IMPORTANT: This syllabus form should be submitted to OAA (gsbs_academic_affairs@uth.tmc.edu) a week before the start of each semester.

NOTE to STUDENTS: If you need any accommodations related to attending/enrolling in this course, please contact one of the Graduate School's 504 Coordinators, Cheryl Spitzenberger or Natalie Sirisaengtaksin. We ask that you notify GSBS in advance (preferably at least 3 days before the start of the semester) so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Term and Year: **Spring 2026** Course Number and Course Title: **GS21 1231: Understanding the Research University: A Primer for Future Faculty** **Credit Hours: 1.0** **Prerequisites: PhD students in 3rd year standing or above** **Meeting Location:** TBD in person **Building/Room#:** TBD in person	**Program Required Course:** No **Approval Code:** No **Audit Permitted:** No **Classes Begin:** Jan. 12, 2026 **Classes End:** May 1, 2026 **Final Exam Week:** May 4-8, 2026
Class Meeting Schedule: TBD 1-hour lecture per week	
Course Director Name and Degree: **Paolo M. Mangahas, PhD** Title: Director, Education & Training Department: Research Education & Training Institution: UTH-MD Anderson Cancer Center Email Address: pmmangahas@mdanderson.org Contact Number: 832-803-6313 **Course Co-Director/s:** Name and Degree: **Suezen H. Salinas, EdD** Title: Program Director Department: Education & Training Institution: UTH-MD Anderson Cancer Center Email Address: shsalinas@mdanderson.org Contact Number: 713-794-3103 **NOTE:** Office hours are available by request. Please email course directors/instructors to schedule an appointment.	**Instructor/s** 1. Name and Degree: **Safia Essien, PhD** Institution: UTH-MD Anderson Email Address: saessien@mdanderson.org 2. Name and Degree: **Arielle Dessens, PhD** Institution: UTH-MD Anderson Email Address: araugh@mdanderson.org
Course Description: This course introduces PhD students to the organization, operations, and finances of a research university/academic medical center and the roles and responsibilities that tenure-track faculty members have. This mini-course aims to provide career stage-appropriate information to graduate students in order to help them explore careers in academia and make plans to maximize the educational and training opportunities in preparation for a tenure-track position.	

Textbook/Supplemental Reading Materials:

- Lecture slides
- Materials/readings distributed during the course
- Recommended reference: Smith, D.O. (2011). *Managing the research university.* Oxford University Press.

Course Objective/s:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the organization, resourcing, and operations of a research university/ academic medical center
- Understand academic life and be better able to evaluate the fit of personal values with choice of career path
- Better prepare for future career paths in academia or beyond

Specific Learning Objectives:
Please see objectives listed for each lecture (Detailed Syllabus).

Student responsibilities and expectations:
Students enrolled in this course will be expected to perform the following activities each week:

- Read, process, and review materials assigned for each class
- Actively participate during in-class discussions and activities
- Be respectful of differing points of view and promote a safe space for open discussions
- Provide well considered and insightful comments
- Submit required assignments and reports in a timeline manner
- Actively reflect on lessons learned in the course and apply them in career planning

Students are expected to complete all assigned reading material prior to class. While you may work and discuss all course materials and assignments in groups, all writing assignments must be your own. Plagiarism and failure to properly cite literature and other sources will not be tolerated and are grounds for dismissal from the course and further GSBS disciplinary action. Cheating or engaging in unethical behavior will be grounds for dismissal from the course without credit and further GSBS disciplinary action.

Grading System: **Pass/Fail**

Student Assessment and Grading Criteria: *(May include the following:)*

Percentage	Description
Discussion Posts and Responses	Discussions and responses posted on Canvas/Study LMS (4); See assignment instructions and rubrics for details; Must receive passing marks for at least three discussion posts/responses.

Final Presentation	Group presentation consisting of a narrated PowerPoint recorded and uploaded Canvas/Study LMS; Students to respond individually to presentations from other groups; See instructions and rubrics for details. Must receive passing marks for this assignment.
Participation/Attendance	No more than two unexcused absences allowed.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Duration (Hour(s) taught by lecturer)	Lecture Topic	Lecturer/s
Week 1	1	Introduction to higher education in the US	Essien, Mangahas, Salinas
Week 2	1	University organization and finances	Mangahas
Week 3	1	Applying for tenure-track faculty positions	Essien
Week 4	1	Tenure-track faculty recruitment	Essien
Week 5	1	Roles and responsibilities of faculty	Salinas
Week 6	1	Laboratory/research group	Dessens
Week 7	1	Mentoring students and postdocs	Dessens
Week 8	1	Clinical faculty positions for biomedical PhDs	Essien
Week 9	1	Promotion and tenure	Salinas
Week 10	1	Programs, centers, and institutes	Mangahas
Week 11	1	Sponsored programs	Essien
Week 12	1	Compliance	Mangahas
Week 13	1	Intellectual property, licensing, and startups	Mangahas
Week 14	1	Personal values and career path choices	Salinas
Week 15	1	Real Colors	Salinas
Week 16	n/a	Final presentations due (during exam week)	n/a

NOTE:

- All course instructors are encouraged to attend each week. Lecturer(s) listed in the class schedule are the lead(s) for each lecture.
- Please see additional information provided in the detailed syllabus for this course.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MD Anderson Cancer Center | UTHealth Houston
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Spring 2026

GS21 1231 – Understanding the Research University:
A Primer for Future Faculty
TBD in person, 1 credit hour

Course Director

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Pauken Lab Website Profile

Office hours: Please email the instructor(s) to schedule an appointment.

Course Description

Many students pursue graduate education and postdoctoral training to pursue careers in academia but have little to no understanding of how their employer, the research university, works. This course introduces MS and PhD students to the organization, operations, and finances of a research university/academic medical center and the roles and responsibilities that tenure-track faculty members have. This mini-course aims to provide career stage-appropriate information to graduate students to help them explore careers in academia and make plans to maximize the educational and training opportunities in preparation for a tenure-track position.

Pre-Requisite

This course is open to PhD students in 3rd year standing or higher.

Objectives

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the structure, resources, and operations of the research university
- Understand academic life to better evaluate the fit of personal values with pursuing a career path in academia
- Make more informed choices regarding future career paths in or beyond academia

Textbook

- Smith, D.O. (2011). *Managing the research university.* Oxford University Press. (Recommended)

Course Schedule

Week 1 begins at 12:01 a.m. on the first day of classes. Each week ends at 8 a.m. on Sunday, with the exception of Week 16, which ends at 11:59 p.m. on Friday of the last week of class. Class meets in-person [day], [time], in [room] each week.

Date	Lecture
Week 1 Jan. 12-17	**Introduction to US Higher Education** **Objectives** • *To provide an overview of course objectives, structure, and activities* • *To introduce the higher education system in the United States* **Topics** • *Course introduction: Goals and expectations* • *Mission areas and classification of institutions of higher education* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education* **Assignments** • *None*
Week 2 Jan. 18-24	**University Organization and Finances** **Objectives** • *To understand university leadership and how roles, authority, and resources are distributed* • *To understand the relationship between organizational finances and university operations* **Topics** • *Organizational structure of a research university* • *Institutional finances: Revenues, expenditures, and funds* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Organizational charts: MD Anderson, UTHealth Houston, UT Austin* • *Beginner's Guide to Financial Statements (Sym Sys School of Business)* • *Understanding Financial Statements of Not-for-Profit Organizations (BDO FMA)* • *Annual financial reports: MD Anderson, UTHealth Houston, UT Austin* • *MD Anderson fund group descriptions* **Assignments** • *None*

Date	Lecture
Week 3 Jan. 25-31	**Applying for Tenure-Track Faculty Positions** **Objectives** • *To understand the academic job market and how to navigate the application process, including timelines, best practices, and the structure of interviews* • *To identify and understand the components of a strong academic job application packet* **Topics** • *The academic job market, strategies for networking, and finding faculty positions* • *Application materials (e.g., CV, professional statements, etc.) and the interview process* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *West, M., McCain, J., & Roska, J. (2024). After the PhD: The role of advisors and social connections in the job search process. Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education. 15(3):380-394. https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-09-2023-0089* • *Vigoreaux, J.O., & Leibowitz, M.J. (2021). Obtaining a faculty position in STEM at a research-intensive institution. BMC Proceedings. 15(Suppl. 2), 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12919-021-00210-x* **Assignments** • *None*
Week 4 Feb. 1-7	**Tenure-Track Faculty Recruitment** **Objectives** • *To understand factors taken into consideration by search committees when hiring a new faculty member* • *To understand resources invested when hiring tenure-track faculty members* **Topics** • *Types of hires: Individual hires, strategic hires, and cluster hires* • *Compensation and startup packages for new faculty* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Salary benchmarks (AAMC Faculty Salary Report, MD Anderson salary benchmarks, OpenPayrolls.com, New Mexico "Sunshine" Portal, etc.)* **Assignments** • *Discussion posts and responses on Canvas/Study LMS (Covering Weeks 1-4)*
Week 5 Feb. 8-14	**Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty** **Objectives** • *Provide an overview of the lectures for weeks 6-10* **Topics** • *Faculty tracks: Tenured/tenure-track, non-tenure track (research, clinical, instructional, sessional, adjunct, etc.)* • *Annual memoranda of appointments: Effort allocation and expectations* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *MD Anderson CARE (Clinical, administrative, research, and education) effort model* **Assignments** • *None*

Date	Lecture
Week 6 Feb. 15-21	**Laboratory/Research Group** **Objectives** • *To become familiar with management and leadership skills that faculty members need to run a successful laboratory/research group* • *To understand sources of funding and support required to operate an independent research group* **Topics** • *The laboratory/research group as a small business* • *Special topics in lab finances, human resources, and operations* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *What does it cost to run a lab? (Chronicle of Higher Education)* • *What a research lab costs (Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation)* **Assignments** • *None*
Week 7 Feb. 22-28	**Mentoring Students and Postdocs** **Objectives** • *To understand the roles and receptibilities of faculty in mentoring graduate students and postdocs, with emphasis on professional and ethical treatment* • *To identify best practices that support effective mentor-mentee relationships* **Topics** • *Responsibilities of faculty to students and postdocs under their mentorship* • *Characteristics of effective mentor-mentee relationships* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research* • *National Research Mentoring Network* • *AAMC mentoring compacts for biomedical graduate students and postdoctoral fellows* • *AAMC Appropriate Treatment of Research Trainees document* **Assignments** • *Discussion posts and responses on Canvas/Study LMS (Covering Weeks 5-7)*
Week 8 Mar. 1-7	**Clinical Faculty Positions for Biomedical PhDs** **Objectives** • *To introduce graduate students in basic/translational research to potential career paths to clinical faculty positions* **Topics** • *Panel discussion with PhDs who completed ABMGG and/or ASM clinical fellowships (in-class activity)* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics initial certification process* • *American Society for Microbiology CPEP clinical fellowships* **Assignments** • *None*

Date	Lecture
Spring Break Mar. 8-14	**No Classes**
Week 9 Mar. 15-21	**Promotion and Tenure** **Objectives** • *To understand the history, rights, and responsibilities associated with academic tenure, as well as the tenure clock, cycle, and criteria for promotion and tenure* • *To identify the key materials required for tenure and promotion and understand how they are reviewed and awarded* **Topics** • *Tenure: History, rights, and responsibilities* • *Tenure clock/cycle and criteria for promotion and grant of tenure* • *Tenure/promotion materials and the review/award process* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Promotion and tenure guidelines at freestanding academic medical centers (Baylor College of Medicine, UTHealth HoustonMcGovern Medical School)* • *Promotion and tenure at Carnegie R1 institutions (Rice University, University of Houston)* • *Dawson, D.D., Morales, E., McKiernan, E.C., Schimanski, L.A., Niles, M.T., & Alperin, J.P. (2022). The role of collegiality in academic review, promotion, and tenure. PLoS ONE. 17(4), e0265506. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265506* **Materials** • *None*
Week 10 Mar. 22-28	**Programs, Centers, and Institutes** **Objectives** • *To understand how research universities use programs/centers/institutes as strategies for investment and growth* ***Topics*** • *Soft-funded vs. Hard-funded programs/centers/institutes* • *Membership, responsibilities, and benefits of programs/centers/institutes to faculty* ***Materials*** • *Lecture slides* • *National Cancer Institute Office of Cancer Centers* • *National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences CTSA Program* **Assignments** • *Discussion posts and responses on Canvas/Study LMS (Covering Weeks 8-10)*

Date	Lecture
Week 11 Mar. 29-Apr. 4	**Sponsored Programs** **Objectives** • *To understand the sponsors and mechanisms of extramural funding that support research* • *To become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of research administrators at the department and institutional levels* **Topics** • *Sponsors and funding mechanisms: The National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute* • *Sponsored programs administration at universities: PIs, departments, institutional offices* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *MD Anderson Office of Sponsored Programs (External site; intranet site)* • *UTHealth Houston Sponsored Programs Administration* **Assignments** • *None*
Week 12 Apr. 5-11	**Compliance** **Objectives** • *To introduce important regulatory frameworks that govern research activities in institutions of higher education* • *To understand responsibilities of principal investigators during the conduct of research and other sponsored programs* **Topics** • *Laboratory safety, animal research, and human subjects research* • *Research integrity (incl. conflicts of interest and research with foreign components)* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *News reports on research integrity issues (e.g., Galveston County Daily News, CBS News, Retraction Watch)* • *News reports on research with foreign components/foreign collaborations (e.g., Bloomberg Businessweek, US Department of Justice press release)* **Assignments** • *None*

Date	Lecture
Week 13 Apr. 12-18	**Intellectual Property, Licensing, and Start Ups** **Objectives** • *To introduce types of intellectual property (IP) and applicable legal/business frameworks* • *To understand common strategies that universities use to commercialize IP* **Topics** • *Types of intellectual property: Patents, copyright, trademarks, and trade secrets* • *Ownership, licensing IP, and start up/spin off companies* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Intellectual Property Basics (Legal Zoom)* • *NIH Intellectual Property Policy* • *Uniform Biological Material Transfer Agreement* • *MD Anderson Office of Technology Commercialization (External site; internal site)* • *UTHealth Houston Office of Technology Management* **Assignments** • *Discussion posts and responses on Canvas/Study LMS (Covering Weeks 11-13)*
Week 14 Apr. 21-25	**Personal Values and Career Path Choices** **Objectives** • *To equip students with the tools and strategies to align personal considerations and potential career paths* **Topics** • *Reflections on personal interests, priorities, and values* • *Wellness and resilience in academia* • *Introduction to Real Colors (Week 15 in-class activity)* **Materials** • *Lecture slides* • *Science Careers (AAAS) myIDP* • *Becoming a Resilient Scientist series NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education* • *Wellness resources at MD Anderson and UTHealth Houston* • *Real Colors Personality Instrument* **Assignments** • *None*
Week 15 Apr. 26-May 2	**Real Colors** **Objective** • *To be able to use the Real Colors personality type test to understand human behavior, uncover motivators specific to each temperament, and improve communications with others* **Topics** • *Lecture slides* • *Real Colors workshop (in-class activity)* **Materials** • *Real Colors Personality Instrument* **Assignments** • *Take the Real Colors Personality assessment (Must be completed before class)*

Date	Lecture
Week 16 May 3-8	**Final Presentations (No Class Meeting)**

Assignments

Course Readings. Students are expected to review assigned reading materials before class so that they are able to contribute to discussions and other in-class activities.

Discussion Posts and Responses. Students will be asked to post replies to discussion prompts provided during Weeks 4, 7, 10, and 13. These prompts are designed to help students reflect on the different topics discussed in prior weeks. Posts are expected to be well considered and concise. In addition, students will be asked to respond to or comment on posts written by at least two classmates. Initial discussion posts are due Fri., 11:59 p.m., and responses to classmates' posts on Sun., 7:59 a.m.

Final Presentations. Students will be assigned into groups and asked to create a 20-min. presentation on a specific topic. The final presentation is expected to be a video recording of a narrated Power Point to be posted on the course site. As with the discussion posts, each student will be asked to respond to or comment on videos posted by at least two other groups. Final presentations must be posted by Wed., 11:59 p.m., with responses to them due Fri., 11:59 p.m. during the semester's exam week.

Sharing different perspectives is not just allowed but is encouraged in this course. Learning from each other through open and respectful discussion is key to broadening one's intellectual horizons.

Attendance and Grading

This course is designed for professional development and preparatory experience and as such will be graded on a Pass/Fall basis. Engagement in the course and thoughtful self-reflection about a future academic career are key to maximizing this opportunity for in-depth career exploration. Instructions for the submissions required for the course will include clear rubrics to ensure consistency in expectations, assessment, and feedback. With the exception of extreme circumstances (e.g., family or medical emergency), no late work will be accepted, and no make-up discussions or other assignments will be given. To pass this course, students will need to have no more than two absences and receive passing marks for at least three out of four discussion posts/responses and the final presentation. Detailed rubrics will accompany the instructions for each assignment.

Technology Requirements

Microsoft Office 365 will be used for word processing and other office productivity functionality. Students will need access to Zoom, Microsoft Teams, SnagIt, or other comparable software to record their final project. A reliable internet connection will also be required to access the course website on the Study @ MD Anderson (Canvas) learning management system. Students registered in GS21 1231 will be enrolled in the course on Study using the email address they have on file with the UTHealth Houston's registrar. For MD Anderson-based GSBS students, this may be your @uth.tmc.edu email address instead of your @mdanderson.org account.

From time to time, electronic surveys or polls will be used during lectures to gather real-time feedback or as part of in-class activities. Students should bring a laptop, smart phone, or other mobile device that is web enabled.

GSBS Policies

Academic Integrity and Use of Generative AI. Academic integrity and intellectual development require original and honest work for this course. Plagiarism, falsification, forgery, etc. defeat the purpose of taking this and other courses. Using generative AI for creating content for this class is limited to image and audio elements for the final presentation. AI may not be used to create substantive content. For example, AI may not be used to create the slide text nor script for the narration but may be used to make visual aids or voice overs. For more information, please review GSBS's policy on the use of generative AI.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy. If you need accommodations related to attending/enrolling in this course, please contact Natalie Sirisaengtaksin, PhD, who serves as the GSBS's 504 Coordinator. We ask that you notify GSBS in advance (preferably at least 3 days before the start of the semester) so we can make appropriate arrangements.

For more information about academic and other policies, please visit the GSBS Policies and Procedures page.

Rubric for Discussion Posts and Responses

To receive a Pass, students must:

- Post an original response to the discussion question,
- Respond to at least two classmates' original posts with meaningful engagement (e.g., asking questions, offering insights, or building on their ideas), and
- Submit all posts by the deadline indicated in the syllabus.

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Pass	Fail
Original Post	Thoughtful, relevant response to the discussion question; demonstrates understanding of course concepts.	Missing, off-topic, or superficial original post.
Peer Responses	Responds meaningfully to at least two classmates' original posts.	Fewer than two peer responses or responses lack substance.
Critical Thinking	Offers analysis, insight, or alternative perspectives.	Lacks analysis or originality; mostly descriptive.
Evidence & Support	Uses relevant examples or references; cites sources when appropriate.	No support or examples; sources missing or incorrect.
Clarity & Organization	Clear, well-organized writing that is easy to follow.	Unclear or disorganized writing.
Timeliness	All posts and responses submitted by the deadline.	Late or missing posts/responses.

Grading Outcome

Pass: Meets all participation requirements and rubric criteria.
Fail: One or more requirements or criteria not met.

Examples of Meaningful Peer Responses

Example 1: Hi Jordan, I really appreciated your point about how mentorship can shape early career decisions. I hadn't considered how informal mentoring might influence someone's choice to pursue leadership roles. Do you think formal mentoring programs could help standardize that kind of support across departments?

Example 2: Hi Priya, your example of using reflective journaling in mentoring sessions was really interesting. How do you think that practice could be adapted for group mentoring settings where time is limited?

Example 3: Hi Marcus, I see your point about the benefits of structured mentoring compacts. I wonder, though, if too much structure might limit organic relationship-building. Have you seen any examples where flexibility led to better outcomes?

Example 4: Hi Elena, your post reminded me of the article we read on developmental networks. I think your experience aligns well with the idea that mentoring isn't just hierarchical—it can be lateral and peer-based too. Did you find that kind of support in your own training?

Example 5: Hi Sam, I had a similar experience when I was a junior faculty member. My mentor helped me navigate grant writing, which wasn't something I expected to get help with. Your post made me reflect on how valuable that guidance was. Thanks for sharing!

Rubric for Final Report/Case Study

Assignment

- Final group presentation (Case study on an assigned topic)
- Format: Narrated PowerPoint video (15 min. max)
- Due date: Wed. of the Spring term's exam week at 11:59 p.m.
- Response deadline: Fri. of the Spring term's exam week at 11:59 p.m.

Overview

Students will work in groups to create an original case study that illustrates a real-world scenario relevant to the structure, operations, or culture of a research university. The case study should reflect themes covered in the course (e.g., faculty roles, finances, mentoring, compliance, promotion and tenure, etc.) and demonstrate thoughtful analysis and application of course concepts.

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Pass	Fail
Relevance & Originality	Case study is original and clearly connected to course themes.	Case study lacks originality or relevance to course content.
Structure & Clarity	Presentation is well-organized, clearly narrated, and easy to follow.	Presentation is disorganized, unclear, or difficult to follow.
Application of Concepts	Demonstrates thoughtful integration of course materials, readings, and lectures.	Minimal or incorrect use of course concepts.
Critical Thinking	Identifies key issues, explores implications, and presents well-reasoned analysis or solutions.	Superficial analysis; lacks depth or insight.
Collaboration	All group members contribute meaningfully; presentation reflects shared effort.	Uneven participation or lack of collaboration.
Technical Requirements	Video is properly formatted, narrated, and uploaded on time.	Missing narration, technical issues, or late submission.
Engagement	Each student responds to at least two other group presentations with thoughtful comments.	Fewer than two responses or responses lack substance.

Grading Outcome

Pass: Meets all criteria above.
Fail: One or more criteria not met.

Examples of Case Study Topics

Example 1: Faculty Startup Package Negotiation – A new assistant professor negotiates their startup package, exploring institutional priorities and equity.

Example 2: Mentoring Challenges in a Multidisciplinary Lab – A PI mentors postdocs from different disciplines, addressing mentoring compacts and communication styles.

Example 3: Compliance Crisis in a Research Center – A lab is audited for non-compliance with human subjects protocols, examining oversight and PI responsibilities.

Example 4: Promotion and Tenure Dilemma – A faculty member faces mixed feedback on collegiality during tenure review, exploring institutional culture and criteria.

Example 5: Launching a New Institute – A university launches a translational research institute, exploring funding models and strategic growth.

Tips for Effective Group Work

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities early on
- Set deadlines for each part of the project to stay on track
- Communicate regularly using shared platforms (e.g., Teams, email, Google Docs)
- Respect each other's ideas and contributions
- Schedule at least one meeting to review the final presentation together
- Ensure all group members are familiar with the course themes and expectations