

The American College of Surgeons

Surgery Interest Group Success Story

The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University

Surgical Interest Group



The Charles G. Rob Student Surgical Society (CGRSSS) at East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine was founded several years ago by a humble man. Dr. Walter J. Pories, father of Bariatric Surgery as we know it today, is the Founding Chair of the Department of Surgery at ECU. With a passion for research, education, and mentorship, Dr. Pories sought to begin a society for students to collaborate and grow as rising physicians. He chose to name this society after the man that mentored him, Dr. Charles G Rob. Dr. Rob, a modest man with humility to match that of Dr. Pories, was a gifted and accomplished surgeon. He was most known for operating on Winston Churchill; however, he was better known to Dr. Pories as a caring educator, mentor, and friend. These core values embodied by Dr. Rob remain to this day as the foundation upon which our group is built.

The CGRSSS, commonly referred to as the Surgery Interest Group (SIG), eventually stalled in activity due to Brody's strong emphasis on primary care but has experienced an exciting rebirth in recent years. This is why our motto is Sic Parvis Magna, Latin for "Greatness from Small Beginnings." SIG was completely

overhauled two years ago by one motivated student interested in redefining what the field of surgery means here at the Brody School of Medicine. Our school's mission is to provide our state with the best primary care physicians possible. At SIG, we believe that those in specialties outside the traditional primary care fields can still contribute to this mission. Our state and nation need competent, caring, empathetic surgeons who have a heart and soul for serving patients as individuals while also bettering the community. By embodying the core values at the foundation of primary care, students and physicians in surgical fields can support and advance this mission by incorporating a primary care mindset into each and every patient interaction in both the clinic and the OR.

Putting this mindset front and center has allowed our SIG to grow and thrive alongside our school's primary care focus. Our group wiped the slate clean and decided to forego talking about flashy surgical procedures every time we gathered. Instead, we built a program that drew from Dr. Rob's legacy to focus on mentorship, leadership, and the creation of a team dynamic between the students and residents at our program. Additionally, we strive to create a supportive environment that provides early exposure to surgery, hands-on training, and longitudinal relationships with like-minded peers and physicians. We believe that our interest group is not only for those who are pursuing a path to surgery, but rather for anyone who seeks to mature as a leader—at our school and in the medical field as a whole—while helping others do the same along the way.

It is through this renewed focus that SIG is now experiencing an incredible run of growth and accomplishment at Brody. Redefining the school's primary care mission, SIG has become one of the most active and thriving groups on the Health Sciences Campus. Membership has grown from a handful to well over 100 in just two short years, in large part due to aggressive rebranding via our popular SIG T-shirts, increased collaboration with our school's Association of Women Surgeons (AWS), our charismatic faculty advisors, and exciting initiatives for our members to take advantage of. These include our brand-new scrub training program, faculty mentorship dinners, attendance at hospital M&M and Grand Rounds sessions, and our new 1-on-1 mentorship program with current surgical residents.

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By providing preclinical students direct and effortless access to these many opportunities, we eliminated a major barrier to getting meaningful clinical experience and mentorship in the surgical fields. Our SIG members are now more qualified and more comfortable as they transition into their clinical years regardless of the clerkship cohort they begin on. The most impactful aspect of all these initiatives is the establishment of long-term relationships with residents and attendings, which has a positive impact on our member's grades, clinical evaluations, learning potential, hands-on experiences, and overall patient care.

Our SIG leadership is excited to spread the word about our recent successes to those who will listen, and encourages them to follow suit in leading their student bodies towards opportunities to grow as medical students while simultaneously advancing the fields of surgery and education.



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