



Dean's 2022 Faculty Awards Ceremony Celebrates Academic and Clinical Excellence

Faculty members were honored for their commitment to the missions of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine at the second annual Dean's Faculty Awards, held on September 7.



Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A. (far left) and Joan St. Onge, M.D., M.P.H. (far right), and the winners of the Dean's 2022 Faculty Awards

Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School, presented awards to 11 faculty members, who were nominated by their peers.



“Our goal as a community is to ensure that our faculty feel valued and recognized for their excellence,” Dean Ford said. “Our faculty work with unflagging energy to achieve great accomplishments as we fulfill our missions of education, research, clinical care, and community service. Tonight, we are taking this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding faculty we have here at the Miller School and UHealth.”

More than 50 faculty were nominated, and each nomination included two letters of recommendation from colleagues. The selection committee was comprised of members of the Dean’s senior cabinet, past winners, and senior leadership.

“There is no shortage of academic talent at the Miller School and UHealth,” said Joan St. Onge, M.D., M.P.H., senior associate dean for graduate medical education and faculty affairs. “We are truly fortunate to have such stellar faculty. Our congratulations and thanks go out to all of them.”

Community Engagement Award



Dean Ford and Armen Henderson,



M.D., M.B.A.

The evening's first award went to Armen Henderson, M.D., M.B.A., assistant professor of medicine at the Miller School and founder of Dade County Street Response. The Community Engagement Award is given to the faculty member who demonstrates a commitment to addressing and advancing health equity in local communities.

Dr. Henderson has led various community efforts to improve the plight of the impoverished amid the pandemic. He also presides over student and resident training initiatives, including Miami Street Medicine, the DCSR Urgent Care Center, and the SAFEMIA program.

"Dr. Henderson is a role model and mentor to those with whom he works," his nominator wrote. "He has shown us how to be more deliberate and effective in improving the lives of citizens in our neighboring communities, and in mentoring the next generation of physician activists to advocate and plan effective programs that will benefit the most disadvantaged among us."

Award for Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Omaida C. Velazquez, M.D., FACS, chair of the DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery, and Patricia Byers, M.D.

Patricia Byers, M.D., professor of surgery in the DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery, was selected for this award for her commitment to advancing equality for women and underrepresented individuals. At the Miller School, she continues to coordinate mentorship for minority high school students in the POSSE program while leading “Cultural M&M,” interactive lectures and workshops on diversity, equity, and inclusion for the department.

One of Dr. Byers' nominators wrote: “She is dedicated to propelling and fostering systematic change that enhances DEI for students, faculty, staff, and patients.”



Excellence in Mentoring



Deborah Jones
Weiss, Ph.D.

In nurturing the careers of future physicians, mentorship is a vital component of the Miller School's educational mission. Deborah Jones Weiss, Ph.D., M.Ed., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, received the award for mentoring women and those from underrepresented groups in science.

"Dr. Weiss spent endless hours providing advice, discussing research topics, and writing scientific proposals and manuscripts with me," said one of Dr. Weiss's mentees. "She always provides the right advice when navigating the research environment, submitting grants, operationalizing clinical research projects, and disseminating research findings."

Faculty Award for Citizenship



Dean Ford and Steven Falcone,
M.D., M.B.A.

Service is a pillar of the Miller School, and Steven Falcone, M.D., M.B.A., professor of radiology, director of undergraduate education and clerkship, and vice chair of faculty development and faculty affairs, is an extraordinary example of dedication to this mission. He is actively involved with the University of Miami Medical Group Leadership Council, the UHealth board of governors, and various national neuroradiological societies. Locally, Dr. Falcone participates in various community service organizations.

“Dr. Falcone’s work ethic and dedication are notable,” wrote one of his nominators. “He has an exceptional ability as a mentor to rally physicians, technologists, and other health care providers around a cause, and an unparalleled ability to inspire them in crisis. He is always willing to take that extra step in additional mentoring or teaching activity beyond his expected participation.”



Senior Educator Award



Dr. St. Onge; Shirin Shafazand, M.D., M.S.; Latha Chandran, M.D., M.P.H.; and Stefanie Brown, M.D.

Shirin Shafazand, M.D., M.S., professor of medicine, received the Senior Educator Award for high impact in educational excellence, including teaching, assessment, curricular development, advising, and administration. Dr. Shafazand has been involved with medical education since the early stages of her career. At the Miller School, she is the director of the M.D./M.P.H. program and serves as chair of curriculum and the NextGenMD Phase 3 committee.

She has further demonstrated her commitment to educational innovation by reorganizing the M.D./M.P.H. program's epidemiology module and transforming the sleep medicine curriculum for fellows and practicing physicians, while mentoring more than 30 medical students toward success in their scholarly work.



Her nominator wrote: “She is an extremely dedicated faculty member who consistently offers her energy and enthusiasm to the next generation of physicians. The students with whom Dr. Shafazand has worked and mentored, and countless other internists and specialists, have benefited from her enthusiastic pursuit of excellence in all she does.”

Senior Research Award



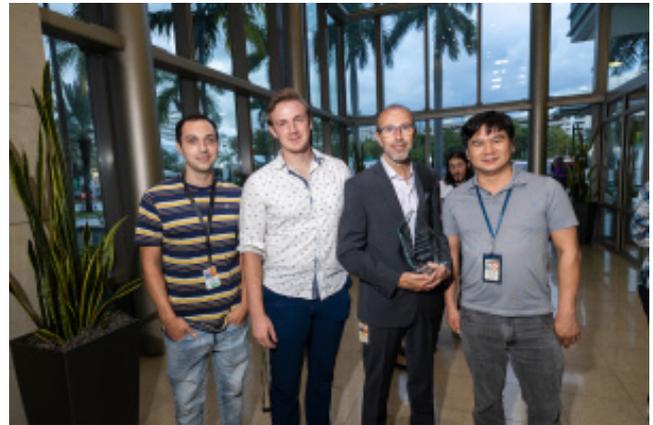
Dean Ford and Savita Pahwa,
M.D.

This year’s Senior Research Award was given to two faculty members: Savita Pahwa, M.D., professor of microbiology and immunology and director of the NIH-funded Miami Center for AIDS Research, and Antonio Barrientos, Ph.D., professor of neurology and biochemistry and molecular biology.

Dr. Pahwa is one of the top NIH-funded investigators in HIV research, ranked among the top five of NIH-funded investigators for more than 10 years. She is also ranked in the top 20 nationally out of 2,000 investigators in departments of microbiology and immunology based on NIH



funding statistics compiled by the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research.



Antonio Barrientos, Ph.D. with his colleagues

For the past 20 years, Dr. Barrientos has made outstanding contributions to research on the mechanisms that govern health, disease, and aging. In addition to numerous NIH grants and other funding awards, Dr. Barrientos has more than 100 peer-reviewed publications in his field and serves as editor and reviewer for major academic journals.

Faculty Leadership Award



Dean Ford and Tomas A. Salerno, M.D.

Tomas A. Salerno, M.D., professor of cardiothoracic surgery, received the faculty leadership award. Throughout his extensive career at the Miller School, Dr. Salerno has held prominent leadership positions, including vice chair of the Department of Surgery, and membership on the Admissions Committee, the Faculty Council, and the Provost's Academic Personnel Board.

Internationally, Dr. Salerno's leadership has been recognized with honorary degrees from institutions worldwide and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Coronary Congress.

"Dr. Salerno is a leader who is very engaged and holds the institutions he is a part of close to his heart," wrote his nominator. "His vision is that of equality and fraternity for all members of the school community."

Faculty Award for Clinical Excellence in Non-Procedural



Specialties



Alejandra Perez, M.D., with her family

Alejandra Perez, M.D., associate professor of medical oncology, received the award for clinical excellence in non-procedural specialties. Dr. Perez serves as the medical director of the Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. Her clinical care has been called well-rounded due to her involvement in research and absolute dedication to patients who undergo breast cancer treatment.

“Dr. Perez is well-spoken, caring, diligent, and conscientious in her manner of dealing with the patients and the medical community in Plantation and Broward County at large,” her nominator wrote. “She plays a significant role in the tremendous growth and expanding footprint that the breast center has experienced over the past five years.”



Faculty Award for Clinical Excellence



Dean Ford and Alexandre Abreu, M.D.

Alexandre Abreu, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, received the award for clinical excellence for modeling moral behavior, outstanding clinical acumen, service to patients, and productivity on a local and national level.

Dr. Abreu is a mentor to his colleagues, an exemplary physician, and a leader of sleep medicine and clinical services. He has even been recognized by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, serving as chair of its Accreditation Committee.

His nominator wrote, “Patients praise Dr. Abreu’s personalized attention and communication they receive from him. His satisfaction metrics are characteristically at or above 95, a testament to his delivery of high-quality, compassionate care, while his proactive approach to assess and reassess every detail of the sleep center’s operations has resulted in both the office and lab running seamlessly.”



Faculty Award for Clinical Excellence in the Procedural Specialties



Dean Ford and Laurence Sands, M.D., M.B.A.

The final award of the night went to Laurence Sands, M.D., M.B.A., professor and chief of the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, for his skill in complex surgical procedures.

Dr. Sands is widely recognized for successfully operating on challenging surgical patients who have multiple complicating factors such as radiation therapy, abdominal and pelvic abscesses, and multiple prior surgeries. He is sought after by his colleagues, patients, and young clinicians for his effective communication skills, compassion, humility, and calm demeanor in the OR.

“Dr. Sands consistently goes the extra mile for his patients to assure that their outcomes are nothing short of exceptional,” his nominators wrote. “He is not only an exceptional surgeon, but his excellent bedside manner also distinguishes him among others within his field.”



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