I had the opportunity recently to host a meeting of the Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion, a group charged with elevating and prioritizing matters relating to these vital ideals at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, in concert with our staff in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

As you might expect, this is a diverse, high-energy group and I was impressed with all that has been put in place in just three short years. When I became vice chancellor in 2015, one of the first positions I created and added to my Executive Cabinet was the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. Not only did I want this work to be represented and visible at the highest level of leadership, this new institutional role would cover all three of our mission areas and coordinate diversity and inclusion efforts among them.

After a months-long national search, I was so pleased when we found Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor to be the most qualified candidate, and she was already right here at UMMC. Having literally grown up on this campus (her family lived in campus housing while her father, the late Dr. Zachary J. Taylor II, was in medical school here), no one knew us better, yet was so well-prepared in this subject matter.

And during that short span of three years, I would say the work of this office has become even more timely. We seem to have reached an inflection point in our society where people are less civil to each other than at any time in my adult life on the basis of political, generational, gender, racial or other differences. In this environment, the work of diversity and inclusion is more important than ever.

Some may wonder, “What are diversity and inclusion, and how do they differ?”

Diversity has to do with an organization and its programs being representative of the society in which it exists. Inclusion is more about making sure that all members of that organization and the people it serves feel welcome and respected.

Dr. Demondes Haynes, vice chair for clinical affairs in the Department of Medicine at UMMC, shared a quote that succinctly sums up the difference between these two ideals in an article he wrote for CHEST Physician (Oct. 2018) about the importance of diversity and inclusion in medicine. He quoted noted diversity advocate Verna Myers, who said, “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.”

It’s important that UMMC be a leader in this effort, not just for the sake of our own internal values about the kind of organization we want to be, but because we have a responsibility to our learners to be mindful and intentional about our commitment to the value and dignity of all.

Accordingly, the staff of our Office of Diversity and Inclusion focuses on three broad areas:

- Developing strategies and initiatives to build “inclusive excellence” (I like that term!),
- Increasing education and training offerings to improve cultural competence at all levels, and
- Partnering with all mission areas in local efforts to support diversity and inclusion.

As reviewed in our meeting, the inventory of work that is currently underway is impressive. A number of groups, including whole classes of students and departments, have received training in “unconscious bias.” This is an insidious mindset we are all subject to and must guard against.

The office has promoted strategies for the intentional recruitment of underrepresented minorities among faculty, staff and students. A very important initiative I was glad to learn about is our enhanced outreach efforts to Mississippi’s historically black colleges and universities aimed at increasing admission rates of students from these institutions to our programs.

I’m sure most of you are aware of the lectures the office has organized featuring both local and national speakers. And the office is in year two of “The Pillars” Awards to recognize achievements in diversity and inclusion in several categories.

Another thing I’m pleased about is the office’s collaboration with other groups that have diversity and inclusion as core values — such as the Associated Student Body, the Group on Women in Medicine and Science, and various departments and schools. Rather than have all these activities centralized, it’s better to nurture and grow them in a distributed manner.

Finally, we have to measure our progress in diversity and inclusion efforts, both internally and as benchmarked against other institutions and national standards.

Intuitively we know diversity and inclusion are and must be core values for all of us at UMMC, but a passive approach won’t get the job done. I believe these values must be actively embraced with intention and resolve. And we’re making progress toward that end, on our journey toward a more just, a more equitable and “A Healthier Mississippi.”

LouAnn Woodward, M.D.
Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Dean, School of Medicine
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PHILANTHROPY
Inside Back Cover
All day every day, Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor gets peppered with questions about diversity and inclusion at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

Faculty members want to know the appropriate terminology to use in academic papers. Prospective students want to know whether UMMC’s educational initiatives speak to their societal concerns. Representatives of area organizations want to know if UMMC’s health care programs address specific needs of interest to their respective constituencies.

And the list goes on and on.

“That’s why I’m here,” said Taylor, chief diversity and inclusion officer and the first leader of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at UMMC. “Everything we discuss at the Medical Center has everything to do with diversity and inclusion. It’s sometimes hard to navigate appropriately because so many groups have so many different needs.”

As a major academic health sciences center, the Medical Center is actively engaged in providing exceptional patient care to all citizens of Mississippi, training the next generation of health care professionals in a wide array of disciplines and engaging in innovative research to improve the lives of people worldwide.

By its very definition, then, UMMC is diverse. Therefore, the duty of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, according to Taylor, is to enhance diversity and inclusion practices already embedded in the institution’s culture by serving as a resource for everyone at UMMC to expand their opportunities for inclusiveness.

“Diversity is not something that can be forced at an organization: It has to happen organically through the institution’s programs and services,” she explained. “Our office has to be all-encompassing. Our goal is to help the organization – everyone we consult with and work with – create a new level of understanding about what diversity and inclusion is and why it’s important.

“The work that happens through this office is the lifeblood that runs through the whole institution.”

That scope is what sets the office apart from previous institutional efforts to foster diversity among its academic sector, such as the Division of Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Minority Student
Affairs. It’s a daunting task of which Dr. LouAnn Woodward, vice chancellor for health affairs, was well aware when she appointed Taylor to become the institution’s chief diversity and inclusion officer in 2016.

An associate professor in the Doctor of Health Administration Program in the School of Health Related Professions at UMMC, Taylor was immersed in diversity efforts before she even joined the Medical Center. After earning her B.S and Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi and her M.S.Ed. from Jackson State University, she led efforts to increase faculty diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs and improve access to higher education and student retention among diverse student populations at the University of Mississippi and Auburn University.

Since coming to UMMC in 2008, she has been an leader in diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout the organization. Selected to participate in the Association of American Medical College’s Healthcare Executive Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program and the National Urban Fellows’ America’s Leaders of Change leadership program, she is a recipient of the Diversity Award for Excellence by the Mississippi Board of Trustees for State Institutions of Higher Learning.

Taylor leads several institutional committees, including the Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the Institutional Climate Committee and the Health Care Disparities Council. Her informed perspective on diversity and inclusion has guided the office’s nascent initiatives and challenged its staff of four to establish productive relationships throughout the organization and to help “guide individuals to look at things through a different lens, to think through things in a different way.”

When she surveys the makeup of today’s Medical Center leadership, student and employee populations and patient census, she can’t help but notice how much they have changed since the institution opened in 1955. As rapidly as the society around it has evolved, the institution must reflect that progression, she said.

“As an academic health science institution, we touch the lives of so many,” Taylor said. “Our overarching goal, what we espouse as an institution, is to achieve ‘A Healthier Mississippi.’ To support that, our office has to identify what societal issues are trending today, what’s popular in the news and at academic medical centers across the country and how it relates to UMMC.”

Fortunately, she said the Medical Center already has established a solid foundation in diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout its many programs and services.

“In education, we have a rich history of touching the lives of so many through our educational pipeline and enrichment programs,” she said.

“Our curriculum in all our schools has expanded beyond basic science to consider our population. That’s evidenced by the recent opening of our seventh school, the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

(The institution’s diversity initiatives in education can be found starting on page 8.)

“As an academic health science institution, we touch the lives of so many.”

— Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor

“In health care, we have established lasting partnerships with other leading health care organizations like the Mayo Clinic and we network with a variety of health care associates to bring the best resources to care for minority health and women’s health. The Human Rights Campaign has identified us as leader in LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) health. And
we've made deliberate progress toward health equity through our Telehealth Program, which has expanded access to health through technology across the state.

(The institution’s diversity initiatives in health care can be found starting on page 12.)

“In research, we are strong contributors to how medicine is being practiced today. Being in the South gives us the unique advantage of having access to a large African-American population that allows us to participate in world-renowned studies like the Jackson Heart Study. And I don't know of any other institution that has committed the resources to studying the mind and aging as our MIND (Memory Impairment and Neurodegenerative Dementia) Center.

(The institution’s diversity initiatives in research can be found starting on page 18.)

“Our employees are our greatest resource. We have some very smart people here, no matter where they are in the organization or what role they may have. We are all a community of people who are wanting to make a difference.”

(The institution’s diversity initiatives in the workforce can be found starting on page 22.)

“We're also reaching diverse populations through our schools: For example, the School of Nursing’s school-based clinic models (in Jackson and the Mississippi Delta), mobile clinics and UNACARE Clinic (in Jackson’s Midtown community) are being expanded. We do so much in our community. We’re an economic driver, and we’ve shown true leadership with our social responsibility.

(The institution’s diversity initiatives in the community can be found starting on page 28.)

Because the Office of Diversity and Inclusion connects so many people and covers so many facets of the institution, Taylor said, it must serve as a “moral compass” for the Medical Center’s equity efforts.

“We facilitate a lot of change,” she said. “It’s important that we pay attention to what’s happening in society today. That drives our climate and that climate drives our culture. We support health care, research and scholarship by teaching others how to deal with diverse populations. And we’re often acknowledging our history.

2018-19 Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion

The Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion elevates and prioritizes matters relating to diversity and inclusion at the Medical Center. The council provides leadership and consultation on goals and metrics of the strategic diversity and inclusion action plan, including campus initiatives to enhance diversity and inclusion among students, faculty, staff and the community-at-large.

LouAnn Woodward, M.D.
Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs

Juanyce D. Taylor, Ph.D.
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Noelle Bates, M.D.
House Officer

Jonathan Black
School of Medicine Class of 2021
2018-19 Gay-Straight Alliance President

Rashanda Booker, Ph.D.
Director, Institutional Equity and Partnerships
Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Cecelia Bass
Director, Employee Relations
Department of Human Resources

Ivory Bogan
Executive Director
Facilities Management

Jerry Clark, Ph.D.
Chief Student Affairs Officer
Associate Dean for Student Affairs
School of Medicine

Emily Cole
Associate Director
Student Services and Records

Kevin Cook, M.S.B.A.
Health System Chief Executive Officer (ex officio)

Carrie Cooper
Director, Student Financial Aid

Lisa Didion, M.D.
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
School of Medicine

Ralph Didlake, M.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Chief Academic Officer (ex officio)

Gaarmel Funches, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Health Careers Opportunity
“Our state has had difficult times in regard to civil rights, and we can’t ignore our history and the institution’s involvement in that history. We still have challenges as a result. We have a long way to go in terms of diversifying our leadership and our student body. We’re making strides, but we’re not quite there.”

Conceptually, diversity and inclusion are much more than just “black and white” issues, she said.

“There are many dimensions of diversity. It’s happening all over the place. There’s diversity among minority populations, women’s groups and religious organizations. Aging is a dimension of diversity we don’t always think about, but we all grow old.

“Everyone is deserving of a voice.”

The key to establishing and maintaining successful diversity and inclusion initiatives lies with leaders who are willing to move out of their comfort zones, she said.

“Diversity and inclusion can happen when leaders are inclusive and thinking beyond what they know. People may be more comfortable around others who look like them, and that’s not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to expand our horizons, reach out and look beyond what we’re comfortable with and identify others to be a part of our team.

“The journey begins when you include others and recognize, celebrate and acknowledge their differences. We want to sustain this approach so that it becomes embedded in who we are and in our culture at the Medical Center.

“We are on that journey.”
Dr. Rashanda R. Booker was appointed director of institutional equity and partnerships at UMMC in April 2018. She collaborates with institutional leaders by playing a lead role in carrying out the institution’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, and establishing strong partnerships with public and private higher education institutions, especially historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

Before joining UMMC, Booker was assistant dean of Williams College, the number one liberal arts college in the nation. During her time there, she became well known for her advocacy and diverse programmatic efforts across campus.

The 2017 Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) Women in Student Affairs – Phenomenal Woman Award winner received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Southeastern Louisiana University and a doctorate in educational leadership, research and counseling from Louisiana State University.

Booker serves on several UMMC councils and committees, including the Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the Diversity Action and Accountability Review Team, the Ethics Advisory Board, the Training and Development Council and the Inclusive Excellence Advisory Council.

Dashunda R. Bunton joined the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at UMMC in July 2016 and serves as a project manager III, managing the office’s day-to-day operations.

She coordinates various projects and activities for the office, in concert with other UMMC departments, agencies and external organizations; she oversees all budgetary activities and the management of all office inventory; and provides administrative and programmatic support to the chief diversity and inclusion officer and all other departmental directors.

Bunton serves on several organizational committees, including the Diversity Action and Accountability Review Team and the Employee Engagement 100-Day Workout Team. She also serves as a multiple-mini interview rater for the UMMC School of Medicine.

She has Bachelor of Healthcare Administration and Master of Public Administration degrees from Belhaven University.

Shirley Pandolfi was appointed cultural competency and education manager in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in October 2018. She is responsible for developing and implementing curricula and providing training in cultural competence for UMMC faculty, staff and students.

The purpose of Pandolfi’s work is to enhance the awareness, knowledge and skills that will facilitate the expansion and integration of inclusive and responsive practices at different levels across the university system.

Pandolfi initiated her public health career in the Mississippi State Department of Health’s Office of Health Disparity Elimination, where she was responsible for conducting training on cultural competence, as well as medical and community interpretation. She also managed the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards Assessment for the agency.

Before joining UMMC, she was division director for the Rape Prevention and Education Grant and the Family Violence and Prevention Grants in the MSDH’s Office Against Interpersonal Violence. She recommended cultural and linguistically appropriate policies and procedures to shelters and rape crisis centers statewide.

Pandolfi manages UMMC’s unconscious bias training team and serves on the Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion and the Diversity Action and Accountability Review Team.

Mandy L. Scott reports on the status of diversity across the institution’s mission areas of education, research and health care to monitor progress toward adopted metrics in the UMMC Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan. She also leads and supports departmental programs that foster a climate of inclusion throughout the workforce and student body.

Before joining UMMC, Scott was director of marketing for a local office of a worldwide nonprofit agency that seeks to increase access to opportunities for success for racial/ethnic minorities and people living at or near the poverty line.

Scott has bachelor’s degrees in English and journalism from the University of Mississippi. She is pursuing a Master’s of Health Sciences from the UMMC School of Health Related Professions and was inducted unto the Alpha Eta Honor Society. She serves on the Vice Chancellor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the Diversity Action and Accountability Review Team and the Student Affairs Council, and is the department’s liaison for the Associated Student Body’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
UMMC’s Institutional Diversity and Inclusion Policy

UMMC will continuously encourage and engage in ongoing and focused processes, operations and communications that reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion and a positive workplace culture.

This includes fair and equitable practices in recruitment; selection; hiring; promotion and tenure; and career development and advancement opportunities of underrepresented groups in employment categories or classifications where there is underrepresentation.

Student admissions, retention programs and enrollment management functions should also be free of implicit and explicit barriers that may impede the success of qualified applicants and enrolled students.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Mississippi Medical Center guides strategies for integrating diversity and promoting inclusive excellence into UMMC’s three mission areas – education, research and health care. The office fosters a climate of inclusion throughout UMMC’s workforce and student body, where respect for different points of view, backgrounds and cultures are seen as strengths that enable the academic health center to benefit from each individual’s unique talent and perspective.

Unconscious Bias Training

“Bias is a process by which the brain uses ‘mental associations that are so well established as to operate without awareness, or without attention, or without control.’ Bias is also described as an inflexible, positive or negative, conscious or unconscious belief about a particular category of people.”

- Cook Ross, 2015

The Unconscious Bias Training Team and Office of Diversity and Inclusion staff are available to provide unconscious bias in-person training for departments and groups. For more information, visit:


Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?

“Most of the time, people consider the importance of diversity and inclusion in the context of getting to know people from different backgrounds and cultures. However, it is much broader than ‘getting to know.’ It is also about everyone hearing and considering different perspectives, priorities and decisions. When we understand these areas, there is a clearer path toward helping others the way that they want and need to be helped. It also leads to sustained change, because everyone is invested.”

Dr. Loretta Jackson-Williams, Vice Dean for Medical Education
Professor of Emergency Medicine, School of Medicine
Doctor of Health Administration (D.H.A.) program faculty host a Jeopardy game for incoming students in the Collaboratory in the School of Health Related Professions building.

2018-19 Fall Enrollment Data

School of Medicine
- Founded in Oxford: 1903
- Established in Jackson: 1955
- New Students: 165
- Total Students: 618
- Dr. LouAnn Woodward, Dean

School of Nursing
- Established: 1958
- New Students: 368
- Total Students: 672
- Dr. Mary Stewart, Interim Dean

School of Health Related Professions
- Established: 1971
- New Students: 210
- Total Students: 479
- Dr. Jessica Bailey, Dean

School of Dentistry
- Established: 1973
- New Students: 63
- Total Students: 203
- Dr. David Felton, Dean

School of Population Health
- Established: 2016
- New Students: 19
- Total Students: 24
- Dr. Bettina Beech, Dean

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences
- Established: 2001
- New Students: 119
- Total Students: 192
- Dr. Joey Granger, Dean

School of Pharmacy (Jackson Campus)
- Founded in Oxford: 1908
- Jackson Campus Established: 1970
- New Students (UMMC): 217
- Total Students (UMMC): 445
- Dr. Leigh Ann Ross, Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs

2017-18 Graduation Data Degrees Awarded
- School of Medicine: 134
- School of Dentistry: 51
- School of Nursing: 414
- Nursing Certificates: 10
- School of Health Related Professions: 233
- School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences: 95

To learn more about our 36 degree programs, please visit the academic bulletin at: www.umc.edu/bulletin

“UMMC exists in and is an important part of a diverse community. It is right that our faculty, staff and students involved in research reflect the makeup of that community.”

Dr. Ralph Didlake
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Dr. Louis Harkey attended graduation practice the day before UMMC’s 62nd Commencement, something he’s dutifully done every year for almost three decades.

But this time, it was different.

“I got chill bumps when I heard them call her name,” said Harkey, professor and Robert R. Smith Chair of Neurosurgery. He was referring to Claire Harkey, the oldest of his four children and a 2018 School of Medicine graduate, who has begun a pediatric residency at the Medical Center. Claire was born during Harkey’s UMMC neurosurgery residency.

“For four years, I’ve watched her go through the process I did three or four decades ago,” Harkey said. “I’ve watched her struggle and I’ve watched her succeed.

“T o have her walk across the stage and receive the diploma . . . I’m getting to do what I’ve envied my colleagues doing for many years.”

Harkey was one of 11 faculty members who placed a hood around the neck of a graduating family member during the annual ceremony at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. Although a good handful of students are hooded by relatives at each commencement, 2018 saw five School of Dentistry graduates hooded by family faculty, and another six in the School of Medicine. Faculty members who have children or spouses graduating have the option to break from tradition to make hooding a family affair.

Those pairings from the School of Dentistry in 2018 were:

- **Alex Carlton Downs**, hooded by his father, **Dr. Larry Downs**, clinician-educator in care planning and restorative sciences
- **Mary Catherine Hoover**, hooded by her father, **Dr. Dennis Hoover**, clinician-educator in care planning and restorative sciences
- **Olha Dmytryshyn McKay**, hooded by her husband, **Dr. Kevin McKay**, assistant professor of radiologic sciences
- **James Chesnut Moore III**, hooded by his wife, **Dr. Alecia Moore**, clinician-educator in care planning and restorative sciences
- **Tyler Samuel Wheeler**, hooded by his father, **Dr. Edward Wheeler**, clinician-educator in care planning and restorative sciences

In addition to Claire Harkey, pairings from the School of Medicine in 2018 included:

- **Marco Giorgio Aru**, hooded by his father, **Dr. Giorgio Aru**, professor of surgery
- **William Spence Crews**, hooded by his mother, **Dr. Karen Crews**, professor emeritus of dentistry
- **Gaylen Danielle Patterson**, hooded by her mother, **Dr. Ruth Patterson**, associate professor of pediatrics
- **Divya Shenoy**, hooded by her mother, **Dr. Veena Shenoy**, associate professor of pathology
- **Stephen Daniel Wahl**, hooded by his mother, **Dr. Nancy Wahl**, associate professor of pediatrics.

Any faculty member can hood a family graduate if the faculty member holds an equivalent degree, said Dr. Ralph Didlake, UMMC associate vice chancellor for academic affairs.

“We have a record, or near record, number of hooders this year, and we have a much larger number of parent hooders this year,” Didlake said. “It’s exciting. We’re seeing second- and third-generation providers hooding their children.”
UMMC creates new School of Population Health

The University of Mississippi Medical Center is advancing its mission to create a healthier Mississippi by forming the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

UMMC received permission to plan the school from the State Institutions of Higher Learning. Opened in 2017, it is the fourth school of its kind in the United States, according to Dr. Bettina Beech, dean of the school.

“Population health considers the whole continuum of factors that contribute to health outcomes,” said Beech, the first African-American female dean at UMMC. “In addition to biological factors, social, environmental and behavioral factors are all important determinants of health.”

This field of science focuses on how these factors interrelate and influence the distribution and determinants of disease and health in defined groups. It has a broader focus than public health, Beech said.

The mission of the school is to create leaders prepared to transform health care delivery and the health of Mississippians. These leaders will include population scientists, clinicians and administrators.

Black Representation in Medicine luncheon gives insight into Freedom Summer

To celebrate Black History Month, the Rev. Ed King, retired minister of the Mississippi Conference, United Methodist Church, and associate professor of general health professions in the School of Health Related Professions, presented “Standing Up and Standing Out: Stories from Freedom Summer 1964” on Feb. 26, 2018.

Sponsored by the Associated Student Body and Black Representation in Medicine, the seminar provided an opportunity for attendees to hear firsthand from a direct participant in the Civil Rights Movement who advocated for black voting rights during the 1950s and ’60s.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?

“Inclusion is critical in health care and in health care education as we need to ensure that every individual receives the attention they need, regardless of their race, sexual orientation, religion or disability. The more diversity we welcome within our students and staff, the more we can welcome all of the residents of Mississippi who can benefit from the services provided at UMMC.”

Ellen M. Robertson, graduate assistant, School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Contact the Student Counseling and Wellness Center to help manage the stresses and difficulties of life – inside and outside the classroom. To learn more, visit https://bit.ly/UMMC_Student_wellness_center
Vice chancellor emeritus moderates panel discussion to disrupt aging

Dr. James Keeton, vice chancellor emeritus for health affairs, was the moderator of a panel discussion, “Disrupt Aging: Living Your Best Life at Every Age,” on Nov. 6, a presentation sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons in collaboration with UMMC’s Everyday Wellness program.

Keeton provided information about what it means to “reinvent aging” with practical advice on how to embrace opportunities to live longer and better.

The event was co-sponsored by the UMMC Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Everyday Wellness, the Department of Preventive Medicine, the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, The MIND Center, the Department of Neurology, the Department of Medicine/Division of Geriatrics and the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities. AARP Mississippi funded the event and provided complimentary copies of Disrupt Aging: A Bold New Path to Living Your Best Life at Every Age by Jo Ann Jenkins, AARP CEO.

Disrupt Aging panelists included:
- Kimberly Campbell, Executive Director, AARP-Mississippi
- Richard A. Courtney, Attorney, Courtney Elder Law
- Evelyn Edwards, Vice President of Community Development, BancorpSouth
- Pamela Melzer, Manager, Benefits Administration, UMMC Human Resources
- Dr. Sara Sanders, Assistant Professor, UMMC Department of Medicine/Division of Geriatrics
- Dr. Scott Gibson, Assistant Professor, UMMC Department of Medicine/Division of Geriatrics

#DisruptAging

Student Interest Groups

Academic Medicine Interest Group
Anesthesia Interest Group
Associated Student Body
Association of Women Surgeons
Biannual African American Visit Day Organization
Black Representation in Medicine
Cardiology
Catholic Students Organization
Club Med
Dermatology
Dreamweavers
Emergency Medicine Interest Group
ENT Student Interest Group
Faith Seeking Understanding
Family Medicine
FrancoMed, Medical French Student Group
Gay-Straight Alliance
Global Health Interest Group
Hippocratic Forum
History of Medicine Interest Group
HomeRun Collaboration
Humanities and Medicine
Jackson Free Clinic
Life Support - The Wellness Initiative of the Gold Humanism Honor Society
Literati Medics (Book Club)
Medical Spanish (Club de Espanol)
Medical Student Cancer Interest Group
Medical Student Infectious Diseases Interest Group
MSMA/AMA - Medical Student Section
Muslim Students Association
Neurosurgery
Ob/Gyn
Oncology
Ophthalmology
Orthopaedic Preparation Program
Pathology
Pediatrics
Peer Assisted Learning Society
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Psychiatry
Pulmonary Medicine/Critical Care
Quality Improvement Student Interest Group
Radiology Interest Group
School of Medicine Honor and Professional Council
School of Medicine Wellness Committee
Sports Medicine Interest Group
Student Alumni Representatives
Student Chaplains
Student Interest Group in Neurology
Student National Dental Association
Student National Medical Association
Surgery
Technology in Medicine
UMMC Operation Smile Medical
UMMC Pacemakers
Urology
Wilderness Medicine

To learn more about student interest groups, go to:
https://www.umc.edu/som/Students/Student Life and Organizations/Student Interest Groups
The Medical Center’s clinical chairs reflect the diversity of the institution’s workforce.

They include, front row from left:
• Dr. George Russell, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation
• Dr. Kimberly Crowder, Department of Ophthalmology
• Dr. Shannon Pittman, Department of Family Medicine
• Dr. Alan Jones, Department of Emergency Medicine

Second row from left:
• Dr. Mary Taylor, Department of Pediatrics
• Dr. Scott Stringer, Departments of Neurology and Otolaryngology & Communicative Sciences
• Dr. Christopher Anderson, Department of Surgery
• Dr. Srinivasan Vijayakumar, Department of Radiation Oncology
• Dr. Scott Rodgers, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior
• Dr. Timothy McCowan, Department of Radiology
• Dr. Robert Brodell, Department of Dermatology

Back row from left:
• Dr. Javed Butler, Department of Medicine
• Dr. Louis Harkey, Department of Neurosurgery
• Dr. Joshua Mann, Department of Preventive Medicine
• Dr. Tim Allen, Department of Pathology
• Dr. Jermaine Gray, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
• Dr. Doug Bacon, Department of Anesthesiology

“Because we serve diverse communities, respecting and celebrating different backgrounds and cultures is part of our organization’s DNA. Our goal is to treat every patient as if each is our only patient. We are here as a resource and caregiver to every citizen of Mississippi.”

Kevin Cook
Chief Executive Officer
University Hospitals and Health System
Unlike his Spanish-speaking parents who came to America from Mexico, Angel Martinez, 7, is fluent in the language of their adopted country.

But when would it be OK to ask someone so young to tell his parents he has a blood-related cancer? When would it be OK to ask this first-grader to explain for them the complications of his illness, Philadelphia chromosome-positive acute lymphoblastic leukemia?

At UMMC, those questions are answered by a group of medical interpreters working out of the Office of Patient Experience: “Nunca. Jamas. Never.”

Among them are Leslye Bastos Ortega, manager of language services and patient advocacy; and Diva McCardle — two interpreters who have worked closely with Miguel and Nicolasa Martinez during their son Angel’s visits to Children’s Hospital for treatment.

At UMMC and its outpatient clinics, physicians and other health care providers may call Language Services whenever their patients need medical information converted into Spanish.

Besides Ortega and McCardle, two other Spanish interpreters are available: Nicole Marr, who works mostly with adult patients and is one of only three certified medical interpreters in the state, and Iris Dale, who serves UMMC clinics at the Jackson Medical Mall, interpreting for about five to 10 patients daily.

Dianne Gilbert, the Medical Center’s tribal liaison for the 10,000-member Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, is the go-to interpreter for patients more at home with their Native American language.

Patients may also seek help from UMMC’s interpreters on the telephone. Counting such calls, on average, Marr and McCardle each have 150-250 patient encounters per month, many in the Emergency Department.

UMMC’s medical interpreters work from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, but there is a phone number Spanish speakers may call after hours or on weekends to reach a contracted interpreting service. In fact, the Optimal Language Line, open 24 hours a day, offers interpreters for more than 200 different languages.

UMMC recorded a total of 1,400,536 patients and 16,429 encounters with Spanish-speaking patients in 2016. The numbers reflect encounters that are inpatient or outpatient, by phone — including the Language Line — or face-to-face and cover doctor’s appointments, scheduling needs, questions about consent forms and much more.

While there is also a heavy demand for sign language, those requests are coordinated by a social worker who brings in interpreters from outside UMMC.

Interpreter-patient relationship translates into trust

Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?

“Diversity and inclusion embraces everyone’s unique qualities and their best potential from within.”

Leslye Bastos Ortega, manager, Patient Advocacy and Language Services
For 14 years, the Center for Telehealth at UMMC has been a national trailblazer in providing high-quality health care, especially for those with little access to both primary and specialty services in underserved areas of Mississippi.

Its leadership, body of work and mastery of telecommunications technology was recognized by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration when it designated the center as one of two Telehealth Centers of Excellence. The designation is the agency’s top award given only to programs at public academic medical centers.

“The University of Mississippi Medical Center’s successful program is already a model for national telehealth expansion,” said former U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran. “Mississippians can be proud that our state’s telehealth investments have set a high standard for improving health care everywhere.”

The recognition from the HRSA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, included an initial $600,000 in funding, with the opportunity for an additional $2 million during the next two years.

The designation allows UMMC’s Center for Telehealth to serve as a national clearinghouse for telehealth research and resources, including technical assistance to other telehealth providers.

The Center for Telehealth connects patients and caregivers to Medical Center health care providers remotely, in real time, using video calls and interactive tools. More than 500,000 patient visits in 69 of the state’s 82 counties have been recorded. The center began with just three sites and eventually expanded to more than 200 sites, not including the homes of patients.

“UMMC’s selection as a national Telehealth Center of Excellence is affirmation of our mission and responsibility to bring high-quality health care to all Mississippians, especially those in rural, underserved areas,” said Dr. LouAnn Woodward, UMMC vice chancellor for health affairs. “We look forward to using our experience to help advance best practices for this increasingly vital service.”

The Center for Telehealth provides remote, on-site access to caregivers in more than 35 specialties, including urgent care, trauma, mental health, dermatology, cardiology, infectious diseases, and Alzheimer’s and dementia care. Pediatric telehealth specialties include remote concussion evaluation, cardiology, neurology, psychiatry, genetics and urology.
Baby-Friendly USA, the U.S. authority for the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund, has named UMMC a “Baby-Friendly” birth facility.

The initiative encourages and recognizes hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

Gaining the status was the culmination of a five-year effort that crossed disciplines and departments. To reach the designation, UMMC’s departments had to work together to improve care for mothers and their newborns.

UMMC staff created a “Mother Baby Unit” where infants room with their respective mothers, encouraged skin-to-skin contact between mothers and their babies soon after delivery and helped mothers start breastfeeding within an hour after giving birth with the aim of providing optimal maternal and baby care.

“This is the hardest thing I’ve worked on in my medical career of more than 20 years,” said Shannon Wentz, former UMMC quality specialist. “It’s definitely been a team effort. For many of us, this has been the challenge of a lifetime.”

UMMC is the second health care facility in Mississippi to earn the designation, following Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg. There are 458 “Baby-Friendly” hospitals and birth centers in the U.S., and more than 20,000 worldwide.

The goal is to increase breastfeeding, which has been proven to be the most complete nutrition for newborns. Scientific studies have shown that breastfed children have far fewer and less serious illnesses and a reduced risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), childhood cancers and diabetes than those who never receive breast milk, according to Baby-Friendly USA.

“It’s definitely been a team effort. For many of us, this has been the challenge of a lifetime.”
— Shannon Wentz

The choice is healthy for mothers, too, as studies have shown that women who breastfeed have decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancer, anemia and osteoporosis.

“It feels pretty amazing that the hard work and dedication of our staff over the last several years has resulted in an improved birthing experience for our patients,” said Dr. Amber Shiflett, UMMC associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology. “We will continue to strive for excellence in patient care and promotion of mother-infant bonding and breastfeeding.”

Amanda Vowell of Ackerman spend precious moments getting to know her newborn son, Renner, in the Mother Baby Unit at the Winfred L. Wiser Hospital for Women and Infants. Nurse Virgile Smoot checks Renner’s vital signs while Amanda cradles him.
When patients believe that health care professionals won’t help them because of their sexual orientation, it can lead to an unhealthy encounter.

“There is a perception that some physicians are ‘homophobic’ and that makes the patient reluctant to ‘come out,’” said Dr. Scott Rodgers, chair of psychiatry and human behavior. “Staying ‘hidden’ is an unhealthy way of living your life.”

For that reason, Rodgers’ department has launched the LGBTQ Clinic at the Jackson Medical Mall – a pioneering treatment center that will help fill a gap in mental health services for Mississippians who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning.

The clinic is a project of UMMC’s new Division of Gender, Sexuality and Health. It offers psychiatric care and psychotherapy to a population that Rodgers estimates makes up 2-5 percent of the state’s inhabitants.

Rodgers works with Dr. Leandro Mena, associate professor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases and medical director of the Open Arms Healthcare Center, which specializes in primary care focused on the health needs of LGBTQ populations. Established by My Brother’s Keeper, Inc., a nonprofit community organization, the center also offers the services of a clinical psychologist and referrals.

For society in general, Mena said there’s a practical reason for encouraging LGBTQ patients to be frank: This can help prevent the spread of HIV. Mena co-authored a 2008 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study that showed this to be the case.

During its first 30 months, Open Arms recorded 171 initial visits for its mental health services alone, Mena said. And it now sees a patient cohort that is 35 percent heterosexual.

In October 2018, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion received a $40,000 grant from the Women’s Foundation of Mississippi to expand clinical care and emotional support to members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning community and their families through UMMC’s Center for LGBTQ Health.

Attending the formal ceremony were, from left, Tracey DeVries, executive director, Women’s Foundation of Mississippi; Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, chief diversity and inclusion officer; Latisha Latiker, director of grant programming, Women’s Foundation of Mississippi; Mandy Scott, director of diversity assessment and programs, Office of Diversity and Inclusion; Dashunda Bunton, program manager III, Office of Diversity and Inclusion; and Dr. Scott M. Rodgers, chair, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior.

### Mental health clinic offers care to LGBTQ community

### Women’s Foundation grant extends clinical, emotional support to LGBTQ community
On March 30, 2018, the Human Rights Campaign released the 11th edition of its annual Healthcare Equality Index, which grades health care facilities on policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of patients, visitors and employees who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning.

A record 626 health care facilities actively participated in the survey, including three in Mississippi. Of the Mississippi facilities surveyed, only one – the University of Mississippi Medical Center – earned a top score of 100 and received HRC’s coveted “Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality” designation.

“This achievement demonstrates our unwavering commitment to inclusion and providing equitable care to LGBT patients and their families,” said Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, UMMC chief diversity and inclusion officer. “After months of working toward this goal with health care providers and staff across the Medical Center, there was never any doubt in my mind that we would achieve leader status in 2018.

“Our responsibility is clear – to create a healthier Mississippi.”

The study was sponsored by the National Coalition of STD Directors, the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors and the National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers.

Standards of care exist for other populations, but not so with the MSM population, Mena said.

“There’s no consistent way by which they receive care,” he said. “There’s no consideration to the disparities that they may be at risk for, or their sexual orientation or sexual behavior.”

The continuum of care is especially important in Mississippi. Jackson has the fourth-highest rate of HIV diagnosis per 100,000 population among the nation’s metro areas. In 2014, about 40 percent of MSM in the Jackson metro area were infected with HIV, and in 2013, Jackson had the highest HIV incidence among HIV-negative MSM in the country.

Overall, an estimated 10,050 Mississippians are living with a diagnosis of HIV. And at the end of 2014, an estimated 1,400 Mississippians were infected with HIV but didn’t know it – underscoring the importance of universal HIV testing.

Mena, expert panel champion first-ever MSM care standard

When it comes to the health of men who have sex with other men, the absence of a national standard of care leaves a critical gap for a population already at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and related health disparities.

A blue-ribbon panel of national public health professionals is changing that scenario. They’ve created a multi-faceted standard of care for MSM in their quest to advance effective STD prevention programs and services in every community in the country.

The panel’s report, “MSM Sexual Health Standards of Care,” addresses the alarming sexual health crisis in that community.

“This is the first effort that outlines what should be included in the care of men who have sex with men as part of a standard of care,” said Dr. Leandro Mena, UMMC professor and chair of population health science in the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

An infectious diseases physician who directs UMMC’s Center for HIV/AIDS Research, Education and Policy, Mena served as co-chair of the 24-member panel. The group included representatives from such entities as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Johns Hopkins School of Medicine; the California Department of Public Health; and the AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta.

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“Our responsibility is clear – to create a healthier Mississippi.”
The ultimate goal of biomedical research is to improve health and well-being of all people.

By fostering diverse research teams and programs, UMMC finds solutions to the most complex health challenges through studies that range the spectrum of scientific inquiry.

Since 1998, the Jackson Heart Study has been a prime example of this mission. The study has made discoveries about cardiovascular health, translated these findings for the community and trained the next generation of biomedical scientists.

Thanks to renewed funding from the National Institutes of Health, its mission is poised to continue past the quarter-century mark.

The JHS is the largest single site, long-term study of cardiovascular health in a cohort of African-Americans, following more than 5,300 Hinds, Rankin and Madison county residents. It is a multi-institutional effort, including UMMC, Jackson State University, Tougaloo College and the Mississippi State Department of Health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease is the leading cause of death for Americans. Among African-Americans, nearly half of adults have some form of cardiovascular disease, and about one in four dies of heart disease.

“The funding is new but the JHS goal remains the same: to figure out what factors can cause and prevent heart disease in African-Americans,” said Dr. Adolfo Correa, professor of medicine and JHS director. “The partner institutions will keep working together in the JHS. But the JHS goal can only be reached if [participants] keep participating.

“With this new funding, we will do many of the same activities.” Correa cited such activities as conducting annual follow-up with participants and hosting community events.

“We are delighted that there will be a Jackson Heart Study Exam Number 4 during 2020-2022,” he said.

Like its predecessors, this exam will add to the extensive longitudinal data on cardiovascular disease risk factors, socioeconomic and sociocultural factors, imaging studies and biological samples. UMMC manages the coordinating and field centers, which conduct research studies and maintain contact with the cohort.

During the next phase, a new Graduate Training and Education Center at UMMC will serve students interested in cardiovascular epidemiology, health disparities and related research. Led by Dr. Bettina Beech, dean of the John D. Bower School of Population Health, the GTEC will provide training in cardiovascular health from a population health perspective to students enrolled in health-, STEM- or social science-related doctoral and health professional programs at Mississippi colleges and universities.

“One of the great lessons that has come from a modern practice of biomedical research is the realization that humans are all different and that one singular diagnostic of treatment strategy may not apply to all individuals. This notion is at the heart of our new directions in precision/personalized medicine and highlights the necessity of integrating diversity in all our research efforts.”

Dr. Richard Summers
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research
UMMC has a strong track record of gaining research funding and using it well. In October 2016, Dr. Wayne Wahls of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences penned an essay, “Send My Tax Dollars to Mississippi,” which highlighted UMMC’s efficiency in turning federal funding into research publications.

“Taxpayers net more scientific publications by funding investigators at the University of Mississippi Medical Center . . . than by giving the funds to prestigious and top-ranked institutions,” Wahls wrote.

In keeping with Wahls’ assessment, UMMC received 316 extramural grants and awards in fiscal year 2017, the most in the institution’s history for a single year. The dollar amount for this record year – $65,454,262 – is also the fourth highest in Medical Center history.

“Research funding is important as we move forward,” said Dr. Richard Summers, associate vice chancellor for research.

“Research techniques are becoming more complicated and expensive.

“At UMMC, we have been able to accomplish a lot with a little, but it will become harder to do that with time.”

Summers said two of the three years with higher funding totals, 2011 and 2012, occurred during a government stimulus period. The year 2014, which has the record for total dollars with more than $82 million, included funds for the recently opened medical education building.

Extramural grants and awards support research activity and the development of human capital. This includes training the next generation of biomedical scientists.

The money from grants, awards and contracts pays for physical resources, such as new equipment and supplies, as well as human capital, such as salary support and workforce development. While a portion of the grants go toward community and improvement initiatives, the majority of the funds support UMMC’s research enterprise.

UMMC researchers publish 10 peer-reviewed articles per $1 million of NIH funding; Harvard and Johns Hopkins University averaged five apiece.

The analysis only included funds from the NIH, the United States government’s primary supporter of biomedical research. Most of UMMC’s extramural funding comes from this agency or other federal sources. However, other groups financially support basic and clinical research.

Summers said he hopes to see UMMC double its extramural research funding in the next five years. He said this is an attainable goal if Medical Center leaders think “outside the box” in terms of funding opportunities.

“We need to look for opportunities outside of our traditional sponsors, including industry and foundations,” Summers said. “All money is green.”

Researchers and faculty, staff and students from three of the South’s top academic medical centers gathered at UMMC to learn, share and transform ideas into solutions to eliminate health disparities in the Mississippi Delta region during the “Delta Clinical and Translational Science Health Disparities Conference” on July 19, 2018.

The conference was highlighted by keynote presentations from each of the participating institutions: UMMC, Tulane University and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. Researchers from all disciplines participated in a poster presentation, and all attendees took part in networking sessions to develop real solutions to assist citizens of the Delta.

Conference presenters and their topics included:

- **Dr. Lydia Bazzano** of Tulane, “The Bogalusa Heart Study: Forty Years of Health Disparities Research”
- **Dr. Shelley White-Means** of UTHSC, “Disparities in Breast Cancer Mortality: A Perfect Storm in Memphis”
- **Dr. Michael E. Hall** of UMMC, “Perinephric Fat, Hypertension and Renal Dysfunction”
- **Dr. Melody N. Waller** of UTSHC, “Factors Associated with African-American Women’s Sexual Health and Risk Behavior”
- **Dr. Sarah Sterling** of UMMC, “The Chronic State of Obesity and the Acute Response to Sepsis”
- **Dr. Katherine T. Mills** of Tulane, “Implementation of Multi-faceted Patient-centered Treatment Strategies for Intensive Blood Pressure Control (IMPACTS)”
- **Dr. Cynthia Karlson** of UMMC, “Impact of Race and Socioeconomics on Psychological Outcomes in Childhood Cancer”
- **Dr. Stacy Drury** of Tulane, “Networks of Opportunities: Building Interdisciplinary and Cross University Studies to Support Clinical Trials for Our Youngest and Most Vulnerable”

**VOICES**

Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?

“Diversity is vital because it allows one to embark on a path of self-discovery through the act of coexisting with individuals from different races and/or ethnic groups. Ultimately, one realizes those observed differences create interesting and unique people, fostering a thirst to discover more about themselves by interacting with more individuals from different cultures.”

**Christina Jordan**, executive assistant, UMMC Cancer Institute
Changes happen with age. Blood pressure rises, as does the risk of other cardiovascular diseases.

Who is most susceptible to these changes? Why do they happen? And, perhaps most importantly, how can we use this knowledge to make people healthier?

Big questions require big studies. For 30 years, UMMC has been looking for the answers through the Jackson field site of the landmark Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities study.

“The main focus (of ARIC) is elucidating the risk factors for heart disease and stroke and determining how that varies by sex, race and geography,” said Dr. Tom Mosley, principal investigator for the Jackson site.

Since 1987, ARIC has followed approximately 16,000 participants in Jackson; Washington County, Maryland; Forsyth County, North Carolina; and Minneapolis, Minnesota, from midlife onward, investigating the origin of diseases associated with atherosclerosis, the hardening of blood vessels.

ARIC conducts physical exams for its participants every few years, including blood samples, electrocardiograms and other tests, as well as phone calls every six months.

Mosley said “exquisite measures of vascular markers” have allowed the study to make discoveries that few others can. More than 1,900 scientific papers and 300 ancillary studies use ARIC data to answer questions spanning far beyond its original scale.

The success of the ARIC Jackson site, which recruited 3,722 African-Americans, was also a determining factor to create the Jackson Heart Study, the largest study of African-American cardiovascular disease. The two studies share some of the same participants.

To celebrate 30 years, the Jackson field site honored hundreds of participants and their families at an appreciation luncheon June 3, 2018 at the Hilton Jackson.

Mosley said the study is still in contact with ninety percent of the living participants, evidence that retention efforts work. The cohort receives some benefit from the study as well.

“There’s evidence that people who participate in medical research tend to live healthier lives.”

—Dr. Tom Mosley

While the study retains its focus on cardiovascular diseases, its scope has grown with time. “ARIC was one of the earliest studies to look at brain aging in a population,” Mosley said. “Now, we can study genetics, kidney disease, cancer and brain aging.”

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“There’s evidence that people who participate in medical research tend to live healthier lives,” Mosley said. “The ARIC participants receive some of the most advanced screenings available, such as EKG and brain MRI.”

ARIC cohort members are currently 70-90 years old, but Mosley doesn’t see the study ending anytime soon. With exam visit six underway and funding for a seventh, it’s set to run through 2019. The ARIC study is supported by the National Institutes of Health.
“At the University of Mississippi Medical Center, we value and strive to achieve a diverse workforce. Individuals recruited, hired, trained and promoted will, in all ways, be treated equally without regard to race; color; gender; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; religion; creed; national origin; age; disability; veteran status; marital status; socioeconomic status; culture; or genetic information.”

Paula Henderson
UMMC Chief Human Resources Officer

These words bring to mind the foundation and support provided by those who hold up an ideal they deem worthy. They are strong words, synonyms to “pillar.”

They are the foundation of an awards ceremony called the Pillars: Recognition of Service and Inclusive Excellence.

With the Pillars Awards, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion pays homage to the students, faculty, employees and alumni who have made meaningful contributions that broaden diversity and promote a climate of inclusion in the UMMC community and beyond.

“The Pillars awards were established to recognize faculty, staff and students,” said Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, chief diversity and inclusion officer. “We felt like this would recognize not only the work that is being done in all three mission areas, but also stimulate thinking around what diversity and inclusion efforts are or what they could look like in action moving forward.”

“I want to extend my congratulations and appreciation to all of those who were honored . . . for what you are doing,” said Dr. LouAnn Woodward, vice chancellor for health affairs. “The efforts, the energy, the passion and the heart that you bring to the table, to your work and to the Medical Center every single day, makes us better, and it makes us stronger.”

Taylor said a steering committee has been instrumental in designing the awards. Its members include Whitney Bondurant, director, Sponsored Programs Pre-award; Dan Coleman, associate director, Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program; Rachel Gressett, director, Health Systems Contracts; Kate Harriel, School of Medicine Class of 2020; Carlen Johnson, School of Pharmacy Class of 2018; Sanette Langston, manager of annual giving, Office of Development; Kim Massey, director of institutional giving, Office of Development; April Mann Overstreet, director, Alumni Affairs; and Joyce Shelby, simulation center manager, Department of Finance and Administration.

The committee scores each candidate by a rubric to determine winners in each category.

Excellence Award
The Excellence Award honors a student, resident or fellow from any of UMMC’s seven schools who demonstrates professionalism in an effort to promote a climate of diversity and inclusion among peers. This person serves as a role model for other students in the area of diversity and inclusion in the learning process.

Recipient of the 2018 Pillars Excellence Award:
Brent Necaise, School of Medicine Class of 2018

Inclusion Award
The Inclusion Award recognizes a full- or part-time staff member who does not hold a faculty position who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in expanding diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The person displays a high degree of professionalism and a commitment to enhancing the climate of inclusion in the workplace by fostering a respectful work environment.

Recipient of the 2018 Pillars Inclusion Award:
Dr. Gaarmel Funches, director of community education outreach

Beacon Award
The Beacon Award recognizes a faculty member, whether clinical or non-clinical, who demonstrates inclusive excellence in teaching, instruction, research or clinical practice. This person displays a high degree of professionalism; mentors diverse faculty, staff and students; and shows professional activities that advance health care and improve outcomes of diverse communities.

Recipient of the 2018 Pillars Beacon Award:
Dr. Norma Ojeda, professor of pediatrics and neonatology in the School of Medicine

Lifetime Achievement Award
The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a UMMC alumnus who has made a significant contribution to improving health outcomes in Mississippi’s diverse communities. The recipient displays a high level of professionalism and a commitment to improving health outcomes for diverse communities. This person has shown efforts to create a climate of inclusion to advance the careers of members of diverse groups.

Recipient of the 2018 Pillars Lifetime Achievement Award:
Dr. Barbara Craft, associate professor of oncology and medical director of the UMMC Cancer Institute

Inspiration Award
The Inspiration Award recognizes a community member or organization that represents the spirit of diversity and inclusion. Recipients must be Mississippi natives, longtime Mississippi residents or an organization that has advanced underrepresented communities through servant leadership.

Recipient of the 2018 Pillars Inspiration Award:
Stewpot Community Services
Invited speakers share their perspectives and experiences on a host of stimulating topics and Medical Center community members join in the dialogue during InclUsive Conversations, a series sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The first InclUsive Conversation was presented on March 21, 2017 by Dr. Brian Williams, associate professor of surgery and general surgery residency program director at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Williams related his personal experiences as lead surgeon on call treating victims of a sniper attack at Parkland Memorial Hospital during his talk, “Critical Mass: Examining Race, Violence and Medicine in the 21st Century.”

During the second, presented April 18, 2017, a panel of religious leaders discussed how to navigate religion, faith and professionalism in the workplace and how to provide an inclusive environment for individuals with competing religions, ethical or moral beliefs in “The Intersection of Religion, Faith and Professionalism in the Workplace.”

Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, chief diversity and inclusion officer, said she established the InclUsive Conversations lecture series to facilitate open and honest discussion.

“We all have biases and can easily make assumptions or generalizations of others,” Taylor said. “The idea behind InclUsive Conversations is to provide a way to give the UMMC community a space to first listen and learn.”

Guests leading the conversations have included:

- **Monica Daniels, M.S.**
  Executive Director
  Special Olympics Mississippi
  “The Revolution is Inclusion”
  November 14, 2018

- **Dr. Robert E. Luckett Jr.**
  Associate Professor of History
  Director, Margaret Walker Center for the Study of the African-American Experience
  Jackson State University
  “Margaret Walker: This is My Century”
  Sept. 10, 2018

- **Michelle Johansen**
  2018 IHL Diversity Educator of the Year
  History Instructor
  Quality Enhancement Plan Coordinator
  Study Abroad Coordinator
  Delta State University
  “A World Class Experience: Improving Cultural Competency at Delta State”
  May 7, 2018

- **Dr. Byron D’Andra Orey**
  Professor of Political Science
  Jackson State University
  “Race-Based Trauma and the Fear of Driving While Black”
  April 2, 2018

- **Dr. Stephanie Rolph**
  Associate Professor of History
  Academic Director for the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty
  Millsaps College
  “Teaching Antipoverty Work: Undergraduate Experiences in the Classroom and the Field”
  March 5, 2018

- **Dr. Mina Li**
  Institute for Disability Studies
  University of Southern Mississippi
  “Disability Inclusion: Getting to Know and Interact with People with Disabilities”
  May 16, 2017

- **Panel Discussion**
  “The Intersection of Religion, Faith and Professionalism in the Workplace”
  April 18, 2017

- **Dr. Brian H. Williams**
  Trauma Surgeon
  University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
  “Critical Mass: Examining Race, Violence and Medicine in the 21st Century”
  March 21, 2017

Many professional presentations provide opportunities for audiences to receive invaluable information. But the best of these seminars give attendees advice that can be applied to professional practice and their daily lives.

That’s the aim of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion-sponsored Distinguished Lecture Series, in which national thought leaders share how their audiences can positively engage and effectively impact meaningful change.

Guests taking part in the Distinguished Lecture Series have included:

Stacey D. Stewart
President
March of Dimes
“A Partnership for Birth Equity in Mississippi”
April 5, 2018

Dr. David Acosta
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges
“Bridging the Cultural Divide in Academic Medicine Through Inclusion Excellence”
Sept. 27, 2017

Recordings of many of the Distinguished Lectures are available at:

Disability inclusion through Project SEARCH

UMMC doesn’t just recognize good talent in selecting its employees. It’s helping young adults with disabilities obtain competitive, community-based jobs by teaching them skills needed for the school-to-work transition.

In August 2018, the Medical Center became a site for Project SEARCH (Special Education As Requirements in Charter Schools), a national initiative that partners young people with disabilities exiting high school with a host job site where they can get a learning experience leading to employment. About a dozen students from the Rankin County School District are spending 10 months at the Medical Center, gaining skills and experiences that will make them attractive to employers – including UMMC.

Those young adults include Austin Tidwell, an avid fisherman who came to the Medical Center eager to take the next step post-graduation by getting hands-on experience in departments such as Physical Facilities, Ambassador Services, Shipping and Receiving, and Printing Services.

“It will train me to get a good job,” Tidwell said.

Project SEARCH is just one example of diversity and inclusion efforts in the Medical Center’s 10,000-plus employee workforce, said Paula Henderson, chief human resources officer.

“We consider the value of diversity as it relates to one’s personal characteristics as well as to the traits or perspectives one has from experiences, education and training,” she said.

The Medical Center’s workforce is 73.4 percent female, 60.2 percent white, 33.6 percent black and about 6 percent other races. Disability and veteran status are self-reported by employees, with 0.22 percent reporting a disability and 2.29 percent reporting they are a military veteran.

“Project SEARCH is more than just another program at UMMC,” said Casey Bridges, supervisor of nuclear medicine and PET-CT assigned to oversee Project SEARCH.

“It will provide students with disabilities the opportunity to acquire marketable job skills they will carry for a lifetime.

“This project is a dream come true for many parents of a child with a disability and for the students themselves.”

Austin Tidwell, center, visits with his mother, Christy Tidwell, clinic operations supervisor at Grants Ferry, and Kenneth McCreary, interim director of supply chain logistics.
UMMC attracts talent from six continents. Physicians, scientists, professionals and students from these varied locations may need help navigating local customs, language and rules.

Take for example Dr. Lili Shi, a postdoctoral fellow in pathology from China. When she found out her 9-year-old daughter’s new school has a dress code, Shi knew where to ask for advice. UMMC’s Office of International Services provides counseling on visa applications and other documentation needed to work in the United States. But it’s not all paperwork.

On Friday mornings at 8:30, the office hosts a coffee hour. A welcoming environment and cross-cultural fellowship gathers people from around the world around a table for a snack and casual conversation to start their day.

“This event provides an opportunity for growth and learning and to help internationals to adjust faster to [Jackson] and to UMMC,” said Julieta Mendez, director of international services. “Our goal is to help them integrate faster and easier.”

Within a couple minutes, Mendez and Karla Velez, associate human resources service partner for international services, helped Shi find out what her daughter needed for school.

“Everyone here is so nice,” said Shi. “I am very grateful.”

This helpfulness has earned Mendez and Velez the unofficial title of “godmother” around the office.

“When you experience a new place and a new culture, you don’t always know what to do or where to go” for assistance, said Dr. Norma Ojeda, associate professor of pediatrics who attends coffee hour regularly. “This meeting provides a friendly environment where you can ask these questions.

“It makes our whole week,” said Ojeda, originally from Paraguay.

“Some weeks, we bring people from the community to talk about topics such as taxes, investments, benefits, driver’s licenses or whatever we think could be helpful,” Mendez said. She also keeps them informed about local cultural events and opportunities to be involved in the community.

For instance, Irene Arguello, a clinical researcher in pediatrics, started a holiday toy drive for children served by the School of Nursing’s school clinics in Rolling Fork and Mayersville.

Arguello, from Paraguay, visits the clinics as part of an ongoing study. When she saw how little the children have in their schools – “They were each coloring on one tiny part of the same coloring book page,” she said – she started collecting toys for them to play with in the clinic waiting room.

By enlisting the help of the coffee hour constituents, the drive was a success.

Mendez said UMMC has about 220 international employees with visas, which permit them to work in the United States for a set period. However, hundreds more are either permanent residents or naturalized citizens.

“Our international employees and students make great contributions to UMMC and its mission,” she said. “They are super important.”

International employees are important to health care across the country as well. Twenty-two percent of physicians working in the United States received their medical degree in another country. Many of them work in states like Mississippi, which has a shortage of health care workers.

As these global professionals “think about where to go next in their careers,” Mendez said, it is vital for UMMC to promote retention. By helping them navigate the legal and cultural landscape and showing them what Jackson has to offer, members of the Office of International Services said they hope these employees continue to work and serve in Mississippi.

But if it’s a Friday morning, they might just be thinking about going to coffee hour.
The Group on Women in Medicine and Science has established an awards program to honor women who have forged new paths at UMMC while encouraging the next generation of women to enter the medical and scientific professions.

Dr. LouAnn Woodward, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine, said GWIMS reaches women who have established vocations and those in the early and middle stages of their careers.

“Our accomplishments are because of those who have gone before us,” Woodward said, “and it is our responsibility to reach back and bring others along with us.”

Dr. Norma Ojeda, associate professor of neonatology, said the awards shine a spotlight on those who are helping level the academic medicine playing field for women at all career stages, “making equality possible for women and making sure there are equal opportunities for advancement,” she said.

Equal opportunities for all, said Ojeda, strengthens organizations and communities.

“If women can thrive, then everyone will do well.”

**GWIMS awards and recipients include:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LouAnn Woodward, M.D. Authentic Leadership Award</td>
<td>Dr. Jane Reckelhoff</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. LouAnn Woodward</td>
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<td>Helen D. Barnes, M.D. Diversity and Inclusion Award</td>
<td>Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor</td>
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<td>Dr. Helen Barnes</td>
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<td>UMMC GWIMS Innovation Award</td>
<td>Dr. Alexandra Castillo</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Dr. Merry Lindsey</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>UMMC GWIMS Resilient Spirit Award</td>
<td>Penny Lowrey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. Bettina Beech</td>
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<td>UMMC GWIMS Emerging Star Award</td>
<td>Dr. Ashley Albert</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. Kristine DeLeon-Pennell</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMMC GWIMS Rising Star Award</td>
<td>Dr. Anju Sukumaran</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. Sarah Sterling</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMMC GWIMS Shining Star Award</td>
<td>Dr. Mobolaji Famuyide</td>
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<td>Dr. Pia Chatterjee Kirk</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMMC GWIMS Trailblazer Award</td>
<td>Dr. Abhaya Bhatt</td>
<td>2018</td>
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The mission of the Association of American Medical College’s Group on Women in Medicine and Science is to advance the full and successful participation and inclusion of women faculty and learners within academic medicine. UMMC’s local chapter focuses on the four GWIMS goals of gender equity; recruitment and retention; awards and recognition; and career advancement.

**GWIMS initiates seminar series with topics of interest to women in medicine, science**

The UMMC Group on Women in Medicine and Science has launched a series of seminars for leading women faculty and staff members to offer information vital to women at UMMC.

The series is presented by GWIM members and visiting faculty from across the country.

Some of the more recent presentations and speakers have included:

- **“Leadership and Global Health Outcomes: A Discussion On How Ideas Become Action”** by various UMMC participants during a “Coffee Talk” presentation, July 12, 2017
- **“Embracing Generational Differences”** by Paula Shelton, UMMC human resources service partner-talent development, Sept. 12, 2017
- **“Super Powers Aren’t Enough”** by Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, UMMC chief diversity and inclusion officer, Oct. 18, 2017
- **“In Order to Lean In, You Have to Be at the Table”** by Dr. Angela Sharkey, professor of pediatrics and associate dean for faculty affairs and professional development at the Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Nov. 30, 2017
- **“Lost in Translation (Taking Actions)”** by Dr. Kristine Deleon, UMMC assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, Dec. 5, 2017
- **“Positive Psychology: Applying the Science of Happiness and Improving Your Daily Life”** by Dr. Julie Schumacher, clinical psychologist and UMMC vice chair for education, Sept. 21, 2018
- **“Learning to Lead . . . With a Little Help from My Friends”** by Dr. Kim Hoover, dean, UMMC School of Nursing, Oct. 19, 2018
- **“Neurobiology of Men and Women and How It Affects Our Thinking”** by Dr. Beverly Bryant, UMMC associate professor of psychiatry and human behavior, Nov. 13, 2018
- **“Powering Your Will: Changing How You Change”** by Dr. Danny R. Burgess, UMMC associate professor of psychiatry and human behavior, Dec. 11, 2018
Lanier High School sophomores Jamecia McLaurin and Christopher Washington each take inspiration from a departed aunt in their quest to work in a health services career.

“My aunt who recently passed was a nurse,” said Christopher, 16. “That really got me interested. Now I want to be a nurse practitioner.

“I’ve always liked helping people. It’s just in my nature.”

Jamecia, 15, said her interest in becoming an emergency medical technician was piqued when her aunt was treated in an emergency situation. She wants people like her aunt to get the help they need when an ambulance or first responder arrives.

They’re among students in Lanier’s Academy of Health Services who have received hands-on training through the donation of a retired ambulance by American Medical Response. The ambulance – to be used as a stationary simulation lab – has become the academy’s Emergency Medical Services Lab.

It provides an instructional environment that supports a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning, enabling students to practice real-world emergency scenarios and learn medical skills needed for a career in the emergency response or medical transportation fields.

The Academy of Health Services is one of five that make up the Jackson Public Schools’ Academies of Jackson.

The UMMC School of Nursing collaborates with AMR, JPS and the Lanier High School National Alumni Association to support the academy.

UMMC is invested in the district’s students in part “because health care is the largest employer in the nation,” said Dr. Claude Brunson, UMMC senior advisor to the vice chancellor.

Since 2015, the School of Nursing has staffed a full-time Teen Wellness Clinic at Lanier in partnership with UMMC and the school district to give primary care and health education to students.

Those in the Health Services Academy “can be certified as an emergency responder by the time they graduate high school,” Brunson said.

“At UMMC and Children’s of Mississippi, we are dedicated to seeing all reach their full potential. Diversity and inclusion practices result in better care for those we serve and allow us to engage with the community in a more meaningful way.”

Dr. Guy Giesecke
Chief Executive Officer, Children’s of Mississippi
Seven-and-a-half hours. That’s how long it takes to complete the Medical College Admission Test. But it can set the course of one’s life for at least the next seven or eight years.

Normally, that’s the length of time required to finish medical school and specialty training – as anyone who tackles the MCAT knows, including John Andrew Del Castillo, an aspiring physician whose scores, he thought, cried out for a do-over.

“They wanted to go better,” said Del Castillo, a psychometrist with Methodist Rehabilitation Center, “so I looked for any kind of extra help I could get.”

He found it in UMMC’s Office of Health Careers Opportunity, which is committed to promoting diversity within the ranks of Mississippi’s health care professions, relying on such initiatives as the Medical Cooperative Program, a prep class for medical school or dental school applicants who are required to take either the MCAT or the Dental Admission Test, respectively.

“When I applied to MEDCORP and was accepted, that was a fantastic day,” Del Castillo said.

Health Careers Opportunity programs covet students who are underrepresented in medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, graduate education and the health related professions, such as occupational therapy and physical therapy.

“We work with all types of students,” said Dr. Gaarmel Funches, director of the office. “With our pipeline and enrichment programs, our mission is to enroll more of them in health professions schools, including minorities, as well as students from rural communities.”

As a first-year student in the School of Dentistry, Jaleesa Dandridge is the beneficiary of another OHCO program, Pre-Matriculation.

First-year step in the pipeline

As a first-year student in the School of Dentistry, Jaleesa Dandridge is the beneficiary of another OHCO program, Pre-Matriculation.

Designed for future dental or medical students, PRE-MAT is a compact, six-week, three-course summer serving of gross anatomy, histology and biochemistry, polishing the participants’ competence in those three critical areas before their first year of actual classes.

“Before PRE-MAT, I had taken a practice [Dental Admission Test] and it scared me,” said Dandridge. She found her courage in the classrooms and labs PRE-MAT opened to her. But PRE-MAT and MEDCORP IV are just a couple of islands of opportunity in the sizable OHCO atoll. In fact, the MEDCORP name alone encompasses several distinct offerings.

MEDCORP DIRECT provides special consideration for medical school admission to a college student who has completed the sophomore year, who intends to train here and “who has a heart for serving in underserved areas,” said LaFreda Sias, project manager for OHCO, who helps Funches recruit the state’s public, private and parochial school students for her division’s programs.

Step provides academic enrichment in math, science and critical thinking for disadvantaged and underserved students in Mississippi. UMMC's pipeline programs recruit and enrich disadvantaged and underrepresented students to the Medical Center.

“Your award-winning program continues to make a significant difference through mentoring and teaching, research, and other efforts worthy of this national recognition,” she said.

Two other initiatives, MEDCORP I and MEDCORP II, are on hiatus because of suspended federal funds. The Medical Center was able to sustain MEDCORP III (MCAT and DAT prep for pre-junior year college students) and its cousin, MEDCORP IV (for veteran test-takers seeking to improve their scores).

Some other OHCO approaches are trying to win much younger hearts, including the Science Training and Enrichment Program, a menu of enrichment in math, science and critical thinking for economically and academically disadvantaged students in grades six through eight. They are served at the UMMC campus on Saturdays.

OHCO works well with others, including the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program and the Health Equity Leadership Initiative, which exposes underrepresented males ages 17 to 25 to health professional training.

The award is presented by the magazine as a tribute to programs that “encourage and inspire a new generation of young people to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and math,” according to Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of the magazine.

STEP, pipeline programs garner national magazine award
Nearly 2,000 Mississippi residents received free dental care at the School of Dentistry’s second-annual Dental Mission Week Feb. 5-10, 2018. The total nearly doubled the number served at last year’s inaugural event.

The halls of the school bustled with activity from morning to evening as faculty, staff, students and volunteers saw a record number of patients throughout the week – 1,826 patients received 4,135 dental procedures worth an estimated $1.05 million in uncompensated care.

“The dental and dental hygiene students had the opportunity to provide high-quality dental care to a large contingent of Mississippians who could not otherwise afford it,” said Dr. David Felton, professor of care planning and restorative dentistry sciences and dean of the school. “While the patients benefitted greatly, our students got to see, firsthand, how ‘giving back’ to those less fortunate can have a dramatic impact on someone’s life.”

Dental Mission Week is a joint effort involving volunteers from the Schools of Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Related Professions and Medicine, as well as staff from local private dental practices.

Jump-starting the week was Give Kids A Smile Day on Feb. 5, 2018. More than 500 students from three local elementary schools and the Stewpot After-School Program received dental care – including cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants – valued at $117,465.

Historically, GKAS Day has been on Fridays, but the school shifted it to Monday to allow parents an opportunity to bring children back for free follow-up care during Dental Mission Week.

Wilkedria Davis, a teacher at Johnson Elementary School, said this is the first time many of the students have had their teeth cleaned.

On Feb. 8, 2018, the school teamed with the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center to provide care for 265 veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, many of whom do not qualify for dental benefits.

“Dental benefits are some of the most restricted by law, so there are a lot of veterans who are eligible for general medical care but not dental care,” said Dr. David Walker, director of the VA Medical Center. “Today is a gift for veterans.”

“This was a huge undertaking for the school and our colleagues, but it was a win-win effort for all,” Felton said. “We’re already working on planning for the 2019 Dental Mission Week activities and hope to continue this effort for many years to come.”
Members of the Associated Student Body and UMMC faculty and staff took a break from classes and work to give back to the community during its second annual Day of Service event at various sites throughout the Greater Jackson area.

The group met at UMMC’s student union on the morning of Jan. 15 to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday and to receive their assignments, then ventured forth to participate in service projects to help non-profit groups in their community. A reflection and meal concluded the day’s activities.

The Office for Community Engagement and Service Learning can connect UMMC community members with service and community engagement opportunities. To learn more, visit https://bit.ly/service_Learning

**VOICES**

Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?

“Including and valuing a diverse population gives the institution more perspectives when tackling issues and also vastly expands the toolbox when creating solutions. When your decisions impact the lives of patients or the education of a generation, the diversity of the decision-makers is our greatest resource.”

*Hardeep Uppal, student, School of Medicine*

**SYNERGY | P31 | UMMC OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**
Board of Trustees recognizes emeritus faculty for community service

Dr. Helen Barnes, a UMMC emeritus faculty member and the first board-certified African-American woman to practice obstetrics-gynecology in the State of Mississippi, received the Karen Cummins Community Service Award from the Mississippi Institution of Higher Learning Board of Trustees Feb. 15, 2018.

The award is named for a former IHL board member who died in 2017.

During her more than four decades of service, Barnes provided care to thousands of women and babies, many of them poor and disadvantaged. She has served as a teacher and role model for countless health professions students.

The recognition was part of the board’s celebration of Black History Month. In addition to honoring Barnes, the board recognized faculty and staff who are advancing diversity on each IHL campus.

Population health science chair receives IHL’s diversity honor

Each year, the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning honors leaders from each of Mississippi’s public universities and the community at-large for their commitment to improving diversity and supporting underrepresented populations.

Among the distinguished honorees, one person is selected to receive the Diversity Educator of the Year Award.

In 2018, Dr. Leandro Mena, professor and chair of the Department of Population Health Science in the John D. Bower School of Population Health, was recognized by the IHL board as UMMC’s diversity champion.

Previous recipients of UMMC’s diversity honor from the IHL board include:

- 2017 Dr. Hamed Benghuzzi, professor of clinical health sciences, School of Health Related Professions
- 2016 Dr. Juanyce D. Taylor, chief diversity and inclusion officer
- 2015 Dr. Claude N. Brunson, senior advisor for external affairs
- 2014 Dr. Bettina M. Beech, dean, John D. Bower School of Population Health

UMMC equity initiative attracts nationally known speaker

Dr. Ivory A. Tolson, president of Quality Education for Minorities, Washington, D.C., presented “Beyond Horizons: A Recognition of Scholarship and Achievement,” to minority male high school students with high academic honors from across the state on Dec. 8, 2017.

Tolson was invited to speak by UMMC’s Health Equity Leadership Initiative, a W. K. Kellogg Foundation-funded program that supports underrepresented males ages 17-25 in becoming leaders in the health care workforce by increasing access to health professional education, training and career options.

The presentation was cosponsored by the UMMC Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Health Careers Opportunity.
The University of Mississippi Medical Center’s Inclusive Excellence Fund supports activities/programs that promote diversity, foster a culture of inclusion, and reinforce the value of our differences in carrying out the institution’s mission of excellence in education, research and patient care.

**Areas of particular interest include:**

- Professional development scholarships for students, staff and faculty
- Initiatives that encourage and support diversity in the student body, faculty and staff
- Programs that train leaders on how to build a culture of collaboration and respect
- Education and training opportunities related to diversity and inclusion

[https://www.umc.edu/odi/Giving/Donate-Online.html](https://www.umc.edu/odi/Giving/Donate-Online.html)

**VOICES**

*Why is diversity and inclusion important to me?*

“Increasing diversity and inclusion among health care workers may provide a vehicle to improve culturally competent care provided to groups of underrepresented individuals, which can positively impact the overall health of the community.”

**Brock Whitson, R.N., AirCare Flight Transportation**