

# HARKINS' CORNER



Dr. Nicole Zern

Dear UW Surgical Community,

This academic year is off to an incredible start with another successful Harkins Symposium for Resident Education and Harkins Society Alumni Reception at the American College of Surgeons (ACS)! Each year the Harkins Society recognizes the professional achievements and humanitarian services of one of our outstanding members. This year, nominated by Dr. **Farhood Farjah**, Endowed Chair in Lung Cancer Research and Associate Professor, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, and selected unanimously by our society leadership, the Harkins Society honored Dr. **Valerie Rusch** as our Distinguished Alumnus. She was also honored as the 2019 Strauss lecturer. Dr. Rusch completed her general and cardiothoracic surgery residencies at the University of Washington (UW). She was then a faculty member at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center before returning to the UW where she was on faculty for six years. She then joined the faculty at MSKCC where she has been since and currently holds the titles of Vice Chair of Clinical Research and Minor Family Chair in Intrathoracic Cancers. Dr. Rusch is the incoming President of the ACS where she has served on and Chaired the Board of Regents. Quotes from several Harkins member who were her co-residents, residents, or students:

"Dr. Rusch was my junior by two years during residency and even by then she had become a recognized leader. Her entire career has been one of leadership and superb patient care. She sets high standards for those around her but continually exceeds them for herself." -Dr. **Ron Maier**, Professor and Chief, Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care

"I remember Dr. Rusch as having tremendous ownership of her patients when she was the chief. She was always calm and in control regardless of the mayhem, codes, etc around her. Even then, the staff and patients deferred to her." -Dr. **Mika Sinanan**, Professor, Division of General Surgery

"Dr. Rusch's clinic was my favorite clinic to attend out of all of them in 5 years of training. She really went out of her way to make sure the resident's learned something, and often many things, from every patient she saw in clinic." -Dr. **Mark Meissner**, Professor, Division of Vascular Surgery

The annual banquet which follows the Harkins Symposium was held at Ivar's Salmon House on South Lake Union, during which we honored the 2019 Harkins Society Inductees and celebrated with fellow alumni including Dr. Rusch, pictured below with the inductees.



2019 Harkins Society Inductees: Matt Bartek, Navin Bhatia, Swaroop Bommareddi, Mert Calis, Brian Cook, Peter Edpao, Katherine Impastato, Colette Inaba, Abbie Jensen, Sarah Kolnik, Katie Liu, Vim Mahadev, Stephanie Mason, Shane Morrison, Trenton Morton, Amer Nassar, Anna Ohlsson, Rachel Payne, Lela Posey, Marko Rojnica, Joel Sternbach, Rebecca Ur, Francys Verdial, Jay Zhu

This fall also marked our annual alumni reception at the American College of Surgeons. This year we celebrated outgoing ACS President, Dr. **Ron Maier**. As always, our clinical fourth year general surgery residents were in attendance (pictured below with Dr. **Douglas Wood**), as well as other current and previous residents and fellows from our surgical training programs. We hope you will be able to join us next year in Chicago!



We continue to transition the structure of the Harkins Alumni Society to an automatic membership upon completion of any surgical training program at the UW, and have eliminated annual dues. As part of this effort, we are working to establish and maintain an inclusive email listserv to better communicate about our Harkins Society events. Please stay tuned for more updates later this year!

We hope to see you all next fall for the Harkins Symposium and in Chicago for the American College of Surgeons Reception!

Sincerely,

**Nicole K. Zern MD, FACS**  
Harkins' Society President