



2022 Outstanding Young Alumni Award Punam Patel '12

The Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizes a Winthrop alumna/us age 35 or younger whose service to Winthrop, service to the community and professional achievements have reflected positively on all alumni and the university.

The 2022 Outstanding Young Alumni Award recipient is Punam Patel '12. Patel describes her time at Winthrop University as "nothing short of a rollercoaster."

Knowing from a young age that she wanted to be a family medicine primary care physician, the Columbia, South Carolina, resident first arrived at Winthrop as a pre-med biology major. She quickly realized it wasn't the path she truly wanted. She moved back home for two years to do some soul-searching and completed core courses from Midlands Technical College, earning an associate degree in the arts.

Through spending time with mentors, she discovered that the field of healthcare business aligned better with her general interests. Her research found that Winthrop was the best place to receive undergraduate training in this field since it was the only certified healthcare management program in the state at that time.

Upon reenrolling at Winthrop, Patel knew her true Winthrop experience would be realized. Her advisor, Dr. Michael Matthews, professor of management and director of healthcare management, became a mentor that helped her work through her newfound passion. One of her classroom speakers provided a connection to help her secure an internship at Palmetto Health, located in the Midlands.

Patel graduated from Winthrop in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in business administration with a concentration in healthcare management. She is now pursuing a master's degree in health administration from the University of South Carolina.

She is currently the external affairs director for the Medical University of South Carolina's Regional Health Network, which includes the Midlands, Florence and Lancaster Division. She also serves as the external affairs lead for the Midlands Division. In this role, she maintains connectivity to enterprise-wide partnerships and locally manages relationships with key external stakeholders across Richland, Kershaw, Fairfield, Lexington and neighboring counties to establish unique collaborations and partnerships.

Prior to joining MUSC, Patel worked in a number of roles, including in management consulting at PwC, as director of operations at Agape Hospice, in Health System Operations at Prisma Health, as well as serving as the ombudsman for AccelerateSC, Governor Henry McMaster's Covid-19 Response Team. Patel has served in several volunteer roles at Winthrop, such as on the College of Business Administration Advisory Board, Healthcare Management Advisory Board and 5-year class reunion committee.

As a first-generation college graduate and daughter of immigrant parents, she strives to pay her blessings forward so that all people have the opportunity to realize their dreams regardless of their circumstances and background, just like she did.

Active in her community, Patel serves on the Board of Directors for Youth Corps, on the City of Columbia Hospitality Tax Grant Advisory Committee, is a former board member of Carolina Sunshine for Children, and volunteers with the United Way of the Midlands and American Heart Association.



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She was selected to participate in the Columbia Chamber Leadership Columbia Class of 2020 and now serves on the Leadership Columbia Advisory Board as the Health & Human Services Day committee chair. She is also a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Punam was a recipient of the 2019 Prisma Health Woman of Impact Award and 2017 Palmetto Health Pillar of Excellence Award.

She currently resides in Columbia, South Carolina, is a member of Elevation Church and the proud dog mom of her English Springer Spaniel, Theo. Her advice to the next generation is to "Be the change you need to see in your world and trust the process because eventually, it all works together for good."