



UMB News

Face to Face With Students' Issues

April 17, 2020 | By [Alex Likowski](#)

"We're staying at home, we're restricted. For me, it has seemed like an eternity." There, in the opening minutes of his weekly web program, University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Interim President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, gave voice to the thoughts of every participant.

"COVID has taken away a big part of my freedom and your freedom, too. I'm happy to tell you that UMB is meeting its many missions, although for each of them we're meeting those missions in new and innovative ways, and I want to thank each of you for playing a role in that success," he told the audience of roughly 200 students, faculty, and staff."



(top l-r) Alex Likowski, Emilia Petrillo, Patty Alvarez; (middle l-r) Amy Ramirez, Flavius Lilly, Roger Ward; (bottom) Bruce Jarrell

The focus of the April 16 edition of *Virtual Face to Face with Dr. Bruce Jarrell* was the wide array of issues facing students, especially those nearing graduation. Engaged to answer those questions were **Roger J. Ward, EdD, JD, MSL, MPA**, interim provost, executive vice president, and dean of the Graduate School; **Flavius R.W. Lilly, PhD, MA, MPH**, associate vice president, Academic and Student Affairs; **Patty Alvarez, PhD, MS**, assistant vice president, Student Affairs; **Emilia Petrillo, LCSW-C**, executive director, Student Counseling Center; and **Amy Ramirez, MA**, director, Office of International Services.

Before the questioning could get underway, Ward took a moment to speak candidly about an important aspect of the current situation.

“We continued with instruction, albeit in the virtual environment and recognizing and acknowledging that it’s not necessarily what all of you signed up for, but the institution did its best and continues to do its best to try to make sure that we’re meeting your educational needs consistent for those of you who are in programs with accreditors with the flexibility granted us by the accreditors,” he said. “Some of those decisions may not be the most perfect decisions, may not be always very well-received, but I hope you know and will accept that we are doing the best we can.”

Among those in the virtual audience was University of Maryland School of Medicine student and current University Student Government Association president **Nivedita Hegdekar**, who brought several questions on behalf of numerous fellow students.

“Several other universities have been offering continuation health coverage for graduating students, once their coverage expires. Why has UMB not been offering the same post-graduation?” she asked.

“Students who are enrolled in the student health insurance plan, their policy ends on July 31,” explained Alvarez, adding that the end of their policy due to graduation is a qualifying event, thus opening the way to enrolling in the state’s health exchange.

Riva Medina, assistant director of admissions at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, was looking for answers to questions she’d been receiving from foreign LLM students, worried that they may not be able to return to their studies in the fall. “The U.S. embassies in their countries are closed. How should they proceed?” she asked.

“As things stand, we’re going to continue to monitor what is happening at embassies as this pandemic continues to evolve,” Ramirez answered. “International students can certainly participate in online courses if we get to that point for the fall 2020 semester, so that is something that we certainly need to contemplate.”

Issues of clinical placement and accreditation requirements were a large part of the conversation. University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) student **Jen Strongwood** expressed concern about the validity and usefulness of restricted internships.

“I’m supposed to be starting my advanced year, which is a three-day-a-week internship,” she said. “And then I only have a handful of credits which are left for me to take. My internship will be at Veterans Affairs Medical Center. My concern is though I did hear the School of Social Work field education say that they’re trying to find online options with these internship placements, I cannot imagine I will have a quality advanced internship three days a week for very long at the VA. Maybe a week or two, but there’s a certain point where that won’t be useful.”

Fellow UMSSW student Francisco Leco pressed a key issue facing many graduating students. “Has anybody heard anything from either the state or [accreditors] about doing testing online or waiving the requirements?” he asked.

“This issue is hot on the burner,” Ward answered quickly. “As you might imagine, your dean has his shoulder on the wheel on this issue and has been pushing very, very hard to get the appropriate boards and people in the state to allow students at a minimum to get a provisional license so they can get jobs.”

Virtual Face to Face with Dr. Bruce Jarrell will be presented live each Thursday at 2 p.m. Next week’s program will include former Lockheed Martin CEO Norman R. Augustine, MSE, and former Lockheed Martin executive vice president and University System of Maryland Board of Regents chair Linda R. Gooden, MBA. Information needed to attend the program will be posted prominently on the UMB homepage, umaryland.edu.

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