

DISTINGUISHED AWARDEE CITATIONS

SHARONNE N. HAYES, MD, FACC

Bernadine Healy Leadership in Women's Cardiovascular Disease

Dr. Hayes' exceptional leadership and significant contributions to cardiology, as well as her pioneering and unwavering commitment to improving and advancing women's heart health over her distinguished 35-year career, make her an ideal candidate to receive this year's Bernadine Healy Award for Leadership in Women's Cardiovascular Disease.

As professor of cardiovascular medicine at Mayo Clinic and founder of their Women's Heart Clinic in 1998, one of the first specialized programs of its kind, Dr. Hayes has demonstrated exceptional leadership in advancing women's cardiovascular care. She established the Spontaneous Coronary Artery Disease (SCAD) Clinic in 2018, where she revolutionized patient care through innovative research approaches, pioneering the use of social media and patient-initiated research to provide insight into the pathophysiology of SCAD, which predominantly affects women.

Her significant research contributions, documented in more than 200 peer-reviewed publications, have fundamentally advanced the understanding of sex-specific aspects of cardiovascular disease. Notably, she authored the American Heart Association's Scientific Statement on SCAD. Moreover, Dr. Hayes has led global efforts to advance the science and practice of sex- and gender-based cardiovascular medicine, serving in leadership and advisory roles for the ACC and numerous other organizations such as the National Women's Health Resource Center, WomenHeart, and the World Heart Federation.

As Mayo Clinic's founding Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (2010-2020), she implemented systematic changes that have improved both health care delivery and professional opportunities for women and underrepresented groups in medicine. Her recent work includes leading initiatives addressing health care disparities, promoting women in cardiology, championing patient-centered care models, studying pregnancy-associated cardiovascular conditions, and developing sex-specific treatment guidelines.

Dr. Hayes embodies the qualities that Dr. Bernadine Healy championed, including excellence in clinical care, groundbreaking research, dedicated mentorship, and transformative leadership. Her work has not only advanced the field of women's cardiovascular health, but has created lasting change in how clinicians understand, diagnose, and treat cardiovascular disease in women.

Pamela S. Douglas, MD, MACC
Jennifer H. Mieres, MD, FACC*
Nanette K. Wenger, MD, MACC

**ACC wishes to thank the nominator and supporters of our Distinguished Awardees as noted at the conclusion of each citation. A * denotes the nominator.*

LAXMI S. MEHTA, MD, FACC

Distinguished Fellow

Dr. Mehta's extraordinary service to the ACC and outstanding leadership in advancing the College's mission across multiple domains makes her most deserving of the 2026 ACC Distinguished Fellow Award.

Dr. Mehta holds several leadership roles at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center including Professor of Clinical Medicine, Director of Preventative Cardiology and Women's Cardiovascular Health, Chief Well-Being Leader and Faculty Director, and as the Sarah Ross Soter Endowed Chair in Women's Cardiovascular Health.

Dr. Mehta's service and leadership roles within the ACC showcase her ability to drive meaningful change and inspire others. As chair of the Membership Committee, she has led initiatives to strengthen member engagement and support clinician well-being. Her prior role as chair of the Board of Governors Task Force on Wellness and chair of the Board of Trustees Task Force on Clinician Well-Being resulted in transformative programs; notably, Dr. Mehta was first author of a joint statement on clinician well-being, co-published in several major journals.

As previous chair of the Core Curriculum for ACC Annual Scientific Sessions and chair of the Educational Standards and Outcomes Committee, Dr. Mehta has shaped ACC's educational offerings and ensured their quality and relevance. Her work on numerous ACC writing committees, including the ACC/AHA Professionalism and Ethics Consensus Conference, helped establish standards for cardiovascular care and professional conduct. Importantly, Dr. Mehta has helped advance ACC's commitment to diversity and inclusion, serving on the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion and on various committees addressing gender equity in cardiology. As a past Governor of the Ohio Chapter of the ACC and now member of the Ohio Chapter Leadership Council, Dr. Mehta has effectively brought her voice to ACC membership.

Dr. Mehta's service to the ACC has been characterized by innovation, dedication and effectiveness. She has consistently demonstrated the ability to identify important issues, build consensus and implement solutions that advance ACC and the field of cardiology. Her work exemplifies the highest ideals of ACC's service and leadership, making her exceptionally qualified for the ACC Distinguished Fellow award.

Sandra J. Lewis, MD, FACC
Jennifer H. Mieres, MD, FACC*
Andrew P. Miller, MD, FACC

KIM GUIBONE, APRN, DNP, FACC

Distinguished Cardiovascular Team Member

Dr. Guibone's dedication to team-based cardiovascular care, outstanding contributions to ACC initiatives, and impressive work focused on advancing cardiovascular nursing, health care and patient advocacy make her the most deserving candidate to receive the 2026 Distinguished Cardiovascular Team Member Award.

Dr. Guibone is an acute care nurse practitioner who holds a Doctorate of Nursing Practice and Master in Nursing Executive Leadership. As a structural heart clinical program manager at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center since 2011, she played a pivotal role in developing and expanding the structural heart program. She also developed the first clinical pathway for nurses at New England Medical Center (now Tufts), introducing systematic approaches to their nursing practice. At Georgetown University Medical Center, she designed the institution's initial nursing clinical ladder to facilitate professional development and recognize clinical expertise.

Dr. Guibone has had significant engagement and leadership in ACC activities and aligned her work with its Mission and strategic objectives, sharing experiences from her global cardiovascular care efforts. She has served on many ACC committees, including as cardiovascular team liaison of the Massachusetts Chapter Leadership Council and member of the CV Team Chapter Representatives Working Group and Lifelong Learning Oversight Committee. She has also been active in several other committees and work groups, including the ACC's Cardiovascular Team Member Section and the NCDR STS/ACC/TCT Registry Steering Subcommittee. Notably, she has served as the cardiovascular team content expert for the ACC Annual Scientific Session Program Committee since 2017, including as the Cardiovascular Team Lead for ACC.24 and ACC.25.

She was also selected to participate in ACC's Emerging Faculty programs, and became the first advanced practice provider to receive its W. Proctor Harvey Young Teacher Award.

As a gifted clinician with exceptional administrative and leadership skills, Dr. Guibone's many contributions at ACC set her apart as the most deserving of the Cardiovascular Team Distinguished Award.

Kathryn Berlacher, MD, MS, FACC
Douglas E. Drachman, MD, FACC
Jane A. Linderbaum, MS, ARNP, FPCNA, FACC*

JEFFREY T. KUVIN, MD, FACC

Distinguished Educator

Dr. Kuvin's numerous outstanding contributions to cardiovascular training, proven innovation in the field of medical education, and visionary leadership in the development and growth of the College's diverse educational portfolio make him an ideal candidate to receive the 2026 ACC Distinguished Educator Award.

Dr. Kuvin has held prominent academic positions, including Professor and Chair of Cardiology at the Zucker School of Medicine/Northwell and previously Professor of Medicine at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and Tufts University School of Medicine. As an advocate for education in his hospital leadership roles, Dr. Kuvin increased prominence in research and education while strengthening the clinical program at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.

During Dr. Kuvin's 17-year tenure at Tufts Medical Center, including as Director of Cardiovascular Education and Fellowship Training, he developed and implemented a comprehensive curriculum comprising didactic lectures, bedside teaching, simulation, flipped classrooms and research symposia. Notably, he received the Excellence in Teaching award numerous times at Tufts.

In his current position as Executive Director and Senior Vice President for Northwell Health, Cardiology, he has unified and grown the academic department while fostering an environment of continuous learning.

Dr. Kuvin's contributions to ACC's educational portfolio have been wide-reaching and impactful, including being the primary driver for the development of the ACC In-Training Examination, now used in nearly every cardiovascular fellowship program as the standard for trainee competency assessment. He also played a critical role in designing and implementing ACC's Maintenance of Certification program in partnership with the American Board of Internal Medicine. In addition, he founded and directed the popular ACC Boot Camp for Cardiology Fellowship Program Directors and Coordinators: Educating the Educators meeting, and previously chaired the ACC's Lifelong Learning Oversight Committee. As president of the American Board of Cardiovascular Medicine, Dr. Kuvin, continues to advocate for the cardiovascular medicine specialty and need for personalized, practice-integrated alternatives for clinical competency assessment.

As a recent ACC Board of Trustees member, he remains a passionate, committed advocate for education and personalized lifelong learning. Based on his well-documented contributions and excellence in all aspects of academic cardiovascular medicine, Dr. Kuvin is most deserving of the 2026 ACC Distinguished Educator Award.

Katie Berlacher, MD, MS, FACC

Edward T. A. Fry, MD, MACC*

Athena Poppas, MD, MACC

BINH AN P. PHAN, MD, FACC

Gifted Teacher

Dr. Phan is a visionary educator whose ongoing contributions to cardiovascular education, academic leadership and learner development have profoundly shaped the future of cardiovascular medicine, making him the ideal recipient of the 2026 ACC Gifted Teacher Award.

As the current Clinical Professor of Medicine and Associate Program Director of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Cardiology Fellowship Program and past Co-Director of the Cardiology Fellowship Program at Loyola University, Dr. Phan has been instrumental in shaping fellowship training. Notably, UCSF fellows honored him with the Joel Karliner Cardiology Faculty Teaching Award in 2017.

At the residency level, Dr. Phan served as a cardiology subspecialty education advisor at Loyola University and developed a structured cardiology curriculum for internal medicine residents. In recognition of his excellence in that role, he received Loyola's Attending of the Year Award for three consecutive years. For his contributions to resident cardiovascular education and guiding the next generation of cardiologists at UCSF, he also received the 2017 Floyd C. Rector Jr. Housestaff Teaching Award. Dr. Phan's outstanding skill as a medical educator has been widely recognized at UCSF, where he received multiple teaching awards and was elected to deliver multiple prestigious lectures.

Dr. Phan also serves as director of the airway, blood and circulation foundational sciences block for first-year UCSF medical students, where he teaches and leads curriculum development. He gives formal lectures to students on internal medicine clerkships and offers countless hours of informal bedside cardiovascular teaching as well. Also noteworthy, Dr. Phan helped found the cardiology interest group at UCSF for medical students and co-founded Cardiac Camp, a program introducing high school students to cardiovascular medicine at UCSF.

Dr. Phan previously served on the American Board of Internal Medicine's Cardiovascular Medicine Board Exam Item Writing Task Force and was Co-Chair of the UCSF Advances in Heart Disease Conference. He has given numerous lectures, seminars, and invited presentations and written multiple publications. He is also a reviewer for two journals.

Because of Dr. Phan's sustained impact on cardiovascular education, excellence in teaching, and compassionate mentorship, he is an outstanding recipient of this award.

Michelle Albert, MD, MPH, FACC*

Catherine M. Otto, MD, FACC

Anjali Thakkar, MD, MBA, FACC

MICHAEL R. ZILE, MD, FACC

Distinguished Mentor

Throughout his remarkable 40-year career as a leading heart failure clinician and scientist, Dr. Zile has consistently demonstrated a tireless dedication to mentoring numerous physicians and cardiovascular care team members across a spectrum of professional activities, shaping the careers of current and future leaders in cardiovascular medicine. Thus, Dr. Zile is a more than deserving recipient of this year's Distinguished Mentor Award.

Dr. Zile is Distinguished University Professor of Medicine at Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and holds the Charles Ezra Daniel Endowed Chair in Cardiology. He is also Chief Medical Officer for the Low Country Veterans Research Organization, and Director of Cardiology at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. Specifically, Dr. Zile is a recognized leader in the areas of cardiac function, congestive heart failure, diastolic heart failure, and valvular heart disease. With an impressive portfolio exceeding 500 peer-reviewed publications and a long history of successfully guiding numerous trainees and faculty members toward research careers, he has clearly demonstrated a commitment to mentorship and collaboration.

Dr. Zile has won multiple awards for his research, mentoring, and leadership, the latest being the 2022 MUSC Research Faculty Mentoring Award. He was previously recognized with the highest VA research accolade, the William S. Middleton Award, for his immense contributions to heart failure research over several decades.

As a mentor, he exerts maximal effort and vigor as a fierce advocate, cheerleader, and critic, with an unmatched work ethic to his mentees, including 17 graduate students, 19 fellows, and 15 early career faculty. He always has time for his many mentees, passing along his wealth of experience and guiding them in the practical aspects of being a physician.

Dr. Zile's dedication and commitment as a cardiovascular clinician, researcher, teacher, and mentor throughout his lengthy career make him most deserving of the ACC Distinguished Mentor Award.

Catalin F. Baicu, PhD
Kristine Y. DeLeon-Pennell, PhD
Michele L. Esposito, MD, FACC
Brian Houston, MD, FACC*
Jean Marie Ruddy, MD
Daniel N. Silverman, MD

JOSEPH C. WU, MD, PHD, FACC

Distinguished Scientist (Basic Domain)

Dr. Wu's unique scientific achievements in the domain of basic science and cardiovascular research and his seminal contributions advancing scientific knowledge in cardiovascular medicine make him most deserving of the ACC Distinguished Scientist Award in the Basic Domain..

Dr. Wu is Director of Stanford Cardiovascular Institute and the Simon H. Stertzer, MD, Endowed Professor of Medicine and Radiology at Stanford University School of Medicine. As an innovative physician-scientist, his research career spanning 20 years has been dedicated to making fundamental discoveries in cardiovascular medicine, particularly in the areas of disease modeling, genomics-epigenomics, precision and regenerative medicine, and new alternative methodologies for drug discovery. Importantly, Dr. Wu and colleagues have made innovative use of patient-derived inducible pluripotent stem cells to model cardiac disease, allowing for the study of individual patient response and transforming precision medicine.

The groundbreaking scholarly work of Dr. Wu and colleagues consists of more than 650 publications (415 original research manuscripts) in leading journals, with a noteworthy H-index of 143 on Google Scholar and recognition as being in the top 0.1% of highly cited researchers in Web of Science (2018-2024).

Additionally, Dr. Wu has made a significant commitment to promoting STEM to the younger generation, serving as the principal investigator of several training grants to mentor future researchers and clinicians. Notably, 60 of his former postdoctoral fellows are now faculty in the U.S. and abroad.

For his innovative research, Dr. Wu has received numerous prestigious awards, including the NIH Director's New Innovator Award (2008), Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists & Engineers (2010), and AHA Distinguished Scientist Award (2018). Dr. Wu also served as AHA President (2023-2024). He currently serves on the FDA Cellular, Tissue, and Gene Therapies Advisory Committee and the Keystone Symposia Scientific Board of Directors.

Dr. Wu's exceptional leadership, innovative contributions to basic science research, wealth of published scientific manuscripts in the field of cardiovascular medicine, and dedication to advancing cardiovascular science make him an outstanding recipient for the ACC Distinguished Scientist Award in the Basic Domain.

Robert A. Harrington, MD, FACC
Jagat Narula, MD, PhD, MACC*
Clyde W. Yancy, MD, MSc, MACC

ALLAN L. KLEIN, MD, FACC

Distinguished Scientist (Clinical Domain)

Dr. Klein's outstanding contributions to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the clinical science domain and his innovative achievements, leadership, and service in the field of cardiovascular medicine make him most deserving of the 2026 ACC Distinguished Scientist Award in the Clinical Domain.

Dr. Klein has been a staff cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic since 1989. He is currently Director of the Center for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Pericardial Diseases and Director of Imaging Research at the Cleveland Clinic. He is also Professor of Medicine at the Lerner College of Medicine, Case Western University.

Dr. Klein's impressive scholarly activity consists of more than 475 publications, with an H-index of 74 on Google Scholar. Two of his papers have garnered over 1,000 citations each. He has edited multiple textbooks on cardiovascular imaging, shaped clinical practice through guideline development, and served as principal investigator for numerous clinical trials.

During Dr. Klein's 30 years as a clinical investigator, he has redefined the clinical approach to cardioversion and the evaluation and management of patients with pericardial disease. Notably, he served as Vice Chair of the 2025 ACC Expert Consensus Statement on the Diagnosis and Management of Pericarditis. He has also made important contributions to the understanding of diastolic dysfunction and was a key member of several American Society of Echocardiography (ASE) guidelines, including the 2025 Recommendations for the Evaluation of Left Ventricular Diastolic Function by Echocardiography and for Heart Failure With Preserved Ejection Fraction Diagnosis. Importantly, he was past president of ASE (2016-2017) and is currently president of the National Board of Echocardiography.

Dr. Klein has been an impactful teacher and mentor to many cardiology fellows who became leaders in cardiovascular imaging. He was honored with the AHA Laennec Clinician/Educator Lecture Award in 2024 and ASE Mentor of the Year Award in 2023.

Dr. Klein's many contributions and unique research accomplishments as a clinical scientist, specifically in the domains of atrial fibrillation, pericardial disease, and diastolic function, make him an outstanding recipient of the Distinguished Scientist Award in the Clinical Domain.

Y. Chandrashekhar MD, FACC
Linda D. Gillam, MD, MPH, MACC*
William A. Zoghbi, MD, MACC

PARTHO P. SENGUPTA, MD, FACC

Distinguished Scientist (Translational Domain)

Dr. Sengupta's exceptional contributions to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the domain of translational science, including his pioneering work in cardiovascular imaging and artificial intelligence (AI) research, make him most deserving of this year's ACC Distinguished Scientist Award in the Translational Domain.

Dr. Sengupta is the Henry Rutgers Professor and Chief of Cardiology, Division of Cardiovascular Disease and Hypertension, at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He is also Chief of the Cardiology Service Line at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. As an innovative physician-scientist, highlights of his major translational contributions include foundational bench-to bedside work in cardiac mechanics, leadership in translational AI for imaging, and pioneering ultrasonics and texture-based imaging.

The groundbreaking scholarly work of Dr. Sengupta consists of more than 300 publications in leading journals. He is currently associate editor of *JACC: Cardiovascular Imaging* and serves as the principal investigator of numerous research grants and studies. Importantly, his consensus statements on deformation imaging remain the global standard. With multiple patents granted or pending—including technologies for synthetic imaging, AI-guided diastolic function assessment, and mHealth-based risk stratification—Dr. Sengupta exemplifies a modern translational scientist who advances science while ensuring its practical application in real-world settings.

Dr. Sengupta has trained over 30 postdoctoral researchers. Notably, his research and mentorship have been recognized with the American Society of Echocardiography Richard Popp Excellence in Teaching Award (2020) and the ACC Gifted Educator Award (2023).

Dr. Sengupta's pioneering work has reshaped the understanding, measurement, and application of cardiac mechanics. His pioneering roles in point-of-care technologies, digital health, imaging, and AI illustrate an aspect of translational work that accelerates the development and application of biomedical technologies to improve health outcomes. His research continues to shape the future of precision imaging.

It is difficult to match Dr. Sengupta's many and unique contributions to the advancement of translational science, including his sustained record of innovations, patents, and publications in the field of cardiovascular medicine. As a translational scientist, he leaves an enduring impact on cardiovascular medicine, making him an outstanding recipient of this prestigious award.

Jagat Narula, MD, PhD, MACC*
John S. Rumsfeld, MD, PhD, MACC
Leslee J. Shaw, PhD

ROHAN KHERA, MD, MS, FACC

Douglas P. Zipes Distinguished Scientist Award

Dr. Khera is a remarkable physician-scientist and emerging leader in cardiovascular medicine, and an outstanding recipient of this year's Douglas P. Zipes Distinguished Young Scientist Award.

Dr. Khera serves as the clinical director for the Center for Health Informatics and Analytics at the Yale-New Haven Hospital Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation. Importantly, he is principal investigator and founder of the Cardiovascular Data Science Lab at Yale, a multidisciplinary group focusing on data-driven discovery in cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Khera's work explores the use of novel applications in medical informatics, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to evaluate patient care and develop precision care solutions. His work also spans broad digital data sources, including electronic health records (EHRs), electrocardiography (ECG), cardiovascular imaging, and wearable devices, with applications to modernize health care worldwide.

Specifically, Dr. Khera helped lead the development of PanEcho, an advanced AI-enabled, multi-task deep learning system designed to automatically interpret echocardiography. He also developed deep learning models that analyze ECG images to detect numerous structural cardiac abnormalities. Notably, he pioneered the application of AI on EHRs for quality measurement and improvement, including novel tools that use large language models to identify care gaps in patients with heart failure.

Dr. Khera's accomplishments have earned him competitive funding, including two R01 grants and support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. He has received many prestigious Young Investigator Awards from the American Society for Clinical Investigation, ACC, Yale and more.

Dr. Khera has authored 270 journal articles, with an impressive h-index of 55 on Google Scholar. Notably, he serves as the associate editor for AI and digital health at *JAMA*. He also serves an ACC special advisor for AI. Dr. Khera is a skilled communicator and mentor who has helped mentees at all career stages succeed.

As a physician-scientist with exceptional accomplishments in scientific discovery and leadership in the cardiology field, Dr. Khera is highly deserving of this award.

Jeffrey R. Bender, MD
Robert O. Bonow, MD, MS, MACC
Harlan M. Krumholz, MD, SM, FACC
Eric J. Velazquez, MD, FACC*

RAKESH GOPINATHANNAIR, MD, MA, MBA, FACC

Distinguished Service

Dr. Gopinathannair's remarkable service through sustained volunteerism, profound contributions to cardiovascular medicine, and enduring commitment to advancing patient care make him a truly deserving recipient of the 2026 ACC Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Gopinathannair's current positions include Director, Cardiac Electrophysiology (EP) Laboratories, Kansas City Heart Rhythm Institute; Cardiac EP Medical Director, Research Medical Center; Professor of Medicine, University of Missouri-Columbia; and Adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Louisville.

At ACC, Dr. Gopinathannair presently serves as Governor of the Kansas Chapter, strengthening programming, mentorship, and advocacy at both state and national levels. He previously chaired the Early Career Section in Kentucky, contributed to the EP Section Leadership Council, and served on the NCDR LAAO Registry Research and Publications Subcommittee. He has been a faculty member, abstract reviewer, and moderator at nearly every ACC Scientific Session for a decade. Notably, his exceptional work on the ACC EP Self-Assessment Program and CardioSmart Patient Portal reflect his passion for education and patient empowerment.

Beyond ACC, Dr. Gopinathannair has held major leadership roles within the AHA, including as Chair of the Electrocardiography and Arrhythmias Committee and EP Program Chair for Scientific Sessions. Within the Heart Rhythm Society (HRS), Dr. Gopinathannair serves on the Board of Trustees and as Chair of the HRS SCA/CPR/AED Task Force, which is dedicated to training all U.S. high school students in CPR and AED use. Deeply committed to collaboration, he has built bridges between multiple societies and international partners.

A prolific scholar, Dr. Gopinathannair has authored over 450 manuscripts, abstract presentations, and book chapters, and delivered more than 100 invited lectures worldwide. He serves as associate editor for *Heart Rhythm: Case Reports* and has served as section head, writing group member, and peer reviewer for numerous leading journals, guidelines, and scientific statements. Additionally, he has served as a paragon of mentorship for multiple fellows, early career physicians, and international colleagues.

Through his sustained excellence in volunteer contributions across multiple cardiovascular societies and substantial contributions to advancing cardiovascular medicine, Dr. Gopinathannair exemplifies the distinguished service that this award honors.

Dhanunjaya Lakkireddy, MD, MBA, FACC*
Brian Olshansky, MD, FACC
Gurusher Panj Rath, MD, FACC

KIAN KEONG POH, MBBCHIR, MA, MMED, FACC

Navin C. Nanda International Service

For his steadfast commitment to advancing cardiovascular care and education across borders, tireless efforts to support the ACC's global Mission, visionary leadership, and extensive scholarly contributions, Dr. Poh is an outstanding recipient of this year's Navin C. Nanda International Service Award.

Dr. Poh's distinguished international career includes serving as senior consultant cardiologist for the National University Heart Centre in Singapore and Director of Research, Professor in the Department of Medicine, and Associate Chair of the Medical Board. He has also served as president of the Singapore Cardiac Society. Dr. Poh has received numerous prestigious awards spanning over two decades and has mentored countless young cardiologists worldwide.

As a driving force for ACC's work outside of the U.S., Dr. Poh has supported ACC's Global ACCEleration strategy, serving as a passionate advocate for equitable cardiovascular care worldwide. As Chair of the Assembly of International Governors and Membership Committee representative (2021-2023), he fostered collaboration among international chapters and strengthened ACC's presence in Asia and beyond. Dr. Poh currently serves on the Lifelong Learning Oversight Committee. Outside ACC, he served on the American Society of Echocardiography Board of Directors (2021-2024).

Dr. Poh's scholarly contributions further underscore his commitment to international service. He is currently clinical cardiology section editor for *JACC: Asia* and has held editorial roles with several leading cardiovascular journals worldwide. Dr. Poh has authored hundreds of peer-reviewed publications and has given many presentations at major cardiovascular meetings that involved collaborative research across Asia, Europe and North America.

Deeply engaged in ACC's scientific and educational activities, Dr. Poh co-chaired the ACC Asia Scientific Meeting and has served on committees for ACC Asia since its inception. He has been a faculty member and abstract grader for multiple ACC Annual Scientific Sessions as well.

Dr. Poh exemplifies the values of ACC and the vision of the Navin C. Nanda International Service Award. His visionary leadership, prolific scholarship, and unwavering dedication to global cardiovascular health make him a truly deserving recipient.

Huon H. Gray, CBE, MD, MACC*
James L. Januzzi, Jr., MD, FACC
Malissa J. Wood, MD, FACC

STEPHEN C. COOK, MD, FACC

Pamela S. Douglas Award for Leadership in Diversity and Inclusion

Dr. Cook is a dedicated and visionary leader whose career is defined by scholarly achievement, tireless advocacy, and deep commitment to equity and the ability to inspire and mobilize others toward lasting change. His transformative contributions in advancing inclusivity within the ACC and across cardiovascular medicine make him most deserving of the 2026 Pamela S. Douglas Award for Leadership in Diversity and Inclusion.

After being appointed to ACC's inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2021, Dr. Cook established and launched the ACC LGBTQ+ Working Group. As Chair until 2025, he built and united a community of nearly 100 ACC members. He also established the inaugural LGBTQ+ and Allies Networking Reception at ACC.23 and developed the ACC LGBTQ+ Internal Medicine Cardiology Program to support pipeline development and mentorship.

Equally impactful have been Dr. Cook's scholarly contributions, with recent publications in *JACC: Advances* addressing gender disparities, results of a study examining workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ cardiology professionals, and strategies for improving cardiovascular care for sexual and gender minorities. Through numerous invited presentations and webinars, Dr. Cook has educated colleagues nationwide on creating more inclusive cardiovascular environments and addressing institutional barriers faced by LGBTQ+ professionals.

Importantly, Dr. Cook's advocacy extends beyond any single initiative. He has truly been a champion to ensure that ACC's definition of workforce inclusion evolves to meet the needs of all cardiovascular professionals. His efforts have introduced the ACC to new communities of professionals who previously felt invisible, while establishing concrete mechanisms for measuring progress and driving institutional change.

Dr. Cook's dedication to fostering an inclusive culture where all can thrive makes him an ideal recipient of this award. His exemplary work represents not just an expansion of inclusivity but a strengthening of the College's goal of being the professional home for the entire cardiovascular community.

Matthew Carazo, MD, FACC
Jennifer H. Mieres, MD, FACC*
Mary Norine Walsh, MD, MACC

HELEN H. HOBBS, MD, FACC

Valentin Fuster Award for Innovation in Science

Because of her pioneering discoveries that have transformed our understanding of the genetic determinants of cardiovascular risk, Dr. Hobbs is a more than deserving recipient of the 2026 Valentin Fuster Award for Innovation in Science.

Dr. Hobbs joined the University of Texas (UT) Southwestern faculty in 1987 after working as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Drs. Michael Brown and Joseph Goldstein. Between 2000 and 2024, she was director of the McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development, which serves as the Center for Human Genetics at UT Southwestern. Currently, Dr. Hobbs is an investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and professor of Internal Medicine and Molecular Genetics at the UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Dr. Hobbs' work focuses on defining the genetic determinants of plasma lipid levels and cardiovascular risk. Most recently, she has identified genetic variations that confer susceptibility to fatty liver disease. Her scholarly work includes hundreds of publications in leading journals.

Among her notable achievements, Dr. Hobbs established the Dallas Heart Study, a longitudinal, multiethnic, population-based study of Dallas County, which is now supported by the Hoffman Family Center in Genetics and Epidemiology, and by the National Center for Advancing Translational Science.

For her numerous accomplishments spanning several decades as a physician-scientist, Dr. Hobbs has received many awards, including the American Heart Association Distinguished Scientist Award in 2007, Harrington Prize for Innovation in Medicine in 2018, and Gerald D. Auerbach Award for Outstanding Translational Research in 2019.

Importantly, Dr. Hobbs's work has directly advanced the principles of prevention and precision medicine championed by Dr. Fuster, translating fundamental genetic insights into clinical strategies that improve population health. These significant contributions make her an outstanding recipient of this year's award.

Valentin Fuster, MD, PhD, MACC

THAD F. WAITES, MD, MACC

Presidential Citation

It is with deep admiration and gratitude, that I have chosen Thad Waites, MD, MACC, to receive the 2026 Presidential Citation.

His legacy of leadership and service has profoundly shaped the College and the cardiovascular profession. He has not only brought a unique blend of creativity, optimism, and quiet humor to every role he has held, but his unwavering commitment to advocacy, quality improvement, and health equity has left an indelible mark on our mission to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health for all.

Dr. Waites is a true "Master of the ACC," with a legacy of leadership that spans decades and includes service as chair of the Board of Governors, member of the Board of Trustees, chair of the Health Affairs Committee and chair of the Governance Committee, among many others. His contributions to key work groups – from population health and career flexibility to site neutrality and value-based care, and medical liability – reflect a tireless dedication to advancing the profession and championing inclusive, forward-thinking solutions to the challenges facing our field.

In addition to his leadership, Dr. Waites exemplifies the spirit of giving. His recent philanthropic gift establishing the Thad and Gerry Waites Rural Cardiovascular Fellowship will expand access to care in underserved communities and nurture the next generation of cardiovascular researchers and clinicians. True to his character, Dr. Waites gives quietly and generously, always focused on where help is most needed and most impactful.

Dr. Waites' constant optimism, thoughtful mentorship, and deep compassion have enriched the lives of countless patients, colleagues, and trainees. It is truly an honor to recognize and celebrate his career defined by excellence, humility, and a steadfast commitment to creating a world where science, knowledge and innovation optimize patient care and outcomes.

Christopher M. Kramer, MD, FACC

ZOHAIR Y. AL HALEES, MBBS, FACC

Lifetime Achievement

Dr. Al Halees's remarkable 40-year career in congenital heart surgery, his unparalleled contributions to cardiac surgery programs globally, and his unwavering commitment to education and philanthropy make him an exemplary recipient of the ACC's 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Al Halees serves as Distinguished Senior Cardiac Surgeon and Consultant at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has held many positions there since 1985 and was instrumental in establishing the department of cardiovascular diseases in 1987. As a mentor, he has trained and inspired countless young cardiac surgeons worldwide and notably donated a fellowship award through the Saudi Heart Association.

As a leading cardiac surgeon, Dr. Al Halees gained recognition by performing over 25,000 major cardiac surgeries, some of which he either developed or refined, including heart transplantation in both adult and pediatric patients around the world. Importantly, he is passionate about helping children with heart disease in underprivileged areas and has led many missions to perform surgeries, as well as to teach, train, upgrade, and establish cardiac surgery programs globally.

Dr. Al Halees has received numerous awards, from a Distinguished Scientist Award (2003) to the Takreem Award for Scientific and Technological Innovations (2017). He is a member of many cardiovascular societies, including serving as a founding member and past president of the World Society for Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery (2020-2022).

The scholarly work of Dr. Al Halees consists of more than 500 publications and over 15 book chapters. He also serves on editorial boards of esteemed journals, including *Asian Cardiovascular and Thoracic Annals*, *Journal of Heart Valve Disease*, and *World Journal for Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery*. Additionally, he has participated in many international scientific meetings, delivering over 500 presentations and lectures.

Dr. Al Halees' extraordinary career as a leading and innovative cardiovascular surgeon, teacher, mentor, and philanthropist has positively impacted the lives of many patients and physicians alike, making him most deserving to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jehad Alburaiqi, MBBS, FACC
Naji Alkholaif, MBBS, FRCP, FACC
Mohamed Hassan Laimoud, MD, PhD, FACC*
Tahir Mohamed, MD, FACC

JOHN E. BRUSH JR., MD, FACC

Master of the ACC (MACC)

For his deep dedication to cardiovascular patient care and quality improvement initiatives, as well as his active involvement and leadership in many ACC committees, Dr. Brush is most deserving of the Master of the American College of Cardiology (MACC) designation.

Dr. Brush has participated in more than 20 committees over the past 25 years. He was president of the College's Virginia Chapter (2006-2009) and served on the ACC Board of Trustees (2010-2015), Board of Governors (2005-2009), Finance (2016-2020) and Nominating (2018-2019) Committees, among others. These appointments reflect his commitment to ACC and show that he is highly regarded by his peers.

Known as an excellent clinician, great communicator, and loyal colleague, Dr. Brush has been a practicing cardiologist at Sentara Cardiology Specialists, Norfolk, VA, since 1992. He is also Senior Medical Director of Sentara Health Research Center and Chief Research Officer at Sentara Health.

Dr. Brush has led and participated in numerous committees that focused on advancing quality and patient care. Importantly, he was a member (2002-2005) and Chair of the ACC Quality Strategic Directions Committee (2005-2008). Notably, Dr. Brush was instrumental in helping to organize the College's Door to Balloon (D2B) initiative that provides hospitals tools to reduce D2B times to 90 minutes or less. Dr. Brush's strong leadership skills and passion for advancing patient care helped make this initiative successful and saved thousands of lives over the last 20 years.

The scholarly work of Dr. Brush includes over 100 publications and book chapters. Notably, he authored an eBook, which was published in 2015, titled *The Science of the Art of Medicine: A Guide to Medical Reasoning*. As Professor of Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School, he has mentored countless younger colleagues. He was also an ACC BOG mentor.

Dr. Brush greatly deserves recognition for his long and selfless service to the College, to his colleagues, and to patient welfare. Additionally, his tremendous drive and dedication to helping improve quality and patient care have earned him the designation of MACC.

Huon H. Gray, CBE, MD, MACC
C. Michael Valentine, MD, MACC

HARLAN M. KRUMHOLZ, MD, SM, FACC

Master of the ACC (MACC)

Dr. Krumholz's career reflects a lifetime of transformative leadership, scholarship and service that has advanced cardiovascular medicine, improved care worldwide, and strengthened the College's Mission. He is most deserving of the Master of the American College of Cardiology (MACC) designation.

As editor-in-chief of *JACC*, he is modernizing and globalizing the flagship journal, ensuring that it remains rigorous, equitable, and central to ACC's Mission to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health. Dr. Krumholz is a prolific author, with more than 1,700 publications and an h-index of 248 on Google Scholar. His work has defined outcomes research, guided federal policy, and inspired clinician-scientists.

Dr. Krumholz is the Harold H. Hines, Jr. Professor of Medicine at Yale School of Medicine and Director of the Yale-New Haven Hospital Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation, where he built one of the world's leading academic enterprises for health outcomes and data science.

At ACC, Dr. Krumholz has been actively involved in more than 50 committees over the past 25 years, including serving on the Board of Trustees and chairing the Door-to-Balloon Quality Alliance Steering Committee, which revolutionized care for STEMI patients, shortening hospital treatment delays and improving survival.

Dr. Krumholz is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and was founding Governor of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute; he also previously served as a member of the American Board of Internal Medicine's Board of Directors, and as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Director of the National Institutes of Health. These appointments reflect the extraordinary trust placed in him to advance science and serve the public good.

A pioneering innovator, Dr. Krumholz co-founded the Yale Open Data Access Project, medRxiv, Refactor Health, and ENSIGHT-AI, redefining transparency and trust in medical research. His global collaborations—including his award-winning partnership with Chinese researchers recognized by the Chinese Government's Friendship Award—exemplify ACC's global Mission and the power of science to bridge nations.

Dr. Krumholz's visionary leadership, lifelong service, and enduring contributions to cardiovascular medicine and to ACC make him an outstanding recipient of the MACC designation.

Valentin Fuster, MD, PhD, MACC
Jagat Narula, MD, PhD, MACC

CAROLE A. WARNES, MD, FACC

Master of the ACC (MACC)

Dr. Warnes is a visionary leader, pioneering clinician and global educator whose lifelong contributions have transformed the care of adults with congenital heart disease (ACHD) and profoundly advanced the ACC Mission. She is most deserving of the Master of the American College of Cardiology (MACC) designation.

At Mayo Clinic, Dr. Warnes is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine in the Department of Cardiovascular Diseases and Division of Pediatric Cardiology. Notably, she founded and led their ACHD Clinic, one of the earliest and most comprehensive programs dedicated to ACHD. She has received numerous prestigious awards, including Cardiovascular Teacher of the Year eight times at Mayo Clinic and ACC's Distinguished Teacher and Distinguished Fellow awards.

Actively involved in more than 40 ACC committees over the past 25 years, Dr. Warnes has served on the Board of Trustees, Governance and Nominating Committees, and has held multiple leadership positions including chairing multiple ACC committees. As Chair of the Adult Congenital and Pediatric Cardiology Section, she guided strategic initiatives that helped integrate ACHD into the broader cardiovascular community. Dedicated to cardiology workforce issues and encouraging women to seek a career in cardiology, Dr. Warnes served as Chair of the Women in Cardiology Section Leadership Council for several years.

Dr. Warnes' commitment to education at ACC and elsewhere is exemplary. She served for a decade as program director of the Cardiovascular Conference at Snowmass and served on several educational oversight committees. Her role as co-chair of the ACC/AHA guidelines for ACHD was instrumental in standardizing care, training and certification. She has published 250 manuscripts, 74 abstracts, 41 book chapters and three books.

Internationally, Dr. Warnes has advocated for the development of ACHD programs across continents, mentored teams in emerging regions and fostered collaborations that have raised the global standard of care.

Dr. Warnes has dedicated her life to advancing congenital cardiology and educating her colleagues, and her strategic leadership and service to the ACC has been exemplary. She is the epitome of what it means to be an MACC.

Hani Najm, MD, MSc, FACC
Mary Norine Walsh, MD, MACC

CHRISTOPHER M. KRAMER, MD, FACC

Master of the ACC (MACC)

Christopher M. Kramer, MD, FACC, received his medical degree from the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, and completed his residency and chief residency in internal medicine, and fellowship in cardiology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. His first faculty appointment was at Allegheny General Hospital, then MCP/Hahnemann University School of Medicine, where he directed the cardiology fellowship.

He then moved to the University of Virginia School of Medicine, where in 2019 he was named the George A. Beller/Lantheus Medical Imaging Distinguished Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine, Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, and Medical Director of the Heart and Vascular Science Line. Kramer's principal research interest has been the application of cardiovascular magnetic resonance (CMR) to the cardiovascular system in translational and clinical studies.

Prior to serving as ACC President, he served as President of the Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance (SCMR), ACC Treasurer, Chair of ACC's Imaging Council, and Chair of the Clinical and Integrative Cardiovascular Sciences NIH study section. Kramer previously was associate editor at JACC and Executive Editor of JACC: Cardiovascular Imaging. He currently serves on the editorial boards of *Circulation*, *Circulation: Cardiovascular Imaging and Vascular Medicine*. He is also a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, Association of University Cardiologists and American Association of Physicians. He received the Gold Medal from the Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance in 2015 and was named a Distinguished Mentor by the ACC in 2021.

During his presidential year, Kramer helped shepherd the College further into the AI era with the creation of an AI Implementation Task Force and the launch of a strategic relationship with OpenEvidence, positioning ACC to harness emerging technologies in ways that directly benefit members and patients.

"Future opportunities with AI offer tremendous hope, as well as challenges, and my hope is that the College can harness these to offer new products that bring tremendous member value," he said.

He also led with strength and clarity on advocacy, guiding the College through a complex policy landscape while elevating ACC's voice on Capitol Hill, including testifying before the Health Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee and meeting with the GOP Doctors Caucus.

The College is deeply grateful for Dr. Kramer's dedicated service as President this past year. His leadership in advancing innovation and advocating for our members and their interests has helped position the organization and its global membership for continued impact in a rapidly evolving health care environment.



Future opportunities with AI offer tremendous hope, as well as challenges, and my hope is that the College can harness these to offer new products that bring tremendous member value.

**CHRISTOPHER M. KRAMER,
MD, FACC**