



SOMnews

Point of PRIDE



Mathew H. M. Lee, '56, was one of 12 American scholars invited to visit the People's Republic of China in 1959, where he studied acupuncture analgesia for the treatment of pain. Lee later became one of America's leading authorities soon rehabilitation medicine as the Howard A. Rusk Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University School of Medicine and medical director of the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine.

DEAN'S MESSAGE

In the midst of the holiday season, we have been experiencing an exponential rise in COVID-19 cases across the country and throughout the world. While many of us may be experiencing COVID-19 "fatigue," it is not yet time to let down our guards. Instead, we must increase our level of vigilance and practice more thoughtfulness and more steps to prevent the spread than ever before. The pandemic has challenged everything from our physical and mental health to our resources and livelihood, and our safety. In some ways, we have no control over how the virus will affect us. However, the choices we make do help determine the impact of COVID-19 on our lives, including the precautions we take or don't take. The CDC continuously updates their guidelines based on new developments, so one of the best actions we can take is to frequently check their website for the latest COVID-19 safety information.

To a degree, we also determine the subjects that will occupy our thoughts. Year after year, the holidays prompt us to practice gratitude and remember the many reasons we have to celebrate. While this year differs from previous years in several ways, this sentiment is not one of them. We remain grateful for all the good in our lives. Aside from the various personal milestones I know we are celebrating, the School of Medicine has had a very successful year despite the challenges of COVID-19. Our high-level accomplishments include:

- Various major COVID-19 scientific advances for diagnosis, treatment and prevention, including successful vaccine candidates;
- Our medical education team's implementation of a Renaissance Curriculum that has shown great initial success;
- Achieving \$563 million in FY20 for grants and contract awards, 4 percent ahead of FY19;
- Surpassing FY20 first quarter grants and contracts by 24% in FY21;
- Our clinical enterprise being ahead of budget for FY21, although now being challenged by the rise in COVID-19 cases and the anticipated reduction in elective treatments.

What's on My Mind...



...is the success and the hope found in safety through the choices we make during this global pandemic.

We also celebrated many significant occasions virtually, including Match Day, Graduation, our White Coat Ceremony, the State of the School Address, Medical Student Research Day, and many more. These successes and celebrations are products of a safe environment that has permitted our students to continue to learn, our physicians to continue to treat our patients, our scientists to continue to conduct research, and our staff to continue to work in various roles.

The safeguards that the School of Medicine and the University of Maryland, Baltimore have collaboratively implemented and executed throughout this year also give us hope for even brighter days and greater achievements. In the coming months, we look forward to a new year, a new administration, and an end to this global pandemic. Please remain cautious and continue to make wise decisions throughout the holidays, including referring to the holiday travel guidance, which can be found on the the UMSOM website <https://www.medschool.umaryland.edu/news/coronavirus/UMB-Holiday-Travel-Guidance--Guidelines/>. Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay hopeful.

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am
Sincerely Yours,

E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA
*Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, UM Baltimore
John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and
Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine*

Dr. Slobogean Named Director of Clinical Research for UMSOM Department of Orthopaedics

Gerard Slobogean, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Orthopaedics and an orthopaedic traumatologist at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, has been named the new Director of Clinical Research for UMSOM's Department of Orthopaedics. His appointment was announced by **Andrew N. Pollak, MD**, James Lawrence Kernan Professor and Chair of the Department of Orthopaedics.

In his new role, Dr. Slobogean will oversee the development of a robust program for clinical research within the Department of Orthopaedics that



Gerard Slobogean,
MD, MPH

SOMnews is your source for all news and information regarding the University of Maryland School of Medicine, including Clinical Care, Research, Education, Community Outreach, and its Culture Transformation Initiative.

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STRAP SETS THE BAR FOR SUCCESS

Highly Successful Dean's Challenge Initiative Concludes — **But Not Before Bringing on 26 Extraordinary Researchers with \$101M in NIH Funding**

As 2020 comes to a close, so has one of the most successful initiatives in the history of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Over the course of just three years, the special **Trans-Disciplinary Recruitment Award Program (STRAP)** has added dozens of top researcher-physician-scientists and biomedical scientists to the already outstanding ranks of UMSOM's faculty. The STRAP Initiative was led by **Terry Rogers, PhD**, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Associate Dean for Research Development and Administration, along with the Office of Research Affairs (ORA) Director, **Joni Prasad, PhD**.

Launched in 2017, the STRAP Initiative produced exceptional recruitment results, with the addition of preeminent physician-scientists and biomedical scientists to the UMSOM faculty, while further elevating the UMSOM's national and international research profile. In all, the STRAP Initiative attracted 26 teams of scientists from leading institutions across the U.S., with \$101 million in total research funding at its conclusion.

Faculty recruited in the STRAP Initiative came from a variety of leading academic institutions and from a diverse range of disciplines. Many were attracted to the exceptional resources of the newly constructed Health Sciences Research Facility (HSRF III) and its state-of-the-art laboratories, while others saw new opportunities to expand and collaborate across various research platforms.

"Louisa Peartree, MBA, Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operating Officer for the UMSOM, and her team in Finance and Administration deserve special recognition and thanks, as they provided critical support in helping to meet the specific laboratory and other resource requirements of the many STRAP recruits, as part of the occupancy program of the new HSRF III research building," Dean Reece said.

Dean Reece and Dr. Rogers noted that the STRAP Initiative evolved and broadened during its three-year tenure. Many recruits were purposely recruited through the original established criteria. Over time, the definition expanded and evolved. Other top scientists, who were recruited during this STRAP period, came to the UMSOM faculty as part of a "halo effect" — in which many of the new scientists were attracted to join existing UMSOM faculty.



Terry Rogers, PhD



Joni Prasad, PhD

According to Dr. Rogers, the result has been an infusion of highly talented researcher-physician-scientists and biomedical scientists who have brought tremendous synergy and opportunities for collaboration to the UMSOM. **"We have seen STRAP-recruited faculty dramatically expand the scope and impact of their research,"** Dr. Rogers said. **"Many have pointed to their ability to engage in crucial collaborations with our existing faculty. This has resulted in technology development start-ups, cutting edge interdisciplinary work, and partnerships leading to new drug development programs and future therapies."**

The STRAP Initiative was among recent components of UMSOM's multi-year research strategy called ACCEL-Med (Accelerating Innovation and Discovery in Medicine). ACCEL-Med was implemented in 2013 to increase the pace and scope of clinical and basic science research, and move the UMSOM to the top-upper echelon of research-intensive medical schools. The initiative included a slate of new programs, including the UMSOM's annual Festival of Science, the formation of a Scientific Advisory Council, a renewed focus on interdisciplinary research and collaboration, the opening of new core biomedical research facilities (CIBR), the introduction of the new course, Foundations in Research and Critical Thinking (FRCT) in the MD curriculum, and the development of a research continuum across the UMSOM, in which faculty, trainees, and students at all levels play a role in advancing science and discovery. The newest component of ACCEL-Med is the recently launched LGAP (Large Grant Award Program) Initiative, which aims to secure large NIH program project, center grants, or the equivalent grants.

"The tremendous success of the STRAP Initiative, along with the opening of Health Sciences Research Facility III, and the other components of ACCEL-Med, has significantly accelerated the upward trajectory of UMSOM as one of the leading biomedical research institutions in the nation," said Dean Reece. **"Our advanced laboratories and leading-edge technology in genomics, personalized medicine, cancer, and diagnostic imaging in the new facility are among the best in the world. Our teams of preeminent, well-funded physician-scientists and biomedical scientists are working on the most critical 'big science' research questions. Indeed, UMSOM's leadership position continues to rise among the upper echelon of research-intensive medical schools."** 🏛️

UMSOM's Distinguished STRAP Faculty Recruits



Tracy L. Bale, PhD

Chair: Margaret M. McCarthy, PhD, Department of Pharmacology
Prior Institution: University of Pennsylvania
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: stress modeling in mice, neurodevelopment
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$14,783,124



Roger A. Bannister, PhD

Chair: Stanford Stass, MD, Department of Pathology
Prior Institution: University of Colorado
Recruitment Year: 2019
Area of Research: ALS, muscle biology
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$923,197



Eli E. Bar, PhD

Chair: Stanford Stass, MD, Department of Pathology
Prior Institution: Case Western Reserve University
Recruitment Year: 2019
Area of Research: tumor stem cells, glioblastoma
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$689,388



Anna A. Birukova, MD

Chair: Stephen Davis, MBBS, Department of Medicine
Prior Institution: University of Chicago
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: Lung Injury; cytoskeletal changes; inflammation; vascular biology
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$10,871,799



Konstantin G. Birukov, MD, PhD

Chair: Peter Rock, MD, MBA, Department of Anesthesiology
Prior Institution: University of Chicago
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: lung injury, vascular biology
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$7,350,769



Xuefang Cao, PhD

Chair: James Kaper, PhD, Department of Microbiology and Immunology
Director: Kevin Cullen, MD, Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center
Prior Institution: Roswell Park Cancer Institute
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: Graft v. Host Disease, ovarian cancer, T cell immune response
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$1,543,981



Linda Chang, MD, MS

Chair: Elias R. Melhem, MD, Department of Diagnostic Radiology & Nuclear Medicine
Prior Institution: University of Hawaii at Manoa
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: brain development and biology, addiction
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,555,638



Allan Doctor, MD

Chair: Steven Czinn, MD, Department of Pediatrics
Director: Thomas Scalea, MD, Program in Trauma
Prior Institution: Washington University School of Medicine
Recruitment Year: 2019
Area of Research: ultrasound, nanoparticles, nervous system control
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$1,424,196



Motomi Enomoto-Iwamoto, DDS, PhD

Chair: Andrew Pollak, MD, Department of Orthopaedics
Prior Institution: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: skeletal development and function, cell signaling, osteoarthritis, cartilage and tendon repair
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$7,918,843



Thomas M. Ernst, Dr. rer. nat.

Chair: Elias R. Melhem, MD, Department of Diagnostic Radiology & Nuclear Medicine
Prior Institution: University of Hawaii at Manoa
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: magnetic resonance imaging, spectroscopy
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,606,029



Masahiro Iwamoto, PhD

Chair: Andrew Pollak, MD, Department of Orthopaedics
Prior Institution: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: connective tissue repair, developmental biology of bone and cartilage, heterotopic ossification
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,358,435



Charles C. Hong, MD, PhD

Chair: Stephen Davis, MBBS, Department of Medicine
Prior Institution: Vanderbilt University
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: drug discovery and development, cardiovascular genetics, pluripotent stem cells, chemical biology
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$2,738,751



Zhe Han, PhD

Chair: Stephen Davis, MBBS, Department of Medicine
Prior Institution: Children's National
Recruitment Year: 2019
Area of Research: leukemia, renal biology, heart development
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$5,716,300



Alexander S. Krupnick, MD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: University of Virginia
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: Lung transplant
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$2,338,739



Hong C. Lai, PhD, MPH

Chair: Jay Magaziner, PhD, Department of Epidemiology & Public Health
Director: Robert C. Gallo, MD, Institute of Human Virology
Prior Institution: Johns Hopkins University
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: Ophthalmology - Age related Maculopathy
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$4,851,552 (Jointly awarded with Dr. Shenghan Lai)



Shenghan Lai, MD

Chair: Jay Magaziner, PhD, Department of Epidemiology & Public Health
Director: Robert C. Gallo, MD, Institute of Human Virology
Prior Institution: Johns Hopkins University
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: Subclinical Cardiovascular Disease and Cocaine Use
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$4,851,552 (Jointly awarded with Dr. Hong C. Lai)



Christine L. Lau, MD, MBA

Chair: Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: University of Virginia
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: Lung transplant
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$797,560



Yang Liu, PhD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: Children's National Health System
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: experimental therapy in cancer and autoimmune diseases, cancer genetics, cancer stem cells
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$976,842



Daniel G. Maluf, MD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: University of Tennessee (UT) / Methodist Transplant Institute
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: transplant surgery, liver donor liver transplantation, and robotic minimally invasive surgery
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,209,249 (Jointly awarded with Dr. Mas)



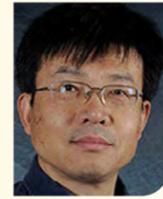
Valeria Mas, PhD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: University of Tennessee Health Science Center
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: transplant immunology; epigenetic modifications on kidney graft and outcomes
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,209,249 (Jointly awarded with Dr. Maluf)



Raymond F. Regan, MD

Chair: Brian Browne, MD, Department of Emergency Medicine
Prior Institution: Philadelphia University & Thomas Jefferson University
Recruitment Year: 2018
Area of Research: cell tissue injury during strokes/brain trauma, Intracerebral hemorrhage
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$10,434,727



Lishan Su, PhD

Chair: Margaret M. McCarthy, PhD, Department of Pharmacology
Director: Robert C. Gallo, MD, Institute of Human Virology
Prior Institution: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Recruitment Year: 2020
Area of Research: HIV research
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$2,543,409



Zhongjun Jon Wu, PhD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Prior Institution: University of Louisville
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: artificial organ development, hemodynamics, cardiovascular disease
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,736,006



Liqing Justin Yu, MD, PhD

Chair: Stephen Davis, MBBS, Department of Medicine
Chair: Richard Eckert, PhD, Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
Prior Institution: Georgia State University
Recruitment Year: 2018
Area of Research: fatty liver disease, lipid metabolism
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$2,528,884



Li-Gun Zhang, PhD

Chair: Victoria G. Marchese, PhD, PT, Department of Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Science
Prior Institution: Northwestern University
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: joint rehabilitation robotics, neurological disorders, musculoskeletal injuries
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,925,056



Pan Zheng, MD, PhD

Chair: Christine Lau, MD, MBA, Department of Surgery
Director: Robert C. Gallo, MD, Institute of Human Virology
Prior Institution: Children's National Health System
Recruitment Year: 2017
Area of Research: signal transduction in hematopoietic stem cells in aging, TSC-mTOR, tumor immunology
Total \$\$ Awarded: \$3,298,923



A UMSOM Treasure

NEW TRIBUTE FUND
HONORS THE LIFE AND
ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF
DR. NANCY RYAN LOWITT

“I describe Dr. Lowitt to others as a UMSOM “treasure,” and I will miss her dearly. During her career, Dr. Lowitt was committed to standing with students and faculty in their pursuit of excellence. She addressed the needs of graduate education and continuing medical education, cared deeply about mentoring women and developing faculty leaders, and valued empathy and integrity. We are all better for having known her. I hope you will join me in honoring Dr. Lowitt with a donation to the Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, EdM, Faculty Development Fund.” – Dean Reece

In the spring of 2020, the University of Maryland School of Medicine lost one of its best — **Dr. Nancy Ryan Lowitt**. A respected and beloved member of the UMSOM community, her passing was mourned by all, with that sadness soon giving way to a collective determination to honor the memory of this trailblazer for equality, diversity, and inclusion in a substantial and lasting way.

On Thursday, November 5, 2020, that resolve was confirmed by the announcement of a new tribute fund in Dr. Lowitt’s honor. During a schoolwide virtual event held to celebrate Dr. Nancy Lowitt’s legacy, UMSOM Dean **E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA**, Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, UM Baltimore, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor, announced the launch of the **Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, EdM, Faculty Development Fund**. Sponsored by the Office of the Dean and UMSOM’s Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS), the fund commemorates her leadership and commitment through an annual award to an UMSOM faculty member whose academic leadership, cultural transformation work, commitment to excellence, and integrity reflect the high standards set by Dr. Lowitt during her 22-year tenure.

As the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs & Professional Development, Dr. Lowitt was instrumental in developing and managing the implementation of UMSOM’s **Culture Transformation Initiative (CTI)**,



Kimberly Lumpkins,
MD, MBA

which launched a school-wide program to ensure a diverse, inclusive, and respectful professional environment for everyone at the School. Part of that initiative included the founding of WIMS, which actively supports the professional and academic success of UMSOM women faculty through professional development opportunities and a range of resources.

“Nancy understood the fundamental importance of supporting faculty to be the best they can be,” said **Kimberly Lumpkins, MD, MBA**, Associate Professor of Surgery and President of the WIMS Executive Council. *“It’s an incredible pleasure to bring this fund in her honor to the faculty at our school.”*



Mary A. Pooton

Its sponsors note that the Lowitt Fund, like its namesake, is focused on producing actionable results. *“This fund is essential to providing professional development resources for rising stars within our faculty,”* said **Mary A. Pooton**, UMSOM’s Assistant Dean for Development. *“In this regard, the Fund seeks to follow the example and best practices set by Dr. Lowitt.”*

Nancy R. Lowitt, MD, EdM, FACP, a longtime University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) educator and national leader in faculty affairs and professional development, was known across the UMSOM community for her extraordinary compassion, collaborative spirit, and selfless demeanor. She was often described by colleagues across the UMSOM as one of the “kindest, friendliest, and most caring people they knew.”

Dr. Lowitt had a distinguished career that provided her with a strong foundation for leadership in medical education and professional development. She received her AB Degree (Cum Laude) from Middlebury College in Vermont, followed by an EdM Degree from Harvard’s Graduate School of Education and then an MD from George Washington University School of Medicine. She completed her residency in Internal Medicine at Harvard Medical School, New England Deaconess Hospital, and her fellowship in General Internal Medicine, Clinician Educator Track, at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She also completed Facilitator in Training in both Teaching and Curriculum Development at Johns Hopkins. She served as Assistant, then Associate, then Program Director, of the General Internal Residency Program at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, and as a teaching attending in a primary care clinical practice. She was elected to Fellowship in the American College of Physicians in 1997. In 1998, she joined the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine as Assistant Professor.

Soon after arriving at the UMSOM, Dr. Lowitt was recruited to lead the School’s Graduate and Continuing Medical Education

A LIFE WELL LIVED: An Accomplished MD, Mentor, and Mother

programs as Associate Dean of Graduate and Continuing Medical Education. Over her 22-year tenure, she took on increasing responsibilities for major UMSOM faculty and organizational management functions — including faculty affairs, professional faculty development, conflict of interest, and culture transformation. Before her passing, she had been promoted to Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs & Professional Development.

She was often described by colleagues as one of the “kindest, friendliest, and most caring people they knew.”

Dr. Lowitt was widely recognized for her national leadership and involvement in medical education issues — serving for many years as a member of several committees of the Association of American Colleges (AACSB), the American College of Physicians, and the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education. She also had been active in educational program development and assessment locally, regionally, and nationally in Faculty Development. The UMSOM Teaching Portfolio for Promotion Curriculum is one that she had presented nationally, and had

been disseminated and adopted at other institutions since 2002. She served as an external reviewer for the UCSF Academy of Medical Educators, and served as a member of national consensus conferences on Educational Scholarship convened by the AAMC.

Earlier in 2020, Dr. Lowitt led the UMSOM to achieve Accreditation with Commendation from the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education.

In perhaps her proudest accomplishment, Dr. Lowitt had taken the lead in developing and managing the implementation of the Dean’s Culture Transformation Initiative (CTI) in 2018. Under her leadership, the CTI launched a school-wide program to ensure a diverse, inclusive, and respectful professional environment for everyone at the UMSOM. She then led implementation, in collaboration with UMB and UMMS, of a wide range of activities, programs and committees dedicated to making both short-term and long-term culture changes that continue to move forward—including policy enactment, professional development, equity in faculty promotions and compensation, and culture/climate research. For her many efforts, she was honored by the Daily Record as one of “Maryland’s Top 100 Women.”

Dr. Lowitt is survived by her husband, Mark Lowitt, MD, and their three children. Dr. Mark Lowitt served on the full-time faculty at UMSOM from 1993 to 2004 and is currently Adjunct Associate Professor in the UMSOM Department of Dermatology. He completed his residency in Dermatology at the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS).

Many UMSOM faculty and staff already have stepped forward to honor Dr. Lowitt through a personal contribution to the Fund. “Nancy hired me in May 2000 as Director of Continuing Medical Education, and we worked together for six years. She was truly a mentor and a friend,” said Jane E. Anderson, currently UMSOM’s Director of Donor Relations and Stewardship and donor whose generous gift enabled UMSOM to establish the Lowitt Fund. “I am grateful for her leadership and inspiration, but most of all for her gentle, caring spirit. I have no doubt there will be many more contributions to this fund as Nancy touched so many lives here at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.” 🙏

Please join your fellow UMSOM faculty and staff in honoring the life and accomplishments of Dr. Nancy Ryan Lowitt. To make your gift today, please visit the **Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, EdM, Faculty Development Fund.**



UMSOM Office of Continuing Medical Education staff in 2004.
Front Row: Jane E. Anderson (L) and Dr. Nancy Ryan Lowitt (R).
Back row, L to R: Robertha Simpson, Gloria Owens, Althea Pusateri.

Extraordinary Times, *Exceptional Students*

White Coat Ceremony Reflects Resilience and Promise of UMSOM Class of 2024

In a year like no other, 2020's White Coat Ceremony at the University of Maryland School of Medicine provided an opportunity for the School's faculty, staff, and fellow students to celebrate the new Class of 2024 in a unique way.

A tradition at the University of Maryland School of Medicine since 1997, the White Coat Ceremony is a key milestone occasion for first-year medical students, where they are presented with their traditional white coats, long the symbol of physicians and scientists. In past years, students have had their coats put on by School of Medicine faculty in welcoming their new colleagues to the profession of medicine. After being "coated," students recite a Code of Honor acknowledging their acceptance of the obligations of the medical profession. In contrast, this year's November 10 ceremony, sponsored by the Whiting-Turner Contracting Company and the Medical Alumni Association, was held virtually via Zoom for the Class of 2024 and a select group of faculty and staff, and also live-streamed on YouTube for the larger UMSOM community and student families. Through the efforts of the Ceremony's Planning Committee — **Donna L. Parker, MD, FACP**, Associate Professor of Medicine and Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education; **Joseph P. Martinez, MD, FACEP, FAAEM**, Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine and Medicine, and Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Experience; **Kerri A. Thom, MD, MS**, Professor of Epidemiology & Public Health and Medicine, and Associate Dean for Student Affairs; **Kristen McCartin, CMP**, Events Specialist in the Office of Student Affairs; **Mary Pooton**, Assistant Dean for Development; and **Natalie Rathell**, Event Specialist, Office of Development — the event was hailed by all as a complete success.

The special tone for the day was set in the opening remarks by UMSOM's Dean **E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA**. *"I know this is not what you imagined today would be like,"* he noted. *"Although the COVID pandemic has prevented us from physically gathering, we are joined together in spirit by collectively recognizing what this occasion means to all of us. Today marks a major milestone in what will surely be a momentous and lifelong journey."*

Along with observations made by various speakers (including **Brad Lerner, MD, FACS '84**, President of the Medical Alumni Association, and UMSOM faculty members **George C. Willis, MD**, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine; John C. Allen, MD '14, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Assistant Dean for Student Affairs; and Dr. Thom), a number of UMSOM faculty members surprised students with video messages of support. In addition, when they were asked to don their white coats for the first time, students discovered personal notes of congratulations tucked into their pockets from UMSOM alumni. And, to demonstrate their collective diversity, students recited sections of the Code of Honor in their native languages, including Turkish, Yoruba, Farsi, Portuguese, and Polish.

An additional highlight of the ceremony came in the remarks from two Class of 2024 students, **Adaobi Ahanotu '24**, and **Maria Vera Alvarez '24**. *"We are a special class that started medical school during a global pandemic, and a racial justice pandemic as well,"* said Ahanotu. *"Despite this, I am truly in awe of how our class has maintained unity and support for one another. We have truly persevered."* In turn, Alvarez urged her classmates to realize their common focus. *"I think many of you will find similarities in your path whether it is linear or not,"* she said. *"I want to encourage you to look back and embrace your path because it's brought all of us here and should be celebrated."*



Adaobi Ahanotu '24



Maria Vera Alvarez '24

Darby Moore '24, Class of 2024 Student Government President, had nothing but praise for this virtual version of the White Coat Ceremony. *"The School did a beautiful job in putting the event together and making the best of the circumstances that we've been given,"* she said. *"I think they really upheld the tradition of the White Coat Ceremony, and maintained all of the true feeling in a virtual format."*

View the entire 2020 White Coat Ceremony [here](#).

Contributions to the **Medical Family Annual Fund** help our UMSOM students take advantage of educational events around the world. Please make a donation [here](#) or contact Irene Amoros, Director of Annual Giving and Special Projects, at 410-706-8550 or at iamoros@som.umaryland.edu.



UMSOM's Class of 2024 students don their white coats.

Outracing the Pandemic

UMSOM Emergency Medicine Faculty and Staff
Set the Pace for Giving with COVID-19 K Race

Five months into the pandemic lockdown, **Amal Mattu, MD**, Professor of Emergency Medicine, was exasperated. *“I was increasingly frustrated that things just seemed to be getting worse and worse,”* he recalls. *“In one sense, it was because our everyday social activities had been taken away from us. But more importantly, it had to do with the constant news about Americans suffering, especially in terms of so many going hungry. I felt like I needed to do something.”*



Dr. Mattu displays the COVID-19 K medal that he designed.

Out on a run with his wife one day, the idea suddenly struck him. *“COVID-19,”* Dr. Mattu remembers thinking. *“Why, that almost sounds like the name of a race!”* From that seed of an idea, an entire event quickly took shape — a COVID-19 K race, which would be open to physicians, residents, residency graduates, and staff of UMSOM’s

Department of Emergency Medicine.

Thanks to the organizational expertise of the department’s conference planning specialist **Doreen Lucadamo, CMP, HMCC**, the program rapidly took off. Through a website set up exclusively for the COVID-19 K, registration for the race was made through a tiered donation to the Maryland Food Bank, a local non-profit organization working to end hunger in the state. In return for their donation and completion of their 19 K, the first 200 participants would receive an actual medal designed by Dr. Mattu.

Race rules were simple: Participants needed to complete the distance of 19 kilometers (11.8 miles) over the course of two weeks, which was set for November 1-14. Any form of mobile exercise was permitted — running, biking, swimming, kayaking, even stationary walking on treadmills — as long as that distance was achieved and documented during the allotted time period.

“COVID 19 is a very serious viral pandemic that has gripped the world this past year. It has been particularly overwhelming to us on the front lines in the Emergency Department. I am very proud of all our colleagues and staff who have worked tirelessly and shown great courage caring for so many very sick patients. Our COVID-19 K was an amusing but important diversion from the pandemic, allowing our Department to donate all proceeds to support the Maryland Food Bank, which has done a terrific job in providing meals to so many families in need.”



Brian J. Browne, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine

“Given that so many of our faculty and residents enjoy exercise activities, and also the fact that they had two weeks to do it, I figured that we ought to be able to get at least 100 people to sign up.”

Dr. Mattu says. But he was wrong — in the best possible way. The COVID-19 K proved to be highly popular, attracting not just Emergency Medicine physicians, residents, and staff, but nurses, alumni, family members, and friends as well. An initial fundraising goal of \$5,000 was quickly surpassed, and in the end, the virtual event raised \$10,070 to feed the hungry in Maryland.

While he admits to being “pleasantly surprised” by the outpouring of support, Dr. Mattu is already looking to expand the event in 2021. *“If there is another good cause, we will try to stage this race again on a broader level,”* he says. *“I think we can potentially make this a really great annual giving opportunity.”*



Drs. Mattu (L) and Browne (R) deliver UMSOM Emergency Medicine’s \$10,070 donation to the Maryland Food Bank.

COVID-19 K participants **Jon Wendell, MD, FACEP, FAEMS**, Clinical Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine, and his son Tucker. Dr. Wendell was part of the UMEM Residency Class of 2010.

Dr. Slobogean Named Director of Clinical Research

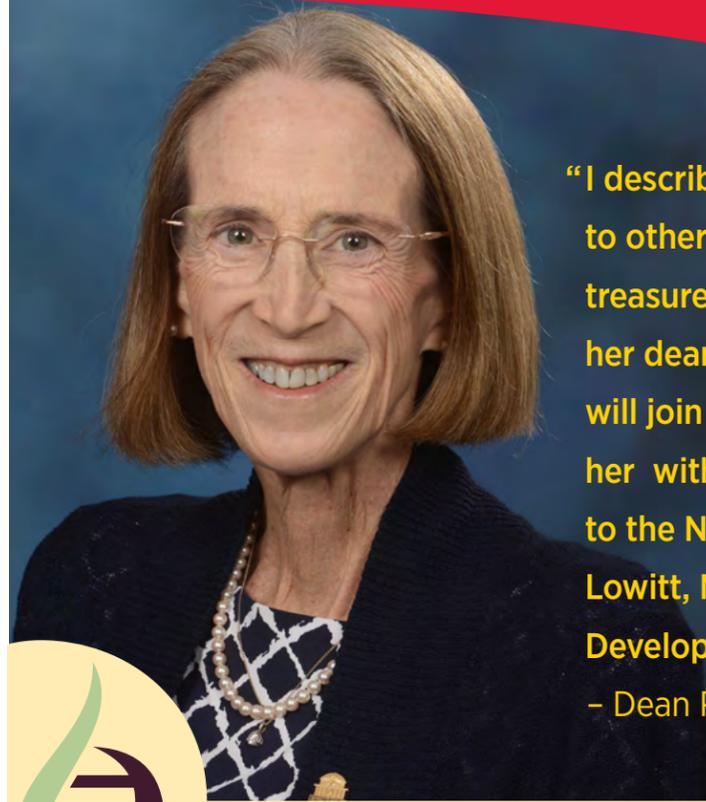
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is focused on high-quality randomized clinical trials, which will meaningfully impact patient care worldwide. Specifically, this research program will focus on managing large, multi-centered clinical trials supported by a broad base of extramural funding sources, including the National Institutes of Health, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, the Department of Defense, and other governmental organizations, foundations, and associations.

To compete for such awards, Dr. Slobogean also will be responsible for promoting the development of a broad-based series of multicenter clinical investigations that demonstrate the department's expertise and capacity in those areas and serve as pilot work to refine and develop important clinical questions. Concurrently, with the support of fellow departmental faculty, he will develop and lead an educational program in clinical research to encourage future generations of investigators, including medical students, residents, fellows, and junior faculty, by supporting and mentoring them to become independently funded investigators. This educational

program will seek to compete for a National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grant (T32) from the NIH National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NAIMS). This grant enables institutions to support pre-doctoral and postdoctoral research training for individuals in the fields of arthritis and musculoskeletal and skin diseases to pursue further career development through K- or F-series awards, and to develop into funded researchers in an academic setting.

"I think that this new position is about developing a larger, long-term, and sustainable research vision for the department," says Dr. Slobogean. "I look forward to developing these larger initiatives and instilling a broader research-oriented philosophy across all the divisions in the department." 



"I describe Dr. Lowitt to others as a 'UMSOM treasure,' and I will miss her dearly. I hope you will join me in honoring her with a donation to the Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, EdM, Faculty Development Fund."
- Dean Reece

As Dr. Lowitt touched the lives of so many, your gift in her honor can make all the the difference to an outstanding and deserving UMSOM faculty member. To learn more and make your gift today, please visit the **Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, EdM, Faculty Development Fund.**

