



Office of Community & Government Relations (OCGR) Update

Spring 2020

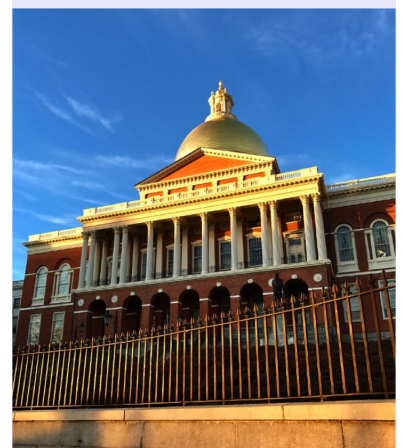
UMass Medical School Responds to COVID-19

While many members of the UMMS community – students, faculty and staff – have not been on campus physically during the COVID-19 pandemic, many have been making significant contributions to the community and the local health care system during this unprecedented time.

On March 31, the School of Medicine became the first in the nation to graduate its class of 2020. The accelerated virtual graduation took place two months early, enabling the new doctors to join the Massachusetts health care workforce immediately to help take on the COVID-19 challenge. A new, streamlined Board of Registration in Medicine licensing process enabled graduates to accept clinical assignments at primary care practices, community health centers and hospitals in Massachusetts.

During a time when face-to-face patient and provider interactions have been severely limited, UMMS students provided training for approximately 850 people in 65 clinics in the area on telehealth, allowing patients and providers to conduct appointments through live video conferencing. Students and staff also helped address the significant shortages of personal protective equipment by gathering and delivering PPE used in UMMS labs to local providers and, producing several hundred gallons of hand sanitizer. In addition, UMMS’ longstanding partnership with the West China Hospital enabled seven Massachusetts Department of Mental Health hospitals to receive critically needed PPE.

Although local public schools and city facilities have been closed due to the pandemic, UMMS students continue to provide tutoring to Worcester school students and, through the city’s Elder Affairs Division, are participating in the “elder buddies” program, reaching out daily to seniors in the program.



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UMMS Students Participate in AMA DC Advocacy Day

UMMS students traveled to Washington in early March to attend the American Medical Association's annual Medical Student Advocacy and Regional Conference (MARC). The students Kevin Enabulele, Abhinav Prasad, Bennett Vogt and Calvin Schaffer visited the offices of U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey and U.S. Representative Jim McGovern.

Medical students from across the country gathered to learn more about the legislative process and policy advocacy, focusing on three bipartisan bills:

- ◇ **Cannabidiol and Marijuana Research Expansion Act**—would improve the process for conducting scientific and clinical research on cannabidiol (CBD) and marijuana, and streamline the development of safe and effective cannabinoid-based drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- ◇ **CONNECT for Health Act** - would benefit Medicare beneficiaries by removing restrictions in the Medicare program that prevent physicians from using widely available telehealth services and technology that has become commonplace in the past decade.
- ◇ **Bipartisan Graduate Medical Education (GME) legislation**—would increase residency training slots to alleviate physician shortages and increase the supply of physicians trained to meet the nation's need for treatment of addiction and related disorders.



Martin Luther King Jr. Semester of Service Awards Announced

Four teams of UMMS students were recently awarded Martin Luther King Jr. Semester of Service Awards to implement community service programs. Now in its 10th year, the semester of service awards provide resources to implement student developed initiatives. The 2020 awardees were:

- ◇ **Cervical Cancer Screening: Understanding Barriers to Access and Implementing Free Screening at Organized Medical Programs**—Partnering with the Worcester Free Clinic Coalition, this multistep approach will evaluate the need for and barriers to cervical cancer screening. Findings will be used to implement free pap testing at Worcester free medical programs.
- ◇ **Worcester Stops the Bleed**—Partnering with Recreation Worcester, the program will train youth workers to save lives by raising awareness of basic actions to stop life threatening bleeding following everyday emergencies and man-made and natural disasters.
- ◇ **Bringing Electronic Medical Records to the Worcester Free Clinic Coalition**—Partnering with the Worcester Evening Free Medical Service Program at the Epworth Church, this project will pilot the implementation of electronic medical records to improve continuity and quality of care by allowing outside providers to log in and access records of care.
- ◇ **Tutoring and Mentoring Initiative**—Partnering with North High School, this project will develop a program to give students tutoring in the fundamental subjects they need, including math and science, as well as SAT exam preparation, while helping them establish relationships with people who have successfully navigated the journey already.

The MLK Semester of Service Awards were presented at the 32nd annual UMMS Martin Luther King Jr. luncheon where keynote speaker Robert Satcher, MD, PhD, the first orthopedic surgeon to become a NASA astronaut, spoke of his personal experiences in the sciences and his journey in the space program.

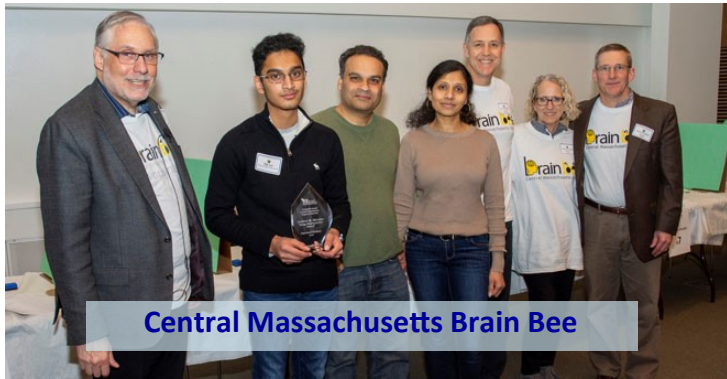
At the luncheon, Valerie Wedge, MSW, program director for the Employee Assistance Program, was recognized as the recipient of the 2020 Chancellor's Award for Advancing Institutional Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion. Wedge was cited for her work to combat domestic violence as well as her work on the Committee for Equal Opportunity and Diversity and expert consultation to local community service organizations.



UMMS in the Community

UMMS faculty, staff and students have long played an important role in the communities where they work. In recent months, members of the UMMS community have participated in a number of events in our community, including:

- ◇ **Central Massachusetts Brain Bee**—the Department of Psychiatry and NeuroNexus Institute hosted the annual Brain Bee, a competition designed to encourage students to pursue careers in the neurosciences.
- ◇ **Winter Walk** - UMMS employees participated in the Boston Health Care for the Homeless annual Winter Walk to raise funds and awareness of the homeless.
- ◇ **Winter Clothing Drive** - UMMS again participated in the annual Worcester Public Schools Coats for Kids Drive. The mission of the coat drive is to provide new, warm outerwear to Worcester children in need in order to foster confidence and increase their attendance and participation in school.

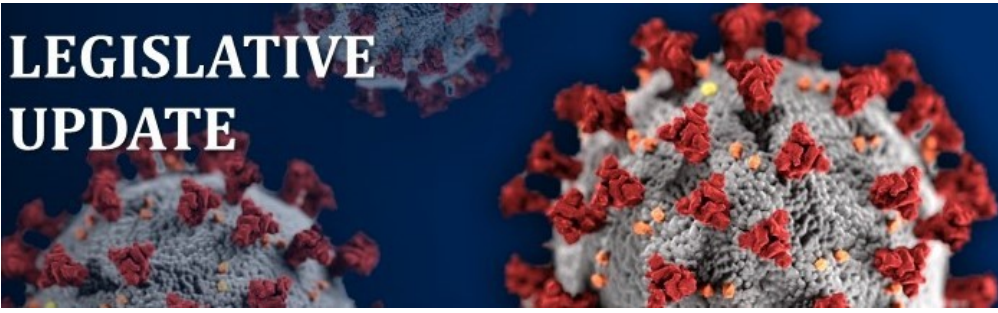


UMMS Employee Giving Campaign Raises More Than \$100,000

The recent UMMS Employee Giving Campaign generated more than \$100,000 in contributions from employees and students. Those contributing to the campaign were able to target their contributions to UMMS research, student aid or the North Quadrant School Services initiative with the Worcester Public Schools or the United Way of Central Massachusetts. UMMS developed its own employee giving campaign after the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Charitable Campaign (COMECC) was suspended indefinitely in late 2019.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Nearly all state and federal legislative activity since early March has been focused on COVID-19 response and efforts to limit the economic impact. At the federal level, three major pieces of COVID related legislation have been enacted:

- ◇ **The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020** ([summary](#)) - provided \$8.3 billion in emergency funding designed to treat and prevent the widespread transmission and effects of COVID-19. This law allocated a significant portion of the funds to the Department of Health and Human Services for vaccination research, CDC emergency funding, medical equipment and grants for state, local, and tribal public health agencies and organizations.
- ◇ **The Families First Coronavirus Response Act** ([summary](#)) - provided paid sick leave, free coronavirus testing, expanded unemployment benefits, increased Medicaid funding and food insecurity measures. The bill's main feature is federally mandated paid leave available for certain employees and up to three months of paid family and medical leave.
- ◇ **The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act - CARES Act** ([summary](#)) - provided emergency assistance and health care response for individuals, families, and businesses. A \$100 billion provider relief fund was established to support healthcare-related expenses or lost revenue attributable to COVID-19. The CARES Act also provides \$14.25 billion for emergency relief to institutions of higher education to respond to the coronavirus. Of these funds, 90% is allocated to colleges and universities based primarily on their share of students receiving the Pell Grant.

On May 15, the U.S. House passed the **Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act** ([summary](#)), a \$3 trillion supplemental spending package in response to COVID-19.

The legislation would provide \$875 billion to states and municipalities to offset COVID-19 related expenditures and lost revenue and increase federal Medicaid payments for health care services by 14%. The bill also includes an additional \$4.7 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus, including \$3 billion designated "for offsetting the costs related to reductions in lab productivity" as a result of the pandemic.

It is unclear when the U.S. Senate will consider further COVID-19 relief legislation.

About the Office of Community and Government Relations (OCGR)

The OCGR is committed to strengthening its relationships with public officials and community stakeholders, increasing visibility of the medical school throughout the region and increasing resources for the medical school's priorities. In addition, the office:

- ◇ Advocates with elected officials and other key policymakers regarding UMMS's primary legislative and regulatory priorities;
- ◇ Encourages public officials to utilize us as a resource for informed insight on major medical, health care and research issues with which they are confronted;
- ◇ Serves as a resource for the medical school community on governmental issues;
- ◇ Identifies and strengthens partnerships with local community and neighborhood organizations; and
- ◇ Keeps public officials and the community informed of important medical school developments.

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