



On the Front Lines: UMB Champions of Excellence: Environmental Services Team

November 11, 2020 | Charles Schelle

Adjusting to new protocols and equipment, nearly 200-person crew comes together in spirit of collaboration while maintaining its mission to keep buildings clean and community healthy.

The **Champions of Excellence** campaign is a multiyear branding campaign at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) in which we highlight individuals and teams that exemplify extraordinary accomplishment and represent excellence at the University. This year, UMB is highlighting the employees who've done exemplary work since the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in March. During the next few months, The Elm will be featuring these UMB Champions, who are making Baltimore, our region, and in some cases the world a better place.



Today: Environmental Services Team, Office of Administration and Finance

The University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Environmental Services (EVS) team has discovered that reinvention can be a roller coaster.

At the same time government agencies encouraged people to stay home during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, the act of cleaning and disinfecting surfaces moved to the top of the to-do list. That's a challenge when you are required to not only come to work and it's your job to clean and disinfect, but when you also have to relearn your job with new protocols — just like the heroic EVS workers did.

That's a huge undertaking emotionally and physically. But through the past several months, EVS staff members never lost sight of their mission.

"They're a very driven group of people who take pride in what they do," EVS associate director Denise J. Meyer said. "It's a challenge for anyone psychologically to accept that they're on the front lines of this pandemic and exposing themselves to risk of infection more than most other employees."

(View video below.)

During the first two weeks of the stay-at-home order, the nearly 200-person team worked tirelessly five days a week to deep-clean every UMB campus building during the day and evening hours. EVS also has three workers at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center in Catonsville.

The hard work has brought EVS together.

"They've embraced a more collaborative, family-oriented approach," Meyer said. "We're seeing staff really pull together to help one another out. They're backing each other up more, and they're working together more seamlessly."

EVS technicians are now equipped with color-coded microfiber rags to avoid cross-contamination and new equipment to spray chemicals that are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for COVID-19 cleaning purposes. They also had to learn a new routine for surface cleaning, concentrating on frequently touched areas and adjusting to new "dwell times," which the EPA defines as how long a sanitizer or disinfectant must be in contact with a surface and remain wet to achieve the product's advertised kill rate. And they did it all while keeping a safe physical distance from passersby.

Adjustments continue as more employees and students return to campus. The focus is on quality control and increasing the frequency of the enhanced cleaning procedures to counter the stepped-up foot traffic.

One of the latest creations is a point-of-use cleaning cart, complete with supplies for students, faculty, and staff to do their part in disinfecting high-touchpoint shared spaces.

"All of this is in addition to our pre-COVID work," Meyer said. "We're still doing our job. We're providing all of the services we did before, and we've added more services."

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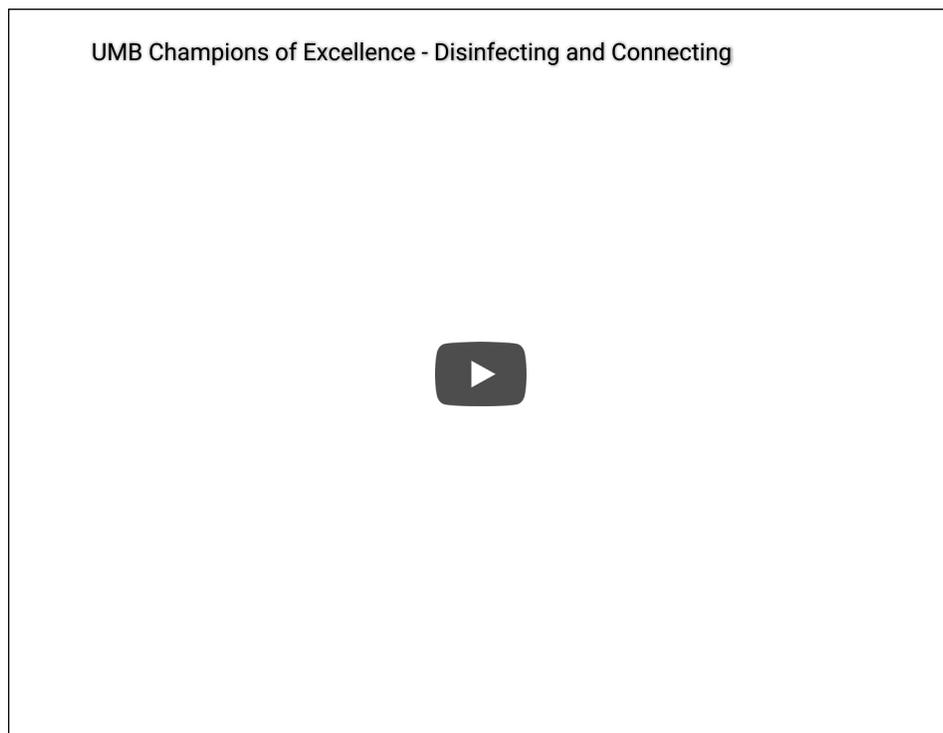
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How did EVS become the star of the sanitizing show at UMB? By holding each other to a high standard for cleanliness, hygiene, and respect.

“They really are the stewards of campus,” said Meyer, who added that EVS has effectively championed its mission through the UMB core value of collaboration and the concept of shared responsibility. “This effort is truly a partnership. While we have our part to do on the service end, it truly comes down to everybody doing their part to keep the campus safe and our community healthy.”



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