

# COMMON GROUND

## TWO UVM STAFF MEMBERS HONORED FOR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE

BY ERIN POST

**T**he University of Vermont President's Our Common Ground Awards celebrate the many contributions staff members make to the institution's success. Awardees are feted for their integrity, their sense of justice, and their commitment to collaboration and innovation, all tenets of UVM's Our Common Ground statement. This year, two of the six Our Common Ground award winners hailed from the Larner College of Medicine. **MICHAEL CROSS**, custodial maintenance worker, and **TIFFANY DELANEY**, M.A.Ed., director of the office of diversity and inclusion, received the award for their extraordinary service to UVM and for the significant impact they have had on the University.



Michael Cross

### Truly a UVM Institution: Michael Cross

When Michael Cross joined the custodial staff at UVM in 1976, he followed in his father's footsteps: The pair worked together in the Given building one floor apart for about ten years until his father's retirement. Over the last four decades, Cross has seen generations of medical students pass through the hallways, study rooms and classrooms of the College, often striking up lasting friendships. In their letters of nomination, students cite example after example of the meaningful support and mentoring he has offered, from a simple "you can do it" during a long study session, to helping with College events and activities.

Said Bryce Bludevich, M.D.'17, in her nomination letter: "He has always been there with a 'Mike Cross pep talk' or just a simple smile and wave. He takes great pride in his work and sets an example of humility that I hope to emulate in my medical career."

Cross has often served as a judge for the College's annual student-led talent show, and he's played a number of "characters" in many skits over the years for the end-of-year Osler Banquet, a time-honored tradition at the College that celebrates the graduating class. He remembers playing Bruce Fonda, the legendary anatomy instructor who taught at the College for 25 years, as well as teaming up with a fellow actor to play Marga Sproul, M.D.'76, a long-time family medicine professor and former dean of student affairs, and her husband.

"Those were fun times," he says, "and good memories."

Students in recent years point to the time amount of time Cross has dedicated to student-led causes. He has donated items to a silent auction to support the College's marathon team, which raised funds for Steps to Wellness, the cancer rehabilitation program. Often, he'll jump in and help when he sees students setting up for events, always willing to lend a hand. His favorite lunch spot — in a chair at the foot of a well-trafficked stairway in the Medical Education

Center — leads to many impromptu catch-up sessions with students passing by.

Guy Shane, UVM's manager of custodial services, said in his nomination letter that Cross is "truly a UVM institution" for his ability to provide a "sympathetic ear, warm smile and an innate connection with the medical students."

Cross looks forward to the holiday cards he receives from former students now scattered across the globe, as well as attending reunion when he can.

Medical students know they have a staunch ally in Cross, and take it upon themselves to celebrate him. When he mentioned to a student two years ago that he was coming up on his 40th work anniversary, in October of 2016, a large group of first-year students organized an impromptu surprise party complete with cookies and a card.

For Cross, it's those "kids" who keep him going.

"Every class becomes a family," he says. "Every year they're friendly. They're just great."

### Nurturing Lifelong Leaders: Tiffany Delaney

Out of the myriad responsibilities that come with the role of director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, a position that Tiffany Delaney, M.A.Ed., has held since 2013, one of the ones she looks forward to most is meeting individually with every member of the incoming class. She reviews with each new medical student their profile using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a tool that provides insight into their current level of intercultural competence, defined as the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. The diversity office selected the IDI in 2014 to help students understand their own profile, with a goal to enhance their cultural competency skills over the four years of medical school.

As one of the only medical schools in the country to use the IDI in this way — students complete the inventory as a first-year student and again after they finish their clerkships — Delaney says it is one example of the College's multifaceted approach to diversity and inclusion.

"We are working to expand the definition of 'diversity' to encompass more than just compositional diversity, to also include the idea that each member of the College of Medicine is responsible for the ongoing development of their own cultural awareness," says Delaney.

Through initiatives such as the IDI, and the ODI Finding Our Common Ground orientation curriculum, students learn the art of "human relations" in all of its complexity, through the lens of diversity and inclusion, in a way that's integrated into the rest of their medical school experience. "We have laid the groundwork to make sure all members of the Larner College of Medicine know what we mean by diversity and inclusion," she says, adding that broad engagement from the entire Larner College of Medicine community has been key to moving this and other goals forward.

At the Our Common Ground awards ceremony, colleague Diane Jaworski, Ph.D., professor of neurological sciences, said that Delaney has been the driving force behind many of the positive changes the College has made in recent years, including the creation of the first explicitly gender-neutral restroom, and private changing rooms adjacent to the anatomy lab. In their letters of support, students echoed Jaworski's sentiments.

"I am proud to say that the Larner College of Medicine is now a leader in medical education for openness and inclusivity for transgender students — and not just in theory," said Al York '19. "As a result of her hard work to make these safe spaces a reality, I feel respected, heard, validated, and safe."

Delaney's work has led to national recognition: In 2014, UVM earned its first Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine.

After receiving her master's degree in higher education administration from George Washington University, Delaney worked for several institutions, including the New England Culinary Institute and a community college on the island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, before joining the office of admissions at the Larner College of Medicine in 2003. In 2005, she became the director of admissions, a position she held until 2013. In 2013, Dean Morin tapped her to create the College's first-ever Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the office soon expanded to include Margaret Tandoh, M.D., the College's associate dean for diversity and inclusion, and Michael Upton, M.D., faculty development liaison. The office's comprehensive five-year strategic plan, steered by Delaney, has helped to move the College forward as a leader in culturally inclusive medical education.

"Through her advocacy, support, and leadership, Tiffany Delaney has guided so many students and future physicians and has impacted the Larner College of Medicine in countless ways," said Jaworski in her remarks. "People like Tiffany, who devote themselves to the nurturing and cultivation of lifelong leaders, make ours an outstanding community that others want to join." **VM**



Tiffany Delaney