

# PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

## *Our Story*

COLLABORATION

PLANNING



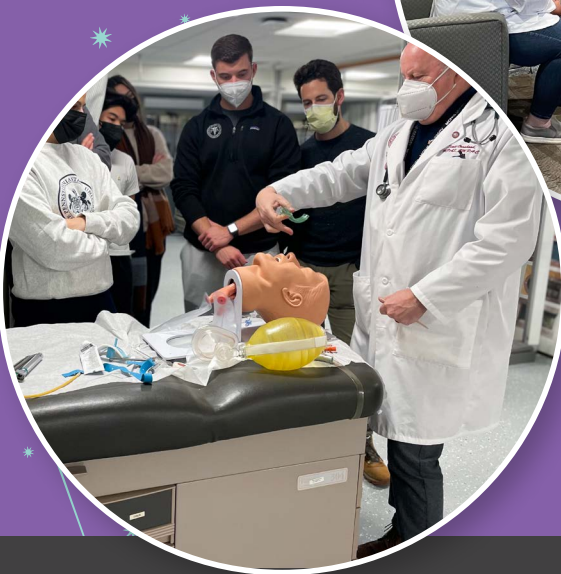
INCLUSION

SUCCESS



SUPPORT

SUSTAINABILITY



# VISION OF THE FUTURE

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE *of* PHARMACY *and* HEALTH SCIENCES

ISSUE 4



DEAR MCPHS COMMUNITY,

Creating a shared vision for the future is one of the biggest challenges of any organization and ours is no different. We have collectively, and painstakingly, withstood the many challenges that this pandemic has delivered. Our unwavering approach to supporting each other should give us a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment. Although we have gained great strength during these last couple of years, the obstacles that lie ahead for higher education, as well as society in general, continue to be daunting. With that said, I am proud to begin to lay out the inspiring results of our Community's efforts in charting the course for our future.

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that I announce the release of our updated Strategic Plan. As this issue's cover story describes, our Plan includes a number of critical and contemporary strategic priorities that will serve to define us and represent what is most important to our University. Some of these priorities were identified a few years back and the remainder will serve to strengthen our Plan for the realities of the present.


You will see that our priorities fall into six general themes including collaboration, inclusion, success, sustainability, planning, and support. In order to ensure the success of our Plan, we have established a formal organizational structure for overseeing and guiding its progress and have energized numerous committees from across the MCPHS Community. These individuals from all stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and others, are working closely together to move these important initiatives forward.

Our University has been a leader in healthcare education for close to 200 years, and it has never been more important to face

our challenges head on. We have an unprecedented opportunity to emerge from the past and embrace the opportunities of the future. This Plan is the roadmap to do just that. For everyone that has been part of this reimagining effort, I truly thank you. Please know that the guidance and input from our entire Community has never been more valuable. We are truly all in this together and I am confident that this shared vision will become our greatest strength.

A complete overview of the Plan and details on its various operating committees can be found at [www.mcphs.edu/about-mcphs/strategic-plan](http://www.mcphs.edu/about-mcphs/strategic-plan). These webpages also highlight the various strategic priorities as well as their purpose statements. This site will be updated regularly to reflect the many accomplishments and current focus of the priority teams. We will also provide many opportunities for all of our Community members to be involved and to provide your important feedback.

As I have mentioned in the past, this is truly a transformational time for our University. We are rapidly approaching the start of our bicentennial year and have never been stronger. We also have a noble responsibility to step forward, define ourselves, and confidently position MCPHS as a leader in healthcare education for generations to come.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of the *Newsletter* and kindly think about how you would like to be involved with the many inspiring things that are happening here. Rest assured, we will continue to celebrate the incredible stories and achievements that make up our fabric as we tell "Our Story." 

## VISION OF THE FUTURE

IN EARLY 2020, higher education reached an inflection point. A number of disruptive forces were in motion. Many schools were in financial duress due to a multitude of reasons including shrinking enrollment, burgeoning operating costs, excessive competition, and increased regulatory pressures. Although our University has never been more **financially stable** and well positioned to withstand these pressures, we were not immune.

In addition to the myriad of competitive challenges that higher education was facing, our University's leadership was also in the midst of change. A Presidential search was underway for the sixth President of MCPHS. Then on top of those transformative events, a global pandemic thrust the world into an unprecedented public health emergency. These converging forces inspired us to reexamine our priorities and areas of focus to better serve our entire Community.

Before the pandemic, as part of the Presidential search process, MCPHS looked inward and listened to what mattered most to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partners. As a result, the University embarked on an exploration of its Strategic Plan to review the priorities that were established in 2018. Through a series of town hall meetings, surveys, focus groups, and other collaborative exercises, the core objectives of the Strategic Plan around student and employee success, infrastructure and technology, and the University's identity continued to resonate with the Community. Additionally, other contemporary and

compelling issues were apparent and needed to be elevated to our highest priorities. Thanks to open conversations and communal efforts, the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion; sustainability; alumni and external engagement; academic programming; and compliance emerged as additional priorities that would enhance the University's vision for its future.

The last two years have been an extremely challenging yet enlightening period. The pandemic has revealed the importance of our strategic priorities and accelerated their adoption. For example, it put into sharp focus the significant inequities of the global health system. Healthcare disparities accelerated the University's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for our healthcare curricula and educational outcomes, as well as our Community members' own support. The pandemic also forced us to think more creatively in terms of education and classroom models. Our academic team was eager and well positioned to lead our efforts in maintaining and enhancing student success through its academic continuity plans. The prioritization and timely implementation of infrastructure and technology initiatives enabled the success of students and faculty alike as health risks necessitated a sudden pivot to fully remote learning. The focus on alumni and external engagement could not have been timelier, as the public health crisis called for extensive community-wide collaboration efforts. We coordinated and led efforts to put students, faculty, staff, and alumni onto the front lines to help inoculate thousands of residents against COVID-19.



We also stepped forward and demonstrated our merit as thought leaders by working with advisors from the medical and academic community to develop and launch a new program in respiratory therapy.

Rather than shy away from the challenges caused by the pandemic, we took the lessons of our rich history and the reality of the present to shape an inspired future. By strengthening our strategic priorities, we have better positioned our entire Community to continue to advance innovations in healthcare and health science education. To support this effort we have operationalized an organizational structure of working groups to define the purpose, goals, and objectives of each strategic priority and establish action items that will allow them to timely and efficiently achieve their goals.

Thanks to the dedicated members of each working group, we continue to make significant progress toward furthering our institution's mission. However, our achievements are but a stepping-stone, the next rung on the ladder as we climb closer to a brighter, healthier, and more equitable future. We must continue to look to the horizon and allow these priorities to represent our identity and serve as the beacon for our future.

In this issue of the *President's Newsletter*, we want to introduce you to a few of these priority areas and some of the people who are working on them:

## STUDENT SUCCESS AND EXPERIENCE

These priorities are to define student success, establish student success indicators, and design initiatives to positively impact student success, and to identify and create experiences, programs, and services that contribute to a positive student experience. We consider students successful when they accomplish their academic, personal, and professional goals through the development of knowledge and skills, a sense of responsibility and compassion, and a connection to the University and the broader community. A recent contribution of this working group is the adoption of a new student-advising platform. Associate Provost for Student Achievement and Success Craig Mack, EdD, says of the effort, "We are investing in the best technology on the market to help our students succeed. The Student Success Hub builds on the relationships we have with students and utilizes these connections to set the students up for success."



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY


This priority is to assess, coordinate, and make recommendations for infrastructure and technology initiatives to support the needs of our Community. An example of this working group's recent efforts is the renovation of the Boston physician assistant practice laboratory. Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost Caroline Zeind, PharmD, RPh, comments on the upgrade, "MCPHS's renovated physician assistant (PA) Practice Lab and Simulation Center on the Boston campus supports the future training needs of our PA students as they safely practice medical procedures in a state-of-the-art simulated setting, prior to clinical rotations. The PA Practice Lab will prepare students for the increasingly complex healthcare system, building their confidence and preparing them to deliver patient-centered care. This is another important step for the University in advancing the goals of the Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education."



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

This priority is aimed at intentionally creating a vibrantly diverse campus where students, faculty, staff, and other members of our Community feel connected, respected, accepted, and valued, and to support efforts to challenge existing biases and disparities that serve as barriers to success for historically excluded populations. This working group recently accomplished the appointment of MCPHS's inaugural Chief Inclusion Officer, Benita Wolff, MEd, EdD, who remarks, "I am grateful for the significant contributions of Jacinda Felix Haro, Dean of Students and Senior Student Affairs Officer, and Kevin Dolan, Chief Human Resources Officer, who launched the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) team and the implementation of the DEI framework that includes strategies to ensure that all MCPHS Community members feel a sense of belonging and connection across the University."



We encourage our Community members who wish to participate in our strategic priorities [to complete a questionnaire](#) on various opportunities for involvement. 

## Congratulations to the School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy–Boston

### WHAT AN EXCITING YEAR 2021

proved to be for the School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy–Boston.

Following the national accreditor's visit in March 2021, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education awarded the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program on all MCPHS campuses the full 10-year accreditation, extending through December 2031. The New Hampshire Board of Nursing, which joined the visit, also granted the program 10-year approval. "These accomplishments were the outcome of strong collaboration both within the School of Nursing [SON] and with the Office of the Provost and President," says Tammy Gravel, EdD, MSN, RN, who served as interim dean at the time.

In acknowledging her tremendous leadership and vision for the future of SON, Dr. Gravel was appointed Dean of SON and Chief Nurse Administrator on December 13, 2021. Dr. Gravel has



*Tammy Gravel, EdD, MS, RN*

held a variety of leadership roles in both academic and clinical settings. She is a member of the Board of Trustees for UMass Memorial/Health Alliance/Clinton Hospital and belongs to several professional organizations. Her goals for the School include a continued focus on supporting students and faculty, an expansion of programs to include doctoral-level offerings, and improvement of pathways for nurses to more easily access higher degrees and pursue lifelong learning.

The School of Pharmacy–Boston also gained a new dean: Robert DiCenzo, PharmD, BCPS, FCCP, FAPhA, joined the University on October 25, 2021. Dr. DiCenzo has held numerous academic leadership positions, served as president of the American Pharmacists Association–Academy of Pharmaceutical Research and Science (APhA–APRS), is a fellow of the American College of Clinical



*Robert DiCenzo, PharmD, BCPS, FCCP, FAPhA*

Pharmacy and APhA, and belongs to many professional organizations. He also brings an energetic ambition to enhance the School's reputation and resources. "Our mission, being a student-centered institution, is to position our students well for success," he says. He aims to do this by working with faculty to expand and build new undergraduate, graduate, and dual degrees; postgraduate learning opportunities; and micro-credentials and pathway programs within the School and with partnering institutions. "[By] giving our students more options, more credentials," he explains, "they can separate themselves and increase their opportunities for success once they graduate." Dr. DiCenzo looks forward to working with MCPHS's interdisciplinary leaders, and he praises the University for its history and influence on healthcare and health sciences education. M

## New Leadership for International Affairs

ON JANUARY 6, 2022, longtime faculty member Stephen Kerr, PhD, was appointed to MCPHS's first-ever Interim Assistant Provost for International Affairs. Dr. Kerr's new role comes with enhanced prioritization of the success and experience of MCPHS's international students, who in the fall 2021 term comprised 14% of the total degree-seeking student body (1,011 out of 7,302), and 32% of the Boston PharmD student body (452 out of 1,416). Dr. Kerr has held a myriad of academic leadership positions, such as Program

Director for the Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences, Chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Senior Associate Dean, and Interim Dean of the School of Pharmacy. In his 26-year tenure at MCPHS as Medicinal Chemistry Professor, Dr. Kerr has observed that, due to differences in culture and unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system, international students are not always aware of the resources available to them, often seeking help from peers rather than directly from professors. "I'm thinking, in terms of the University priority of student success, how this new office [can] change that perspective for those international



*Stephen Kerr, PhD, Interim Assistant Provost for International Affairs*

students," says Dr. Kerr. He plans to work across departments to build earlier student-faculty mentorships for international students and improve the communication of existing support systems. M



# MCPHS Faculty and Students Participate in DEA Workshop

IN OCTOBER, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) invited community partners; Assistant Professor Beth Geraldts, MPAS, PA-C; and Assistant Professor Lissa Foote, MSN, RNC, to attend a Citizen Academy. The DEA's goal was to raise awareness of local drug threats, implement strategies for drug use prevention, and build supportive community connections such as connections with healthcare professionals. When Geraldts opened the invitation to her physician assistant students



Abigail Lent, MPAS '22



Beth Geraldts, MPAS, PA-C

they heard from former DEA Special Agent Jack Riley, who took down one of the most powerful cartels in history: the one led by Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. In recognition of their community service, the MCPHS faculty and students received certificates of completion. M

on the Manchester campus, she was joined by Dominique Colvard, MPAS candidate '22; Brianne Perry, MPAS candidate '22; and Abigail Lent, MPAS candidate '22.

Taking place over four weeks, the program included four 2-hour courses. During that time, the MCPHS professors and their students learned about the DEA's history and current domestic and international threats. They also were shown privileged video footage of global missions as well as a mobile clandestine laboratory and equipment, and they took a detailed look at how common threats (i.e., fentanyl, meth, and bath salts) are made and distributed. On the final night,



Dominique Colvard, MPAS '22

## / EMPLOYEE NEWS /

### MEET THE MCPHS COVID-19 TEAM

SINCE ITS INCEPTION at the outset of the pandemic, the MCPHS COVID-19 Team has worked tirelessly to keep the Community safe and up to date on all COVID-19 news. From their implementation and communication of campus protocols, coordination of testing sites and schedules, effective isolation of infections, and more, everyone at MCPHS is well acquainted with the COVID-19 Team's efforts—but who are the individuals? The heroes behind the masks, if you will, include (pictured left to right) COVID-19 Coordinator I Executive Director, Worcester/Manchester Seth Wall, EdD; COVID-19 Coordinator I Professor & Chair of Pharmacy Practice Sheila Seed, PharmD, MPH, CTH®, AFTM RCPS (Glasg), RPh; COVID-19 Testing Site Lead, Boston Testing Center Stephanie Alexander; COVID-19 Coordinator I Chief Information Officer Tom Scanlon; (not pictured) Contact Tracer Nicole Ceruolo, MPH '22; Contact Tracer Nicole Nichols; COVID-19 Operations Coordinator Era Korovesi, MPH; Contact Tracer Annabelle Ponterdolph, MPH '21; Systems Engineer II Max Saber, DHA, MSHI; and Case Manager Hayley Venio. The University is indebted to this incredible team of students, faculty, and staff. M



MCPHS COVID-19 Team

### CHIEF INCLUSION OFFICER BENITA WOLFF

ON JANUARY 3, 2022, Benita Wolff, MEd, EdD, began her appointment as MCPHS's inaugural Chief Inclusion Officer. Dr. Wolff has more than 15 years of experience focusing on issues related to access and equity, recruitment and retention, and student and faculty affairs. She has served in leadership positions such as Assistant Dean and Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV); Visiting Equity and Inclusion Administrative Fellow at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Division of Science, Harvard University; Director of Inclusion and Diversity at the nonprofit ACT, Inc; and Associate Dean for Diversity at the Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa. Dr. Wolff appreciates that MCPHS is a comprehensive health sciences institution preparing students to serve in both the clinical and the non-clinical side of the health system. She says, "I'm excited about the opportunity to join exceptional colleagues who are thinking deeply about the intersection of diversity, equity, and inclusion and health science education and recognize the importance of training future healthcare leaders who will serve diverse patients and their families effectively." Dr. Wolff also commends MCPHS, especially President Lessard and Provost Zeind, for "setting the bar for excellence" in terms of its pandemic response, and expresses gratitude for the opportunity to serve the MCPHS Community as the Chief Inclusion Officer. M




Benita Wolff, MEd, EdD

## DENTAL HYGIENE OUTREACH OF AN AWARD-WINNING ALUM

### FORSYTH SCHOOL OF DENTAL HYGIENE (FSDH)

and School of Arts and Sciences alum Jeannette Diaz, MS (Dental Hygiene) '20, MPH '21, RDHAP, candidate for DHS '24, has accomplished several prestigious degrees as a first-generation college student. Furthermore, she has won multiple awards, such as the MCPHS President's Commitment to Diversity Award and Sunstar/RDH Magazine's 2021 Award of Distinction, which she received at the "RDH Under One Roof" dental hygienist conference. Equally impressive, however, is her passion to give back to the community.

In the height of the pandemic, Diaz volunteered at an outreach program to support teen parents with free oral hygiene education. She gave virtual presentations at schools, teaching students how to take care of both their oral health as well as their children's. Intent on providing services to populations for whom access is difficult, she set up her own portable dental hygiene clinic, traveling to and treating patients who are elderly or have special needs. "I want to be able to provide

that continuity of care to them," she says. "If they can no longer come see me, then I can go to them." Aside from dedicating her time and expertise to helping others, she works as a dental liaison at the California Department of Developmental Services. "My role as a dental liaison is to increase advocacy about the oral health needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in hopes to improve access to care for this population," she says. An educator at heart, she also began an adjunct position at FSDH this spring. 




*Jeannette Diaz, MS (Dental Hygiene) '20, MPH '21, RDHAP*

## KING'S SPEECH: DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT 2021

### SINCE GRADUATING FROM MCPHS

eight years ago, Nicole King, RN, BSN '13, CFRN, CCRN, CEN, EMT-B, has worked in emergency and critical care nursing. In addition to meeting the demands of her job as a critical care transport nurse for Boston MedFlight, she provides psychosocial support and resources to fellow crew members as part of Boston MedFlight's in-house peer support team. Her passion for promoting mental health awareness can be traced to her experience in social work; she holds a bachelor's degree in youth, adult, and family services from Purdue University. With her compassionate and interprofessional outlook, King embodies some of MCPHS's greatest values, thus making her the perfect speaker to address MCPHS's December 2021 graduates.

At Commencement, King's speech rang with inspiring words about the great responsibility of health professionals and the privilege of patients' trust in them. In line with her holistic approach to healthcare, she cautioned the graduates to look after themselves. "Do not forget to treat your mental health with the same tenacity that you treat your patients' physical health," she said. Especially in the COVID-19 era, King's words carry hope and wisdom for health professionals experienced and new: "Never forget—you are more resilient than you think you are." 




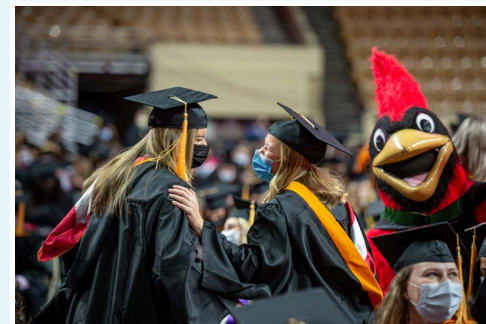
*Nicole King, RN, BSN '13, CFRN, CCRN, CEN, EMT-B*



## DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT 2021


The DCU Center in Worcester, MA, was flocked with happy Cardinals on December 15, 2021, as we celebrated 440 graduates from the Schools of Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Physician Assistant Studies, and Diagnostic and Medical Sonography. The ceremonies began with Board of Trustees Chairman Christopher S. Flynn's call to order, followed by a soothing rendition of the national anthem, sung a capella by Kaylyn Elcock, MPAS '21. After an invocation by University Chaplain Gail Phillips Bucher, BSP '63, President Lessard addressed the graduates, urging them to "enjoy and savor this moment."

He also recognized the Board of Trustees for their volunteered time helping the University achieve its goals and thanked the entire faculty for their dedication in supporting graduates reach this milestone. Keynote speakers alum Nicole King, RN, BSN '13, CFRN, CCRN, CEN, EMT-B, and graduate Joy Restucci, BSN '21, also addressed the graduates with inspiring speeches. Restucci spoke of their resilience in the face of the pandemic as these graduates continued their education and followed their healthcare calling: "The key is that we persisted." Congratulations to all our graduates! 



## COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER CLINIC

To support eligible Community members in meeting their COVID-19 vaccine booster requirement by the February 4 deadline, MCPHS (in collaboration with Shaw's) held two COVID-19 vaccine booster clinics open to all students, faculty, and staff. The

first clinic was held in mid-January on three consecutive days for each MCPHS campus respectively; the second was held at the end of January. All participants were able to consult with a pharmacist and choose which vaccine they received, free of charge. 





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