

UM, UHealth and Miller School Leaders Share Strategic Visions with Medical Students

In a wide-ranging interactive discussion organized by the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Student Government, the leaders of UM, the Miller School and UHealth – the University of Miami Health System shared their strategic visions with medical students.



From left, Edward Abraham, M.D., Henri R. Ford, M.D., MHA, Crystal L. Yan and President Julio Frenk.

UM President Julio Frenk joined Executive Vice President for Health Affairs and UHealth CEO Edward Abraham, M.D., and Miller School Dean and Chief Academic Officer Henri R. Ford, M.D., MHA, who described their common vision of making the Miller School and UHealth the preferred destination for anyone seeking the latest advances in biomedical research, innovative medical care and outstanding medical education.

Dean Ford also talked about President Frenk’s lofty goals for the university as a whole — to make UM known as a hemispheric, excellent, relevant and exemplary institution — and how the medical system has the opportunity to leverage its strengths, centers of excellence and interrelationships with other UM schools and colleges to help achieve those goals.

“I believe we have the strengths to solve some of the more vexing problems in health care, but also to find solutions to advance health globally and educate the next generation of health care professionals and scientists,” Dean Ford said. “For the Miller School and UHealth to realize their full potential, we must explore the intersections of biomedical science with health care, engineering, education, technology, business and health policy. I am eager to build bridges across disciplines to allow the convergence of clinical and basic science that will do innovative groundbreaking research and attract the best clinicians, the best researchers and, of course, the very best medical students.”

Dr. Abraham spoke next, also telling the students, “You’re going to hear very common themes from the Dean and me, and that’s as it should be. Fundamentally, we are an academic medical center, which is unique because we are not just a health system providing care to patients. We also have research programs and educational programs that create a very special environment.”

Noting that research and education make UHealth the only academic medical center in South Florida, with the largest faculty practice plan in the state, Dr. Abraham said UHealth’s challenge is differentiating itself from non-academic medical centers — especially when patients tend to come to UHealth and its competitors with the same problems and conditions.

Some of that challenge is being met by 5 to Thrive, UHealth’s five-part strategy for becoming a preeminent medical institution with an unparalleled patient experience. A spectrum of destination programs is being developed to offer patients — both local and from around the world — the opportunity to experience the UHealth difference. A new research strategic plan was developed that focuses on areas in which UHealth and the Miller School are preeminent and which can be linked to clinical programs.

“But in our rapidly changing world, it’s about more than offering exemplary patient care,” Dr. Abraham said. “A big issue for all health care systems is the move toward value-based care. Instead of fee for service — getting paid for treating patients each time they show up — we have new community health models — being paid a set amount per life per year. Rather than putting the focus on treating disease and illness, it is now on preserving health. The other issue is how should health care delivery change? If a lot of patients are spending time sitting in the waiting rooms of clinics, is that the best place to deliver health care? With new technologies and new operational models, are we better off taking health care to the patients? That’s a real paradigm shift for us.”



Medical students, who filled the auditorium, asked a wide range of follow-up questions.

When it was his turn to speak, President Frenk noted that all three of the leaders held M.D. degrees — something he described as a “visual expression of why medicine is so important to this university.” He said that expression should be seen in the context of the “Roadmap to Our New Century,” UM’s five-part strategic plan that will guide the institution as it approaches its centennial in 2025. “Preeminent Academic System” is one of those aspirational pillars, along with “Administrative Excellence,” “Mission-Driven Research,” “Education for Life” and “Hemispheric Leadership.” He described the plan as having specific initiatives designed to help UM achieve quantitative targets.

“Universities are among the most enduring institutions in the world,” President Frenk said. “Seventy-five of the oldest institutions in the Western world are universities. They provide the continuity of what we think of as civilization. For our university to be able to celebrate 100 years is the promise that we can be around for many years to come, and we can contribute to this continuity in research, in producing knowledge, in educating successive generations of leaders, and in preserving the knowledge that defines our sense of civilization.”

President Frenk noted that the “Roadmap” and its strategic pillars also play a crucial role at this time, when the basic idea of universities is being challenged.

“It is very important for our students to know that we are committed to the pursuit of truth,” he said. “In medicine, we believe in evidence-based practice. Those values are important to sustain and defend at

this particular time. We are currently in the middle of huge transformation — not only in health care, but also in education and research. And we have the aspiration to be in the forefront.”

The students responded enthusiastically, with follow-up questions that generated discussions on topics ranging from the evolution — and the cost — of medical education to the impact of climate change to the relationship with Jackson Memorial Hospital.

“One of the goals of this event was to allow medical students to be able to interact personally and informally with our institution’s top leaders, who interestingly are all M.D.s by training,” said Student Government Executive President Crystal L. Yan, a member of the Miller School Class of 2020. “Everyone really appreciated the opportunity to ask Dean Ford, Dr. Abraham and President Frenk questions together and get real-time answers.”