Greetings from your Co-Chairs!

It has been another great year for the Women’s Faculty Committee (WFC). Our subcommittees have been busy hosting several outstanding events this spring. Our open meeting in March was very well attended and brought many new participating members. We are thrilled to welcome all our new members and their ideas.

In April, in conjunction with the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, WFC co-hosted an outstanding Women’s Health Event Luncheon. Dr. Nancy Dragoon and Dr. Jennifer Lauretti gave an informative presentation titled “Losing to Win: Weight Management for Women’s Health and Vibrancy.” They discussed the medical and psychological aspects of weight management. It was very well attended and highlighted a very important topic in Women’s Health.

The Women’s Faculty Committee Awards Luncheon in May was a wonderful celebration of the accomplishments of our women faculty. We are very proud of the six awardees (listed on page 2). Dr. Judy Ockene gave an inspiring talk titled “Where have we been? Where are we going?: UMMS Women Faculty Moving Forward.” She explained the history of women at UMMS, highlighted many women “firsts” at our institution and described the progress we have made to advance women in medicine and science. She also charged us all with a call to take action to continue these efforts at UMMS. We were honored to have many of the original members of the inaugural Women’s Faculty Committee in the audience. Chancellor Collins and Dean Flotte expressed their continued support and commitment of towards gender equality at UMMS.

This spring we have begun work on responding to the Diversity Engagement Survey results, focusing on the responses of women faculty. WFC members have come up with some great ideas about how to “move the needle” on several issues that the survey raises. We will continue with this work and contribute to a joint effort led by the Diversity and Inclusion Office to impact the engagement of the UMass community. We will be looking to our subcommittees to carry out our action items in the coming years.

Ann Salerno’s term as clinical Co-Chair ends this summer. We are thankful for all her hard work and dedication to the WFC over the last two years.

We are excited to start working with all of you again next year on all the great subcommittee projects and advancing the WFC mission together!

Hope you all have a safe and happy summer!

Ann Salerno and Molly Waring
UMass contributions to local Women in STEM Conference

In March the Northborough Junior Women’s Club hosted a day-long conference for over 150 girls in 5th through 8th grade from Northborough and numerous nearby towns, with the goal of encouraging girls to consider careers in math and science. UMass Worcester Campus sent women faculty, staff and students from a variety of fields including environmental health and safety engineering, sustainability, nursing, medicine, surgery, and biomedical research.

UMass participants included, Cheryl Killoran, Caille Sousa, Anna Zinovyeva, Katie McLunkin, Charlene Sotolongo, Joann Ranslow, Shannon O’Brien, Danielle Delage, Meghan Lachowski, Jessica Norton, Jennifer Rondeau, Janice Lalkos, Oksana Babchenko, Dylan Perry, Ava Chapell, Rebecca Lundquist, Nicole Ross and Cuff Baker, who ran workshops in their fields of expertise, and volunteer organizers Sarah Cutrona, Paulette Goeden, Sue Young and Jean O’Connor. The conference was free and open to all girls who applied. The girls and their parents loved it and many girls described being exposed to fields they hadn’t known about previously. Many of our workshop presenters are returning volunteers, having committed not just once but multiple times over the years. Thank you UMass for your continued investment in our community, and look out for opportunities to participate next year!

Sarah Cutrona
This past winter, a group of faculty and administrators at UMMS and WPI collaborated to establish the Worcester Area Affiliate Group of the Association of Women in Science (AWIS). AWIS champions the interests of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) across all disciplines and employment sectors including academia, industry, and government. The new Worcester AWIS group was initiated by Karen Oates, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at WPI, who was quickly joined by Mary Munson, Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Pharmacology at UMMS. Oates and Munson believed that there was more that could be done to facilitate interactions between the female faculty, postdocs and students at WPI and UMMS. Female STEM professionals on both campuses would benefit by having a group in which women could help each other obtain grants and awards, achieve promotions, and form research collaborations. In just six months since its formation, the AWIS Worcester Affiliate Group has hosted several well-attended events on both campuses, including a kick-off holiday networking social, a webinar on navigating implicit bias in the workplace, and a workshop on applying your research skills to manage all aspects of your personal and professional life. AWIS Worcester is currently soliciting ideas about upcoming events for the fall. Possible events include professional development and promotion workshops, networking socials, peer support and mentoring groups, and scientific symposia. Participation is open to all STEM professionals at all career levels in industry, academia and government. To get more information about upcoming events or to join the mailing list, please contact the group’s current co-chairs Natalie Farny, Assistant Teaching Professor of Biology and Biotechnology (nfarny@wpi.edu) or Tara Mann, Director of Academic Operations for the College of Arts and Sciences at WPI (tmann@wpi.edu), or Mary Munson (mary.munson@umassmed.edu).

Unintended Consequences of Family-Friendly Workplace Policies

Workplace policies intended to improve work-life balance and facilitate mothers’ employment have sometimes had unintended consequences, even for childless women. For example, in Spain, after the adoption of a policy that provides parents of young children with the ability to work part-time, there was a drop in full-time jobs among all women, not just mothers. In other European countries with relatively long maternity leaves, women employees are less likely to advance to high-level positions. A similar effect was seen in the United States with the adoption of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act; afterwards, women were more likely to remain employed but less likely to be promoted. And in Chile, where employers must provide child care to working mothers, they receive lower pay. In short, such policies may provide a disincentive to hire or promote all women. Suggestions for preventing these unintended consequences include: not having employers bear the costs, which results in their being passed along to employees; ensuring that policies are appropriately but not overly generous; and enacting gender-neutral policies, such as parental — rather than maternity — leave.

The Hope Scholarships are awarded to New England minority students, enrolled in high school, college, medical, graduate or professional school, who have demonstrated an interest in biomedical, biotechnology or other science-related fields and have had direct involvement in Biomedical Science Career Program. http://www.bscp.org/%5Cabout.asp. The students selected are highly motivated, have recognized potential and seek opportunities for educational advancement. This concept is captured in the word HOPE: Horizons, Opportunity, Potential and Excellence.

Racquel Wells, a fourth year medical student, class of 2016 was recently chosen to receive a HOPE award.

How did you learn about this organization and how long have you been part of it?
I have been a part of this organization since beginning my journey in the medical field. I attended a BSCP conference as a premedical student and was paired with a mentor who currently specializes in pediatrics. I attended workshops, networked with students and faculty and realized that the world [of minorities in medicine] I thought was so small was much larger. I was even able to mentor and prepare the high school and undergraduate students for their next steps. I’ve continued to attend the biennial conference, present research at the associated New England Science Symposium (NESS), which I also most recently helped plan and facilitate as a NESS Planning Committee member. I have found BSCP to be a very supportive environment with tons of resources and development opportunities for aspiring students.

What have you learned about yourself in the last three years and what responsibilities do you see associated with this award?
My experiences have taught me to embrace your strengths and weaknesses. I did not have an interest in medicine until the end of my undergraduate career. I was uneasy with my decision to pursue medicine even at that time. I’ve come to realize that being stimulated by my colleagues and patients keeps life interesting. The best way I can practice medicine is through teamwork. Throughout my journey, I developed a confidence in myself, a simple belief that I deserved to reach for things seemingly unattainable. In the same vein that UMass has put faith in me to become a successful physician, this scholarship exemplifies the faith BSCP has in me to be a leader, motivator and perhaps shake things up a bit.

How will this award will impact your ability to “go beyond your comfort zone” as a medical student?
Representing BSCP as a HOPE Scholar is an achievement that allows me to further my goals by recalling where I came from and telling me where I can go. As I enter my final year of medical school, I’d like to interact with the global community in developing countries and apply what I have learned thus far by taking risks. When I look towards the future and career options, I want to dive in and be a part of the changing social climate for patients and physicians alike because our choices impact each other and I believe that everyone should benefit from these outcomes, not one party over the other.

Women in medicine/science articles

Promotions:
Janine Gould, MD, Emergency Med., Assistant Professor
Tara Strutt, PhD, Pathology, Assistant Professor
Apeksha Tripathi, MD, MPH, FMCH, Assistant Professor
Yumi Uetake, PhD, CDB, Research Assistant Professor
Patricia Miron, PhD, Pathology, Associate Professor
Katharine Barnard, MD, FMCH, Clinical Associate Professor
Monika Mitra, PhD, FMCH, Associate Professor
Susanne Muehlschlegel, MD, MPH, Neurology, Associate Professor
Rita Bortell, PhD, PMM, Research Professor
Seema Adhami, MBBS, MS, MRCP, Pediatrics, Associate Professor
Suzana Makowski, MD, Medicine, Associate Professor
Kristina Deligiannidis, MD, Psychiatry, Associate Professor
Laura Gibson, MD, Medicine, Associate Professor
Lisa Hall-Anderson, PhD, CDB, Associate Professor
Shixia Wang, DVM, PhD, Medicine, Professor

Awards:
Faculty Scholar Awards:
Wendy Marsh, MD, MS, Psychiatry

AAMC Early Career Faculty Development Seminar:
Amy Wachholtz, PhD, MDiv, MS, Psychiatry

Faculty Vitality Awards:
Rachel Gerstein, PhD, Microbiology & physiological systems, Associate Professor
Jie Song, PhD, Orthopedics & Physical Rehabilitation, Associate Professor
Elifce Cosar, MD, Anesthesiology, Clinical Associate Professor

Leadership:
Shubjeet Kaur, M.B.B.S., Chair of Anesthesiology
Vivian Budnik, PhD, Chair of Neurobiology

Mary M. Lee, MD, appointed to endowed chair

Mary M. Lee MD, professor and chair of pediatrics, professor of cell & developmental biology and physician-in-chief of the UMass Memorial Children’s Medical Center, has been appointed the inaugural recipient of The Stoddard Chair of Pediatrics. The Stoddard Charitable Trust, created in 1939 by businessman and entrepreneur Harry Stoddard, is a Worcester-based philanthropic foundation. Its interest in supporting an endowed position for the chair of pediatrics at UMass Medical School stemmed from the strong desire of its trustees to ensure the long-term health and well-being of children in central Massachusetts.

Dr. Lee, who is among the most accomplished physician-scientists in the nation, has trained, taught and conducted research at some of the world’s most renowned institutions. Currently, in addition to overseeing the Department of Pediatrics and maintaining a pediatric endocrine practice, Dr. Lee researches environmental health and the mechanisms contributing to juvenile diabetes and other pediatric endocrine disorders. Her tireless work and scholarly contributions include authoring or co-authoring more than 80 peer-reviewed articles and 45 editorials, reviews and book chapters, and have earned her key roles in leading professional organizations.
This year, the American Medical Women’s Association celebrated 100 years of progress, advocacy and commitment to the advancement of women in medicine and the improvement of women’s health. At the Centennial National Conference in Chicago, IL from April 23-26, UMass Medical School was represented by Faculty Advisor Dr. Luanne Thorndyke, National Conference Chair Safiyah Hosein (‘16), National Recruitment Chair Amarilys Rojas (‘17), Region I Director Elizabeth Yuan (‘17) and AMWA Leader Emily Yuan (‘18). Special congratulations to Safiyah, Amarilys and Elizabeth for being elected to national and regional AMWA positions!

In April, AMWA joined other student groups in welcoming the prospective medical students of the class of 2019 at the 2015 Revisit Weekend.

Also in April, AMWA participated in the Women in Science & Math Conference at the Algonquin Regional High School. Committed to community service, UMMS faculty and students encouraged high school students to explore the field of medicine through workshops, lectures and hands-on learning of basic physical exam and suturing techniques. Cuff Baker (‘16) was a workshop presenter for the second year in a row.

In May, AMWA and the Surgery Interest Group co-hosted the popular annual event: Female Physicians in Male-Dominated Fields. The presenters were Dr. Yvonne Shelton (Pediatric Orthopedics), Dr. JeanMarie Houghton (Gastroenterology), Dr. Heena Santry (Acute Care Surgery) and Dr. Deborah DeMarco (Rheumatology). The discussion topics included career paths, melding personal and professional trajectories and descriptions of the physicians’ work in their respective fields.
Inverse relationship observed between maternal vitamin B12 and infant HDL cholesterol levels

A cross sectional study of 91 Caucasian mother-infant pairs in the UK showed that 40% of mothers exhibited low vitamin B12 levels (i.e., <191 ng/L) and that vitamin B12 levels were inversely associated with cord HDL cholesterol levels. Because vitamin B12 deficiency is more commonly seen in certain patient populations, concerns are raised for vegetarian mothers, mothers with on medications such as proton pump inhibitors, as well as those with malabsorption disorders. This study contributes to growing research on the effects of maternal vitamin B12 deficiency on infant outcomes including insulin resistance and small for gestational age.

Adaikalakoteswari A1, Vatish M2, Lawson A3, Wood C4, Sivakumar K5, McTernan PG6, Webster C7, Anderson N8, Yajnik C9, Tripathi G10, Saravanan P11,12,13. Low maternal vitamin B12 status is associated with lower cord blood HDL cholesterol in white Caucasians living in the UK. Nutrients. 2015 Apr 2;7(4):2401-14

SWAN Sleep Study correlates chronic stress and sleep disturbance in middle aged women

The Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation (SWAN) Sleep Study characterized women aged 46 to 57 years (n=330) by chronic stress level and assessed sleep disturbance based on self-reports and at-home polysomnograms annually for 9 years. After adjusting for confounding factors, including BMI, marital status, mental illness, and acute stress, the study found that women with high chronic stress exhibited poorer self-reported quality of sleep and more wake after sleep onset. Essential to health, the results of this study suggests controlling stress for long-term proper sleep, particularly in middle aged women.

Hall MH, Casement MD, Troxel WM, Matthews KA, Bromberger JT, Kravitz HM, Krafty RT, Buysse DJ. Chronic Stress Is Prospectively Associated with Sleep in Midlife Women: The SWAN Sleep Study. Sleep. 2015 Mar 22

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Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/469190009868083/
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