

UMass Chan Named One of the Top 100 Healthiest Employers in America

UMass Chan Medical School has been recognized as one of the 100 Healthiest Employers of America for offering employees and students a variety of mental health, wellness, and support initiatives through its [Office of Well-Being \(OWB\)](#).

The 8th annual award, given Dec. 13, 2023, by the Worksite Wellness Council of Massachusetts, with Healthiest Employers honors UMass Chan’s achievements in providing best-in-class wellness programs and supporting employees through a culture of well-being. This year, UMass Chan is nationally ranked 73 out of 100 and is the only institution of higher learning in the “Large Employer” category. The university also received a WorkWell Massachusetts Award, whose goal is to not only recognize outstanding local wellness programs but to also share best practices across all Massachusetts employers.

OWB’s [Wellness](#) and [Employee Assistance](#) programs help promote a culture of wellness for members of the UMass Chan community through many offerings, including free lifestyle coaching, myriad workshops, mindfulness programs, confidential and free mental health counseling, and virtual and onsite fitness programs.

“On behalf of the UMass Chan Office of Well-Being, I am proud to accept this award, which symbolizes that we are on the right track in how we’re positively, proactively, and creatively impacting our employees’ lives,” said OWB Director Valerie Wedge, LICSW, CEAP. “This recognition reinforces that, after only two-and-a-half years of programming, our leadership’s commitment to the health and wellness of the UMass Chan community— staff, faculty, and students—speaks volumes about what UMass Chan is all about.”

Launched in 2021 as part of UMass Chan’s human resources strategy and the university’s overall strategic plan, OWB ensures that employees have access to health and wellness resources and opportunities to move toward their optimal health.

“It was a timely innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic to develop OWB within the six dimensions of wellness (emotional, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual),” said Wedge.

Carolyn Brownawell, UMass Chan’s deputy executive vice chancellor for human resources, said workplace wellness and employee assistance programs, such as those offered through OWB, support employee engagement and performance.

“I’m pleased that our Office of Well-Being has been recognized for supporting our campus commitment to the health and wellness of our employees,” she said.

Meanwhile, OWB’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has a strong reputation for confidentiality, mental health referrals, problem resolution, and emotional wellbeing.

“EAP is the foundation and essential component of the Office of Well-Being,” said Wedge.

Worksite Wellness Council of Massachusetts (WWCMA), a non-profit member organization dedicated to the advancement of worksite wellness programs, created the WorkWell of Massachusetts awards program. WWCMA also partnered with Healthiest Employers, a trusted national awards program that recognizes people-first organizations taking a proactive approach to employee health.

The judging is based on each organization's Healthiest Employers Index—a metric focused on six categories: culture and leadership commitment, foundational components, strategic planning, communications and marketing, programming and interventions, and reporting and analytics. To qualify for the national award, applicants

are also scored based on an additional section called “the Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America,” which scores the applicant essays and asks additional questions related to chronic conditions and workplace health.

“Our society is calling for us to prioritize workplace wellbeing,” said Archana Kansagra, WWCMA board director; Awards & Recognition Committee co-chair, and founder of the WorkWell MA Awards program. “Employers acknowledge that there are various influencers that impacts an employee’s overall health, engagement, experience, and ultimately productivity. These organizations are taking it to the next level, transforming workplace wellbeing through outstanding programming and innovative solutions that improves the employee experience, builds community, and shares the important message of mental health and wellbeing within the company culture.”

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