

November 2022

Giving Matters



The Remillard Fund Celebrates 5 Years



Largest Class in School History

A newsletter for supporters of UMass Chan Medical School

UMass Chan is experiencing momentum

Chancellor honors faculty and thanks supporters at annual ceremony

“Together with those who support us, there are no boundaries that cap our potential.”

Spoken by Chancellor Michael F. Collins at the 2022 Convocation and Investiture Ceremony on Sept. 15, these words encapsulate the tremendous momentum propelling UMass Chan Medical School into the new academic year.

Some of the fuel driving this momentum, Chancellor Collins said, is increased philanthropic activity, including the transformational \$175 million gift from the Morningside Foundation; recruitment of outstanding faculty and recognition as one of the “best employers in Massachusetts” (Forbes); completion of the new VA Community-based Outpatient Clinic and groundbreaking of the new education and research building; and opportunity to educate more learners, including pursuit of a second branch campus in partnership with Beth Israel Lahey Health’s Lahey Hospital and Medical Center in Burlington.

The annual convocation event pays homage to UMass Chan’s extraordinary faculty. “This ceremony

Neil McDonough, son of the late donors Myles and Jean McDonough, joined Chancellor Collins in investing Roberto Caricchio, MD, as the *Myles J. McDonough Chair in Rheumatology*.

is a genuine celebration of the faculty, who are the heart and soul of this academic institution. They collectively advance our mission, one defined by ingenuity and passion, as well as by commitment, collaboration and collegiality,” said Provost Terence R. Flotte.

Chancellor Collins announced the recipients of the 2022 Chancellor’s Medals, as follows:

Melissa Fischer, MD, MEd, professor of medicine and assistant vice provost for interprofessional and instructional innovation, received the **Chancellor’s Medal for Distinguished Teaching**.

Marian Walhout, PhD, the *Maroun Semaan Chair in Biomedical Research* and chair and professor of systems biology, was awarded the **Chancellor’s Medal for Distinguished Scholarship**.

continued on page 2

Jeanne B. Lawrence, PhD, professor of neurology and pediatrics, is the new *Leo P. and Theresa M. LaChance Chair in Medical Research*.

Donna Rouisse joined the stage with **Dr. Lawrence** on behalf of her late parents, **donors Leo and Theresa LaChance**, whom **Chancellor Collins** recognized as “**Devoted partners and parents, ardent champions of their cherished Gardner community and generous supporters of medical research.**”



The **Chancellor’s Medal for Distinguished Clinical Excellence** was presented to **Ira Ockene, MD**, the *David J. and Barbara D. Milliken Professor in Preventive Cardiology* and professor of medicine.

The **Chancellor’s Medal for Distinguished Service** was awarded to **Deborah DeMarco, MD**, professor of medicine.

Chancellor Collins then invested six faculty members as named chairs or professors, after Provost Flotte recognized the “visionary support of those donors who make these invaluable endowments possible.” Donors or family of donors who established three of the six endowments attended the ceremony.

Roberto Caricchio, MD, professor of medicine and chief of the Division of Rheumatology in the Department of Medicine, is named to the *Myles J. McDonough Chair in Rheumatology*.

Neil McDonough, son of the late donors Myles and Jean McDonough, joined Chancellor Collins in investing Dr. Caricchio. Said Chancellor Collins, “we thank you for carrying forth the rich legacy of civic engagement and philanthropic investment that your parents instilled in you and your siblings and that you have so willingly and enthusiastically embraced as chairman of FLEXcon.”

Alan C. Mullen, MD, PhD, professor of medicine and academic chief of gastroenterology, is invested as the *Mary C. DeFeudis Chair in Biomedical Research*.

Michelle A. Kelliher, PhD, professor of molecular, cell & cancer biology and co-leader of the Cancer Genetics Program, is the inaugural holder of the *Our Danny Cancer Fund Chair in Biomedical Research I*.

Eric Baehrecke, PhD, professor of molecular, cell & cancer biology, is the inaugural holder of the *Our Danny Cancer Fund Chair in Biomedical Research II*.



Celia A. Schiffer, PhD, chair and professor of biochemistry & molecular biotechnology, is the new holder of the *Arthur F. and Helen P. Koskinas Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biotechnology*.

Donor Helen Koskinas looked on as **Dr. Schiffer** was invested. **Mrs. Koskinas** established a **second endowed chair, the Arthur F. Koskinas Chair in Neuroscience**, to celebrate the life and legacy of her beloved late husband, **Arthur**. Said **Chancellor Collins**, “**This remarkable generosity, which serves as a compelling and inspiring example for others to follow, forever links, in a public and profound way, the Koskinas name to the commonwealth’s public medical school. We are most proud of this enduring association.**”

Support the UMass ALS Cellucci Fund by running the 2023 Boston Marathon

- 1 Are you passionate about finding effective treatments for what is currently an incurable, fatal illness?
- 2 Are you ready to raise funds to support the groundbreaking ALS research happening at UMass Chan Medical School?
- 3 Are you dreaming of running the 127th Boston Marathon® on April 17, 2023?

We are now accepting applications for charity runners who commit to raising at least \$7,500 each for ALS research at UMass Chan.

We hope to see you at the starting line!

To apply, please visit umassals.com/boston-marathon-team/bib-app by Dec. 16, 2022.



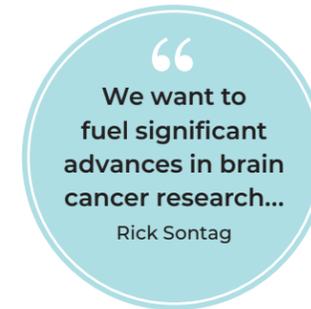
Advancing groundbreaking brain cancer research through a Sontag Foundation award

Medical innovation often occurs when pioneering research ideas and bold, thoughtful philanthropy come together. UMass Chan Medical School cancer biologist William Flavahan, PhD, is advancing his studies of the genetic processes leading to brain tumors through an esteemed award from the Sontag Foundation. Since receiving the four-year, \$600,000 Distinguished Scientist Award in December 2021, Dr. Flavahan’s lab has progressed toward the ultimate goal—the development of more effective ways to treat brain tumors.

Founded in 2002 by Rick Sontag and the late Susan Sontag, who had been diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer, the Sontag Foundation is one of the largest private funders of brain cancer research in the United States. To date, over \$50 million has been awarded to promising researchers pursuing transformative ideas. The foundation received a record number of applications for the 2021 award, selecting Dr. Flavahan, along with five other exceptional scientists, after a competitive scientific review and site visit.

“I am incredibly honored to be a recipient of this very prestigious award,” said Dr. Flavahan, assistant professor of molecular, cell and cancer biology. “Changes to the epigenome are ubiquitous in brain cancer, yet much remains to be discovered about how these changes guide brain tumor biology.”

“We want to fuel significant advances in brain cancer research which is why, through a competitive process, we award grants to scientists who demonstrate promise for making scientific and medical break-throughs in brain cancer research. Dr. Flavahan is a terrific addition to the Sontag Distinguished Scientist Award community and we know he will continue to make great strides to



“
We want to fuel significant advances in brain cancer research...
Rick Sontag

advance the field,” Rick Sontag said.

The Sontag-funded study will examine how epigenetic defects may play a role in primary pediatric glioma, the leading cause of cancer deaths in children. Specifically, the Flavahan lab is researching how defects in the epigenome may both trigger the onset of brain tumors and make them resistant to treatments.

Dr. Flavahan and colleagues made the groundbreaking discovery that epigenetic controls can go awry and turn on genes called oncogenes, which may turn normal cells into tumors, including gliomas. Previous work he performed in collaboration with other Sontag awardees demonstrated how epigenetic dysfunction led to the development of a class of adult glioma.

The findings suggest that new drugs targeting gene controls could be effective against these hard-to-treat tumors.

“My studies seek to further expand this paradigm to other poorly understood mutations that are known to drive brain tumors, and to develop new technologies to further examine the role of the epigenome in how brain tumors respond in the clinic,” Dr. Flavahan said. “Understanding these processes may help guide the development of new treatments or help us mobilize existing treatments in new ways.”

Since starting Sontag Foundation-funded work in December 2021, Dr. Flavahan and his lab have started developing and implementing a novel sequencing method.



This approach is capable of directly reading changes to the DNA, either epigenetic modifications made by the cells or damage caused by a chemotherapeutic like temozolomide. Hopefully, this will lead to greater understanding of how DNA is stored, modified and damaged in brain cancer cells.

The Sontag Foundation is known for fostering collaboration among previous and current awardees. At the foundation’s annual scientific retreat, held in February 2022 in Ponte Vedra, Florida, Dr. Flavahan attended panel discussions and other events, while also making the most of valuable, unstructured opportunities for networking with other innovators in brain cancer research.

“The Distinguished Scientist Award network is an incredible scientific resource,” said Dr. Flavahan. “Many previous awardees are highly successful giants in the field, and the opportunity to connect and collaborate with them provided by the retreat and other events held by the foundation is an incredible resource.”

Dr. Flavahan joins UMass Chan’s Mark Johnson, MD, PhD, the *Maroun Semaan Chair in Neurosurgery* and chair and professor of neurosurgery, who received the Distinguished Scientist Award in 2004 and serves on the Sontag Foundation’s Scientific Advisory Board. ●

We are saddened to share that Susan Sontag passed away in September. Our condolences to Rick and his family.

UMass Chan and Lahey Health Announce Intention to Create Regional Campus

In August 2022, UMass Chan Medical School and Lahey Hospital & Medical Center (Lahey or LHMC) announced plans to establish a new regional campus at LHMC in Burlington after signing a non-binding letter of intent. The regional campus of UMass Chan at Lahey Health would be the Medical School's second regional campus, joining the highly successful UMass Chan-Baystate campus in Springfield.

Lahey Health, which is now a part of Beth Israel Lahey Health, offers nationally recognized, award-winning hospitals and more than 1,900 physicians close to home, and has an accomplished history of medical education.

The new partnership would address medical priorities critical to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including the shortage of primary care and specialty care physicians. In addition, Lahey and UMass Chan seek to form a new research collaboration, together creating a new institute for health care delivery science and quantitative science research hub, to advance innovation in digital medicine, population health and health care delivery.

"UMass Chan and Lahey share a common vision of training future generations of physicians grounded in evidence-based, patient-centered, multispecialty and interprofessional practice," said Chancellor Michael F. Collins. "We look forward to welcoming Lahey Hospital & Medical Center as one of our outstanding clinical affiliates."

Terence R. Flotte, MD, the *Celia and Isaac Haidak Professor*, executive deputy chancellor, provost and dean of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine added, "Our potential partnership could greatly enhance our medical students' educational opportunities and health care for people across the commonwealth."

Pending the successful completion of discussions and a formal agreement to establish the regional campus, as well as approval by the Medical School's accrediting bodies, it is anticipated that the first UMass Chan-Lahey students would matriculate in the summer of 2024.

"Training the next generation of health care leaders and meeting the diverse needs of our patients and communities long into the future require that we approach medical education in new and innovative ways," said David Longworth, MD, president of Lahey Hospital & Medical Center. "UMass Chan is equally committed to redefining the future of medicine and is an outstanding cultural fit to build on Lahey's commitment to interprofessional, team-based care that is



“ This partnership would bring together two world class institutions dedicated to preparing medical students to excel in a fast-changing health care environment... ”

UMass President Marty Meehan

centered on the patient and reflects a culture of inquiry and innovation.”

The plan must be approved by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the accrediting body for medical schools in the U.S. and Canada, and the New England Commission of Higher Education before it can move forward.

With an interest in redefining its approach to medical education to meet the evolving health care landscape, Lahey undertook a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify a medical school with which to partner in training, developing and supporting the next generation of health care leaders. Lahey selected UMass Chan due to complementary strengths and resources to advance education and research in innovative ways.

A joint task force between the two organizations will develop campus-specific programs with a focus on leadership, health system science and interprofessional education. Students will follow the core curriculum of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine and complete their third-year clerkship rotations and the majority of their fourth-year rotations under the supervision of Lahey faculty.

The focus on leadership and health system science was influenced by feedback from students, who have expressed interest in learning more about the organization of health systems. For example, how insurance works; understanding the intricacies of Medicare and Medicaid; and exploring leadership opportunities in the health sciences.

"This partnership would bring together two world class institutions dedicated to preparing medical students to excel in a fast-changing health care environment," UMass President Marty Meehan said. "Lahey will join a family of UMass Chan clinical affiliates that are providing excellent training to a new generation of physicians in every region of the commonwealth." ●

UMass Chan welcomes largest class of medical students in school history at White Coat Ceremony

On Sept. 16, UMass Chan Medical School formally welcomed the T.H. Chan School of Medicine class of 2026 in a festive ceremony befitting Worcester's spectacular Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts. One-hundred and seventy-five students, constituting the largest entering class in the history of the school, were cloaked with a white coat—the mantle of the medical profession.

The white coats were gifts from the Chan School of Medicine class of 2022. Nestled into the pocket of each coat was a message from a class of 2022 graduate, offering reflections and advice on the momentous four-year journey ahead, such as these words from Lauren Cralle, MD: "Enjoy being clueless, savor being curious, and relish every moment. It's unlike anything else you'll be privileged enough to experience."

In opening remarks, Chancellor Michael F. Collins heralded the tremendous growth of the Medical School since its founding over 50 years ago and the centrality of students, as well as faculty, to this success. "We just need to look at the future physicians sitting right here in front of me who collectively comprise one of this nation's most accomplished first-year medical school classes to remind us all how



First-year medical students proudly carry white coats, a symbol of their chosen profession.

bright our future will be," he said.

Keynote speaker Janice F. Lalikos, MD, professor of surgery and 2021 recipient of the Chancellor's Medal for Distinguished Clinical Excellence, welcomed students and highlighted the importance of service and leadership in medicine, stating, "if your passion and purpose manifested in service and leadership remains in focus, you will build a positive legacy no matter what you do."

The White Coat Ceremony emphasizes the importance of both scientific excellence and compassionate care for the patient. As noted by Terence R. Flotte, MD, the *Celia and Isaac Haidak Professor*, executive deputy chancellor, provost and dean of the T.H. Chan School of

Medicine, the White Coat Ceremony is a relatively new tradition in medicine, first arriving at UMass Chan in 2010 under the leadership of Chancellor Collins. The white coat itself carries deep meaning in the medical profession, and at its core is a statement about trust between physicians and patients.

"The white coat is not an entitlement to a patient's trust, but rather a cue that you desire their trust," said Dean Flotte. "Earning that trust takes time, personal and cultural humility, and most of all, sincerely caring for your patients as people. We, the faculty, believe that you possess the fundamental attitude of service and strength of character to fulfill the promise your white coat makes on your behalf."

During this hands-on ceremony each student was called to the stage, where white coats were placed on each shoulder by two people: an individual significant in the student's personal and/or professional development, chosen by the student, and the student's learning community mentor, who represents the value system of the school and the medical profession.

Following the donning of white coats, Dean Flotte led the class of 2026 in reciting the Oath of Maimonides, through which students publicly pledged to honor the human side of medicine. ●



Celebrating five years of local outreach through the Remillard Family Community Service Fund

A deep dedication to the local community is woven into the fabric of UMass Chan Medical School. Over the last five years, the Medical School has bolstered this commitment through 32 community service projects funded by the Remillard Family Community Service Fund. Established in 2015 through a \$3 million gift from the Remillard Family Foundation, this endowed fund is dedicated to ongoing support for community outreach led by UMass Chan faculty, students, staff and partners.

“When discussing potential funding ideas with Chancellor [Michael F.] Collins, we were immediately drawn to the concept of a community service fund that would make thoughtful and worthwhile investments in the Central Massachusetts community for many years to come,” said Arthur J. Remillard III.

Each year, representatives from the Medical School evaluate project proposals from the UMass Chan community based on their potential to improve the lives and health of residents of Worcester and Central Massachusetts, with a focus on economically or educationally disadvantaged or underrepresented individuals and groups. Projects address some of the most challenging issues facing the local community, including:

- Identifying and addressing health inequities and disparities.
- Improving access to health care via free clinics.
- Supporting those struggling with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Providing supportive environments for educational growth and future prosperity.

Spotlighted here are just two of the 32 projects that have positively impacted the local community since 2017.



Supply-laden backpacks are distributed to local students, an initiative originally launched through the Remillard Family Community Service Fund.

Supporting students in North Quadrant of Worcester Public Schools

One of the first funded projects built upon the Medical School's longstanding academic partnership with Worcester Public School's North Quadrant. Recognizing that many of the quadrant's K-12 students face socioeconomic barriers to academic success, the project launched multiple initiatives, including:

- **Backpacks:** Distribute hundreds of backpacks filled with school supplies to elementary school students.
- **Washer/Dryers:** Supply appliances to five schools with children whose families are unable to afford laundry services, helping to prevent students from embarrassment and missing school.
- **Winterwear clothing drives:** Provide thousands of outerwear pieces to children in Head Start through high school; distribute gift certificates for winterwear purchases.
- **Food pantry:** Build and continually stock North High food pantry with nutritiously balanced food.
- **Attendance incentives:** Provide theater tickets and sponsor a driver's education course for students with improved attendance.

The initiative had an immediate and positive effect on students and their families that continues to this day. Activities in the first year spurred UMass Chan faculty, staff and students to raise close to \$60,000 to sustain the programs, which continue to be supported through the Medical School's employee giving campaign, UMass Chan Cares.

Tackling the opioid epidemic

In fiscal year 2019, two funded projects directly addressed the opioid epidemic, which has deeply impacted the Worcester community. In 2019, Worcester's opioid fatality rate was one-and-a-half times greater than the Massachusetts opioid fatality rate.

One of these projects, the Overdose Prevention Fund, organized several initiatives designed to reduce overdose deaths, including development of naloxone training videos for the UMass Memorial Medical Center Clinical Decision Unit, which were highly viewed; educational community symposia on substance use prevention, recognition, treatment and recovery; and a medication disposal program that resulted in the return of more than 500 pounds of medications within one year of the program's launch. ●

Superheroes descend on Polar Park for UMass Cancer Walk and Run

Annual event raises money for cancer research and clinical trials at UMass Chan Medical School

More than 3,000 people took part in the 24th annual UMass Cancer Walk and Run presented by Harr Toyota at Polar Park on Sunday, Oct. 2. Runners and walkers, many wearing capes in honor of this year's superhero theme, raised more than \$700,000 for adult and pediatric cancer research and clinical trials at UMass Chan Medical School.

“The UMass Cancer Walk never disappoints,” said Mike Gross, president/general manager of Harr Toyota. “There was a great turnout from our amazing community to support this cause. We are proud and grateful to be part of it!”

Jennifer Wood of Team Walking Together first took part in the UMass Cancer Walk and Run in 2017 in honor of her father, David Tatro, who was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic squamous neck cancer that year and given six months to live. He took part in a clinical trial at UMass Chan and has been in remission for five years.

“Throughout my father's treatments he always had a smile on his face no matter how sick or tired he felt. No matter how long and worrisome the days were, his entire oncology team was always there to assist in every way possible. We truly cannot thank them enough. My father wouldn't be here walking with us this year without them,” Wood said.

More than 50 people returned to Team Olivia Strong to raise funds in support of 12-year-old Olivia LaMountain of Oxford, diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia on Sept. 15, 2021, a month before last year's walk.

“Cancer was not even on my radar,” said Olivia's mother, Alex LaMountain, who shared that before the diagnosis, her daughter was a healthy kid who loved to dance. Her team includes her dance family from Aspire Dance Center in Oxford.



This team of superheroes is all smiles before walking 5k to raise funds for cancer research at UMass Chan.

“Olivia became a member of their competition team in 2020-2021 and they supported her by doing the 2021 UMass Cancer Walk and Run, wearing ribbons on their costumes last season during competitions and performing a dance dedicated to Olivia which she was able to join and participate in. They have become a big part of my family,” Alex said.

Richard Carr is a two-time cancer survivor and president of the Carr Financial Group. A client told him about the UMass Cancer Walk and Run and after participating in the walk, Carr decided to be a sponsor and join the Steering Committee. He served as chair for two years.

“I walk out of a sense of deep appreciation for those who raised money for research long before I was diagnosed,” Carr said. “It's emotional to see the families who have lost loved ones next to cancer patients and survivors all motivated by the same vision. There are lots of hugs and high fives. It's what gives life meaning—helping one another.” ●

The following teams had raised more than \$7,500 as of Oct. 3:

- Team Absolute: \$23,491
- Team Olivia Strong: \$17,001
- Team Kick it “Can”cer: \$15,074
- The Doyle Dashers: \$12,293
- Team Walking Together: #FYW and TateStrong: \$11,369
- Team Allie's Warriors: \$9,783
- Team UMass Chan – IT: \$8,626
- Team UMassFive: \$8,583
- Team Karina's Crew: \$8,080
- Team Queen Vee and Her Bees: \$7,678

Donations are still being accepted at umasscancerwalk.org with 100 percent of the funds going toward research and clinical trials.

Changing the landscape of UMass Chan

New research and education building takes shape on Worcester campus

Construction is underway on a nine-story, state-of-the-art research and education building that will transform the Worcester campus of UMass Chan Medical School. In keeping with the Medical School's strategic vision to propagate an even greater impact, the completed building will meet the pressing need for more physical space to accommodate groundbreaking biomedical research and student teaching.

A "topping off" ceremony in August marked a milestone in construction, with the steel skeleton nearing completion. In front of community members, project leaders and members of Iron Workers Local 7, a boom crane carefully lifted a ceremonial beam, inscribed with hundreds of signatures, to the highest point of the structure.

The 350,000 square foot facility will be a stunning addition to the expanding Worcester campus, strategically placed between the Aaron Lazare Research Building and the Albert Sherman Center. Plans include space to support the growth of laboratory research and educational and conference facilities to support all three graduate schools.

The building is designed to achieve LEED Gold certification for energy efficiency and sustainability, with aspirations of net zero energy use. Meanwhile, construction is incorporating sustainable practices, such as repurposing materials removed from the site. For instance, during the partial demolition of the West Garage to make way for the building, a total of 165 tons of steel and 8,280 tons of concrete were reclaimed and will be processed for reuse as raw materials.

The building's construction has been remarkable to observe. Initial work included excavation of a 35-foot-deep foundation hole, including three months of bedrock blasting that resulted in the removal of approximately 52,000 tons of bedrock. Work then began on the building's complex concrete foundation, followed by erection of the structural steel framework. The plan is to secure a weather-tight building by winter, allowing interior work to begin.

While the façade will be impressive with its intricate mix of steel and glass, the work that will happen inside the completed building is extraordinary. New research space will accommodate over 70 principal investigators under one roof, thereby facilitating the kind of



Artist's rendering of the new education and research building.

close collaboration that ignites sparks of scientific innovation. Plans include the co-location of principal investigators who specialize in gene therapy, molecular medicine and neuroscience—areas of medicine in which UMass Chan is leading groundbreaking research.

Space dedicated to educational facilities will also help UMass Chan expand class size to meet the growing physician shortage, consistent with recommendations from the Association of American Medical Colleges.

"The teaching and biomedical research that will occur in this building is critical to achieving our strategic goals," said Chancellor Michael F. Collins.

"Groundbreaking discoveries in RNA biology and gene therapy for diseases like ALS, Tay Sachs, and Canavan disease have been made right here on this campus. Now we take an important symbolic step toward the promise of the next generation of discovery, breakthroughs and teaching that will take place in this new space."

Understanding the enormous potential that a facility like this will bring to the Medical School, the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees approved the building's construction in 2020 at the height of the pandemic, a time when many projects of this nature were put on hold. Through the contributions of countless partners, including hundreds of building trades workers, the new facility is scheduled to open to faculty and students in 2024. ●

“
Now we take an
important symbolic
step toward the promise
of the next generation
of discovery...
Chancellor Collins

Help us keep the momentum going. **Make a gift.** umassmed.edu/giving