



## From accreditation to pandemic, 2020 education events worthy of reflection

By Dr. Loretta Jackson



Jackson

Wow! At the beginning of the calendar year, those of us responsible for the School of Medicine's education program anticipated challenges for 2020 with the school's accreditation site visit scheduled for February. We did not anticipate the avalanche of change that has occurred.

At this point in time, we are all hoping/wishing/begging/praying/choose your verb for some sort of constancy as we look forward to 2021. In the midst of this extraordinary year, there have been many changes with varying consequences. These reflections focus on those changes and some of the known consequences.

In so many ways, the medical education community was delivered its first shock in February when it was announced that the first part of the licensure exam, USMLE Step 1, would transition from a numeric score to pass/fail with the January 2022 implementation.

It was understood at that time that this would cause ripple effects. In short, those ripple effects will occur over time in the selection processes for residencies, the promotion process within the UME educational programs that include passage of parts of the licensure exams, and the sequencing of the UME curriculum designed to deliver the content for these licensure exams.

Before all invested parties could begin to strategize and develop a plan for the implementation of this change, COVID-19 completely disrupted the continuum of medical education in March. Since March, we have all been working feverishly to keep up with changes.

All programs for the end of Academic Year 2019-20 were cancelled or changed to a virtual format. This included Match Day, Honors Day, graduations from school and residency/fellowship training – major transition points for students, residents and fellows. Some programs for the beginning of Academic Year 2020-21 were cancelled or changed to a virtual format. This included M1 orientation, Family Day and residency/fellowship orientation.

Students, residents, and recertifying physicians had their licensure and board exams cancelled or rescheduled. The difficulty with scheduling the licensure exams prompted the NBME and the FASB to suspend the requirement of USMLE Step 2 CS for the licensure process for 12-18 months. It also prompted the SOM to permanently move the requirement of USMLE Step 1 passage as a promotion criteria to Year 3 of the curriculum.

The clinical curriculum for students was paused for two weeks and reformatted for a short period of time as an online experience. It has since returned to the in-person format. The preclinical curriculum

was delivered as an online experience for a short period of time and reformatted during the summer to be delivered in a hybrid manner.

Everyone had to be prepared for these changes, new skills had to be developed and the assessment tools had to be modified.

During this time, the admissions and residency application processes were completely disrupted. Students applying to medical school had difficulty scheduling the MCAT while medical students had difficulty scheduling the still-required second part of the licensure exam, USMLE Step 2 CK.

All shadowing and extramural rotations were suspended. No visiting medical students were allowed to come to UMMC. The timeframe for submission of applications was modified for both groups and scheduled for later in the academic year.

Interviews were changed to a virtual format. The results of these changes will not be known until 2021 with Match Day on March 19 and the welcoming of the SOM Class of 2025 in August.

In the midst of these major shifts in medical education in the SOM, the routine and not-so-routine events and phases for management of the educational program continued without any pause.

The SOM redesigned and implemented the first pre-matriculation and MCAT prep programs it has managed. The pipeline program for students underrepresented in medicine (PROMISE) was redesigned and implemented.

The LCME site visit results were returned to the school in June and shared with the medical education community through various committees and the SOM Education Town Hall meetings in August as highlighted in the September issue of the newsletter.

Work on the follow-up report for the LCME to be delivered in December 2021 has begun. The Summer Professional Development Series was offered again in 2020 with a new format. The school is still working to transition from SAP to Workday and the clinical curriculum migrated from E\*Value to MedHub.

All students, faculty and staff in the SOM were welcomed to the 2020-21 academic year, which began as planned. Since everyone was impacted by the economic challenges created by COVID-19 and the subsequent workforce reduction, this work was accomplished by fewer individuals.

This year has been extraordinary. It has reaffirmed for me that the only constant is change. While 2021 appears daunting with the known challenges that it brings, I remain hopeful that the lessons from this year will be useful in meeting those challenges. Godspeed!

# Leadership changes, pandemic regulations prompt Student Affairs makeover

By Dr. Michael McMullan



Just as COVID-19 has drastically altered the way we now provide medical education, the Student Affairs Office has undergone (and continues to undergo) its own makeover.

McMullan

After 12 years of serving as the associate dean for student affairs and chief student affairs officer for the institution, Dr. Jerry Clark retired, leaving a large gap of institutional knowledge (as well as a huge personality!) that cannot be replaced. He succeeded Dr. Lincoln Arceneaux, who served in the role for almost 30 years.

Compare that to the six months I have been in the role and the 18 months that Dr. Lyssa Weatherly has served as assistant dean for student affairs, and you can quickly see the vast difference in experience.

Fortunately, we have had wonderful support, including from Virginia Covington, who has been with UMMC and the Office of Student Affairs for 25 years. Congratulations, Virginia, and thank you for your many years of service!

We also have had Jan Simpson in the Office of Student Affairs for the last four years. Sadly, Jan is retiring this month after 10 years at UMMC. She has been a true resource for the medical students during the last decade, receiving recognition from the Evers Society as Course Coordinator of the Year on multiple occasions and eventual induction into the Evers Society Hall of Fame. She will be missed.



Last but certainly not least, Tommeke Mason continues to do a superb job in our office, where she has served for a little more than one year.

As mentioned earlier, COVID-19 has drastically altered the way we now provide medical education. From providing orientation with

social distancing and using multiple classrooms to allow all of our incoming students to participate in person, to hosting a virtual white coat ceremony and staggering coating ceremonies with individuals wearing masks to minimize numbers and contact, to virtual online learning and lectures, to providing multiple rooms for testing and virtual interest group meetings, all the way to hosting clinical rotations that have been a combination of virtual and in-person learning, and conducting virtual interviews for all of our M4 students applying for residencies, it is easy to see the marked effects that COVID-19 has had on our medical student education.

Just as COVID-19 has forced us to quickly advance our experience with Telehealth to care for our patients, the same is true for our educational experiences. I must say how impressed I have been with both our preclinical and clinical faculty. EVERYONE has worked together to make the best of a difficult unprecedented situation.

Two words that best summarize our faculty during the pandemic have been FLEXIBILITY and PATIENCE, and I truly appreciate each of you and your dedication to provide the best education possible for our medical students while maintaining the safest possible environment. THANK YOU!

I would like to conclude with a few words about our medical students. I LOVE seeing the way they respond to crises. As soon as COVID-19 temporarily took them away from patients or rotations, they immediately responded by volunteering to help – through mechanisms such as screening, testing and even helping stock and provide the kits for testing. They have put together organizations to help deliver food and supplies during the pandemic, consistently continued to aid the elderly and infirmed, and maintained the Jackson Free Clinic to provide medical care to the neediest population.

Of all groups, they have been most affected by the pandemic, and while our faculty are typically present for multiple years, our

students only have one year and one chance to be a senior medical student.

Besides having to deal with online classes and rotations, the inability to do away rotations and in-person interviews, and the lack of social interactions between and among classes, has also affected their very ability to even take their most important tests, the Step examinations. In fact, while most students were forced to reschedule the biggest examination of their lives at least once, one group of students had their Step exam canceled – 6 HOURS INTO THE TEST! – because someone called and said they had tested positive for COVID-19 after taking the test the day before.

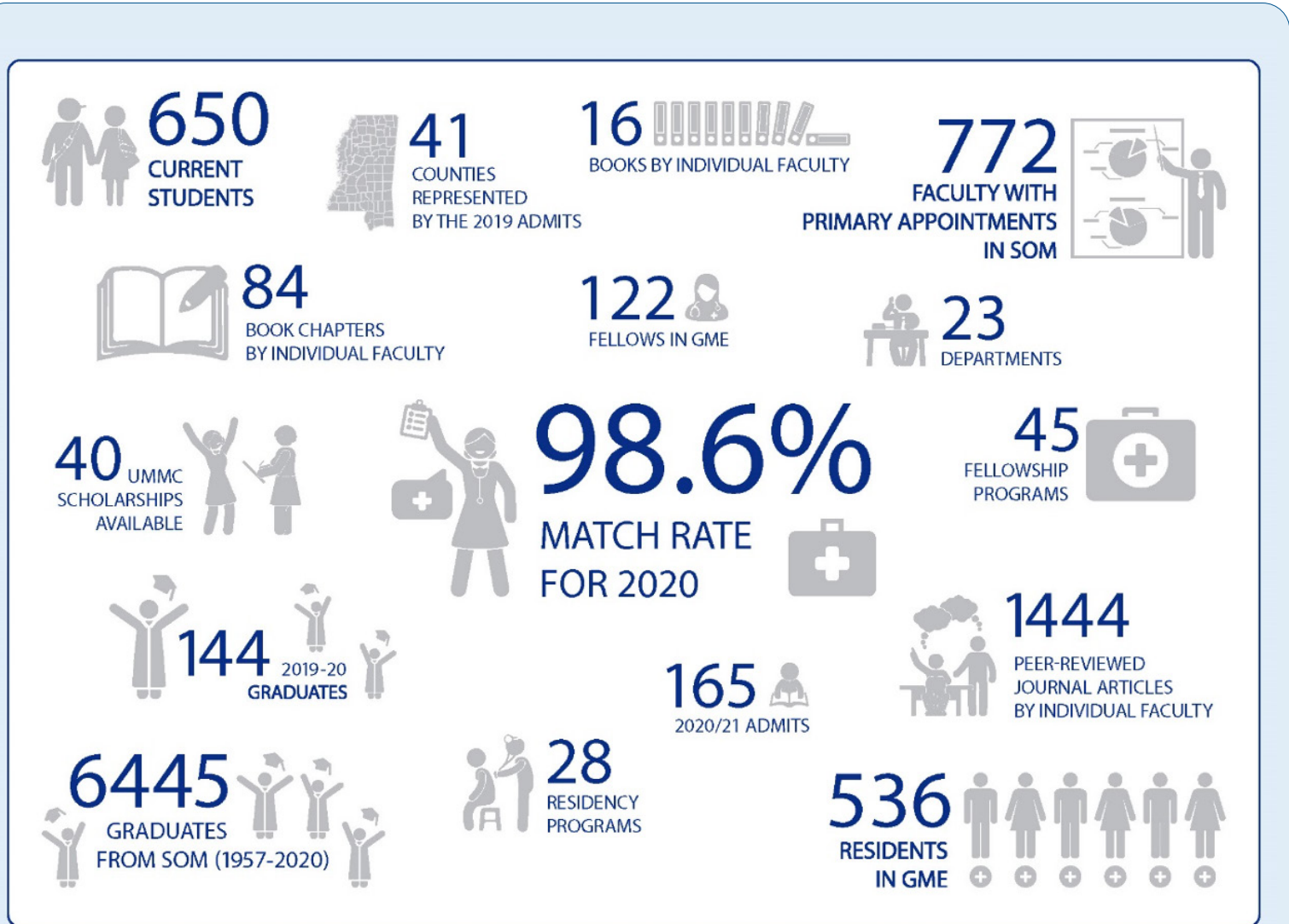
You cannot make this stuff up! But, our students have remained RESILIENT through it all, and I have never been prouder of the way they have responded.

I have included a graphic that nicely illustrates the success of our medical students and the accomplishments of our faculty and the GME program. It captures the essence of what we are as a



medical school, from education to clinical care and research.

Thanks to each of you who have contributed in large and small ways. You are each making a difference.



# SNAPSHOT FACTS

DATA PROVIDED IS FOR THE 2019-20 ACADEMIC YEAR UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



# Despite COVID-19, Office of Admissions finds fresh reasons to be optimistic

By Dr. Demondes Haynes



Haynes

“Hope springs eternal” is an expression coined by Alexander Pope circa 1733 in his poem, “An Essay on Man.” It means that it is human nature to always find fresh cause for optimism.

This may be difficult for some to comprehend in the midst of such trying times in 2020 given the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for racial justice and reconciliation, political and ideological divisions, the need for virtual interviews, the lack of in-person shadowing or other clinical experiences, hybrid and novel learning styles, etc. However, I am a believer in this expression coined by Pope.

In the Office of Admissions, one of the reasons we are optimistic is that despite the pandemic, we have a record number of applicants this year for the School of Medicine. The total number of submitted applications this year is 453.

## 2020 brings innovative technology upgrades

By Elizabeth Jacobs



Jacobs

Technology gives us useful tools that provide innovative options for improving processes and content delivery in education. Sadly, many users never take advantage of them.

This is a heartbreaking reality for those of us involved in vetting, acquiring and implementing such tools.

The year 2020 certainly changed that at UMMC.

Moving to a fully online education model last spring gave many users the gentle nudge they needed to embrace the available eLearning tools and use their functionality.

School of Medicine faculty realized the potential of NearPod lessons. Whether using live or student-paced sessions, this tool was put to use in 2020. The SOM alone launched 65 sessions to a collective total of 2,545 students.

BigBlueButton’s usage increased exponentially, resulting in two contract amendments to accommodate the number of concurrent sessions needed. Additional licenses were also needed for Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor. Together, these remote proctoring solutions proved to be the best option for high-stake assessments taken off campus.

Canvas course functionality used in SOM courses, particularly assignments and discussions, saw an increase of almost 100 percent each from fall 2019 to fall 2020. Assignments went up from 886 in 2019 to 1,509 in 2020. Similarly, discussions totaled 221 in 2019 and 443 in 2020.

Remote education in 2020 also required remote live lectures. This created a realization of the importance of web conferences.

SOM faculty used Microsoft Teams, BigBlueButton and WebEx to meet these needs. Each one proved to be a valuable option, depending on class size, functionality needs and ease of use, as determined by each user.

Thankfully, Studio does not have a file storage limit! This solution was overwhelmingly used and proved to be the best option for sharing recorded lectures in Canvas courses.

This list could go on, but the point has been made: SOM faculty were asked to quickly adapt to changing circumstances and were able to do so by effectively using the technical resources available.

As an application support analyst, it has been professionally gratifying to work with many new users, as well as familiar ones, to explore the use-case scenarios, determine the best options available and help trouble-shoot issues along the way.

In doing so, the difficulties of 2020 provided a large number of learning opportunities and improvements to content delivery. Congratulations, faculty, on a job well done, and I look forward to seeing what opportunities 2021 brings.

The COVID-19 pandemic could easily have deterred many from this noble career in medicine; however, more students are interested and willing to serve by seeking to provide health care. This is not only important nationwide, but even more so for our state, given the need for more physicians to help us become a healthier Mississippi.

The staff in Admissions are a great group with whom I work, and I am extremely grateful to them for their relentless efforts to help elevate our procedures and processes for the School of Medicine. We are excited about 2021 and look forward to what the New Year may bring in the School of Medicine.

## JCCR provides supplies to those in need

By Alex Engel



Engel

When I think of the Jackson Community Covid Response, I think of family.

People throughout the community have come together during the last nine months to help take care of our city during the trials of the novel coronavirus.

Many community members are facing decreased access to food as well as health and safety supplies. The JCCR is a charity run by

medical students with the mission of providing essential supplies to the elderly, financially strained, and others.

In March, Dr. Felicitas Koller and Tyson Jackson recognized how many children in the Jackson Public School system were going without food during spring break. When school was canceled because of the coronavirus, they started a phone line for food requests.

Numerous medical students were called to action: grocery shopping, packing, deliveries, you name it! We worked to create a system to safely order, package and deliver food all over the community.

This was made possible through our wonderful community partners. The People’s Advocacy Institute and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Mississippi continue to share their wisdom, connections and advice and to pour their love for Jackson into the JCCR.

We still purchase fresh vegetables from Footprint Farms, making this the first time some of these families receive fresh vegetables. It has truly been a heartwarming experience to see volunteers work to ensure essential resources are provided to those in need.

To date, our team has helped feed approximately **29,000 people (5,225 families)**!

**Become part of the family and our mission!**

People still need help. To learn more about our Caring During Covid fundraiser, visit <https://www.jacksoncommunitycovidresponse.com/caring-during-covid>. All donations will help to provide essential resources to those in need.

To volunteer or for more information about the JCCR, email [jacksoncommunitycovidreponse@gmail.com](mailto:jacksoncommunitycovidreponse@gmail.com) or [aaengel@umc.edu](mailto:aaengel@umc.edu).

**Editor’s note: Alexa Engel, M4, serves as president of the Jackson Community COVID Response.**

