Class of 2024 Receives White Coats, Representing 'a Beacon of Hope for Those in Need'

Watching the Miller School of Medicine’s incoming Class of 2024 formally enter the medical profession at the John G. Clarkson Freshman White Coat and Pinning Ceremony was a stirring moment for students, faculty, alumni and family members around the world.

Dean Henri Ford with Amanda Nwaopara.

“As a UM alumnus and faculty member for 28 years, I couldn’t be more proud to put the white coat on my daughter Julia as she begins her medical career at the U,” said Fred F. Telischi, M.E.E., M.D. ’85, chair of otolaryngology, professor of neurological surgery and biomedical engineering, and the James R. Chandler Chair in Otolaryngology. “It was a glorious ceremony and a wonderful way to begin her journey.”
In-person attendance was limited at the August 21 ceremony at Hard Rock Stadium, which honors the dean emeritus who founded the pinning event. However, nearly 1,000 attendees watched online as the Miller School students made a defining commitment in their careers as the first class to experience the NextGenMD curriculum.

“Like her classmates, Julia will also learn firsthand about delivering health care during a pandemic at the University of Miami, which has one of the best established protocols for treating these patients,” said Dr. Telischi.

UM President Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., welcomed the students to the ceremony, after they walked in carrying their white coats and took their seats in front of the stage, a safe distance from each other. “You are entering this field at an unprecedented time in medicine,” he said. “Your white coat symbolizes the trust we place in you to always act in your patients’ best interest.”
President Julio Frenk addresses the new class.

Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School, hosted the second annual freshman ceremony, which symbolizes formal entry to the medical profession. “Your skills, dedication, commitment and compassion are needed today more than ever,” he said. “We plan to equip you with the necessary tools and knowledge to have a lasting impact on the lives of others. Your new white coats represent a beacon of hope for those in need.

“Congratulations to you and your parents.”

Focusing on Learning

Hillarie Bass, chair of the University of Miami Board of Trustees, thanked the Miller School leadership for a “creative
solution” to the white coat ceremony. She then introduced Latha Chandran, M.D., M.P.H., executive dean and founding chair of the Department of Medical Education, who gave the keynote address.

“With a deadly pandemic ravaging the world, we have to be vigilant,” said Dr. Chandran. “As medical educators, our goal is to provide you with an outstanding learning experience while keeping you safe. In the future, perhaps one of you will contribute to finding a vaccine for this or another disease.”

Medicine is a career that is intellectually challenging, emotionally satisfying and physically demanding, added Dr. Chandran. “I encourage you to hold your ideals close to your heart, emulate positive role models and practice daily reflection on the importance of being a caring professional,” she said. “It is our sincere hope that you will be the health care leaders of tomorrow and we wish you the very best in this journey,“
The Class of 2024 enters the ceremony with their new white coats.

Dr. Chandran explained the meaning of the white coat ceremony, which was created by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation in 1993, and Alessia Lavin, Class of ’21, described the gold pins, designed in 2001, which were given to each student. Later in the ceremony, each student unwrapped a surprise gift: a new UM stethoscope provided by donations from alumni, faculty and friends of the Miller School.

The students were grateful for the recognition and celebration. "It was a privilege to be part of the white coat ceremony, as I have been working for this all my life," said Christina Raquel Roldán. "The hybrid ceremony actually was a blessing in disguise, as my family members were able to watch from our home in South Florida, as well as Brazil and Chile. Getting the stethoscope was a beautiful personalized touch."
Dr. Chandran led the students in reciting the Hippocratic Oath. Then President Frenk, Dean Ford and Dr. Chandran placed the white coats on each student’s shoulders as they stepped across the stage.

For nearly a dozen Miller School faculty members and alumni, the occasion was particularly special as they placed the white coats on their sons and daughters.

The Miller School group “Doctor’s Note” sang the alma mater to conclude the ceremony.