



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

Building Community in Research: Working together and looking out for one another



The HIV, ID and Global Medicine division unveiled their new Pride Hall office signage with a ribbon-cutting ceremony (September 4, 2024).

Research is a core pillar of the ZSFG Department of Medicine, and there are many exciting initiatives underway to make our research community even stronger and more cohesive.

Last year, most researchers moved into Pride Hall, bringing together basic, clinical and translational labs together for the first time. “Being under the same roof allows so many wonderful things to happen,” said Peter W. Hunt, MD, ZSFG Department of Medicine Associate Chief for Research and Professor of Medicine in the Division of Experimental Medicine. “I bump into people and have hallway discussions about science every day. People eat lunch together in the

Town Center, talking and enjoying each other’s company, and we hold impromptu events there to celebrate retirements and other milestones. There’s a palpable sense of community.”

That fuels collaboration. “For example, on the second floor there are multiple labs from different departments, and they have meetings to share what they’re working on,” said Dr. Hunt. “They also share space and equipment, which naturally brings communities together.”

Dr. Hunt is helping the community navigate challenges, particularly the space limitations associated with Pride Hall’s smaller footprint.

He worked with partners across UCSF to secure additional research space at 499 Illinois Street at Mission Bay. In January, nearly 60 people will move to their new home, including both “wet” (lab-based) and “dry” (computer-based) researchers. Many are malaria and tuberculosis investigators from the ZSFG Division of HIV, Infectious Diseases and Global Medicine and the Division of Experimental Medicine.

The 499 Illinois building also houses many Chan Zuckerberg Biohub investigators with complementary research interests, which will support natural synergies. “We hope this will build connections we can grow further, and anticipate



those divisions will rotate meetings between the General and Mission Bay to retain cohesiveness,” said Dr. Hunt. “It’s a really nice space overlooking the water, with both outdoor space where people can gather and an auditorium for conferences.”

Drawing on lessons learned from Pride Hall, Dr. Hunt ensured everybody was represented in the 499 Illinois build-out planning group. “We had to make some compromises, but everyone was heard,” he said. That inclusive process shaped the balance of wet and dry lab space, as well as ensuring appropriate placement of each piece of equipment.

Give and Take

Dr. Hunt currently leads efforts to improve space utilization at Pride Hall, where more than 400 people in the ZSFG Department of Medicine now work. “Some groups still don’t have enough space to function optimally, while other spaces are relatively underutilized, with people only coming in once or twice a week,” he said. He and his colleagues distributed a survey to gather information about unmet space needs, and led a space inventory to guide redistribution of this precious resource.

“That redistribution will be based on clear metrics and a personnel-to-space ratio,” said Dr. Hunt. “Everyone may want more space, but gathering data helps center our discussions on something that’s quantifiable and verifiable.” This proactive approach supports good stewardship of existing space, which will also help when advocating for

additional space from the Vice Dean’s Office.

Dr. Hunt is championing a cultural shift, which requires building trust over time. “Hoarding space is the old way,” he said. “When there’s a limited footprint, we simply can’t afford to have some groups not have enough space to do their work, and others holding onto vacant space for long periods of time. We need to think as a community: how do we work together to meet everyone’s needs? Space needs may grow or contract over time. One division may give up unutilized space today, but a few years later when they get more grants, another division helps them out.”

It remains a work in progress, but Dr. Hunt continually solicits feedback to troubleshoot new issues, and is encouraged by the collaborative spirit. “You have to have ingenuity and resilience to end up in science, particularly at UCSF,” he said. “People are adapting, overcoming challenges, and focusing on positive things in this space.”

Becoming Even Stronger, Together

Dr. Hunt is advancing research in other ways, and looks forward to partnering in these efforts with Lucy Kornblith, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery in the ZSFG Division of General Surgery. Dr. Kornblith is the inaugural Director of Research for UCSF at ZSFG, as part of the Vice Dean’s Office.

“Lucy has done both clinical and bench research, and is a problem-solver who listens and comes up with fair, practical solutions,” said Dr. Hunt. “As



Peter W. Hunt, MD

leader of the biospecimen working group for the Pride Hall move, she managed the challenging task of figuring out how to decompress freezer storage on campus by setting up offsite freezer barns at Oyster Point.”

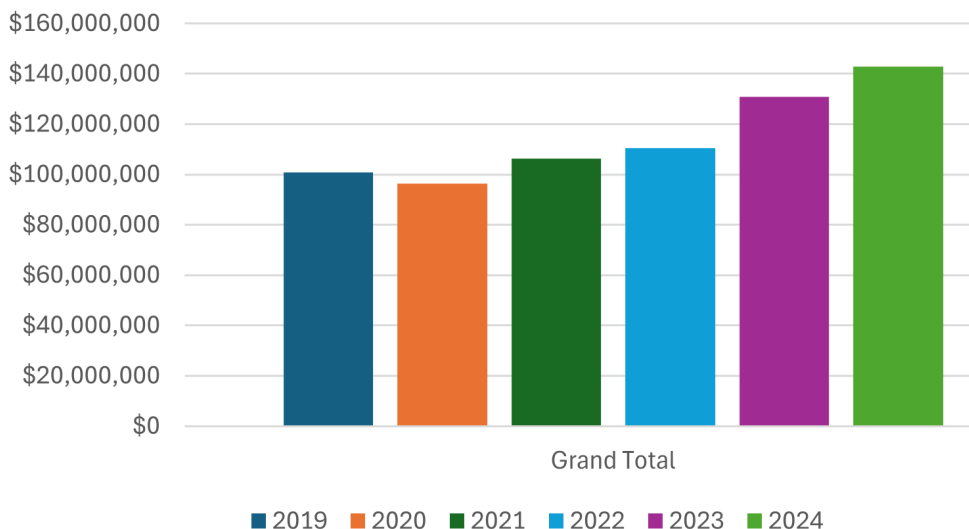
Some upcoming initiatives include:

- *Improving data access:* The 2019 rollout of the Epic electronic medical record (EMR) was a huge advance for patient care. However, ZSFG and the San Francisco Health Network purchased a more basic version of Epic which is less suited for research. It requires a more labor-intensive process to de-identify patient health information to make it useable for research. In addition, there are concerns about maintaining privacy of personal health information.



Pride Hall brought the UCSF Tobacco Center bench and clinical research teams closer together: (left to right) Lawrence Chan, Edgar Castellanos, Armando Barraza, Lisa Lawrence, Trisha Mao, Tina Bello, Sayani Mallick

Research Revenue - Medicine ZSFG by fiscal year



SPOTLIGHT

Monica Gandhi, MD, HIV, ID, & Global Medicine received the 2024 Lifetime Achievement in Mentoring Award at UCSF.

Shreya Patel, MD, Gastroenterology, has been appointed the Associate Chief Medical Officer (ACMO) of Specialty Care and Diagnostics at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center.

Lisa Winston, MD, HIV, ID, & Global Medicine, has been appointed the Associate Chief Medical Officer (ACMO) of Med/ Surg Care Areas at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center.

Leonard Telesca, will be joining the Department of Medicine at ZSFG as our new Director of Administration and Finance, effective October 14, 2024.

7th Annual Nova 12 SF Walk - The Nova 12 San Francisco Breast Cancer Walk is on Saturday, October 26, 2024 - We walk 12 miles as a community to represent the 12% of women diagnosed with breast cancer. Funds raised directly benefit ZSFG's most vulnerable patients living with breast cancer.

The Division of the Center for Vulnerable Populations has been renamed the **Division of Health Equity and Society (DHES)** and encompasses: the **Action Research Center for Health Equity** (formerly known as the Center for Vulnerable Populations), the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, and Amend. [Learn more here.](#)

The **SPIRIT of DOM Award** recognizes staff members who exemplify the UCSF PRIDE Values and make the DOM and UCSF better places to work. [Submit your nominations by Wednesday, October 9.](#)

“Unlike the Parnassus campus, our EMR doesn’t have the same bells and whistles to facilitate this process,” said Dr. Hunt. “ZSFG investigators’ access to information is piecemeal, often with long waits to start new research projects. It’s an equity issue not just for investigators, but for science, since there are clear research gaps about the diverse, less wealthy populations we serve at ZSFG.” He is working to identify the best strategy to move forward, which might include convening a ZSFG-wide advocacy group to articulate needs and potential solutions to the Vice Dean’s Office and the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

of Hematology/Oncology in particular has some really good ideas,” he said.

- **Further strengthen the ZSFG research community:** Dr. Hunt wants to keep facilitating new connections among the diverse ZSFG research community. Ideas include contributing to a seminar series, holding scientific “speed dating” lunches, and curating five-minute flash talks to help researchers learn what their neighbors are working on.

He also wants to convene affinity groups of investigators with common interests who might not otherwise meet, such as PhDs from different divisions, people interested in implementation science, and researchers studying immune-based therapeutics in disparate fields like infectious diseases, oncology and rheumatology. “We’d like to create opportunities for people to meet and get exposed to each other’s work,” he said.

“We already have a strong, interconnected community, but we can become even stronger,” said Dr. Hunt. “It’s exciting to have new opportunities to do that, now that many of us are together in Pride Hall and we’re also connected to our new Mission Bay satellite campus. The most gratifying thing is seeing people work together to address challenges. I want to foster an environment where we work together and look out for one another.”

Elizabeth Chur

Editors: Neil Powe, Jenny Fowler, Ali Cunningham

- **Optimizing clinical research:** Pride Hall includes the Community and Clinical Research Center, where research participants fill out questionnaires, complete interviews and provide biospecimens like blood and urine. The Dean’s Office is subsidizing the center’s initial operational costs at Pride Hall, but will soon begin charging an hourly rate to use the space. “Because full-time staff are needed to manage the center, if a lot of investigators are utilizing the space, the [per-hour] cost will be less than if it’s underutilized,” said Dr. Hunt. He is collaborating across ZSFG to maximize efficient use of this resource.
- **Streamlining clinical study approvals:** Currently, research applications require sign-off from multiple departments and sometimes experience significant delays. Dr. Hunt and his colleagues are working to make this process more efficient. “There are lots of ways to rethink the process, and the Division

