

# Core Values Awards

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Core Values Awards recognize faculty, staff, and students who exemplify UMB's core values of accountability, civility, collaboration, diversity, excellence, knowledge, and leadership.

These awards are bestowed by the UMB president recognizing members of the University community who, through their actions, work to foster and strengthen UMB's values-driven culture.

Core Values Awards will be given to individuals and/or teams who demonstrate outstanding contributions to the UMB community through the exemplary incorporation of one of the core values. A nomination may be for an action, special project or initiative, exemplary service, or achievement that occurred during calendar year 2020. In addition to value-specific criteria, each nomination will be judged on how the nominee integrated the core value into their particular team and their duties, studies, or activities at UMB. The Core Values Awards Selection Committee will seek to ensure that the award recipients reflect UMB's broad diversity among school, affiliation (e.g., faculty, staff, or student), job classification/rank, and personal characteristics.

*Presidential*

**COREVALUES** *Awards*

## 2021 Core Values Award Winners

The 2021 Core Values Awards were based off the University's previous set of Core Values: Accountability, Civility, Collaboration, Diversity, Excellence, Knowledge, Leadership. UMB's core values were updated for the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, as the University sought to evolve and revitalize the values that are at the heart of our mission to improve the human condition and serve the public good of Maryland and society at-large.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

**Award Winner: *Charles Schelle***

Senior Media Relations Specialist  
Office of Communications and Public Affairs, UMB

**Honorable Mention:** *Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, School of Medicine*



**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.

— Jen Badie

**Honorable mention:** Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, School of Medicine

## CIVILITY



**Award Winner: *Violeta Rus, MD, PhD***

Professor, Department of  
Medicine  
School of Medicine

**Honorable Mention: *Mary  
Therese Phelan,***  
*Communications and Public  
Affairs, UMB*

In promoting the core value of civility, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) expects interactions among its students, faculty, and staff to be professional, ethical, respectful, and courteous. This is second nature to **Violeta Rus, MD, PhD**, professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland

School of Medicine (UMSOM).

As a teacher, researcher, and clinician who specializes in rheumatology and internal medicine, Rus is highly respected for her knowledge, decorum, and compassion.

“As an expert on lupus, Dr. Rus advances potential medical therapies with clinical research. While conducting this research, she also supervises fellows in the clinic and sees her own panel of patients,” says Afton Thomas, DO, an instructor in UMSOM’s Department of Medicine. “These cases are often complex, so she spends additional time with patients and goes the extra mile to help them.

“Dr. Rus is an amazing and compassionate physician who is rightfully being recognized for her dedication to our patients and education,” Thomas added. “She is an absolute joy to work with.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged all health care professionals, and Rus is no exception. She especially appreciates and excels at the face-to-face aspect of patient care, so the increase in virtual visits was not ideal.

"I enjoy having the ability to pursue complex medical questions from the bedside to the bench and back. Human contact and interaction are what I like most about my job," Rus said. "The uncertainty derived from replacing the physical exam, which is so important for a rheumatologist, with a cursory and limited exam on Zoom, or even worse, a phone conversation, was the biggest challenge of the pandemic."

That doesn't mean she wasn't effective, according to Thomas.

"Dr. Rus helped us navigate the difficult transition to telemedicine, continued to contribute to our education as rheumatology fellows, and has helped me now as a rheumatology faculty member," said Thomas, who nominated Rus for the UMB Presidential Core Values Award.

"As a teacher, she went above and beyond during the pandemic and presented multiple times during Grand Rounds to update us on COVID immunology and virology and its impact on our patient care. I was impressed with her perseverance despite the numerous challenges we faced and survived together.

"Dr. Rus truly embodies civility and professionalism and is an outstanding physician. I aspire to be like her, and we are truly blessed to have her in our division."

Rus said she was honored to win the Presidential Core Values Award because "it's a recognition of dedication, professionalism, and hard work in general. But I don't think I am any different than my colleagues. Any of my colleagues would be a worthy recipient."

— Lou Cortina

**Honorable mention:** Mary Therese Phelan, Office of Communications and Public Affairs, UMB

## COLLABORATION

### **Award Winner: Joint Vaccination Site Team**

*UMB, University of Maryland Medical Center, Faculty Physicians, Inc.*

**Honorable Mention:** *TaShara Bailey, PhD, CURE Scholars Program, UMB; Council for the Arts & Culture members, UMB*



With emergency use authorization for COVID-19 vaccines imminent last December, a team of employees from the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), and Faculty Physicians, Inc. (FPI) was tasked with transforming the SMC Campus Center into a vaccination site for health care workers and other front-line personnel.

This was no small feat. Not only did the group have to plan, set up, and implement a high-capacity vaccination clinic within a month's time, it also had to do it in the middle of a pandemic and as the holidays approached.

"This group included people who had not previously all worked together," said Christopher Stanton, MS, deputy director of the UMB Office of Emergency Management (OEM). "In very

short order, the team came together as a tight-knit and highly efficient group that put the mission first.

“Their work meant time away from family during the holidays and no vacation as is traditional for UMB employees during that time of the year. One team member’s wife had a baby during this period, but after one day of leave, he was back and demonstrating his commitment and leadership in service to UMMC, UMB, and FPI.”

The team worked from Dec. 7 to Jan. 5 to plan the clinic, where workers and volunteers administered more than 27,000 vaccine shots between Jan. 6 and March 13. The SMC Campus Center clinic then transitioned to a UMB-led operation and reopened March 18.

“This partnership among three organizations was a marvelous thing to see,” said UMB President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS. “The team’s actions during this vital period of the pandemic to set up a clinic, particularly across UMB schools and units — and also from outside the University — exemplify the UMB core value of collaboration.”

To begin the mission, Laura Cathcart, PhD, training and exercise program manager for OEM, identified the SMC Campus Center as the highest-efficiency location for a site that could vaccinate UMB, UMMC, and FPI employees as well as UMB students.

“By standing up a collaborative site, the three organizations were able to quickly vaccinate a critical percentage of their employees to help the effort to defeat COVID-19 and aid in the recovery from the pandemic,” Stanton said.

Stanton singled out team member Bill Crockett, MS, RCRSP, executive director of Student Affairs for UMB, for praise because of his extensive knowledge of the SMC Campus Center, which opened in 2009.

“Bill was part of the group that designed the center,” Stanton said. “His depth of knowledge of the facility, the culture of the organization, and aptitude for efficiency was inspirational to the team.”

— Lou Cortina

**Honorable mention:** TaShara Bailey, PhD, CURE Scholars Program, UMB; Council for the Arts & Culture members, UMB

### **Joint Vaccination Site Team Members**

Maureen Archibald, MS, RN, Director, Clinical Education and Professional Development, UMMC

Kathryn Balch, RN, Heart Center-Cardiology Prep and Recovery, UMMC

Christina Bisser, MBA, Director, Performance Improvement and Quality, UMMC

Jonathan Bratt, MS, Executive Director, Office of Emergency Management, UMB

Nicholene Burgess, Senior Medical Practice Supervisor, FPI

Christina Cafeo, DNP, RN, CENP, Vice President of Patient Care Services and Associate Chief Nursing Officer, UMMC

Laura Cathcart, PhD, Training and Exercise Program Manager, Office of Emergency Management, UMB

James Chandler, MPA, Critical Resources and Logistics Program Manager, Office of Emergency Management, UMB

Brian Coats, ScD, Associate Vice President, Technology Operations and Planning, UMB

Bill Crockett, MS, RCRSP, Executive Director, Student Affairs, UMB

Marisol De Leon, PharmD, MBA, Director of Pharmacy Operations, UMMC

Juliet Dickerson, MS, Interim Associate Vice President, Human Resource Services, UMB

Joseph Dicubellis, RPh, MPH, Senior Director of Pharmacy Services, UMMS; Senior Director of Pharmacy, UMMC

Karen Doyle, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Senior Vice President, Nursing and Operations, UMMC

Chad Ellis, Acting Deputy Chief, UMB Police Department

Danielle Evans, MS, BA, RN, CCRN, NE-BC, Clinical Practice and Development Coordinator, UMMC

Evette Everett, BSN, RN, Clinical Nurse, UMMC

Cynthia Feeley, MBA, Operations Executive, FPI

Tyrell Fleming, Lieutenant, UMB Police Department

Mia Forbes, Epic Business Operations Analyst, FPI

Cora Goecke, RN, CPPS, Senior Leader, Performance Innovation, UMMC

Stacey Graves, RN, Clinical Nurse, UMMC

Mangla Gulati, MD, CPPS, FACP, SFHM, Associate Professor, School of Medicine, UMB; Chief Quality Officer, Associate Chief Medical Officer, and Vice President of Patient Safety and Clinical Effectiveness, UMMC

Madison Haas, MSW, Economic Inclusion Coordinator, Office of Community Engagement, UMB

Jimmy Heiner, MS, Associate Director of Operations, URecFit, UMB

Paul Jaravata, Director of Practice Operations, Family and Community Medicine, FPI

Diana Johnson, PT, MS, Senior Director, Patient Care Services, UMMC

Jane Kirschling, PhD, RN, FAAN, Bill and Joanne Conway Dean, School of Nursing, UMB

Cherokee Layson-Wolf, PharmD, BCACP, FAPhA, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, School of Pharmacy, UMB

Jennifer Lepus, MA, BSN, RN, TCRN, Quality Improvement Coordinator, Perioperative and Procedural Services, UMMC

Cynthia Little, Director, Registration and Scheduling Training and Support, FPI

Mario Majette, MD, Clinical Instructor, Family and Community Medicine, and Director of Student and Employee Health, School of Medicine, UMB

Hayley Markman, MPA, Continuity of Operations Program Manager, Office of Emergency Management, UMB

Gregory Mesa, MSPT, COMPT, Manager, Department of Rehabilitation Services, UMMC

Christina Miller, Aesthetician, Otorhinolaryngology-Facial Plastics, FPI

Jill A. Morgan, PharmD, BCPS, BCPPS, FNAP, Professor and Chair, Department of Pharmacy Practice and Science, School of Pharmacy, UMB

Carin Morrell, MA, Public Information Officer, UMB Police Department and Office of Emergency Management

Rachel Reynolds, MBA, MS, PMP, PMI-ACP, Program Director, Division of Quality and Safety, UMMC

Christopher Stanton, MS, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Management, UMB

Richie Stever, CHFM, Director of Operations and Maintenance, UMMC

Victoria Stewart, MBA, Senior Director of Business Operations, Perioperative and Procedural Services, UMMC

Jessica Wehle, MPH, Senior Performance Improvement Leader, UMMC

Shane West, DHSc, PMP, LSSBB, Senior Clinical Performance Improvement Consultant, UMMS

## DIVERSITY

**Award Winner: “A Brief History of Oppression and Resistance” Course Team**  
*School of Social Work*

**Honorable Mention: Eseosa Fernandes, MD, MPH, School of Medicine; Diane Marie St. George, PhD, School of Medicine**



*(In photo, from left: Emma Kupferman, Victoria Stubbs, Lane Victorson, Ashlie Kauffman)*

A University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) team’s work to develop the course “A Brief History of Oppression and Resistance” became even more urgent last year as the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor sparked a national reckoning on racial injustice.

“The issues, history, and movements we had been grappling with were front and center and very heavy, and we knew it would be that way for our incoming students, and that all of our efforts were very necessary and pressing,” said Ashlie Kauffman, MFA, MA, lead instructional designer, IDEA Team, UMSSW, who along with clinical instructors Victoria Stubbs, MSW, LICSW, LCSW-C, and Lane Victorson, MSW, LMSW, and adjunct faculty member Emma Kupferman, MSW, LICSW, LCSW-C, developed the prerequisite course for Master of Social Work students.

UMSSW had offered an elective of the same name focused on historical events in the United States, but the team decided to take another approach when asked to create the new course.

“We made the decision that in light of the needs of our students and the communities they serve, we would start from scratch and focus the prerequisite on Baltimore and its history, holding it as representative of other cities and communities that experience oppression and work to resist its impact,” Kauffman said.

After a year of work, the result was a 15- to 20-hour online prerequisite, launched in July 2020, broken into four modules: Baltimore today; the history of oppression in Baltimore; a history of and current look at resistance to oppression in Baltimore; and an introduction to how

frameworks for critical thinking and social work principles of empathy, social justice, and cultural humility can be employed in the classroom and social work practice.

A central aim of the course is to foster knowledge and reflection about the experiences of the diverse populations that social work students serve. The team's work included developing the concept and outcomes, outlining the modules, and writing course content and narration.

A survey of fall 2020 students shows the course is changing their knowledge, understanding, and comfort discussing oppression. For example, 87 percent felt their knowledge about the history of oppression in Baltimore changed a good amount or great deal, and 68 percent felt their comfort level discussing oppression in Baltimore changed a good amount or great deal.

"Instructors in other foundation courses report that their students are engaging with content around diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-oppression in a deeper way than in previous semesters," said Amanda Lehning, PhD, MSW, associate dean for academic affairs, UMSSW. "By focusing on Baltimore, it is creating a stronger connection to our community."

Despite the course's initial success, Kauffman said she and the team "believe it is an ongoing process and see this first launch as an invitation for others to join us in adding to the work and being critical of our perspectives. We are truly thrilled by the honor and the awareness it brings to the efforts of many at our school."

— Jen Badie

**Honorable mention:** Eseosa Fernandes, MD, MPH, School of Medicine; Diane Marie St. George, PhD, School of Medicine

## EXCELLENCE

**Award Winner: *Intercultural Leadership and Engagement***  
*Student Affairs, UMB*

**Honorable Mention:** *Erik Nielsen, Communications and Public Affairs, UMB; Michele Ondra, MBA, MS, Francis King Carey School of Law; Bill Crockett, MS, RCRSP, Student Affairs, UMB*



*(In photo, clockwise from top left: Jolé Ruff, Gregory Brightbill, Courtney Jones Carney, Mark Dixon, Rosemary Ferreira, and Cyndi Rice)*

With its varied lineup of programs and initiatives, the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) **Intercultural Leadership and Engagement (ILE) unit** strives to bring out excellence and continued growth in UMB and the members of its community.

Founded in spring 2020, ILE immediately faced its first challenge: the dual crises of COVID-19 and systemic racism. The staff worked on anti-racism efforts, the promotion of virtual volunteering, and interprofessional collaboration programs.

"These various initiatives showcase how a small office can fully embody a core value and make it a shared priority of improving the whole campus community toward a similar goal," Gregory Brightbill, MBA, MEd, associate director, Student Leadership & Involvement, ILE, said in nominating ILE for the 2021 Presidential Core Values Award for Excellence.

ILE, which Brightbill said “serves as a leading guide for UMB’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion,” offers numerous programs that foster a sense of belonging and acknowledge the needs and lived experiences of historically marginalized students, staff, and faculty. Initiatives include heritage month programming, anti-racism and anti-oppression educational programs, and Safe Space trainings on LGBTQ+ allyship, advocacy, and education.

The team of four full-time staff has taken an academic approach to addressing issues that impact UMB, writing articles on the University’s COVID-19 response, racism and its impact on the University, and how experimental medicine on Black communities affects vaccination efforts.

Courtney Jones Carney, MBA, executive director, ILE, said the staff members were humbled to receive the award.

“As a unit dedicated to anti-racism work, we plan to use this award as fuel to continue to create and implement initiatives and experiences that better position UMB students, faculty, and staff to embody excellence through equity,” said Jones Carney, who also leads ILE’s Intercultural Center, which provides resources for historically underrepresented students and promotes Universitywide programming that is grounded in equity and social justice.

ILE also leads initiatives such as the President’s Student Leadership Institute, a co-curricular interprofessional program that engages students in service and inclusive leadership, career development, entrepreneurship and innovation, integrative health and well-being, and scholarly research and writing. The program, which had more than 600 students take part in 2020 and 2021, includes 30 hours of community service.

ILE sponsors the President’s Symposium and White Paper Project made up of President’s Fellows. This year, the students researched Health Literacy as a Social Determinant of Health and will make recommendations to UMB leadership to address societal concerns.

“These initiatives specifically focused on students provide them with many options to improve their leadership ability and career development,” Brightbill said. “The work done by ILE helps UMB’s students learn how to be better leaders for a future of excellence within the fields of health and human services.”

—Jen Badie

**Honorable mention:** Erik Nielsen, Communications and Public Affairs, UMB; Michele Ondra, MBA, MS, Francis King Carey School of Law; Bill Crockett, MS, RCRSP, Student Affairs, UMB

## KNOWLEDGE

**Award Winner: Abree Johnson, MS, MBA**

*Director, Pharmaceutical Research Computing  
School of Pharmacy*

**Honorable Mention: Steve Deck, DM, MBA, Environmental Health and Safety, UMB;  
David Ingle, MBA, School of Medicine**



**Abree Johnson, MS, MBA,** says she's naturally inquisitive, a trait that explains her success as director of the Pharmaceutical Research Computing (PRC) data analytics unit at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP).

"Working with PRC allows my inquisitive nature to flourish," Johnson said. "We might juggle five to 10 projects on any given week with topics that may never overlap. I might not know a thing about HIV or cancer treatments or dental procedures at the start of a project, but I'm able to learn from investigators and clinicians who have a true passion for their craft."

PRC, part of the Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research at UMSOP, provides data management and analysis support for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and other researchers. PRC's executive director, Eberechukwu Onukwugha, PhD, MS, said Johnson's knowledge and ability to multitask have been great assets to the center, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Abree leverages her knowledge of data, analytics, billing processes, human resource management, and project management to great effect," Onukwugha said. "She elevates morale, encourages accountability, and fosters a sense of community among the individuals who report to her as well as individuals outside the center."

As the pandemic unfolded in March 2020, Onukwugha said investigators from University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) schools, Baltimore Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and other public and private institutions leaned more than ever on PRC to continue their programs and begin new projects.

“Thanks to Abree’s deep knowledge of PRC operations, her can-do attitude, and her ability to engage with the offices that support our operations, PRC maintained continuous server access to data resources, added new projects to its workflow, and added new dataset resources, all while working remotely,” said Onukwugha, who nominated Johnson for the UMB Presidential Core Values Award.

Johnson, who also manages PRC’s billing process, supports projects by attending investigators’ meetings, and oversees technical staff and their contributions to projects, said she was humbled to be honored by UMB.

“Being recognized for my hard work validates that it’s OK to be inquisitive, it’s OK to challenge the norm,” she said. “It also reminds me that although I might question and challenge things, taking a moment to listen and to learn helps not only me but others around me in the long run.

“There isn’t a day that goes by that I do not learn something new from faculty, students, administration, or other staff.”

— Lou Cortina

**Honorable mention:** Steve Deck, DM, MBA, Department of Environmental Health and Safety, UMB; David Ingle, MBA, School of Medicine

## LEADERSHIP

**Award Winner: Nivedita Hegdekar**

*Student*

*Graduate School and Francis King Carey School of Law*

**Honorable Mention:** *Robyn Palmeiro, LCSW-C, School of Medicine; Thomas Leone, UMB Police Department*



**Nivedita Hegdekar** had no intention of pursuing an executive-level leadership role with the University Student Government Association (USGA). She was shy and introverted growing up, so the biochemistry and molecular biology student at the University of Maryland Graduate School didn't see herself as a leader.

But in 2017, when Hegdekar was a USGA senator, then-treasurer Alex San Nicolas nominated her as secretary. "A student leader saw something special and took a chance on me," Hegdekar said.

Now as president for the past two years, Hegdekar is a student advocate working closely with the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) administration to ensure that all student voices are heard on critical decisions.

She has led USGA during a turbulent year that has seen students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice issues. USGA held listening sessions, created virtual events to keep students engaged, and reassessed its policies to make them more inclusive. She proposed creating a diversity, equity, and inclusion executive-level position and is leading the new USGA Equity Committee.

"The greatest challenge this past year was making sure that every UMB student felt heard and helped. I tried to address as many campuswide issues as possible," Hegdekar said. "We have also worked tirelessly to improve the culture of our campus."

Hegdekar has served on the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, where she has been instrumental in voicing student concerns and providing collaborative solutions, and on the search committees that chose the UMB president and chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer.

“When policies were being framed, it was important to make sure there was adequate student representation,” said Hegdekar, who also is pursuing a master’s degree in patent law at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law.

In addition to USGA, Hegdekar serves as a UMB representative on the University System of Maryland (USM) Student Council, where she plays an active role in addressing policies and issues that impact students across the USM system.

Cynthia Rice, director of student development and leadership, calls Hegdekar a responsible and caring leader.

“Instead of coming to UMB to only obtain a degree, she has been actively involved in leaving the University a better place than it was when she entered,” said Rice, who nominated Hegdekar for the 2021 Presidential Core Values Award for Leadership.

Hegdekar says empathy has helped shape her into the leader she is today.

“Leadership is ultimately about serving others. It means motivating others and leading them in a direction that is compelling and inspiring. And empathy is the foundation of these actions,” she said.

Hegdekar has enjoyed working with students from across the UMB schools and student leaders from the USM institutions as well as UMB presidents Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, and Jay A. Perman, MD. And she is grateful to one person in particular: San Nicolas.

“His decision forever changed my life for the better,” she said.

— Jen Badie

**Honorable mention:** Robyn Palmeiro, LCSW-C, School of Medicine; Thomas Leone, UMB Police Department