
Six new endowed chairs named at UMass Chan Medical School



The University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees voted to approve six highly accomplished faculty members to endowed chairs at UMass Chan Medical School on Thursday, Sept. 21.

Dale L. Greiner, PhD

Dale L. Greiner, PhD, professor of molecular medicine and co-director of the Diabetes Center of Excellence, has been appointed the *Herman G. Berkman Chair in Diabetes Care Innovation*, an endowment established for clinical and translational research aimed at improving diabetes care, patient outcomes and clinical care experience.

Dr. Greiner is a pioneer in the development of humanized mouse models, having created the world's most frequently used immune-deficient mouse model for basic, translational and clinical research. He is ideally positioned to advance understanding of diabetes, cancer and other diseases through use of his revolutionary model, which allows scientists to transplant human cells, including cancer cells and stem cells, into a living organism in order to better understand their behavior. His humanized mouse model also allows the transplanting of a human immune system into the mouse, enabling the study of autoimmune diseases such as type-1 diabetes. This breakthrough has enabled the development of various animal models for rare forms of cancer, such as cancer of the appendix, which could not previously be studied in animals.

Greiner received his PhD in microbiology in 1978 from the University of Iowa and completed his postdoctoral training in pathology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and the University of Connecticut Health Center. He continued his career at the University of Connecticut and was appointed associate professor of pathology in 1989. Greiner joined UMass Chan in 1991 as a professor of medicine and holds a joint faculty appointment as professor of molecular medicine.

Previously, Greiner held the Dr. *Eileen L. Berman and Stanley I. Berman Foundation Chair in Biomedical Research*.

Danny G. Winder, PhD

Danny G. Winder, PhD, incoming chair and professor of neurobiology, has been named the *Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research Chair I*. Established in 2014 by the Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research, the endowment was created to support basic research at UMass Chan Medical School.

An internationally recognized research leader focused on the molecular basis of brain abnormalities in substance use disorders and obesity, Dr. Winder was recruited as chair of neurobiology from Vanderbilt University. His investigations deepen our understanding of the biological changes in the brain that predispose patients to addiction and perpetuate addictive behaviors once they are established. He has also discovered novel associations of how addiction pathways interact with anxiety and memory pathways on a molecular and genetic basis. By using sophisticated electrophysiologic and genetic methods in cellular and animal models, he has been able to establish both key regions of the brain and the key molecules altered in addiction. This work promises to pave the way for improved therapies for substance use disorders and obesity in the future.

Winder received his bachelor's degree in 1990 from North Georgia College, and his PhD in 1995 from Emory University. He completed postdoctoral research at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and continued his career with an appointment as assistant professor in molecular physiology and biophysics in 1999 at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. He was promoted to associate professor in 2005 and to full professor in 2010. In 2016, he became the founding director of the Vanderbilt Center for Addiction Research. He will join UMass Chan in January.

Vivian Budnick, PhD, professor of neurobiology, was the inaugural holder of the *Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research Chair I*.

Elinor K. Karlsson, PhD

Elinor K. Karlsson, PhD, associate professor of molecular medicine, has been appointed the *Dr. Eileen L. Berman and Stanley I. Berman Foundation Chair in Biomedical Research*. The Berman Foundation chair, established in 2013, was created to support faculty research with the primary goal of exploring and developing pioneering therapeutic advances.

Dr. Karlsson is a recognized leader and pioneer in the field of comparative genomics and evolutionary biology in both humans and dogs. She received her bachelor's degree in biochemistry and cell biology in 1999 and a Bachelor of Fine Art in 2000 from Rice University. She went on to earn her PhD in bioinformatics in 2008 from Boston University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in 2014 in the laboratory of Pardis Sabeti, PhD, at Harvard University. She joined the UMass Chan faculty as an assistant professor of molecular, cell & cancer biology in 2014 and was promoted to associate professor in 2019.

Her research uses evolution as a tool for deciphering genome function. She leads the NIH-funded Zoonomia project, which leverages the enormous power of genome sequencing to perform comparative genomic across hundreds of mammals. Meanwhile, her canine genomics research seeks to identify behavioral traits and psychiatric diseases in the canine model, as well as the genetics of aging, developmental social behavior and canine cancer. This strategy uses genetic-behavioral studies in dogs to help understand the genetic basis of human psychiatric disease and how genetics and environment can determine the aging process and cancer.

She initiated an ambitious project, now known as Darwin's Ark, to collect massive amounts of dog genome data aimed at linking genomic variation with phenotype variation. In a highly creative approach, she employed "citizen science" initiatives to recruit dog owners to provide material for genome analysis of their dog as well as details about their pet's traits. This allowed her team to relate genetics to traits in an animal.

Jeannette M. Wolfe, MD

Jeannette M. Wolfe, MD, professor of emergency medicine, has been appointed to the *Joy McCann Professorship for Women in Medicine*. The purpose of the three-year term professorship, which was established in 2005, is to identify and reward female physician faculty who have demonstrated leadership in medical education, mentoring, research, patient care and community service. Dr. Wolfe is the first UMass Chan-Baystate faculty member to receive an endowed position.

Deeply committed to advancing both opportunities for women in medicine and inclusion of the variables of biological sex and gender in medical research and clinical teaching, she has written, lectured and published extensively in these areas and is considered a national expert in the field of sex- and gender-based medicine.

During the pandemic, Wolfe was involved in a global network that focused on evaluating COVID through the lens of sex and gender. Her extensive work in this area explored the sex and gender differences in exposure and immunological response to SARS-CoV-2 and encouraged researchers to examine their COVID-related data for sex differences. In 2023, she spearheaded a new experiential learning opportunity in partnership with the Academy of Diversity and Inclusion that works to educate physician residents about sex-based physiological differences and social determinants of health.

Wolfe has held leadership positions in Baystate's Women in Medicine and Science organization, as well as in the national Society of Academic Emergency Medicine's (SAEM) Academy of Women in Academic Emergency Medicine. Throughout the past two decades she has been heavily involved in programming and skill development workshops advancing the careers of women in medicine. In 2020, she received the prestigious national SAEM award for the Advancement of Women in Emergency Medicine.

As the *Joy McCann Professor*, Wolfe will design and implement sustainable projects to give women faculty the support and practical tools they need to succeed.

Jennifer A. Reidy, MD, associate professor of family medicine & community health, was the most recent holder of the *Joy McCann Professorship*.

J. Kevin Donahue, MD

J. Kevin Donahue, MD, professor of medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, has been named the *David J. and Barbara D. Milliken Professor of Preventive Cardiology*. Established in 2001 by Barbara D. Milliken in her late husband's name, the endowment supports the exemplary research and teaching programs of the division of cardiovascular medicine at UMass Chan.

A recognized pioneer in gene therapy for cardiac arrhythmias, Dr. Donahue devised recombinant adenovirus and adeno-associated virus gene therapy to potentially deliver anti-arrhythmic therapies to surgical patients. These genetic therapies have been shown to be effective at preventing very common cardiac arrhythmias in various animal models and are now in human clinical trials. The potential use of the techniques he has developed holds great promise not just for post-operative atrial fibrillation, but for the very common age-related version of this disorder, as well as for life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias in future years.

Donahue received his bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1987 from the Washington University College of Arts and Sciences and his medical degree in 1992 from Washington University School of Medicine. He completed his residency in 1994 at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and a fellowship in 1999 at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. After completing his fellowship, he was appointed assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University in 1999, and associate professor in 2004. He became associate professor at Case Western Reserve University in 2007 and was promoted to professor in 2011. He joined UMass Chan in 2013 as professor of medicine.

Ira S. Ockene, MD, professor of medicine, was the inaugural *David J. and Barbara D. Milliken Professor of Preventive Cardiology*.

John E. Harris, MD, PhD'05

John E. Harris, MD, PhD'05, chair and professor of dermatology, has been named the *Lambi and Sarah Adams Chair in Genetic Research*. The endowment was created in 2001 to support a faculty chair in biomedical research with the goal of eradicating disease through the discovery of new therapies.

As an internationally recognized leader in the field of autoimmunity, Dr. Harris is a fitting successor to Michael Green, MD, PhD, who held the position of *Lambi and Sarah Adams Chair in Genetic Research* for more than two decades until his untimely death earlier this year.

Harris is a proud alumnus of UMass Chan's MD/PhD program. He received his bachelor's degree from Gordon College. After receiving his MD/PhD in 2005, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship in 2010 at the University of Pennsylvania. He joined the UMass Chan faculty as an assistant professor of medicine in 2010, was promoted to associate professor in 2016, and professor in 2021. He became chair of dermatology at UMass Chan in 2021.

Considered one of world's preeminent experts in vitiligo, Harris and his lab have uncovered the molecular biology underpinning the development of this autoimmune disease. His discoveries have paved the way to clinical trials of inhibitors of those pathways.

Harris has formally mentored many graduate students, postdocs, undergraduates and junior faculty.

Source: [UMass Chan Medical School](#)

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