

# The Vibe @

Summer 2011

**Greetings and welcome** to the Summer issue of *The Vibe*! Our academic year has come full circle and we are pleased to share with you some of the striking achievements, memorable moments and upcoming events that reflect the experience, values and mission of the students, faculty and alumni of UMass Medical School.

In this issue, we share in the joyous celebrations of Reunion and Commencement. You'll read the account of an international service trip to the Dominican Republic that has become a legacy passed on from class to class and that embodies the collaborative spirit of service that is a UMMS hallmark. You'll also learn about the experience of a fellow alumnus who has traveled from the Worcester City Hospital ER as an undergraduate to a position caring for high-profile critically ill patients and training young physicians in the practice instilled in him at UMMS.

Check out event listings and opportunities to stay connected with fellow alumni. If you have news you'd like to share or have suggestions for future issues of *The Vibe*, drop us a note at [alumni@umassmed.edu](mailto:alumni@umassmed.edu) or call the Office of Alumni Relations at 508-856-8300. We look forward to hearing from you!

Our best wishes for a relaxing and enjoyable summer!

**Irvin (Irv) Heifetz, MD'79**

SOM Alumni Association President

**Andrew (Andy) Miller, MD'79**

SOM Alumni Association VP/Treasurer

## The School of Medicine



### Students Fulfill Core Mission of Service in the Dominican Republic

SPRING BREAK 2011 was an opportunity for a team of 45 students and preceptors from the Graduate School of Nursing and the School of Medicine to travel to the Caribbean. But instead of a vacation on the beach, they deepened their clinical skills, providing care in a challenging setting to more than a thousand individuals in the Dominican Republic.

"This trip has become a legacy project," said Michele Pugnaire, MD, senior associate dean for educational affairs and professor of family medicine & community health, who leads UMMS' clinical partnership with Good Samaritan Hospital in La Romana, the Dominican capital. Launched in 2006 by the School of Medicine International Medicine

▲ GSN student Caitlin Jolda and SOM student Mike Grant team up to care for Dominican patients

Interest Group, the service trip has grown into a multifaceted educational experience that begins with months of planning and training.

Mike Grant, SOM '14, is one of six team members that did most of the planning. "The experience helped me with a broad scope of clinical skills—the interview process, physiology, prescribing," said Grant. "You're on your own. It pushes you to know what the next step is and you become more relaxed after the week's practice. The pure repetition creates a rhythm."

*Continued on page 2*

Members of the Class of 2011 begin their procession at Commencement ceremonies on June 5.



## Sunny Skies and Bright Futures for UMass Medical School Graduates

UNDER PERFECT SKIES, the 192 graduates of the UMass Medical School Class of 2011 received applause and recognition for their years of hard work from the 3,000 family, friends, faculty and staff who viewed the festivities under the giant tent on the campus green on Sunday, June 5. They also heard talks from campus leaders, distinguished guests and fellow students, who marked the significant occasion with reflections and advice. Among the 80 graduates receiving MD degrees was student speaker Anthony Burrows, MD, who said: "The graduates of 2011 have the best combination of clinical knowledge, compassion, advocacy and humanity to face our future obstacles. It will be an honor working together for the rest of our lives." ■

### Medical Mission Teaches... *Continued from page 1*

Grant also noted that one of the most valuable learning experiences was working alongside nursing students on the care teams, because it exposed him to a fresh point of view and reinforced the interdisciplinary nature of medicine.

Students were divided into care teams that headed out each morning to the bateys—small villages on sugar cane plantations where workers live—to set up mobile clinics. Clinics consist of student-staffed stations that focus on different aspects of the visit, from intake to vitals, patient interview and diagnosis. Preceptors, most of whom are physicians and nurse practitioners from UMMS and UMass Memorial Medical Center, circulate throughout the clinic and review and sign off on all cases; local volunteers serve as interpreters.

"There were incredible moments of learning," said Kelley Wittbold, SOM '14. "The evolution in flow from Day 1 case history reports to Day 5 proved to be light years apart for each student, including myself. I also had the privilege to work in the ultimate team environment, which naturally fell into place because everyone who was there was there for the same reason—because we wanted to help. With a common goal and unusual adaptability, the strategies fell into place, and things got done."

The full scope of the trip reflects students' commitment, not only in planning the logistics but also in arranging for funding and setting the stage for a sustained program as groups of students graduate. In addition to recruiting and training members of the class behind

them to take over when they move on, the second-year medical students who do the bulk of the planning undertake a fundraising campaign. This year's team raised \$60,000 to support the trip costs, including all medications the team brought. They also developed educational components to prepare students for the medical mission and compiled a patient database from previous trips, from which they created a formulary for gathering supplies and medication.

What began with a small group of students interested in experiencing international medicine has evolved into a once-in-a-lifetime medical mission that will continue to enrich the lives of the medical and nursing students and preceptors who participate and bring medical care to patients who otherwise have none. ■

## THE POWER OF PARTICIPATION

### We appreciate you...

our alumni for your thoughtful contributions to the alumni annual funds. Alumni support allows us to continue offering a high quality education that tuition and state funding alone cannot sustain. We are honored and grateful to count you among our donors.

On behalf of all the students who benefit from your annual support, thank you! We encourage you to continue your commitment to our mission at UMass Medical School – to advance the health and well-being of the people of the commonwealth and the world through pioneering education, research and health care delivery with our partner, UMass Memorial Health Care.

**You may make a gift online at: <http://w3.umassmed.edu/OnlineDonation/> or send your contribution to UMass Medical School Development Office, 333 South Street, Shrewsbury, MA 01545.**

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER

### Convocation/Investiture

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2011

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Campus Green

UMass Medical School

### White Coat Ceremony and Reception

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2011

3:30 – 5:30 PM

Campus Green

UMass Medical School

### Annual Alumni Scholarship Dinner

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2011

6:00 – 8:30 PM

UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL

### 13th Annual UMass Medicine Cancer Walk

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

10:00 AM

UMass Medical School

## DECEMBER

### UMass Medicine Winter Ball

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2011

Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA

For more information about these events, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 508-856-8300, or e-mail [alumni@umassmed.edu](mailto:alumni@umassmed.edu) or visit [www.NetworkUMass.com/Medical](http://www.NetworkUMass.com/Medical).



## Alumni Return to Campus for Reunion 2011

On May 14, 2011, School of Medicine classes of '76 '81 '86 '91 '96 '01 and '06 were welcomed back to campus to celebrate their reunion. Reunion attendees gathered for an informative campus tour showcasing the newest building and program additions; received a school update by Dean Terence Flotte; and attended a cocktail reception to reconnect with classmates. In addition, a few classes organized class get-togethers. Many remarked on the tremendous growth of the campus and how much they enjoyed catching up and reconnecting with classmates. Reunion photographs may be viewed online at <http://www.russcam.com/umassmed/reunion/>.

## Governor Paul Cellucci Announces Endowment for ALS Research

After revealing in January that he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), former Governor Paul Cellucci announced in May that he is raising money for an endowment at UMass Medical School that will fund ALS research led by Robert H. Brown Jr., DPhil, MD, chair of neurology and Governor Cellucci's physician. An internationally

known researcher and physician leading the quest to cure neurodegenerative and neuromuscular diseases like ALS, Dr. Brown's 1993 discovery of the first ALS-related gene was the seed from which most current ALS research has grown.

Recognizing the need for scientists to have the ability to pursue new ideas quickly

and continue promising research, the School has created the UMass ALS Champion Fund to support ALS research. Visit the UMass ALS Champion Fund website at [www.umassals.com](http://www.umassals.com) for more information and to contribute to the fund. ■



The  
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The School of Medicine

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*This is a publication of the University of Massachusetts Medical School Office of Alumni and Parent Relations.*

## Alumni Profile | Imoigele Aisiku, MD



**Class:** 1997

**Specialty:** Internal Medicine

Managing neurologic care for one of America's most high-profile patients is light years away from Imo Aisiku's first glimpse of medicine, as a part-time security officer at Worcester City Hospital, where he worked as an undergraduate in the ER. As vice-chair and medical director of critical care in the neurosurgery department of the University of Texas Medical School at Memorial-Hermann Hospital in Houston, Dr. Aisiku leads the team caring for U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

His professional journey, though, remains rooted in the time he spent observing professionals in the ER and in his UMMS education. Eventually he earned additional degrees, an MBA and a Master's in Clinical Research. "I first got interested in medicine because I spent a lot of time watching emergency medicine, and eventually I returned to that path," said Dr. Aisiku. "But fairly early on, I found I enjoyed taking care of critically ill people, so I decided to do a critical care fellowship after my residency."

Treating Congresswoman Giffords presented both complex medical and logistical challenges for Dr. Aisiku and his team. "There are famous people you may care for, and there are VIPs, but this situation is on a different level altogether," he explains. "I've enjoyed caring for her, and we've seen a lot of her type of injury. But in addition to dealing with the national tragedy, the logistics of heightened media and the additional security for a national official

who basically had survived an assassination attempt were a huge challenge."

Today, as he trains young physicians, Dr. Aisiku finds himself constantly drawing on the basics instilled by his UMMS professors. "The education I received was phenomenal, and I knew that within three months of my residency. The professors had a very high level of expectation," he said. "I hear myself saying the same things to my medical students—if you understand what you are doing and seeing, when things vary in the body, you'll be prepared for it. I teach my second-year students the same way I learned how to communicate with a patient and then translate the patient's information to a colleague. That foundational training stays with you." ■

**Anyone with news to share is encouraged to send their class notes to [alumni@umassmed.edu](mailto:alumni@umassmed.edu). You may also submit notes by visiting the UMass Alumni Online Community at [www.NetworkUMass.com/Medical](http://www.NetworkUMass.com/Medical) and clicking on "Class Notes."**