



Diversity Advisory Council

Outstanding UMB Faculty Award

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Sandra M. Quezada, MD, MS



Sandra Quezada is leaving no stone unturned in her mission to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and beyond.

In addition to her appointment as an associate professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), Quezada is the school's associate dean for admissions and assistant dean for faculty diversity and inclusion, serves on the UMB Diversity Advisory Council (DAC), and is a member of DAC's Latinos Unidos @UMB affinity group.

A 2006 UMSOM graduate, she works tirelessly to promote greater diversity among the medical student body and foster an inclusive environment for students and faculty, says Jean-Pierre Raufman, MD, professor and head of UMSOM's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, who nominated Quezada for the 2021 UMB Diversity Recognition Award for Outstanding Faculty Member.

"Dr. Quezada's efforts are guided by UMB's core values of diversity and inclusion," Raufman wrote in his nomination for the award, which

Quezada will receive at UMB's Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month virtual celebration Feb. 4. "Her strategy for fostering diversity and inclusion is unique in that she works to instill equitable and anti-racist policies and structures that seek to achieve equity in medicine across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity, so that these changes are sustainable and become integrated into the framework of the institution.

"Her commitment is unwavering, and her ultimate goal is to train current and future providers to provide high-quality care to our diverse patient population while addressing disparities in health care access, delivery, and resources."

In his nomination, Raufman listed the multiple ways in which Quezada impacts diversity, equity, and inclusion at UMSOM and throughout UMB. Among her efforts, Quezada:

Established and delivers required unconscious bias training to all UMSOM admissions committee members and interviewers

Instituted reforms that changed the school's admissions committee's makeup from 60 percent white, 20 percent Asian, 10 percent Black, and 10 percent Latino in 2018 to 42 percent Black, 33 percent white, 16 percent Latino, and 8 percent Asian

Established the school's Latino Medical Student Association chapter and Student Diversity Council, with leadership representation from multiple student interest groups

Developed and directs the Medical Spanish course, which instructs students on relevant medical terminology in Spanish and strengthens their Spanish language skills for taking histories and performing physical exams

Developed and presented inclusivity guidelines to the UMSOM Core Curriculum Committee in 2017

Serves as a reviewer on the Educational Content Review Committee, which seeks to reduce, if not eliminate, all forms of residual bias embedded in medical education materials including lectures, team-based learning, and small group content

"I am most proud of bringing training that increases awareness of our biases to the School of Medicine and how we have proactively made changes in the admissions process to mitigate bias," Quezada said, pointing out that UMSOM's student body makeup increased from 13 percent underrepresented students in 2018 to 24 percent in 2020. "I hope this is sustainable change that will create a new baseline for us from which to continue learning and improving."

"A more diverse student body inspires critical thinking and allows for complex, challenging, and vital discussions on race and society in medicine," Raufman wrote in his nomination. "It also yields a rich sense of community and results in feedback from students that accelerates the necessary evolution of the medical education curriculum."

In her role as assistant dean for faculty diversity and inclusion, Quezada aims to increase the diversity of the school's faculty and establish UMSOM-specific affinity groups to cultivate an inclusive environment. "I'm also providing 'Anti-Racism in Medicine' presentations to inspire each department to find ways to dismantle racism in the medical field," she said.

Beyond UMB, Quezada is chair of the American Gastroenterological Association's (AGA) Diversity Committee and co-chair of the advisory board for AGA's Equity Project, which aims to achieve equity and eradicate disparities in the field of digestive diseases. She also is a member of the Association of American Medical Colleges' Committee on Student Diversity Affairs as well as the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation's Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce.

On a local level, she is a coach for Bridges Baltimore, a program that involves a seven-year commitment to mentor inner-city students, and has worked with the Baltimore City Health Department to educate Latino populations on colon cancer awareness and prevention. She also is a member of the Latino Providers Network, which looks to maximize resources available to the Baltimore-area Latino community through advocacy, education, and networking.

This is not the first time Quezada’s diversity efforts have been recognized. In 2017, she won the inaugural UMSOM Dean’s Alumni Award for Diversity and Inclusion, and in 2020, she was honored with AGA’s Distinguished Award for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Regarding the UMB Diversity Recognition Award, Quezada said it inspires her to continue working to be a champion for diversity.

“The fact that this award exists demonstrates UMB’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values, recognizing how people who work to advance these values ultimately advance the success of the campus as a whole,” Quezada said before reflecting on Dr. King’s legacy.

“Growing up, Dr. King always represented to me the ideal courageous leader: authentic, compassionate, and inspiring,” Quezada said. “More recently, I’ve also come to appreciate the tangible and concrete nature of his leadership style. While he was a truly gifted orator, it was not only his words but also his actions that showed who he was and what he believed in. I hope to emulate that type of leadership.”

— Lou Cortina

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