

Anesthesia Update

Beyond the classroom

Advocacy, connection, & growth at the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia

While education begins in the classroom, it certainly does not end there—especially at the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia. Nor does it stop in the operating room or during clinical rotations. By the time Resident Registered Nurse Anesthetists (RRNAs) graduate, their learning has been shaped by a wide range of experiences that extend far beyond traditional instruction.

Dr. Rachel Wolfe, the school's director, emphasizes education through advocacy and consistently brings that philosophy to life. One meaningful example is the school's participation in the American Heart Association's annual city-wide Heart Walk. Now in its third year, the initiative—led by student volunteers—has grown from a small group of participants into a vibrant team raising funds for heart disease research, CPR training, and community health



Heart Walk 2025

awareness. Just as importantly, it fosters connection within the school and highlights the program's presence in the Erie community.

Building relationships beyond the clinical environment is another important aspect of the student experience. Through the UPMC Hamot Anesthesia Department's annual golf outing, students and CRNAs come together in a relaxed setting that encourages camaraderie, mentorship, and teamwork. These shared experiences strengthen bonds that carry into professional practice.

Students are also encouraged to engage in advocacy at the state and national levels. In 2025, the program celebrated a record

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4th Annual Symposium TOPICS:

- Anesthesia & intraoperative neuromonitoring: from sedation to signals
- Child-life aspects
- Pediatric gastroenterology
- Updates in PONV prophylaxis
- Resuscitation in massive transfusion
- Amniotic fluid embolism: when seconds matter
- 1099s vs W-2s for CRNAs
- Airway management



REGISTER NOW!

And more!

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Of Special Interest

- Faculty Accomplishments
- We want to hear from you

SAVE THE DATE

4th Annual Anesthesia Symposium

Sept. 12, 2026

Cost: \$350
Students: \$200

Early registration
(through August 1):

Cost: \$300
Students: \$175



We would
LOVE to hear
from our
alumni

Please reach out with updates on your lives, jobs, families, new babies, new pets, etc., so that we can include those in future newsletters.

We are always excited to hear from you!

School Director wins 2026 Didactic Instructor of the Year

The Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists (PANA) presented the prestigious Didactic Instructor of the Year award to our very own director, Dr. Rachel Wolfe, at its 2026 Spring Symposium in Hershey, Pa., “It’s easy to understand why Dr. Wolfe won,” said José Bueno Ventura, Class of 2027. “It’s because she has so much enthusiasm when teaching us.” He went on to say, “She helps us relate the material to real life in a way that reminds us that anesthesia is actually really fun and worth all the stress that we’re having now.”

Wolfe, DNP, CRNA, CCRN, CPN, is the director of the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia, an active nurse anesthetist at UPMC Hamot as well as the mother of three young children. She has made it her priority in the last 15 years to specialize in the anesthesia care of UPMC’s youngest and most vulnerable patients and has earned a reputation for stellar care of these children.



The PANA Didactic Instructor of the Year award is presented to a didactic instructor who provides instruction to nurse anesthesia students in a PA nurse anesthesia program. The award recognizes the instructor’s commitment to the education of nurse anesthesia students to advance the art and science of anesthesia. “A great nurse anesthesia program director does more than educate—she advocates fiercely for her students, embodies the integrity and future of the profession, and leads by example with confidence, compassion, and clinical excellence,” said Isabelle Meehl, DNP, CRNA, a recent graduate of the program. “Her legacy is measured not only by the providers she helps shape, but by the trust, respect, and strength she inspires throughout the community.”

Meehl went on to say, “Dr. Rachel Wolfe is the CRNA I only hope to be in the future and thank her for her unwavering support and knowledge.”

In August 2024, Wolfe earned AANA’s Clinical Instructor of the Year award. However, Wolfe will tell you though that with all her accolades and accomplishments, the ones she is most proud of are her marriage to her husband, Mike, and their commitment to their three children.



Dedication in action: Clinical coordinator nears DNP achievement

For the past year, Shannon Markham, one of the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia's clinical coordinators, has been diligently working toward her doctoral degree while maintaining her role as a full-time CRNA and stepping into the clinical coordinator position following Jerry Rupp's retirement. Alongside Autumn Arkwright, Markham assumed this responsibility with a clear understanding of the significant legacy left behind, while also striving to enhance and expand the scope of the clinical coordinator role.

After multiple semesters filled with extensive coursework, countless hours of studying, and a demanding schedule balancing

professional and academic commitments, Markham is now approaching the completion of her doctoral journey. She is expected to reach doctoral candidacy milestones and graduate in December 2026.

"Her ability to balance professional responsibilities with advanced academic work reflects exceptional commitment, resilience, and leadership, making a meaningful impact on our program and the profession," said Dr. Rachel Wolfe, DNP, CRNA, Director of UPMC Hamot's School of Anesthesia. "I am proud of Shannon's dedication to excellence as a clinical coordinator while pursuing her DNP."



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milestone, with 11 students and alumni attending the AANA Annual Congress. Participation in these events allows future CRNAs to better understand healthcare policy, professional advocacy, and the evolving landscape of anesthesia care.

Support for these opportunities is made possible through scholarships funded by the School of Anesthesia's Annual Education Symposium and generous alumni contributions through the Hamot Health Foundation. Community outreach remains a cornerstone of the program. Long-standing initiatives, such

as the LEADS program at Penn State Behrend, provide opportunities to engage and inspire students interested in healthcare careers while promoting the vital role of nurse anesthetists.

Through these experiences, the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia demonstrates that education is not confined to a classroom or clinical setting. It is a comprehensive journey—one that develops skilled clinicians, dedicated advocates, and future leaders committed to advancing patient care and serving their communities.



(left) Abby Fantaski, Class of 2025, instructs a LEADS student in oral intubations.



(above) Nicole Dragoone, CRNA, shows a future nurse anesthetist how to intubate and ventilate a mannequin-patient.

Clinical opportunities grow with each new rotation site

If you ask resident registered nurse anesthetists (RRNAs) what they value most about their clinical education, many will point to the opportunity to participate in outside rotations. While these experiences are highly anticipated, they are made possible by the strong foundation first established at UPMC Hamot.

RRNAs at the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia begin their clinical journey within UPMC Hamot's operating rooms, where they develop core anesthesia skills under close guidance. As they progress, they expand their experience at UPMC Hamot Magee-Womens Hospital through obstetric anesthesia and at the UPMC Hamot Surgery Center, where they refine efficiency and adaptability in a fast-paced environment. These initial clinical sites, all located in Erie, Pa., are intentionally designed to provide a comprehensive and supportive learning environment that prepares students for success.

After approximately 12 months, RRNAs build upon this solid clinical and didactic foundation by transitioning to outside rotation sites. These rotations are not a starting point, but rather an opportunity to expand and deepen the competencies first cultivated at Hamot, allowing students to further develop autonomy and confidence in the operating room.

All rotation sites are located within Pennsylvania and include UPMC Williamsport, Punxsutawney Area Hospital, UPMC Northwest, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, and UPMC Wellsboro. Each site offers a unique clinical perspective, exposing students to diverse patient populations, practice models, and care environments ranging from rural to urban and

from team-based to CRNA-driven practice. The newest addition

to the rotation network is the Erie VA Medical Center, spearheaded by Shaun Firster, class of 2014. This site further enhances the program's clinical offerings by providing focused experience in CRNA-driven regional anesthesia, including block placement and management. Students will also gain valuable exposure to preoperative evaluation of complex patients, strengthening their clinical judgment and risk assessment skills. Firster will serve as the clinical coordinator at this site, ensuring a high-quality and structured learning experience.

Each rotation site complements the foundational training students receive at UPMC Hamot by offering distinct learning opportunities. At Punxsutawney Area Hospital, students experience a non-UPMC, rural healthcare setting, broadening their understanding of different organizational cultures and resource utilization. The Punxsutawney Area Hospital rotation is a rural setting with a total bed count of only 49 beds. This hospital provides the community with a very well-rounded community hospital, and this requires 24-hour anesthesia coverage 365 days a year.

Todd Neufeld, CRNA, MS, DC, UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia Class of 2004 and Punxsutawney's clinical coordinator, said, "Students here see lower staffing levels and learn to function at a higher capacity and integrate into a larger role outside of the OR including their



Erie VA Medical Center

help in development of policies and procedures, administrative meetings, and educating staff or residents." He went on to say, "They also possibly get their first real experience with regional anesthesia including blocks, spinals, and epidurals."

At UPMC Children's Hospital, select students gain exposure to high-acuity pediatric anesthesia. The clinical coordinator at Children's, Jennifer Kundick, MSN, CRNA, said "Children's Hospital is a special clinical experience not only in the population of patient that we care for but in the environment for learning that has been created here. Everyone is passionate in that, as a team, we provide the best care for these children." She added, "CRNA preceptors, physician anesthesiologists, and our surgical attendings are all passionate mentors in their specialties. Children's Hospital is a special environment which nurtures the learning process, encourages growth, and celebrates success in every teaching moment."

UPMC Williamsport presents a unique blend of rural and higher-acuity case presentations. "The best thing about Williamsport as a rotation site is the case variability, opportunities for increased autonomy, and abundance of arterial line placements," said Andrew Patterson, MSN, APRN, CRNA, (UPMC Hamot Class of 2021). "The advantage to rotating at Williamsport is the diverse CRNA population that we have here," said Patterson. "Our CRNAs are educated from many programs, and the residents benefit from that experience."

UPMC Northwest provides a quieter, rural experience, allowing students to explore practice in that setting. Said the clinical coordinator at Northwest, Timothy Kozek, MSN, CRNA, (UPMC Hamot Class of 2017) "Northwest offers students a unique learning experience in a rural hospital setting where the operating room team truly feels like family." He went on to say, "Students are welcomed as a part of the team from day one. The close relationships among staff cre-

UPMC Williamsport



If you would like to be a vendor or sponsor, please register for the 4th Annual UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia Symposium held on September 12, 2026.



ate a supportive environment that helps students grow clinically, gain confidence, and become valued members of the team."

UPMC Wellsboro offers a fully CRNA-driven model, showcasing independent anesthesia practice. Wellsboro is a critical access hospital that provides students

with the unique opportunity to provide anesthesia with a CRNA-only group. Ryan Wojnicki, MSN, CRNA, the clinical coordinator at this rotation site, said "Due to our commitment to promoting CRNA independence, students are given every opportunity possible to perform a wide variety of skills including spinals, epidurals, PNBs, CVLs, a-lines, emergent intubations, lumbar taps, etc." He also said that one of the great advantages to their rotation is that the residents have "maximal autonomy." Wojnicki went on to say, "Our CRNA staff strives to give students the experience of fulfilling the roles of an anesthetist to the fullest capacity of their future scope of practice."

"Our clinical partners are foundational to the success of the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia," said Dr. Rachel Wolfe, director of the school. "Your commitment to mentoring our nurse anesthesia residents, supporting clinical excellence, and fostering a culture of learning is deeply valued. We are grateful for your continued partnership in shaping the next generation of CRNAs." Patterson agreed with this observation. He added, "Our CRNA team loves having residents because it keeps them engaged in the profession and giving back to the CRNA community." Kundick also added that mentoring was of great value for them as well. "We know that in this mentoring process, we can continue to support the growth of our professions, but most importantly the safe care of children," she said.

Together, these experiences are intentionally structured to build upon the strong clinical base established at UPMC Hamot. Rotation sites provide RRNAs with a rich variety of learning environments where they can apply their knowledge, refine their skills, and grow in professional independence. By the time they complete the program, graduates are not only clinically competent, but adaptable, confident, and well-prepared to enter a wide range of practice settings.



UPMC Northwest

Thank you PANA for continuing to support our students through your Mid-Year Assembly scholarships.

THANK YOU TO OUR 3RD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM SPONSORS



Faculty Accomplishments

Donald Larmon, DNP, CRNA

- ◆ As of May 2026, has now retired from all clinical responsibilities and plans to retire completely from the UPMC School of Anesthesia in December 2026.

Autumn Arkwright, MSN, CRNA

- ◆ Has successfully survived a full year with a 9-year-old and a toddler. Wishing her good luck in the next challenging year.

Cathy Miseta, MS

- ◆ Volunteers with A Hand Up Erie, a local nonprofit providing members of the community with gently used, donated furniture and household essentials.
- ◆ Manages the website (<https://ahanduperie.org>), coordinates applications from people requesting items, and helps organize fundraisers such as the Ed Miseta Memorial Golf Outing.



State, County, City officials take part in CRNA Week

Celebrating CRNA Week is an annual tradition enjoyed by the faculty, students and staff of the UPMC Hamot Anesthesia Department and the School of Anesthesia. But this year, during the weeklong celebration held January 19 to 23, School of Anesthesia director Dr. Rachel Wolfe added an element of excitement by inviting VIPs to observe during a special day of this event.

Pennsylvania State Representative Patrick Harkins and representatives from the new county and city administrations joined the faculty and students of the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia during a simulation lab to not only observe but to try some of the hands-on activities themselves. Chris Groner, the director of administration for Erie County, under the leadership of new Erie County Executive Christina Vogel, as well as Mary Wassell, the media and public relations coordinator, serving the new City of Erie Mayor Daria Devlin, joined Pat Harkins to participate in activities such as IV placement, arterial line placement, and fiberoptic intubations, under the guidance of Dr. Wolfe while various students from the Classes of 2026, 2027, and 2028 provided both instruction and humor.

Students involved in the simulation lab included Class of 2026's Jake Martinez, Andrew Skuta, and Vanessa Stenulis; Class of 2027's Samantha Douglas, Josh Miller, and Stephanie Wong; and the Class of 2028's



Chris Groner, the director of administration, representing Christina Vogel, Erie County Executive, guides an IV needle under the tutelage of SRNA Stephanie Wong, Class of 2027, during a Simulation Lab demonstration during CRNA Week 2026. He then attempts the simulated intubation of an infant – no easy feat. Mr. Groner was one member of the community invited to participate in the simulation in an effort to educate members of the public on the work of CRNAs in the community.



Cathryne Chao, Eric Clark, Alyssa Hahn, and Cohen Wildeson.

By inviting Mr. Harkins, Mr. Groner and Ms. Wassell, Dr. Wolfe made great strides to educate the community and the public on the work and function of CRNAs. Hand in hand with that goal, she's putting the name of the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia in the public eye to bring additional visibility and focus to the school.



Mary Wassell, the media and public relations coordinator, serving the new City of Erie Mayor Daria Devlin, begins a pediatric intubation while Samantha Douglas, Class of 2027, carefully guides her during a CRNA Week 2026 Simulation Lab demonstration.



PA State Representative Pat Harkins, successfully inserts a breathing tube while Samantha Douglas, Class of 2027, guides and instructs him during a Simulation Lab demonstration during CRNA Week 2026.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Congratulations to UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia RNRNs on winning scholarships from the Stephen Anderson CRNA Professorial Endowment Fund (provides funding for scholarship support of the CRNA program) and the Sandra Shreve Pickens Anesthesia Fund (to support the education of CRNA students through scholarships and to support research activities and equipment).

2026 AANA Mid-Year Assembly Scholarship:

- ◆ Stephanie Wong, '27, was sponsored

2026 AANA Annual Congress RRNA \$500 Scholarships:

- ◆ Rachel Cowan, '27
- ◆ Brian Doyle, '27
- ◆ Katherine Flanagan, '28
- ◆ Mojdeh Hussaini, '28
- ◆ Mackenzie Molesworth, '27
- ◆ Aaron Rehm, '27
- ◆ Colin Stoddard, '28
- ◆ Madison Streich, '27

WE NEED YOU!

[Donate | Hamot Health Foundation](#)

Please select the **Stephen Anderson** or **Sandra Shreve Pickens** funds for your donation.



Alumni Corner



(left) Megan Nielsen, Class of 2018, and her husband welcomed Anne Elizabeth Nielsen on Sept. 10, 2025, to make their family a family of five. Anne's siblings are Liam (middle), 4, and Charlie (right), 2. Megan is a clinical faculty member at UPMC Hamot.



(right) Andrew Skuta, Class of 2026, and his wife Eleni, welcomed Maximus to their family on March 3, 2026, joining big brother, Sebastian.



(below) Josh Kuzman, Class of 2022, and Micaela Celender, Class of 2027, were married on June 20, 2026. Congratulations to them both!

(above) Rachael Broadbent, a didactic clinical faculty member at UPMC Hamot, and her husband, welcomed Milo into their family on June 10, 2026.



(above) Jessica Barbato, Class of 2022 and clinical faculty member, and her husband, Scott, added baby Ella to their little family on January 20, 2026. Big sister, Sophia, is thrilled.

(below) Terese Downing retired on April 3, 2026, after 23 years of clinical service to UPMC Hamot. Terri was honored as both graduate in 2003 and clinical faculty member in 2016 with the Joseph H. Carter Award for Clinical Excellence.



(right) Brad Hoge, Class of 2017, and his wife, Bridget, added Madelyn to their family of four on Oct. 7, 2025. Their other children are Vienna, 5, (middle) and Griffin, 3, (right). Brad currently is a CRNA clinical faculty member as well as teaching Endocrine and Renal as a didactic faculty member. He also earned the UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia Clinical Instructor Award in 2021.



UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia Faculty & Staff

Rachel A. Wolfe, DNP, CRNA
Director



Donald E. Larmon, DNP, CRNA
Assistant Director



Cathy Miseta, MS
Instructional Coordinator



Angela M. Rood, BA
Sr. Admin. Assistant



Autumn Arkwright, MSN, CRNA
Clinical Coordinator



Shannon Markham, MSN, CRNA
Clinical Coordinator



Emily Britton, PharmD
Didactic Faculty



Rachael Broadbent, DNP, CRNA
Didactic Faculty



Friday, Sept. 11
3 to 5 p.m.

Come & tour the
UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia!

~ 201 State Street ~ Erie, Pennsylvania ~
(The school is located on the ground floor, north complex, west wing.)



From 6 to 8 pm, join us at Pier Six
Rooftop Bar for an
Alumni Celebration!



**SAVE THE DATE—4th Annual UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia
Symposium coming September 12, 2026.
REGISTER EARLY FOR GREAT SAVINGS!**