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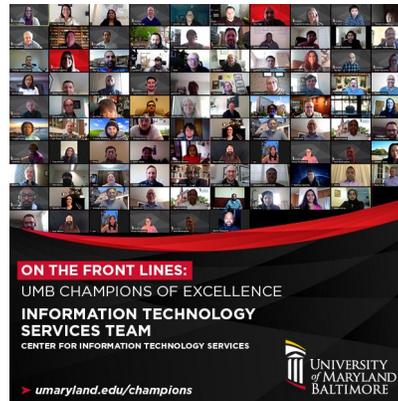
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On the Front Lines: UMB Champions of Excellence: Information Technology Services Team

February 03, 2021 | Laura Lee

The staff of the Center for Information Technology Services rose to the challenge of COVID-19 by helping students, faculty, and staff make the daunting transition to telework and tele-education.

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. In 2020-21, UMB is highlighting the employees who've done exemplary work during the COVID-19 pandemic, and The Elm will be featuring these UMB Champions, who are making Baltimore, our region, and in some cases the world a better place.



Today: Information Technology Services Team, Center for Information Technology Services

On March 12, 2020, University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, announced that UMB would transition to telework two days later in an effort to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and maintain the safety of students, faculty, staff, and patients.

The letter served as a call to action for Peter Murray, PhD, chief information officer and vice president for information technology at UMB, who called the pressure placed on the Center for Information Technology Services (CITS) staff at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic "nothing short of extraordinary."

But the CITS staff rose to the challenge, and within a few short weeks the team had helped thousands of people across UMB acclimate to remote teaching, learning, and work. The staff's calm assurance made the University's transition to telework and tele-education as smooth as possible, considering the hardships posed by the health crisis.

Aiding the effort, careful planning had taken place years before COVID-19 was part of the global lexicon, with information technology employees diligently working to migrate on-site applications and systems to cloud-based infrastructures. That preparation allowed for an easier transition from working on campus to working from remote locations. When the pandemic hit hard, UMB was ready to move quickly with little interruption.

CITS staff hit the ground running by assisting students, faculty, staff, and administrators with the many different technologies used for telework and tele-education including Webex, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom. Each of these audio-video technologies is used extensively at UMB, with Zoom now registering approximately 6,500 sessions per week. The high level of dedication and tremendous amount of work from CITS staff ensured that critical communication, collaboration, and academic and business systems could handle the increased usage and be available from anywhere.

According to Murray, every member of the CITS staff is deserving of the UMB Champions of Excellence Award, which highlights workers who have continued to fulfill their extraordinary commitment to the University by keeping important functions and operations running during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The dedication and hard work of the CITS staff put the University in a great position to deal with this crisis," Murray said. "You might not recognize all of their names, but they're on the front lines as well as behind the scenes, making sure that you can get connected."

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