



UMB News

Goodbye, Online Learning. Hello, New Students

August 12, 2021 | By [Mary Therese Phelan](#)

As a first-year student at the [University of Maryland School of Dentistry \(UMSOD\)](#), **Brianna Thewsuvat** was eager for Aug. 11, 2021, to arrive — the date of new student orientation at the school on the [University of Maryland, Baltimore \(UMB\)](#) campus. *In-person* orientation.



University of Maryland, Baltimore President Bruce E. Jarrell welcomes new dental students to campus.

"To finally have some in-person interaction and not be seeing people on a computer screen — honestly, I feel really, really happy," said Thewsuvat, donning graphite scrubs, the uniform of incoming dental students. "I do much better with the learning styles of in-person learning, and especially as a commuter student, I look forward to making new friends. I was so glad when I learned we wouldn't be going virtual."

Thewsuvat, who lives in Owings Mills, was one of 130 masked students occupying every other seat of the school's auditorium to keep with physical distancing protocols. Throughout the day, students met each other, faculty, and staff, and learned about the roles of the offices of academic and student affairs and other information as they embarked on their four-year program. **(See [photo gallery below](#).)**

"We've had quite a year, haven't we?" said **Judy Porter, DDS, MA, EdD**, associate dean for admissions and recruitment, as she began the orientation session. "COVID has affected us all, in a lot of different ways. The isolation has affected us. But you know what we're going to do? We're going to get through this together. We're going to remember self-care. We're going to make friends. Watch for people who need help."

Build community. I think this is the great challenge of our generation right now — to build community because we are so tied to technology. Help us build the best UMB."

Students were welcomed by UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, who said he was delighted to be greeting students in person. "It's a pleasure to be here," he said.

Jarrell encouraged students to put their college days behind them and focus on what it means to be a student at one of UMB's six professional schools.

"You're about to shed your college mantle. Whatever you did in college, that's fine. But what you do here is very different," he told the Class of 2025. "You are no longer a college student, you are now a professional student, about to become a professional. And when you become a professional, that means things are very different. You will be a source of knowledge. People will look up to you. I know that's hard to believe today. But that will happen. They'll say, 'What do you think?' Your opinion will be important."

While facing challenges due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, UMB also rose to the occasion by performing critical services, Jarrell said, from receiving some of the first samples of COVID-19 for research, to operating a statewide lab for processing test results.

"If any of you who went to a Maryland university and got tested for COVID, it is highly likely your test came here and we did the results," he said. "We did over a million tests here."

UMB also operated a vaccination clinic where more than 40,000 people were vaccinated, assisted in the development of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, and conducted numerous trials, including one in which Jarrell still participates.

"I would urge you all to know that it's important also that you participate, not just as an investigator, but as a participant in some of these trials. To me, that was really important," he said.

In addition to welcoming students to UMB, Jarrell welcomed them to Baltimore and emphasized the important role the University plays in its partnerships with West Baltimore neighborhoods on the other side of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

"Those people have suffered. They're our neighbors, we're their partners," he said, urging students to get involved in activities at UMB's new [Community Engagement Center](#) at 16 S. Poppleton St. "We're there to help the community in whatever ways they need. Dental care is one of them, but you offer more than dental care."

UMB's core values of knowledge, leadership, excellence, and civility, among others, are important to each student's success, continued Jarrell, who will welcome students from all of UMB's professional schools during a series of events next month.

"I look forward to your graduation in four years. I certainly look forward to how you're going to make me proud. So, congratulations on being here. And have a good year this year. Maybe it's going to be different than last year," he said, glancing over to Porter, who raised her hands, fingers crossed.

Student **Sydney Goertzen** echoed her classmate Thewsuvat's eagerness to begin her higher education journey in a non-virtual setting.

"It is so good to see everyone," she said. "I'm glad we're in person."

"This feels really exciting. I'm ready to go. And I am excited to get to know a new city," added a classmate from Florida who goes by **T.K.**

Other speakers helping to get new students adjusted to their surroundings and class schedules included **Patricia E. Meehan, DDS**, associate dean of academic affairs, and **Karen Faraone, DDS, MA**, associate dean of student affairs.

"It is just a pleasure to have all of you guys here in person," Meehan said. "We'll look forward to when you get your headshots done, so we can look at the composites and actually see your beautiful smiles."

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