

April 2024

Giving Matters



Founding chief of vascular surgery establishes endowed chair



What makes UMass Chan distinctive?

A newsletter for supporters of UMass Chan Medical School



Fund for autism research at UMass Chan aims to improve clinical care

Meghan Banik Sass, MD'03, R'05, F'09, and Ugyen Sass establish endowment in honor of daughter Vivian

Upon entering The Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CANDO), visitors are treated to a striking piece of original artwork. Titled "Hope," the acrylic on canvas painting features a prominent building at UMass Chan Medical School with dramatically contrasting colors, bold lines and sharply rendered architectural features. It reflects the prevailing style of the artist, Vivian Sass, age 17, who donated the painting in November 2023. The description of the painting reads:

This custom painting of the Albert Sherman Center was donated by Vivian, a senior at Needham High School. Diagnosed with ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] at age 4, Vivian started painting as a toddler and has always painted brightly colored architectural pieces. Vivian hopes displaying her artwork in ASD-focused clinics will be a reminder of the unique abilities and valuable strengths of individuals with ASD.

The painting is one of many that Vivian has donated to nonprofit organizations and programs such as CANDO. Her generous spirit reflects that of her parents, Meghan Banik Sass, MD'03, R'05, F'09, and Ugyen Sass, who recently endowed a fund for autism research at UMass Chan on behalf of their family, which includes daughter Rosie, age 13, along with Vivian.

The Sass family's growing connections to UMass Chan began when Meghan was a medical student. After earning her bachelor's degree at Tulane University, Meghan returned home to Massachusetts, where her family has strong roots that include service to the commonwealth—both Meghan's father and brother are Massachusetts state troopers—so the state's public medical school was the natural choice.

Reflecting on her time at UMass Chan, which included the MD program, residency, and fellowship, Meghan cites the people, both students

continued on page 2



Private, flexible funding like this drives innovation that otherwise might not be possible.

—Jean Frazier, MD

Vivian Sass presents her painting to the team at CANDO. From left are Vivian; Yael Dvir, MD, vice chair and director, child and adolescent psychiatry; David Cochran, MD, PhD, medical director; Meghan Banik Sass, MD'03, R'05, F'09; and Miriam Aframe, PsyD, program director.

Autism research

continued from page 1

and faculty, as a key differentiator.

“The school attracts bright, exceptional, authentic people who create a healthy work and learning environment. Everyone was very close-knit and supportive, like an extended family,” said Meghan, who is an active member of the Class of 2003, serving as class chair and representative for the past two reunions.

Meghan stepped away from her role as the sole endocrinologist at a community hospital soon after Vivian was diagnosed with autism at age 4. Amid the challenges, Meghan and Ugyen embraced Vivian’s talents, including painting, which provided a tool for social-emotional learning and empowered Vivian to channel her incredibly high energy into a creative pursuit that others could appreciate.

“Vivian has always found comfort in painting. In her busy preschool classroom, she painted so much I started using her artwork as wrapping paper,” said Meghan.

Today, Vivian is an engaged student at Needham High School, where the enriching environment and offerings such as Advanced Placement art and physics are well-matched to her drive and talent. Currently a senior, she is looking ahead to college and plans to major in architecture. Described by her mom as outgoing, creative and intelligent, Vivian is giving with both her interests and time. Alongside the thoughtful donations of her artwork, she recently started a math tutoring program for neurodivergent kids, where she shares her exceptional ability to visualize and describe math concepts.

While Meghan observes that both acceptance

On the cover: The Sass family, including Vivian, age 17; parents Ugyen and Meghan; and Rosie, age 13.

of and support for children with autism have progressed in the past decade, there is still a lot of work to do, including the improvement of diagnostic tools.

“Early diagnosis is key,” she said. Support for siblings is another area that Meghan feels needs development. “Neurotypical siblings live with a lot of disruption. I think more awareness around how autism impacts the whole family is important.”

After several years of generously supporting the Hudson Hoagland Society, the leadership giving society of individuals who support biomedical research at UMass Chan, Meghan and Ugyen decided it was time to support the Medical School in a more substantial way. Given their personal connection to autism, as well as both medicine and research—Meghan recently earned a master’s degree in clinical research at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences—supporting autism research at UMass Chan was a clear choice.

As a flexible source of funding, the Sass Family Fund for Autism enables a physician with a focus on autism spectrum disorder to pursue new or continued research ideas that lead to improved clinical care.

“We’re grateful for the Sass family’s generous support, which has the potential to impact children with autism and their families in profound ways,” said Jean Frazier, MD, the *Robert M. and Shirley S. Siff Chair in Autism*, professor of psychiatry and pediatrics and executive director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center (of which CANDO is a program). “Private, flexible funding like this drives innovation that otherwise might not be possible.” ●

Founding chief of vascular surgery at UMass Chan deepens his legacy through endowed chair

As an esteemed professor of surgery *emeritus* and founding chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery, Bruce Cutler, MD, has built an enduring legacy at UMass Chan Medical School, well-known among the division for his fierce commitment to providing the highest standard of patient-centered care. Now, Dr. Cutler’s decades-long connection to UMass Chan has evolved to cherished benefactor, alongside his wife, Kim, with the establishment of the *Cutler Chair in Vascular and Endovascular Surgery*.

Dr. Cutler recalls his first visit to the site that would soon become UMass Chan Medical School’s main campus in Worcester.

“It was in 1960,” said Dr. Cutler. “I rowed crew in college, and in 1960 the Eastern Sprints were held on Lake Quinsigamond for the first time. My parents came to watch the rowing and had a picnic lunch while sitting in a field where the power station parking lot is now located. Little did I think at the time, that 14 years later I would begin a 36-year career at the same location.”

But first, Dr. Cutler would earn his medical degree at Harvard Medical School, followed by an internship and residency at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). His training was interrupted by service in Vietnam, where he was commanding officer of a medical battalion (MASH Hospital) and where he was awarded two Bronze Stars and two Air Medals. He was later assigned to the surgical staff at Kirk Army Hospital in Aberdeen, Maryland, before returning to MGH to complete his surgical residency. A fellowship in vascular surgery at Baylor University Medical Center followed.

Dr. Cutler was recruited to UMass Chan in 1974 by H. Brownell Wheeler, MD, the founding chair of surgery. At the time, vascular surgery was a new surgical specialty, and Dr. Wheeler gave Dr. Cutler the exciting opportunity to build a new division in this emerging field.

Under Dr. Cutler’s direction, vascular surgery at UMass Chan developed into a highly regarded division that trains leaders in vascular care and innovates through research. He is widely remembered as an exceptionally dedicated physician who put the well-being of his patients above all else.

“I am especially proud of the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery’s commitment to education,” he said. “In addition to teaching clinical vascular surgery to medical students and surgical residents, the division has offered post-graduate training in vascular surgery since 1983, when it was one of the first programs to be certified by the American Board of Surgery. Since its inception,



Newly invested faculty member Andres Schanzer, MD, left, is joined by donors Bruce Cutler, MD, and Kim Cutler, center, and Chancellor Michael F. Collins, right, at the annual Convocation and Investiture ceremony in September 2023.

we have trained over 40 vascular surgeons who have gone on to practice across the country, with a few coming back to UMass Chan.”

Retiring in 2010, Dr. Cutler continues to be actively involved in the Medical School as a member of the admissions committee, a role he deeply values.

Together with his wife, Kim, a graphic artist and potter, the Cutlers established the *Cutler Chair in Vascular and Endovascular Surgery*. Their generosity brings an invaluable source of discretionary funding to the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery which, at the chief’s direction, may be used to turn bright ideas into research projects, sponsor unique educational experiences for motivated learners and faculty, or launch new initiatives to improve patient care.

The inaugural Cutler chair is held by Andres Schanzer, MD, professor of surgery and population & quantitative health sciences and chief of the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery.

“This gift is transformational and reflects a key inflection point for the division that Bruce worked so hard to establish, build and grow over his career here,” said Dr. Schanzer. “It is already allowing us to move the division forward in ways that are simply not possible without the funds that come with a gift like this. From my perspective as a leader of our division, having an endowed chair was our most critical unmet need, and the Cutler family has so generously stepped up to meet this need. The impact has been immediate and enormous, allowing us to remain laser focused on achieving our goal to be an academic center of excellence that transforms the understanding and treatment of vascular disease.”

Said Dr. Cutler, “Our gift is one of gratitude to the Medical School and to the many faculty, staff and students who served to make my career at UMass Chan so satisfying.” ●

What makes UMass Chan distinctive?

Take a look at just a few points of pride

At UMass Chan, collaboration and collegiality are the superpowers that help us advance innovation, attract some of the world's greatest minds, and train the next generation of physicians, nurse leaders and scientists. We call this culture of uncommon collaboration and teamwork—which UMass Chan has come to be known for—"Advancing Together."

For more than half a century, we've held true to our mission to advance the health and wellness of our diverse communities throughout Massachusetts and across the world. Thanks to philanthropic support from generous partners like you, our ability to fulfill this mission grows each year.

A world-class medical school

→ **812**

issued and active worldwide patents.

→ **159**

worldwide patents and applications
in fiscal year 2022.



#13

U.S. News & World Report's
list of Best Medical Schools:
Primary Care (tie).

\$322
million

\$2
million

1977 2022

Federal and private research grants and contracts increased from approximately \$2 million in 1977 to more than \$322 million in fiscal year 2023, making UMass Chan one of the fastest growing research institutions in the United States.

A top place to work



Named to:

- The *Boston Globe's* 2023 list of Top Places to Work in Massachusetts for the second consecutive year
- *USA Today's* 2024 list of Top Workplaces
- *Forbes'* list of America's Best Employers by State 2023
- *Newsweek* and Plant-A Insights' list of America's Greatest Workplaces 2023 For Diversity
- Healthiest Employer's 2023 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America

100%

Pass rate for the
National Council
Licensure Examination
(registered nurses
exam).

If you would like a copy of our Points of Pride brochure, please email giving@umassmed.edu.

Community impact: *Making a difference right here in Massachusetts*



UMass Chan and Lahey Hospital & Medical Center, part of the Beth Israel Lahey Health system, are launching a regional medical campus in Burlington in 2024 to be known as UMass Chan-Lahey to help train, develop and support the next generation of health care leaders.

The Worcester Pipeline

Collaborative encourages underrepresented and disadvantaged students to pursue careers in health care and the biomedical and biotechnology industries. The Worcester Pipeline is operated through a partnership between UMass Chan, Worcester Public Schools, Worcester State University, Quinsigamond Community College, Plumley Village, Abbot Bioresearch Center and UMass Memorial Medical Center.



The class size of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine is increasing in part to meet the growing need for primary care physicians—rising to 225 medical students for the incoming class in 2025.

Including faculty and staff, UMass Chan supported a total of 16,117 jobs in the Commonwealth in fiscal year 2022.

From mobile units to small clinics

and large-scale vaccination sites, the volunteer Vaccine Corps delivered more than 200,000 COVID-19 vaccines throughout Central Massachusetts.



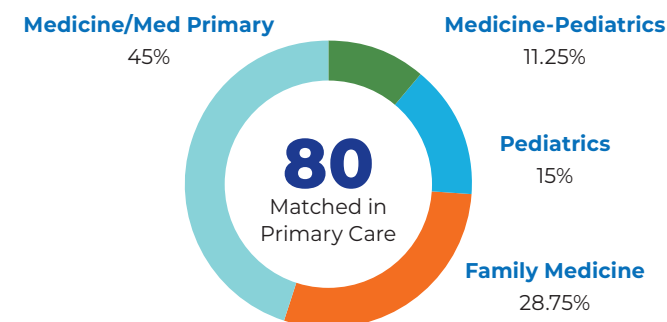
The UMass Chan Medical School-Baystate regional campus in Springfield follows the core curriculum of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine at UMass Chan with a focus on population health, health care disparities, and health issues that are specific to urban and rural communities.

In 2023, UMass Chan and Southcoast Health signed an affiliation agreement, enhancing education for T.H. Chan School of Medicine students doing clinical rotations in ambulatory medicine settings, including primary care, as well as inpatient medicine clerkships.

T.H. Chan School of Medicine Class of 2024 sending 167 students to residencies

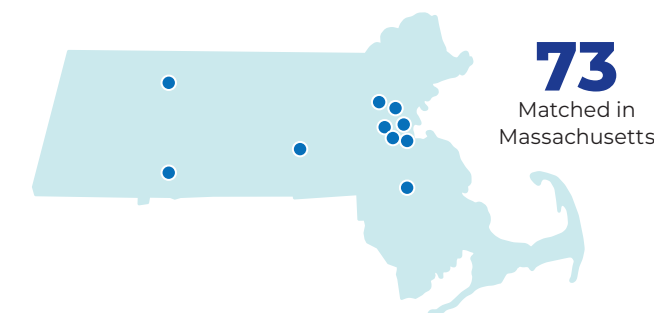
Congratulations to members of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine Class of 2024—the largest in school history at 167—who celebrated Match Day at UMass Chan Medical School on Friday, March 15! Match Day is an annual event where students open personalized envelopes from the National Residency Match Program containing the destinations of where they'll complete their residency training.

Matches in primary care specialties



Reflecting the institution's mission to train primary care physicians, 80 students matched in internal medicine, family medicine and pediatrics, **representing nearly 50 percent of the Class of 2024.**

Massachusetts match locations



The Medical School also continues to fulfill its mission to care for residents of the commonwealth, with 73 members of the class completing some or all of their residency training in Massachusetts.

Top 5 specialties

1. Medicine/Med Primary (36 students)
2. Family Medicine (23 students)
3. Emergency Medicine (14 students)
4. Pediatrics (12 students)
5. Obstetrics-Gynecology (11 students)

Celebrating reunion?

Now is the perfect time to make an immediate impact at your medical school with a gift. Your contribution will make medical education at UMass Chan even better.



Visit umassmed.edu/givereunion to give today!

Or scan the QR code



Is your class celebrating reunion this May?

If you're a member of a class listed here, the answer is a resounding "yes"!

1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019.

This unique opportunity to reconnect as a class only happens every five years. So whether it's been five years since you graduated or 45, please consider making a gift now in honor of your milestone.

Importantly, your gift will support the aspiring physicians, nurse leaders and scientists who are following in your footsteps.

Register for Reunion:
alumni.umassmed.edu/reunion2024

Help UMass Chan Medical School advance education and groundbreaking research, and inspire the next generation of caregivers and scientists.

MAKE A PROFOUND IMPACT

GIVE CASH and provide instant support.

USE YOUR DONOR-ADVISED FUND to make an easy gift and help students thrive today.

MAKE A TAX-FREE GIFT from your IRA that counts toward your RMD (age 70½ or older).

BYPASS THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX with a gift of appreciated stock or real estate.

RECEIVE A LIFETIME INCOME from your gift with a charitable gift annuity.

Want to know more?

Kim Canty
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Advancement
508-723-4243
kim.canty@umassmed.edu
plannedgiving.umassmed.edu



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL



From serving our country to nurturing future generations of medical students

Gerard R. Cox, MD'83, MHA, establishes scholarship

For 40 years, Gerard R. (Gerry) Cox, MD'83, MHA, has built a distinguished medical career rooted in government and military service, including his current role as the assistant under secretary for health for quality and patient safety in the Veterans Health Administration. Now, Dr. Cox is building a legacy in medical education through a scholarship he funded with his wife, Catherine W. Cox, RN, PhD, to benefit students at UMass Chan Medical School.

An interest in science combined with a drive to help others compelled Dr. Cox to pursue a career as a physician. A Massachusetts native, Dr. Cox was excited to matriculate at the Medical School in 1979, where the developing campus held the promise of a new, dynamic institution.

Reflecting on his time as a medical student, Dr. Cox recalls small class sizes and a congenial, collaborative atmosphere where students seemed happy to be learning alongside each other—a refreshing departure from more competitive academic cultures.

"I was happier as a medical student than as an undergraduate, which says a lot," said Dr. Cox, who made long-lasting friendships with classmates that remain strong.

According to Dr. Cox, UMass Chan prepared him well for a less traditional career in medicine that began to take shape during his deployment to Saudi Arabia amid the Persian Gulf War. He went on to spend more than 30 years as a U.S. Navy medical officer before joining the Veterans Health Administration, serving in a series of hospital leadership roles with increasingly complex responsibilities, including executive positions on the staffs of the Navy surgeon general, the commandant of the Marine Corps, the commander of U.S. Navy forces in the Middle East, and the naval inspector general. He also served as a White House physician for Presidents William J. Clinton and George W. Bush.

Dr. Cox is impressed with how far the Medical School has come since he graduated.

"UMass is a very different and much bigger place



“

Knowing that scholarships help relieve the financial pressure of a medical education, we're happy to give back to deserving students so they can focus more on learning.

—Gerry Cox

Gerry Cox, MD'83, MHA, alongside his son, Alex Cox, celebrates his 40th reunion in May 2023, during which he received the Distinguished Alumni Award.

than when I was a student," he said. "The physical changes are striking; the campus is covered with education and research facilities. It's built a national reputation for turning out well-trained physicians, many of whom go into primary care."

He enjoyed reconnecting with classmates at Reunion 2023, where he received the Alumni Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his medical career and significant impact on the health of thousands of service men and women, veterans and their families. Dr. Cox was joined by his and Catherine's son, Alex, who continues to live in the Boston area after earning both his Bachelor of Arts and joint graduate degree in urban planning and public administration at Harvard University. Meanwhile, their daughter, Caroline, is a member of the George Washington University School of Medicine Class of 2026.

In honor of reunion, he and Catherine, who is a tenured associate professor at the George Washington University School of Nursing and served as a nurse in the U.S. Navy, decided to start an endowed scholarship fund.

"I had the benefit of attending UMass on a U.S. Navy Health Professions Scholarship, and graduated debt-free," Dr. Cox said. "Knowing that scholarships help relieve the financial pressure of a medical education, we're happy to give back to deserving students so they can focus more on learning." ●



UMASS CANCER WALK!

PRESENTED BY
HARRIS
TOYOTA

Advancing
cancer research
together

Registration is now open!

Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024 | Polar Park, Worcester

To register, visit p2p.onecause.com/umasscancerwalk24

For more information about the UMass Cancer Walk, visit umasscancerwalk.org



Hudson Hoagland Program

Please join us for the 39th annual
Hudson Hoagland Society meeting

May 14, 2024, at 6 p.m.

Albert Sherman Center, The Cube

Navigating the Gut Highway: Insights into Microbiome-Driven Health and Disease

Featuring UMass Chan speaker:

Beth A. McCormick, PhD

Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research Chair II

Professor and chair, Department of Microbiology & Physiological Systems

Founding director, UMass Center for Microbiome Research

For more information

or to RSVP, please contact

Kim Canty at

kim.canty@umassmed.edu

or 508-856-1411

Want to join supporters of basic research at UMass Chan? Become a member of the Hudson Hoagland Society.

Make your gift at umassmed.edu/hhs