clerkships. This model allows for early leadership development and meaningful pre-clerkship engagement.

Despite our rotating leadership timeline, FMIG is the largest and most active interest group at USU, with roughly half of all medical students participating in at least one event per year. Our student leaders design and execute events for students across all years—from skills labs and specialty panels to wellness events and networking opportunities. For first- and second-year students, programming aligns with systems-based learning modules and introduces the scope of family medicine. For third- and fourth-years, we focus on research support, residency guidance, and mentorship in the match process.

Student leaders take responsibility for brainstorming and planning events, coordinating speakers, securing spaces, and collecting feedback. We collaborate with other interest groups on cross-disciplinary events and create connections across military services through operational medicine programming. One student serves as the liaison to the AAFP and the Uniformed Services Academy of Family Physicians (USAFP), ensuring that our work remains nationally connected. Additionally, FMIG encompasses and supports affiliated groups like the Sports Medicine Interest Group and the Apollo Society (focused on the arts and humanism in

medicine), both of which are advised by family physicians and contribute to our shared mission.

Goals

Our FMIG exists to serve all USU students interested in community service, career development, and clinical education related to family medicine. Our mission is to promote awareness of family medicine's breadth and value—both within the Military Health System and in civilian contexts—and to create inclusive, engaging opportunities that reflect the heart of the specialty.

Our core goals include:

- Exposure: Introduce students to the full scope of family medicine, emphasizing its commitment to whole-person, continuous, and community-centered care.
- Military Medicine: Showcase the unique roles of family physicians in operational, readiness, and leadership settings across all services.
- Service and Well-being: Promote health, resilience, and service through community engagement and wellness-focused programming.
- Mentorship and Leadership: Empower students through near-peer mentoring, student-led planning, and leadership experiences that reflect the values of family medicine.

Faculty Advisor

For this award year, our FMIG was advised by Dr. [REDACTED], MD, FAAFP, a core faculty member in the Department of Family Medicine. Dr. [REDACTED] plays an integral role in the success of our group, offering mentorship and strategic guidance.

Dr. [REDACTED] supports all aspects of FMIG leadership: she helps connect us with speakers, aligns our programming with national trends in family medicine education, and ensures our events reflect the mission of both USU and the USAFP. She regularly reviews our event plans, provides institutional knowledge, and supports collaborative programming across departments. Dr. [REDACTED] is also a role model of what it means to be a family physician - her presence at our events reminds us of the impact and versatility we can have in this field.

Programs

Learning from Senior Medical Students Who Are Future Family Physicians

This initiative was created to help first- and second-year students explore family medicine through one of the most trusted and relatable sources: senior medical students. Many of us at USU are still deciding which specialty aligns with

our goals, and sometimes the best way to learn is by talking to peers who've just been in our shoes. This year, FMIG hosted two events that brought first- and second-year students together with fourth-years who recently matched into or were applying to family medicine. The events were designed to build mentorship between pre-clerkship students and fourth-years who chose family medicine, giving students firsthand insight into the specialty's culture, residency process, and career alignment. Our February event, Meet the Matchees, was a structured 90-minute panel that featured members of the Class of 2024 who had just matched into family medicine. During this panel, they shared their motivations for choosing FM, insights from their clerkships across the Military Health System, and tips for navigating the military match. Students asked about lifestyle, clinical diversity, and operational medicine roles, highlighting the real-world relevance of FM for future uniformed physicians. The second event was a more informal 4th-Year Mixer held at a senior student's home. FMIG student officers coordinated invitations and organized the food for dinner, while the fourth-year invited other Class of 2025 students and created a relaxed space for open conversation. This unstructured gathering made it easier for students to ask questions like, "When did you know FM was the right fit?" or "What did you do on your audition rotations?" Students who were unsure about family medicine said they left feeling curious and excited to learn more. One first-year even commented, "It was the first time I felt like I had a clear picture of what my future could look like." This was the first time we had an event like this, and we will plan to have something like it again in the future. Student leaders coordinated the logistics, recruited panelists and hosts, and aligned the timing of events with other academic and extracurricular activities. We gathered informal feedback after each event and were excited to hear that many attendees planned to attend future FMIG events or request shadowing with family physicians. These events help demystify the specialty and reinforce the value of family medicine through relatable, real-life experiences.

Demonstrating the Value of Family Medicine in the Military

As a military medical school, our students will go on to serve in unique and sometimes unpredictable environments, from humanitarian missions to special operations deployments. This four-part series highlighted how family medicine is deeply embedded in operational readiness, leadership, and full-spectrum care in the Military Health System. On June 11, we hosted an Operational Medicine Panel featuring four uniformed family physicians: Drs. James Chung (Navy), Megan Mahowald (Army), Roselyn Fuentes (Air Force), and Joey Perez (Public Health Service/Coast Guard). Students gained insight into how FM physicians deploy with special operations teams, lead humanitarian missions, and shape operational readiness across services. Each speaker brought a unique lens, discussing topics like leading trauma response teams, serving in austere environments, and advising commanders on medical readiness. Students were able to rotate through service-specific breakout rooms to ask deeper questions about career progression, fellowship options, and mentorship. On June 18, FMIG led a tour of the White House Medical Unit, where students met uniformed family physicians who serve on staff and care for the President, senior leaders, and White House staff. With 3-4 hours on site, we toured clinical spaces and heard about the day-to-day life, trust, and responsibility inherent in this prestigious assignment. Students learned that family physicians often serve as the President's personal doctor and staff key readiness roles. The experience gave us a powerful visual of how versatile family medicine can be, even at the highest levels of national service. In August, we partnered with the Operational Medicine Interest Group to bring in Dr. [REDACTED], a family physician who served as both a Battalion Surgeon and Flight Surgeon. Her experiences in Special Operations Forces helped students connect the dots between family medicine training and operational leadership. She discussed everything from combat medicine to physician resiliency. Finally, on October 23, FMIG held a panel titled "What is Family Medicine?" led by our USU family medicine faculty. Panelists shared powerful vignettes of continuity, leadership, OB care, team-based medicine, and overseas deployments. With slides framing the scope of FM and discussion grounded in lived experience, students came away inspired. Their reflections helped define FM for students

new to the specialty and reminded us of its foundational principles—continuity, community, and compassion. Across all events, FMIG leaders coordinated speakers, scheduled logistics, and advertising across student cohorts. Our faculty advisor ensured events complemented the academic calendar and service-specific needs. Survey feedback showed increased interest in family medicine as a career, and students valued seeing military family physicians in impactful leadership roles.

Scope of Clinical Care in Family Medicine

Family medicine is known for its clinical versatility. This year, FMIG hosted some hands-on workshops to showcase the scope of what family physicians do in both outpatient and operational settings. These events gave students practical exposure, built procedural confidence, and made the skillsets of family physicians feel tangible and accessible. Our first workshop on June 21 focused on Nutritional Counseling and was led by Dr. [REDACTED] (nutritionist/exercise scientist) and family physician, Dr. [REDACTED]. Students reviewed motivational interviewing principles and practiced counseling each other on nutrition goals using realistic cases. We ended with a group discussion about the barriers patients face and the vital role family physicians play in promoting long-term health and behavior change. After pairing up for a role-play exercise, the group debriefed on how to approach sensitive conversations and how family physicians build trust with patients around health behavior change. In September, we held a Cervical Exam Workshop using simulation models and a structured teaching model. Dr. [REDACTED] reviewed key intrapartum concepts like dilation, effacement, fetal station, and cervical consistency. Students practiced on models and debriefed in small groups, discussing how to perform exams respectfully and how cervical exams fit into family medicine maternity care scope. Faculty shared maternity care stories from clinical and operational contexts, connecting procedural skills with patient-centered care. On December 2, we co-hosted a Battlefield Acupuncture Workshop with the Integrative Medicine Interest Group. It was led by Dr. [REDACTED] (a family physician) and six other family medicine faculty at USU. This event taught students how to use auricular acupuncture for pain management, a technique developed by the Air Force and now widely practiced by military family physicians. After a review of evidence and safety, students practiced ear acupuncture techniques on a simulation model and then applied and received BFA under supervision, an unforgettable experience. It was one of the most talked-about events of the year. These were new workshops that we haven't routinely incorporated into our schedule of FMIG events. Each workshop gave students exposure to high-impact family medicine procedures and helped them see the clinical and cultural versatility of the specialty. They reflected the value of family medicine as hands-on, patient-centered, and whole-body focused. They also showed how FM physicians lead in diverse clinical areas—nutrition, OB, sports medicine, integrative medicine—without needing to specialize early. Informal event feedback showed increased confidence in clinical skills and appreciation for FM's procedural training. The goal is to keep empowering students with skills and confidence—while showing just how dynamic family medicine can be.

Lazy Ironman Challenge

The Lazy Ironman Challenge was our new wellness and community-building initiative of the year. Designed to promote physical fitness, resilience, and camaraderie across the USU community, this 30-day challenge invited participants to complete the total distances of an Ironman triathlon on their own schedule throughout the month of November. The event was spearheaded by [REDACTED], President of the Sports Medicine Interest Group, and coordinated by a joint FMIG-SMIG planning team. From concept to completion, student leaders devoted 40+ hours to shaping the challenge into an inclusive and high-energy campaign. This included working with USU legal counsel to ensure compliance, designing promotional materials and tracking tools, and securing custom t-shirts and stickers for all participants. The

branding and outreach helped generate campus-wide excitement—and helped reframe fitness as a shared goal rather than an individual burden. We called it “lazy” not to diminish the effort, but to emphasize that completing an Ironman isn’t about speed or competition. It’s about consistency, goal-setting, and showing up for your health even when the schedule is tight. As future physicians, and current military officers-in-training, we wanted to model the kind of sustainable wellness we hope to inspire in our patients and teams. Over the month-long event: 67 members of the USU community participated (including medical and graduate students, faculty, and staff) 30 participants completed the full Lazy Ironman As a group, we logged 1586 miles run, 4683 miles biked, and 119 miles swum To build community during the challenge, we encouraged students to share photos, progress updates, and motivational messages in our group chat and through social media. Many students trained in groups, took part in accountability check-ins, and even organized weekend “Ironman meet-ups” to complete parts of the challenge together. The Lazy Ironman exemplified family medicine values in action: whole-person health, preventive care, and community support. It also fostered leadership, as students learned how to mobilize an interdisciplinary team, handle event logistics, and drive cultural change through example. Most importantly, it gave participants a sense of personal accomplishment—especially for those who had never considered themselves “triathletes.” One student shared, “This was the first time I realized I could take small steps toward a huge goal and actually get there.” The challenge ended with a celebration event, where we recognized all participants and gave out completion stickers and shirts. Feedback from across the school was overwhelmingly positive, and many departments asked if it could become an annual tradition. We’re proud of how this initiative brought the USU community together and inspired a new conversation around health, motivation, and balance in the lives of future military physicians. This event was the highlight of the year.

Student Scholarship and Mentorship through the USAFP Annual Meeting

Another focus of the FMIG was student engagement in research with family physicians at the Uniformed Services Academy of Family Physicians (USAFP) Annual Meeting. In March 2025, over 31 USU medical students, including many FMIG members and four students from the Enlisted to Medical Degree Preparatory Program (EMDP2), traveled to the conference to present original scholarship, attend clinical and operational workshops, and learn from uniformed family physicians across the services. FMIG student leaders worked closely with faculty mentors and the Department of Family Medicine to support the abstract development and submission process. Preparation began in late fall 2024, when the FMIG coordinated informational sessions, writing workshops, and faculty-student pairings to guide early-stage ideas through poster or podium-ready presentations. The collaboration extended across all years, with third- and fourth-year students mentoring junior presenters, including EMDP2 students—post-baccalaureate scholars on the path to becoming future military physicians. Several USU medical students were accepted into USAFP’s Research Competition, along with family medicine residents and staff. Among the presenters were four first- and second-year students, who stood out not only for their academic rigor but also for their courage in stepping into a professional conference environment so early in their training. EMDP2 participants were mentored by FMIG leaders and family medicine faculty throughout the process. For many of them, this was their first exposure to academic medicine, and presenting alongside medical students and physicians was a powerful validation of their journey. One participant reflected, “This made me feel like I belonged in medicine.” The USAFP meeting offered a wide range of family medicine exposure—from maternity care workshops and wilderness medicine training to discussions on leadership in deployed environments. Students attended lectures, networked with residents and residency faculty, and even met past FMIG alumni now serving as military family physicians. Faculty advisors, including Dr. Kelly and others from the department, provided on-site mentorship and debriefed with students to help translate their experience into future goals. FMIG played a central coordination role: organizing early abstract planning meetings, helping to match students with mentors, and keeping track of logistics and deadlines. Student leaders also created a shared conference group chat, coordinated social meet-ups, and ensured everyone had access to funding resources and guidance for travel. In total, more than 30 scholarly presentations were

delivered by USU students, many of them closely tied to family medicine topics like behavioral health, patient education, leadership in primary care, and operational readiness. This event showed our FMIG's commitment not just to exposure, but to active engagement in the family medicine community at a regional level. Our biggest success was creating an inclusive environment that supported students at every stage—from those exploring family medicine for the first time to those committed to matching into FM residency. The multi-layered mentorship, peer support, and leadership shown through this project are already shaping our planning for next year's conference. This program reflected family medicine's best values: teamwork, scholarship, mentorship, and service.