



UMB News

Face to Face: Welcoming the New Dean of Social Work

July 31, 2020 | By [Jena Frick](#)

Warm welcomes and well wishes were plentiful on the July 30 edition of *Virtual Face to Face with Dr. Bruce Jarrell*, when [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB) Interim President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, sat down with **Judy L. Postmus, PhD, MSW**, the new dean of the [University of Maryland School of Social Work](#) (UMSSW).

Postmus began her term as the new dean of the UMSSW on July 1, and after a month on the job she was eager to greet the UMB community, talk about her experiences, and share the plans she has for students, faculty, staff, and alumni at the UMSSW. Part of those plans include a mostly virtual curriculum and a new course on structural oppression that will be offered both online and in-person.



University of Maryland, Baltimore Interim President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, welcomes Judy L. Postmus, PhD, MSW, the new dean of the University of Maryland School of Social Work (right).

"This is a new, required course for all incoming graduate students," said Postmus. "This course will encourage students to understand the causes, impacts, and strategies that address all forms of structural oppression based on race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, national origin, class, etc.

"We're really excited to launch this and a couple of other new courses in the fall, and I'm looking forward to engaging with students virtually and — hopefully someday soon — in-person."

Postmus joined UMSSW after 14 years with the School of Social Work at Rutgers University. She was a professor as well as associate dean for faculty development and strategic initiatives (2018-2019) and associate dean for research and faculty development (2019-2020).

During her sit-down with Jarrell, Postmus talked more about her experience in that role and about her research, which is focused on the physical, sexual, and economic victimization of women. At Rutgers, she was the founder and director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (2007-2018), which works to eliminate physical, sexual, and other forms of violence against women and children — and the power imbalances that permit them — through multidisciplinary research, education, and community engagement.

She also discussed the 2016 grant she received from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), within the U.S. Department of Justice, to create the Rutgers Violence Against Women Research Consortium. The consortium provides a platform for interdisciplinary researchers and experts to collaborate on projects aiming to fill the gaps in our current knowledge about violence against women.

Postmus said she hopes to bring her passion for teaching and student success to UMB as well as her deep commitment to research and community engagement.

“My heart is really in the community,” said Postmus. “Even though Baltimore is a new community for me, I’ve been working in similar communities across the country my whole professional career. I see the value and strengths and resilience, and my hope is to see how we can use the school and the University’s resources and information to support these communities and accomplish the goals that they want to accomplish.”

Postmus said she hopes to develop a strong connection with the Baltimore community by working closely with different UMB departments and programs including the UMB Community Engagement Center, Promise Heights, and the University of Maryland School of Nursing.

Postmus said she also hopes to address the diversity challenges within the school and outside of the school with the new assistant dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion, **Neijma Celestine-Donnor, LCSW-C**, who is an alumnus of the UMSSW. Postmus explained that she and Celestine-Donnor will be working together to ensure the inclusion and participation of diverse voices in all areas including curriculums, policies, procedures, and vendors.

“Neijma is a wonderful person who is very committed to Baltimore and committed to the school,” said Postmus. “She’ll be working very closely with me and a number of other key leaders. I can tell from our interactions that she really wants to help make a difference and I’m excited that she’s starting on Monday [Aug. 3].”

Postmus went on to express her commitment to addressing issues of systematic racism and oppression and making sure that everyone from students and alumni to faculty, staff, and members of the Baltimore community are heard and feel like they have a voice.

“I learned from my father very early on that it doesn’t matter who you are or what position you hold, everybody has a voice, and everybody has different strengths and gifts and abilities,” she said. “You never know if somebody may have an idea or a concern that will really help shape the road ahead, and if you don’t listen, you lose those opportunities for positive change.”

“We have to be committed as a school to look at everything we do to make sure we’re not being oppressive within, and we have to make sure we are educating our students to not being oppressive when they go out into the world. I am looking forward to meeting and addressing those challenges together.”

The entire program is available on [UMB's Facebook page](#) .

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