



The UMass Chan Women's Faculty Committee (WFC), in collaboration with the Office of Faculty Affairs, recently hosted its 26th annual awards ceremony to recognize faculty members across medicine, nursing, and science for excellence in education, community service, scientific advancement, and patient care.

***Christine K. Cassel, MD '76 Faculty Scholar Award — Katharine Barnard, MD***



Dr. Barnard's commitment to justice and the protection of vulnerable persons has foundations early in her career: as a UMass medical student she worked in free clinics, and early on served on mission trips to Honduras with CAPE Cares as a volunteer physician, later becoming a Board member. As Medical Director at Plumley Village Health Center, a clinic embedded within a residential community, she transformed care delivery through her fluency in Spanish, deep listening to patients and staff, and commitment to community-centered practice. Dr. Barnard later co-founded Worcester RISE for Health – an independent clinic for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that co-locates medical, social, and legal services. Dr.

Barnard additionally serves as Medical Director of Hector Reyes House, which provides housing and health care for formerly incarcerated Latino men. At both sites, she fosters environments of safety, respect, and shared leadership – the care and the setting create social justice. She has volunteered over the past decade to perform asylum medical evaluations —critical work that enables individuals and families to secure legal protection. Her scholarship spans more than twenty years of teaching family medicine residents on refugee health, peripartum care, asylum medicine, trauma-informed care, and the humanities in medicine. She speaks nationally and regionally on immigrant health, group visits, and maternity care, and has received multiple awards recognizing her clinical excellence, scholarship, and community service, including her efforts in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at UMass.

### **Early Career Achievement in Science and Health Award — Gianna Wilkie, MD, MSCI**



Dr. Wilkie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Dr. Wilkie serves as Co-Director of both the Cardio-Obstetrics Clinic and the Diabetes in Pregnancy Clinic at UMass, where she not only delivers clinical care and teaches but also performs research on multidisciplinary care models for high-risk patients. She led a randomized controlled trial evaluating continuous glucose monitor use in pregnant patients with type 2 diabetes and served as PI on a Digital Health Insights Grant to optimize cardio-obstetrics care delivery. Dr. Wilkie's research focuses on early detection and optimization of treatment for gestational diabetes mellitus, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, and cardiovascular

diseases. She has authored more than 40 peer-reviewed publications. She regularly teaches residents and students and earned the Faculty Educator Award and Outstanding Fellow as an Educator distinction.

### **Early Career Clinical Excellence Award — Jennifer Bolton, DO, MEHP**



Dr. Bolton has had a sustained and transformative influence on the Baystate Health system. Her work reflects a lasting commitment to culture change grounded in professional excellence and compassion. As a trained peer supporter and educator, she directly supports physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and other team members during moments of crisis and moral distress, contributing to improved retention and decreased attrition. After identifying systemic drivers of burnout and disengagement, she translated these insights into durable, organizational solutions by building structures that normalize peer support, psychological safety, and help seeking. On numerous occasions, she has organized interprofessional

debriefs on short notice and off hours to ensure all voices are heard. She has also designed and implemented Social Emergency Medicine curricula, Emergency Medicine in situ and high fidelity simulation programs; in addition, she brought in a platform to improve end of shift evaluation and feedback, which has reshaped culture and improved patient care. Patients and families praise her compassion, presence, and advocacy.

### **Excellence in Clinical Service Award — Teresa Pazdral, MD, FACEP**



Dr. Pazdral is an exceptional leader whose impact on emergency medicine has been both transformative and lasting. She effectively built the Acute Care APP Program for the department from the ground up, creating the on boarding structure, designing the educational curriculum, developing supervision guidelines, and ensuring that APPs were seamlessly integrated into the clinical model. As Chair of Emergency Medicine at the Marlborough ED, Dr. Pazdral leads with an unwavering commitment to improving quality of care and patient safety. She guided the department through the merger of UMass Memorial Marlborough Hospital and UMass Memorial Medical Center, ensuring operational stability, maintaining high quality care, and supporting staff through significant system- level transition. In this role, she also contributed

essential clinical and workflow expertise to the planning of the new Emergency Department at Marlborough, ensuring that the design supports efficient, patient-centered care. She is deeply devoted to giving people a voice, actively incorporating feedback, and tirelessly advocating for those who may not always be heard. Additionally, she helped develop and is now a leader in the WP3

program, a longitudinal initiative designed to give women faculty the skills, support, and tools needed for advancement. Her passion for supporting the advancement of women and her service on the department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee reflect her dedication to building a more inclusive and equitable environment. Dr. Pazdral's leadership, advocacy, and ability to create meaningful structural change make her an extraordinary asset to our department and to the patients and clinicians she serves.

#### ***Sarah Stone Excellence in Education Award — Anindita Deb, MD, FAAN***



Dr. Deb serves as the Director of the VISTA Pathways Program, leads the Population, Community and Global Health Pathway, and serves as the Co-Director of Medicine and the Human Experience, the third pillar of the VISTA curriculum at UMass Chan. Over the last 10 years, Dr. Deb has developed and implemented several innovative curricula. In 2016 she developed a pilot global health curriculum for neurology residents that led to the development of a comprehensive Global Health Track that she continues to lead for the neurology residency program. Dr. Deb was selected as the Director of the UMass Chan Global Health Pathway-International Medical Education Program (now known as the Population, Community, and Global Health Pathway in VISTA) and revamped the curriculum for first- and second-year medical students. With the transition to VISTA, Dr. Deb developed curricula for the Pathways Program, including the Pathways Longitudinal Project (PLP). Student PLPs have had a positive impact on patients, the hospital system, and the local and global communities and resulted in several publications and conference abstracts. As Co-Director of Medicine and the Human Experience, Dr. Deb has worked with the other Co-Directors to review this important third pillar of the VISTA curriculum and determine the most effective way to present material to students and ensure historically underrepresented topics in medicine are threaded through the curriculum longitudinally. Dr. Deb has also mentored numerous medical students and residents and was named a Distinguished Educator by the Health Education Academy for Leadership and Learning (HEALL) (2024).

#### ***Science and Health Achievements Award — Jennifer Wang, MD***



Dr. Wang has established a highly productive and continuously funded research program focused on innate immunity, viral pathogenesis, and type 1 diabetes (T1D). As a reflection of her work's scientific rigor and translational relevance, Dr. Wang has served as Principal Investigator on multiple awards from the NIH (NIDDK and NIAID), as well as from the Department of Defense. In recognition of her outstanding scholarly and institutional contributions, Dr. Wang was promoted to Professor with tenure in 2020. Dr. Wang's publication record (one hundred peer-reviewed manuscripts across basic science, clinical research, and scholarly reviews) attests to both her productivity and breadth. In recent years, Dr. Wang has expanded her impact as the UMass Chan site Principal Investigator and team leader for dozens of NIH- and industry-sponsored clinical trials evaluating novel preventive and therapeutic agents for respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus. This work reflects her agility as a scientist and her ability to align her research portfolio with evolving public health priorities. As a dual-trained physician-scientist, Dr. Wang is an advocate for evidence-based infectious diseases practice and remains clinically active on the inpatient Infectious Diseases consult service, where she teaches medical students, residents, and fellows, and supervises infectious diseases fellows on scholarly projects. Dr. Jennifer Wang is an accomplished scientist, clinician, mentor, and institutional citizen whose contributions have had a sustained and meaningful impact.

### **Outstanding Community Service Award — William Soares III, MD, MS**



Dr. Soares exemplifies the values of the Outstanding Community Service Award across every dimension—clinical innovation, interdisciplinary leadership, mentorship, and policy influence. His work has saved and improved lives, transformed systems, and advanced the integration of Emergency Medicine and Public Health. As the Director of Harm Reduction Services for the Department of Emergency Medicine and long-time leader of the Emergency Department (ED) Opioid Task Force at Baystate Medical Center, Dr. Soares developed and implemented a broad suite of interdisciplinary programs that included ED based buprenorphine and methadone initiation pathways, take-home naloxone, safer-use supplies, mobile harm-reduction services, telemedicine-based addiction consultation, and culturally informed communication tools. His local community engagement includes major COVID-19 public education forums and opioid-related community outreach. Dr. Soares works directly with public health and government agencies to shape regional and statewide responses to the opioid crisis. He serves on the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Advisory Council on Substance Misuse, the Hampden County Addiction Taskforce, and the Springfield Opioid Remediation Fund review committee, where he helps direct community resources and informs state-level strategies and guidelines. His leadership roles in NIDA-funded projects incorporate telemedicine, mobile syringe service vans, geospatial analytics, and user-centered clinical decision support tools, demonstrating his ability to champion multidisciplinary solutions informed by public health, technology, and patient-experience Research. Dr. Soares’ ability to bridge frontline clinical care, implementation science, community partnerships, and public health policy is rare and deeply impactful.

### **Outstanding Mentoring Award — Pranoti Mandrekar, PhD**



Dr. Mandrekar has been recognized for her sustained record of mentorship of colleagues and trainees in multiple roles across UMass Chan. As a researcher, she has mentored over 70 students and faculty since joining the faculty in 1998. She currently directs the Morningside Graduate School of Biomedical Science’s Translational Science Program and the Summer Research Program for undergraduate students. In 2012 she was awarded the UMass Chan Chancellor’s Award for Advancing Diversity for her efforts in implementing pipeline programs for students, and her passion for creating career pathways for underrepresented students was recognized with federal funding in 2024. Dr. Mandrekar is a former chair of the UMass Mentoring Advisory Board that worked to improve mentoring for faculty across the institution. As a co-leader of the Junior Faculty Development Program, she shares her expertise in grant funding, academic writing, academic advancement, and project management. She has helped junior faculty define research goals and develop projects. In her current role in the Department of Medicine, she guides faculty through the promotions process, relying on her deep understanding of scholarly productivity, strategic thinking, and academic rigor. Dr. Mandrekar is recognized as one who exemplifies the values, mindset, and skills of a superb academic mentor, including kindness, inclusiveness, and deep caring for everyone she meets.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the WFC Awards.

## Share your stories!

The WFC newsletter is a space to celebrate our collective achievements, share wisdom, and build a warmer, more connected faculty community.

What are you proud of or working on? We want to feature it in our next issue! We are looking for:

- Milestones & Successes: Recent publications, presentations, grants, or departmental achievements (and the "behind-the-scenes" stories of how they happened!).
- Micro-Mentorship: Tips, resources, or tools that have made your faculty life easier or more fulfilling.
- Community & Connection: Notices for book clubs, informal interest groups, or peer-led initiatives.
- Shout-Outs: A chance to publicly appreciate a colleague who has supported you or done outstanding work.

Click [HERE](#) to submit your story.

## Connect with the Women's Faculty Committee

The Women's Faculty Committee (WFC) is **OPEN to all faculty, faculty-at-large, postdocs, residents, and students**. We meet monthly from September through June to discuss leadership, equity, and professional growth. Our meeting schedule is distributed at the start of each academic year, and we look forward to seeing you there.

*Join Us Live via Zoom:* [Meeting Link](#)

*Explore Our Initiatives:* Visit the [official WFC Website](#) to learn more about our current subcommittees and work.