



## DEAN'S MESSAGE: What's On My Mind

**W**hat's on my mind this month is the School of Medicine's reaccreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) Review. As you know, the LCME survey team visited the School of Medicine last February, and provided its recommendations to the LCME shortly thereafter. An LCME committee then met in early June to review and evaluate the survey team's recommendations. It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the LCME voted to continue accreditation of the educational program leading to the MD degree at the School of Medicine for an eight-year term. The program's next full survey will take place during the 2015–2016 academic year.

The LCME concurred with the survey team that the following represent institutional strengths:

- The Office of Medical Education, headed by Associate Dean David B. Mallott, MD, is lauded for its superb support of the curriculum.
- The excellent resources and services provided by the library and the information technology staff facilitate the implementation and administration of the educational program.
- Strong professional development programs and faculty mentoring efforts throughout the school are laudatory, as is the support provided by the Office of Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, headed by Associate Dean Nancy R. Lowitt, MD, EDM, FACP.
- Maturation of the revised curriculum in Years I and II has been facilitated by excellent communication and collegiality among faculty members and department chairs and through the oversight of the Curriculum Coordinating Committee.
- The School of Medicine has benefited from strong decanal leadership over the past decade.
- The accelerated growth of the research enterprise is especially noteworthy.
- It is evident that an outstanding commitment to teaching permeates the institution.

Of course, as with any institutional review, along with our strengths there were some opportunities for improvement. The LCME identified only two areas of partial noncompliance with accreditation standards. The first opportunity for improvement is our limited student relaxation space. The LCME standards state that "schools should assure that students have adequate study space, lounge areas and personal lockers or other secure storage facilities." The LCME is aware that

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the university is building a new student center which will be completed next summer, and that should address this item of partial non-compliance.

The second opportunity for improvement deals with our admissions committee. The LCME standards state that the “final responsibility for selecting students to be admitted for medical study must reside with a duly constituted faculty committee.”

Our admissions committee is composed of 16 voting members, of whom 10 are faculty and six are medical students. The LCME was concerned that it is therefore technically possible that a quorum made up of a majority of medical students could determine an admissions decision. This has never occurred in the long history of the admissions committee. However, we have addressed the concern by now requiring a majority faculty vote for admissions committee actions, thus eliminating this remote possibility. These changes have been formally approved by the School of Medicine Executive Committee and Council. This will now place us in full compliance.

I again wish to thank the School of Medicine's entire LCME task force for their hard work. I want to especially acknowledge task force co-chair, Executive Vice Dean Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, who did an outstanding job

coordinating this mammoth project. My special thanks also go to David Ingle, director of Academic Administration, Angelina Battaglia, program director in the Office of Medical Education and John Raczek, Web developer in the Office of Medical Education, for their hard work.

I wish to also thank each and every one of you, who every day work so hard to make the University of Maryland School of Medicine the outstanding institution that it is. The LCME has once again given us the “outstanding stamp of approval.” Congratulations to our entire School of Medicine family.

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am  
Sincerely yours,

E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA  
Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland  
John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor  
Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine



## Cancer Center Achieves National Cancer Institute Designation

The University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center (UMGCC) has been selected as a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer center, a distinction shared by only 63 other centers across the country. The NCI bestows this special designation on the nation's top cancer centers in recognition of their scientific excellence and outstanding patient care. The centers are selected through a highly competitive, peer-reviewed process, made even more competitive in the wake of recent NCI funding cutbacks.

“This is a tremendous honor and achievement for all who work in the cancer center and share a vision to defeat cancer. It's also a tribute to our tireless supporters inside and outside of the cancer center who embrace this vision and have made this day possible,” said Kevin J. Cullen, MD, professor, Departments of Medicine and Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics, and director of the UMGCC.

Dean Reece praised the cancer center's commitment to research, saying, “The cancer center has an outstanding

basic science and clinical research program, with some of the best scientific minds in the country working to unravel the mysteries of cancer. I believe this well-deserved recognition will pave the way for major breakthroughs in cancer research that will benefit patients everywhere.”

Dr. Cullen noted that the Greenebaum Cancer Center cares for patients throughout Maryland and the region but has a unique commitment to minorities and underserved communities. “African Americans represent more than 40 percent of our patients, and nearly half of them take part in clinical trials. Nationally, less than two percent of African-American cancer patients participate in clinical trials. African Americans have a much higher death rate from cancer than white patients with the same disease, and we need to look at the underlying reasons. Their participation in clinical trials provides us with valuable informa-



Kevin J. Cullen, MD

tion to better understand cancer in this community and to develop effective treatments. Our commitment to addressing health disparities among minorities sets us apart from many other cancer centers,” he said.

The NCI cancer centers are funded through the P30 Cancer Center Support Grant, and as part of the designation, the UMGCC will receive up to \$3 million in NCI funding over the next three years. The designation also will open the door to grants and NCI-funded cancer studies offered only to designated centers and may also help to generate additional funding from other public and private sources. Dr. Cullen, a head-and-neck cancer specialist, spearheaded UMGCC's efforts to seek the designation. He recruited more than 40 top clinicians and researchers, significantly expanded the center's research and clinical programs and oversaw efforts to re-

build laboratory facilities and modernize inpatient rooms—with support from the Maryland Cigarette Restitution Fund Program. Total research funding for the center has nearly doubled since 2002, to \$48.1 million, with \$14.4 million from the NCI. In June 2005, it also opened a new, state-of-the-art outpatient area, the Roslyn and Leonard Stoler Pavilion, designed to promote multidisciplinary patient care.

The Greenebaum Cancer Center has comprehensive programs to treat all types of cancer and is a major referral center for patients throughout Maryland and the region. It is named for real estate developer and businessman Stewart Greenebaum and his wife, Marlene, a breast cancer survivor.

**NCI·CC**

A Cancer Center Designated by the National Cancer Institute

# Five Faculty Members Inducted into New Pass and Susel Academy



3rd Annual  
Back to School,  
Back to Work  
Ice Cream Social

Take an afternoon break  
to enjoy delicious  
ice cream and chat  
with Dean Reece.

All are invited!

Wednesday  
September 10  
3:00–5:00 pm  
MSTF Atrium

RSVP by September 5 at  
[medschool.umaryland.edu/rsvpstaff](http://medschool.umaryland.edu/rsvpstaff)

# G

enerous alumni Carolyn Pass, MD, clinical assistant professor, Department of Dermatology, and Richard Susel, MD, clinical assistant professor, Department of Ophthalmology, a husband and wife team from the Class of 1966, have established the Academy of Educational Excellence at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. The goal of the academy is to create an environment that enhances the status of teachers as medical educators and promotes and rewards superlative teaching. The first five School of Medicine faculty members to be inducted into the Pass and Susel Academy of Educational Excellence were announced at a ceremony held June 25, 2008.

This year's five honorees were Larry Anderson, PhD, professor, Department of Anatomy & Neurobiology; Miriam Blitzer, PhD, professor, Departments of Pediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology; Frank Calia, MD, Theodore E. Woodward Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine and professor emeritus, Department of Microbiology & Immunology; Michael Donnenberg, MD, professor, Department of Medicine and Microbiology & Immunology; and Jordan Warnick, PhD, professor, Department of Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics and assistant dean for Student Education & Research. The inductees, who were selected by their peers for this distinction, were presented with plaques of recognition and a monetary award by Drs. Pass and Susel. Two new members will be inducted into the academy every year.

"The School of Medicine has had few ways to recognize the select few who truly excel at pedagogy and cherish the opportunity to teach, mentor and mold the next generation of physicians, scientists and allied health professionals," said Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA. "The academy is designed to recognize faculty members who demonstrate excellence in

bedside, classroom and/or innovative medical and graduate education. Honorees are exemplary role models to students, embody the highest ideals of the medical profession and display uncommon commitment to students' best interests."

Dr. Susel believes the Academy of Educational Excellence will make a difference for decades to come. "As important as the teaching faculty is, it would not be complete without the participation of the outstanding teachers in the medical school," he said. "The five inductees today have demonstrated their special teaching abilities in being selected for this award. We honor and salute them and thank the medical school for allowing us to endow this program." 



Carolyn Pass, MD, and Richard Susel, MD, both from the Class of 1966, established the Academy of Educational Excellence to reward superior teachers.



(L-R) Michael Donnenberg, MD, Jordan Warnick, PhD, Frank Calia, MD, Mimi Blitzer, PhD, and Larry Anderson, PhD, gather near a new sign proclaiming them members of the Academy of Educational Excellence.

## Scientists Pinpoint Key Receptor in Celiac Disease

A new study from Alessio Fasano, MD, professor, Departments of Pediatrics, Medicine and Physiology, director, Center for Celiac Research, and director, Mucosal Biology Research Center, answers a fundamental question relating to the cause of celiac disease.

The findings, published in the July 2008 issue of the journal *Gastroenterology*, could even have implications for other autoimmune disorders such as Type I diabetes and multiple sclerosis.

Patients with celiac disease are sensitive to eating gluten, a protein found in wheat. For them, gluten triggers an autoimmune response in which the immune system attacks the body, leading to a wide spectrum of serious health problems.

At the moment, the only treatment for celiac disease is a gluten-free diet—that's no easy task, as any celiac patient will tell you.

Before, it was unclear how gluten found an inroad into the body to trigger the faulty immune response in celiac patients.

Dr. Fasano's newest study identifies the key gluten receptor in the intestine that seems

to open that gateway and let gluten into the body of the vulnerable patient.

The receptor, called CXCR3, is critical to the early stages of the faulty immune response. Pinpointing it could help doctors treat celiac disease more effectively, maybe avoiding the immune response altogether, according to Dr. Fasano.

"This is a scientific question that had never before been answered," said Dr. Fasano. "It is not only significant in the basic science of autoimmune disorders such as celiac disease, but in therapeutic approaches for the future. This opens a new scientific paradigm for the study of immunity."

There are three key components of celiac disease, according to Dr. Fasano. One is genes, and researchers have already identified a number of genes that seem common among celiac patients, but none that are consistently found in all patients.

The second component is the environmental trigger that leads to the autoimmune attack. Triggers have remained elusive for all autoimmune diseases except celiac disease, in which gluten is the undisputable trigger.

The third component is a leaky gut, wherein the barrier of the intestine becomes permeable enough to allow in the offending antigen—in this case, gluten—to come through.

Researchers at the Center for Celiac Research found that gliadin, the component of gluten that proves prob-

lematic for celiac patients, binds to the receptor called CXCR3. This interaction between gliadin and CXCR3 triggers the release of a human protein called zonulin, which opens up the intestinal barrier to make it more permeable. In healthy patients, this effect is temporary. In celiac patients, the effect is long-term, and the results can be devastating.

The findings may be significant for other autoimmune disorders as well, said Dr. Fasano. The same process may occur in patients with Type I diabetes and

**“It is not only significant in the basic science of autoimmune disorders such as celiac disease, but in therapeutic approaches for the future. This opens a new scientific paradigm for the study of immunity.”**

multiple sclerosis, in which the intestines are the port of entry or the pathway through which the offending antigens in these and other autoimmune disorders get into the body.

"For the first time, we have evidence of how the foreign antigen gains access to the body, causing the autoimmune response," explained Dr. Fasano. "Further study is needed, but this could allow us to intervene before the zonulin is either released or activated, preventing the immune response altogether." 



Alessio Fasano, MD

# Mohan Suntha Awarded Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Endowed Professorship in Radiation Oncology

Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum are continuing their generous support of the School of Medicine with the establishment of the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Professorship in Radiation Oncology. A ceremony was held June 24, 2008, to induct Mohan Suntha, MD, professor and vice chair, Department of Radiation Oncology, as the first recipient of this endowed professorship.

An endowed professorship “is recognized as one of the highest tributes that an institution can bestow on its most distinguished faculty,” said Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA. “It provides a faculty member with an enduring source to sustain his or her research and teaching efforts and is indicative of superior performance in the classroom, the laboratory and the clinical setting.”

*“It is recognized as one of the highest tributes that an institution can bestow on its most distinguished faculty.”*

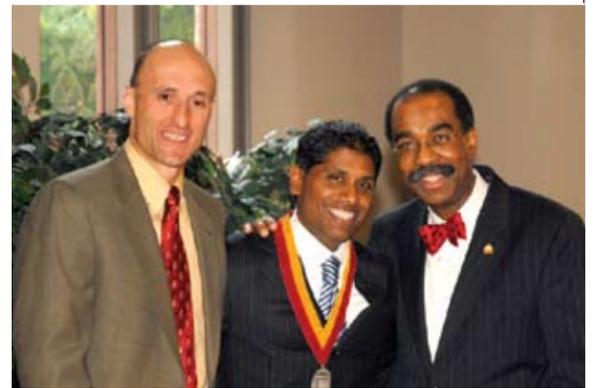
“I’m proud to describe myself as a faculty member of the School of Medicine,” Dr. Suntha said in accepting his professorship. “And I’m equally proud to describe myself as a member of the medical center. Together they provide

me with many opportunities to work with incredibly talented faculty who have pushed me to consider goals that I would have never dreamed possible.”

The Greenebaums, who have long been crusaders in the fight against cancer, were only too happy to support Dr. Suntha. “I never say this, but he would be genuinely irreplaceable,” said Mr. Greenebaum. “What makes him so extraordinary is the rarest

kind of brilliance. A brilliance that resides as much in the heart as in the head, a brilliance that shines as brightly as his smile, and that’s saying something. His enthusiasm for life is present in the research lab as well as the treatment room, bringing hope and comfort even to those who know their chances are slim. It’s a brilliance that embraces and inspires everyone around him.”

One of those he inspired is Frank Calia, MD, Theodore E. Woodward Professor and chair of the Department of Medicine. Dr. Calia once served as the interim chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology and credits Dr. Suntha with helping him succeed in that position. “Mohan Suntha is the whole package,” he proclaimed at the investiture ceremony. “He’s a terrific physician, a skilled teacher and a productive investigator. Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum have done a wonderful thing, recognizing and honoring a respected member of this institution. Let’s hope that all subsequent Greenebaum professors live up to the Suntha standard.”



(L-R) William Regine, MD, professor and chair, Department of Radiation Oncology, Mohan Suntha, MD, and Dean Reece at Dr. Suntha’s investiture ceremony where he received a medal acknowledging his endowed professorship.

## An End of an Era for the Office of Student Affairs

As the new school year begins, the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) will be missing two very familiar faces. Assistant Deans Michael Plaut, PhD, and Gary Plotnick, MD, have retired from their administrative positions after 35 and 32 years, respectively, in OSA.

Dr. Plaut and his wife have moved to North Carolina, but even in retirement work is never far from his mind. “Although I have retired from the university, I plan to contribute professionally where I can be helpful,” said the former associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry. “I will continue a research project that I began at the School of Medicine and am writing a book chapter. However, I will also enjoy the opportunity to ride my bike every day, play my clarinet, take our boat out and travel. I am 67 years old. My wife and I built a beautiful beach house in North Carolina in 1994, and as much as we enjoyed living in Maryland and working in Baltimore, we would now like to enjoy that lovely setting and have more flexibility in our lives.”

Retirement is not in the cards for Dr. Plotnick, who will remain a professor in the Department of Medicine. “There is nothing more rewarding than to see a medical student get ‘turned on’ by learning a new fact; more importantly, to see him or her get more excited when they take that fact to the bedside and help a patient get better,” he said. “Although I have enjoyed the administrative aspect of my positions at the medical school, my real joy and passion has always been in teaching. I’ve had the opportunity to teach at every level of medical education, and I intend to continue doing this for many years to come.”

During their more than three decades in Student Affairs, a highlight for both men was being able to assist the thousands of medical students who passed through the school. “I’ll miss the administration and the support staff but mainly I’ll miss my intense interaction with the students,” admitted Dr. Plotnick, who has won numerous awards from students, including nine Golden Apple Awards, given to teachers whom students vote as their favorites. “I’d estimate that I’ve written well over 1000 Dean’s Letters (now called the Medical Student Performance Evaluation or MSPE), which gave me the oppor-



Former assistant deans in the Office of Student Affairs Gary Plotnick, MD, and Michael Plaut, PhD, always dressed in their finest to present fourth-year students with the Match Day envelopes that determined where the aspiring doctors would spend their futures.

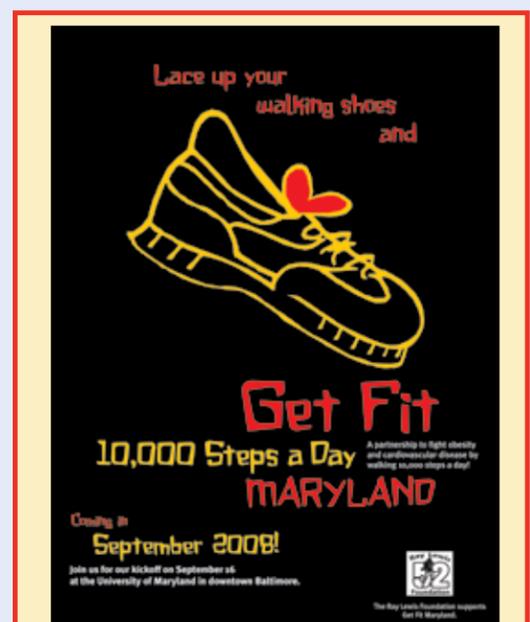
tunity to get to know those students extremely well. I often receive e-mails, letters and face-to-face comments from former students, who are grateful for their experience at the School of Medicine. They say the school gave them a wonderful start on their careers.”

Plaut gets much the same reaction. “What I have valued most in my work in the Office of Student Affairs has been the opportunity to help students who are addressing difficult situations in their lives, whether a personal issue or the need to make a critical career decision,” he said. “I hear from students on occasion for many different reasons, usually because of a special relationship I had with them in the OSA or some other aspect of their lives here. We used to have a wonderful program called Human Dimensions in Medical Education, in which faculty often developed close ongoing advisory relationships with students. There are a few of those students who graduated as long ago as 1981 whom I hear from regularly.”

For both men, their many years with the School of Medicine have had a profound impact on their lives. “To be able to spend 35 years of your life at one institution is really special,” Dr. Plaut said. “What has made it even more special is to have been able to learn and do as many things as I have been able to do over that time. When I came to the School of Medicine, I was doing animal research and never dreamed I would become a sex therapist or work in student affairs or sit on a licensing board or chair a state task force or serve as an officer in a national society or be a journal editor. I value the wealth of experiences I have had and the many people who have helped make it possible.”



The School of Medicine has quite literally become a part of Dr. Plotnick’s family. “I have been associated with the University of Maryland School of Medicine in one capacity or another for 41 years—as a med student, resident, chief resident and faculty member,” he revealed. “My wife Leslie graduated in 1970, my daughter-in-law Rachel in 2003 and my son Danny in 2006. And I expect to see my granddaughter Alana graduate with the Class of 2030.”



Get Fit Maryland™ kicks off its fourth year this fall on September 16, 2008—and it’s shaping up to be as successful and invigorating as our past programs! The 2008 honorary chairman is Governor Martin O’Malley. This year the Ray Lewis Foundation supports the 2008 Get Fit Maryland/Get Fit Kids programs!

# Digital Harbor High School Interns Partner with School of Medicine IS Staff

The School of Medicine's Office of Information Services hosted five talented seniors from Digital Harbor High School (DHHS) this past spring. This was the first internship program between this campus and DHHS, Baltimore City's premier technology-focused high school.

"The mission of Digital Harbor High School is to prepare students for technology careers, college and responsible citizenship," said Janet Purnell, who oversees Instructional Support for Technology at the high school. "Digital Harbor is a 'school of choice,' and students apply to attend and are chosen by lottery, not by entry requirements. Students major in one of four career and technology pathways: Information Support and Services, Programming, Networking and Multimedia. Students also engage in a rigorous study in English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, health, physical education and fine arts, as well as technology."

Upon graduation, Digital Harbor High School students earn a Maryland high school diploma. "Additionally, students who complete six credits in their technology pathway are awarded a career and technology (CTE) completer certificate endorsed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)," Purnell explained. "They can also take industry-level tests for international certification in a technology field. Over 95 percent of graduates in 2006 and 2007 were awarded a Maryland diploma, as well as the MSDE CTE certificate."

Brandon Alston, Jaahira Amers, Dametrise Branch, Quantrell Cureton, and Sergio Sanchez worked with the School of Medicine's IS staff under the mentorship of James McNamee, PhD, associate dean of Information Services and CIO, Sharon Bowser, assistant dean for Information Services, and Jimmy Reid, network director. During their three-month internship, the students worked 20 hours per week in areas chosen to match each of their interests. Each student was given the opportunity to apply knowledge gained from their technology-related courses in an environment using advanced technology.

"They did very well," said Dr. McNamee. "Of course, the students came with some skills, and there were some things they were less familiar with, but they all had basic computer skills and were very facile at finding information on the Web. They helped our staff research questions and came up with solutions quickly."

The primary goals of the SOM IS internship program are to give these students valuable on-the-job experience, exposure to career opportunities in technology and



(L-R) Digital Harbor High School teacher David Adamson with interns Sergio Sanchez, Brandon Alston, Dametrise Branch and Quantrell Cureton.

*"The primary goals of the SOM IS internship program are to give these students valuable on-the-job experience, exposure to career opportunities in technology and encouragement to pursue higher education in technology related fields."*

encouragement to pursue higher education in technology related fields. This experience will also give interns exposure to leaders in their related fields, as well as an opportunity to create a network of technology contacts in the workplace. In turn, the School of Medicine has yet another means of engaging and supporting the Baltimore community and might also gain a potential pool of productive, quality workers who are comfortable with operations within the school's IS environment.

This is what happened with Brandon Alston, who worked with the School of Medicine Help Desk during his DHHS internship and then became a School of Medicine summer employee. "He displayed such a very high degree of resourcefulness and zeal for the work he was assigned that his supervisor, Jimmy Reid, asked me if we could find a way to retain him," explained Dr. McNamee. "So we hired him for the summer and he did a fantastic job."

Mr. Alston is thrilled to have had this opportunity. "It was more than I expected. I learned a lot during my internship and my summer employment. It's a good opportunity and I'm pleased I was chosen for it. I would love for my experience and good fortune to happen for other kids, too."

That might be a possibility. "We've already begun talks with Digital Harbor about when we're going to sponsor more interns," said Dr. McNamee.

For more information on Digital Harbor High School, visit <http://www.digitalharborhs.org/>. 

# SOMnews

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SAVE THE DATE

UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
 School of Medicine

Annual State of the School Address

Wednesday  
 September 24, 2008

3:00 pm

MSTF

Reception to Follow

