Dean Henri Ford Receives Arnold Salzberg Mentorship Award

For his dedication to mentoring academic excellence, Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School of Medicine, has been awarded the Arnold Salzberg Mentorship Award by the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Surgery (SOSu). The award is based on nominations from the entire SOSu membership and was presented virtually by Jeffry Upperman, M.D., surgeon in chief of the Monroe Country Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Upperman detailed how Dean Ford has been a mentor to him and many others. As evidence, he said Dean Ford has directly impacted more than 50 research and clinical fellows who have led medical programs across the country, including mentoring three surgeons in chief. He has supported more than $30 million in grants by his mentees and has taken the initiative
of being a resource for Black surgeons whether they directly worked with him or not.

“Many of us have learned from him how to be the consummate father, gentleman, scholar, and servant leader,” Dr. Upperman said. “He made sure his mentees were front and center. It wasn’t about him; it was about their experience and his impact on their growth as academic surgeons and scholars in the making. He wanted to make sure they have a vibrant and fruitful enterprise.”

Impactful Reflections

During his acceptance speech, Dean Ford walked through his own educational journey as he referenced various impactful mentors such as Ann Bender and Nancy Levine, high school educators who challenged him to a more rigorous academic experience. Dean Ford also singled out his medical mentors, including Richard Emmanuel Wilson, M.D., who recommended the young Dr. Ford to go into academic surgery, and Richard Simmons, M.D., who Dean Ford calls a “godfather in surgery” during his study of immunology.

“I’m living the dream today because of the many mentors and sponsors who have helped me along this journey and the initial investment the American College of Surgeons (ACS) made in me,” Dean Ford said. “Together, my mentors, sponsors, and the ACS helped me to live my dream of becoming a role model and inspiration for countless students, residents, fellows, physicians, and surgeons who ultimately are the only reason why I stand before you today. I thank them for teaching me and making me a better human being.”