

Diversity

in the Department of Surgery

DOS Residency Programs Reflect on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Soon it will be 75 years since the first surgery residency class graduated from our Department. Much has changed in all these years; our department has its own story of where we started, where we are today and our goals for the future. In this article, we reflect on the changing face of surgical education and the benefit of diversity and inclusion in improving how we fulfill our mission.

Where We Started

Like all other residency programs in the country, from 1945 to 1980 the makeup of our single program was quite homogenous: nearly 100% men and 100% white. In the 1980s the composition of the residency program started gradually to change. As the statistics shown above reflect the Department's residency programs are improving in gender balance, and in some areas are approaching an equal number of women and men.



Dr. **Carlos Pellegrini**, who became Department Chair in 1993, introduced a concerted, and multi-faceted effort to build diversity in the department through several initiatives including establishing our Department of Surgery Diversity Council. He also generously supported a standing annual fellowship program with the **Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS)** whereby several of our faculty and

residents are sponsored by the Department to attend the SBAS annual meeting. In 2015, the Department of Surgery established the **Pellegrini Diversity Visiting Student Internships Program**, supported by contributions from Dr. Jorge Reyes. This program provides the necessary financial support to allow medical students from diverse backgrounds to complete a sub-internship with us, providing the opportunity to explore programmatic fit, with the hope that they consider us for their training. The Pellegrini **Diversity Sub-Internship** has served as a model for more than ten other

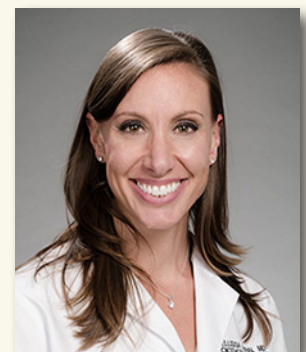
UW residency programs and this year we are excited to welcome an alumnae of this program, Elina Serrano (UCSF), as an intern in the next class of General Surgery residents!

Where We Are Today



Since becoming Chair, Dr. **Douglas Wood** has continued to emphasize the value of an environment that welcomes and fosters diversity. He has listened to feedback about appearances, about our UWMC Department of Surgery hallway looks to others, and the unintended absence of a message that diversity is a part of our core values. With input from faculty and residents, our hallway is changing, emphasizing

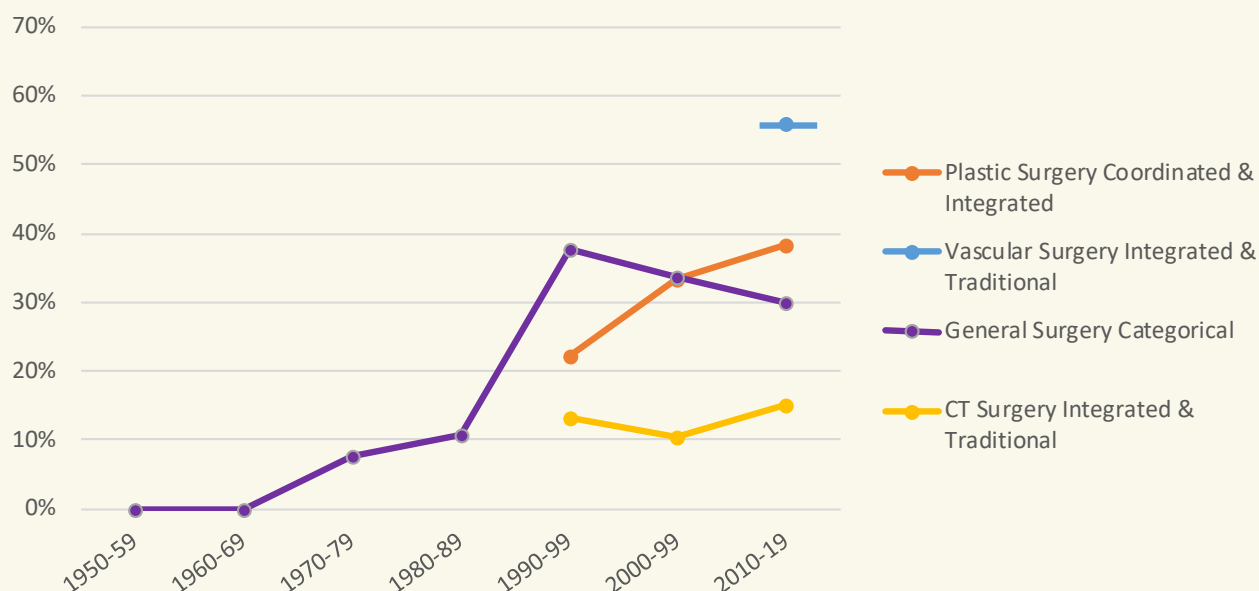
the increasing diversity of our graduating chief residents and the incredible artwork of Andrea Gahl. Although this renovation is only an appearance change on the surface, it is also aspirational, demonstrating progress, but also continued room for improvement in how our faculty and residents can best reflect the people that we all care for, and can be the better as a department in the process. This project is in nearing completion, and we hope that those visiting our hallways will be inspired and recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in the Department of Surgery.



To further extend the work into Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Wood also established the **Department of Surgery Women's Council**, focused on challenges specific to women in surgery. A related, resident-initiated group was recently started by Dr. **Mohini Dasari**, (top left), General Surgery R2 and Dr. **Melissa Herrin**, (top right), Cardiothoracic Surgery R2. The UW Women in Surgery group is

Diversity

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Percent of Department of Surgery residency trainees that are women, 1950–present

focused on supporting and empowering residents and faculty to promote gender equity in surgery. They have already demonstrated scholarship and impact that improves the department and our environment for all of us; what improvements are identified clearly improve work and life for both men and women. The Women's Council has evaluated gender differences in various barriers to career progression, highlighted in oral presentations and paper submissions. They have proposed parental leave guidelines currently under consideration and have advocated for better access to breast feeding stations within UWMC. The Women's Council has already had an impact, not just on our department, but also, by example, more widely within UW Medicine, and the serve as an inspiration for prospective resident applicants who are considering UW Surgery.

Change is also happening in our educational curricula, with some of our residency programs incorporating lectures addressing social determinants of health, and issues of racial and social inequities in medical care.

Our Goals for the Future

We have the responsibility to embrace, and nurture diversity and inclusion. It is wonderful that so many talented candidates chose UW Department of Surgery in recent years. And, we want to better understand what we are doing that has promoted diversity. One of the next steps of the Diversity Council is to distinguish the attributes, experiences, and other intangible items that most influenced our residents choosing UW. We hope to feed back this information to the Division of Education and the department as a whole. The goal for our department is to continue creating an environment where all residents experience a true sense of belonging, feel valued, and can reach their highest potential. Hopefully the many efforts we've made over the years and continue to make will provide ongoing success.