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2021 Presidential Core Values Award for Accountability: Charles Schelle

April 28, 2021 | Jen Badie

Senior media relations specialist is recognized for being the linchpin for communicating COVID-19-related information to the UMB community over the past year.

To celebrate and promote the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) core values, the University hands out **Presidential Core Values Awards**, designed to recognize students, faculty, and staff who embody the seven values at the heart of UMB's mission: accountability, civility, collaboration, diversity, excellence, knowledge, and leadership.

Accountability Award Winner: Charles Schelle, senior media relations specialist, Office of Communications and Public Affairs, UMB



Charles Schelle began his job as a senior media relations specialist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) just weeks after the pandemic started. Over the next year, he would become the linchpin for communicating COVID-19-related information to the University community.

Schelle quickly assumed responsibility for producing and managing content on the UMB COVID-19 (later the UMB COVID-19 Recovery) website. He revamped it to include communications on policies, procedures, and changes to University operations. UMB community members turn to this website when they need information on reporting health information, testing and vaccinations, or the rules for research, travel, or clinical work. He also played a key role in launching the SAFE on Campus symptom monitoring program and the COVID-19 Hotline, and he produces the weekly COVID-19 Recovery Recap email.

"His ability to take a large amount of complicated information, digest it, and reorganize it for the website and general communications is invaluable," said Laura Kozak, MA, associate vice president, Office of Communications and Public Affairs. "Much of the success of our COVID-19 recovery communications is because of his great work."

Schelle said he was nervous and excited about taking on such an important responsibility.

"An avalanche of information was coming and not only did the UMB community need answers, but they also needed to quickly know what information applies to them," he said. "We are dealing with a complex virus that doesn't have any simple answers to how we move forward."

He said the greatest challenge was keeping up with guidance and policy changes.

"We would go in cycles on what was the crisis of the day," he said. "Was it face coverings? Social gatherings? Physical distancing? Testing? Policies? The cycle would repeat as federal, state, or local guidance changed, and scientists continued to learn more about the virus."

Alex Likowski, UMB's executive director of media relations, praised Schelle for embodying the University's definition of accountability, which emphasizes keeping the UMB community informed and being responsive to its needs.

"Charles Schelle is the single person most responsible for fulfilling that commitment with regard to the greatest threat to our health and University operations in 100 years," Likowski said.

Schelle is grateful to be recognized.

"I'm proud to work for UMB because you're encouraged to consider new ideas, keep pushing for something better, and have the support of your co-workers to accomplish nearly anything," he said.

Honorable mention: Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, School of Medicine

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