

2026 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT HONOREE

Ajay Maker, MD, FACS — CLASS OF 1993



Dr. Ajay V. Maker is an international leader in surgical oncology and serves as Surgeon-in-Chief at the University of California San Francisco Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, Galante Distinguished Professor, and Chief of Surgical Oncology for UCSF. He earned degrees with honors in Biology and Fine Arts from Brown University, his medical degree from Yale University, surgical residency at the Brigham and Women's Hospital of Harvard Medical School, and completed surgical oncology fellowships at the National Institutes of Health, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and the University of Paris. He also completed postdoctoral training at the National Cancer Institute, contributing to landmark clinical trials that led to the first successful immunotherapy for patients with metastatic cancer. He moved back to Chicagoland to start his career and prior to UCSF was a tenured professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Director of Surgical Oncology at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center.

Dr. Maker is known for caring for patients with some of the most complex and advanced cancers, including many who have been told their tumors have spread and cannot be removed with surgery. Patients seek him out for his ability to provide clear guidance, surgical options, compassion, and hope. In addition to his clinical work in liver and pancreatic surgery, his team leads major nationally funded research efforts and has shared discoveries through hundreds of publications and invited lectures around the world. He is deeply committed to teaching and mentorship and has been repeatedly recognized for excellence in mentorship and patient care.

At New Trier, he was a three-season scholar athlete in soccer and track and field, served as design editor of the yearbook, and was deeply engaged in music, science, and service. He participated in the symphonic wind ensemble and Science Olympiad, where he became Illinois State Champion in Anatomy, and was active in the Biology Club, Scholastic Bowl, Social Service, and *Calliope Literary Magazine*. He attributes the opportunities offered at New Trier as formative in shaping his outlook. Outside of his professional life, he values time with his wife and three sons and finds balance through triathlon training, mountain trekking, adventure photography, and the arts.

