



# UNIVERSITY NEWS

UMKC'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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## UMKC defends against allegations of mishandling COVID-19 case

**Lukas Kenney**

Staff Writer

**Abbey Higginbotham**

Staff Writer

The mother of a UMKC School of Law student says she informed the administration that her daughter tested positive for COVID-19 on March 21, four days before the university informed the campus community on March 25.

University officials denied these claims and said they informed the UMKC public as soon as they had confirmation of a positive COVID-19 case.

The student's mother, Louise Lynch, first came forward with these allegations in an article published by The Kansas City Star on April 1.



UMKC has denied allegations that it withheld information on a law student who tested positive for coronavirus.

"I have physical proof," said Lynch in an interview with UNews. "I left a voicemail for the chancellor on his personal cell phone upon finding out." Lynch's phone shows that she left a voicemail to UMKC Chancellor Mauli

Agrawal's personal cell phone at 1:14 p.m. on March 21. As an outgoing message, the contents of the voicemail were not available to be verified.

Lynch also said that a School of Law professor insisted her daughter come to campus for a meeting on March 16, even though UMKC had switched to online classes, and the daughter requested a meeting via Zoom.

"Why was my daughter made to go to school on the 16th?" Lynch said. "Why are you even suggesting it when you know they just closed down classes? Knowing my daughter has disability accommodations, knowing my daughter has an undiagnosed autoimmune disorder, why? I have proof my daughter asked for a Zoom session."

*Continued on pg. 4*

## Students look for work during record unemployment

**Lacey Clark**

Staff Writer

With unemployment at an all-time high, many UMKC students are searching for alternative work.

Students who have found themselves unemployed are now seeking jobs that may not be their first choice, but will keep them afloat financially.

"I am looking for alternative work because I am financially independent, and I have a lot of expenses that come with that," said junior Rebekah Shackelford.

Other students are seeking employers that are taking precautions to protect their employees from the spread of COVID-19.

"I tried to find somewhere close to my apartment that would pay okay, and was taking preventive measures," said Kelsey Keith, a junior commu-

nications major.

Nearly 6.6 million people filed for unemployment last week, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Some states are offering additional unemployment benefits to help cover expenses. Additionally, the federal government is giving many Americans \$1200 checks to bolster their bank accounts.

However, this may not be enough for some students.

"I won't get the stimulus check because my parents claimed me as a dependent on taxes," Keith said. "I filed for unemployment, but it won't be enough to cover my expenses."

Finding a job might be easier said than done. Shackelford says she hasn't had much luck finding a job, but has found small freelance jobs to make extra cash.

"I have not necessarily found another job yet. I have been walking and grooming

dogs for extra income, but honestly, that takes a lot of time and does not seem like it will provide enough to cover essentials like rent," Shackelford said.

Keith and Shackelford said they didn't consider using UMKC's Career Services during their job search.

"Honestly, I didn't even know they were doing anything," Keith said. "I figured they were pretty much shut down."

Keith was wrong. Despite coronavirus closures, Career Services is still offering help (albeit online) for those seeking work or internships.

"Our career services staff is available to help you find a new position, update your resume, or prepare for an interview," said Career Center Director Tess Surprenant in a statement on Handshake.

"Chances are it will be tough to find similar work, but if you



UMKC's Career Services remain open to help students looking for a job.

need to earn something to tide you over, take a look at temporary, part-time, or flex-time positions. These can get you through the next couple months."

To meet with a career advisor, you can schedule an ap-

pointment online via Handshake for a video meeting or phone call.

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# U-News wins best overall website at MCMA conference

## Publication receives 12 total awards

U-News won first place for best overall website and 12 total awards at the Missouri College Media Association (MCMA) awards Tuesday night.

The newspaper, which competes in Division 1 against the largest schools in the state, doubled its award total from last year.

The 12 awards won and their recipients are:

- First Place, Website, Sam Capkovic, Ethan Evans, Lucas Cuni-Mertz and Jodi Fortino.
- First Place, Op-Ed page, Lydia Fultz, Carlos Mercado and Alex Fulton.
- Second Place, Op-Ed page, Lydia Fultz, Robert Zimmerman and Mason R. Dredge.
- Third Place, Op-Ed page, Jodi Fortino, Gary Enrique Bradley-Lopez and Mason R. Dredge.
- Third Place, Investigative Reporting, Stephanie Klein.
- Third Place, News Writing, Lukas Kenney.
- Third Place, Feature Writing, Emily Reid.
- Honorable Mention, Feature Writing, Lukas Kenney.
- Honorable Mention, Editorial Writing, Caleb Wilson.
- Honorable Mention, Entertainment Review, Mason R. Dredge.
- Honorable Mention, Entertainment Review, Mason R. Dredge.
- Honorable Mention, Video, Darius Stewart, Abbey Higginbotham, Sam Capkovic and Henry Gamber.



# How students are handling everyday life amid COVID-19

**Jasmine Jones**

Staff Writer

**Adriana Macias**

Staff Writer

It's been a month since UMKC moved all classes online to combat the spread of COVID-19, and since then students have had to adjust to life under quarantine. With no end in sight, students are weighing in on how they are coping with the sudden changes.

Thomas Murphy, a senior majoring in business administration, said he is more of a social person but has been doing more skateboarding to pass the time and get some exercise.

"I can still anti-socially skate the spots in my neighborhood for exercise," Murphy said. "Honestly I've been skating more in the last couple weeks than I have all year."

Adriana Colina, a junior majoring in communications, is also using exercise as a way to pass the time.

"This is a very hard task for me, because I'm a very active person," Colina said. "I feel like I've been home less often since the stay at home order; I find ways around not staying home. I've been skating more than usual; my



Students like Thomas Murphy have been finding activities they can pursue alone.

boyfriend and I will skate in new parts of KC and people watch. I've been trying to bike and find new trails to walk on."

Some students feel the quarantine has given them time to focus on other hobbies.

"The lockdown orders have given me time to work on other activities," said Jacob Lee, a sophomore political science major. "It's a pain for sure to be stuck inside, but if it keeps us

healthy and safe, I'm down."

Murphy said he is also taking time to pick up old hobbies.

"Messing about with music has been great to fall back on," Murphy said. "I've lost my 'I don't have time' excuse."

A common notion between students is that they are feeling closer to their friends and family now more than ever.

"It's been lovely catching up with friends from out of state and out of

country, many of them UMKC alums," Murphy said. "Hearing their perspectives on how the pandemic is progressing locally has been fascinating. It's interesting how the lockdown made close friends more distant, and distant friends more close."

Murphy has been hosting Zoom sessions with other students in what he calls "Friday night e-drinks."

Colina said Zoom has also helped keep her family connected in these times.

"Most of my immediate family lives in different countries and continents, so I'm already used to the conditions of not seeing them often," Colina said. "This epidemic has brought us closer. We meet on Zoom twice a week so all of us can talk to each other, and my dad will give us cooking classes and we will all cook together."

Lee emphasized the need for a positive mindset in these difficult times.

"Staying motivated is key," Lee said. "Don't start skipping classes or not paying attention, and make sure you don't just stay in bed the last semester. We have five weeks left—let's keep it up Roos."

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# Graduation blues: UMKC seniors react to postponed commencement ceremony

**Amina Dalton**

Staff Writer

The coronavirus has turned this semester into one unlike any before it. With campus closed, students have to take all of their classes online. A city-wide “stay-at-home” order mandates that people only come out of their homes for essential items only. Libraries, small businesses and other stores have closed their doors until further notice.

Now, the one thing UMKC seniors look forward to the most is postponed as well.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UMKC administration postponed its in-person commencement ceremony until December.

The news elicited some negative reactions from seniors.

“I’ve worked so hard to get to this point of being able to be a part of a commencement ceremony,” said Amarya Wilson, a senior studying psychology and criminal justice. “For it to be taken away from me because of something out of my control has saddened me.”

Jaelon Brooks, a senior studying interpersonal communication, said, “It hurts having to accept that a major



UMKC’s spring commencement ceremony has been postponed to December. (UMKC)

milestone in my life isn’t going to go as imagined. I never thought it would come to this, but as things have progressed, I’m starting to understand the severity of what the world is going through. This situation is affecting everyone’s life, and I’m no different.”

According to UMKC administration, they have postponed in-person ceremony to ensure the safety of students, faculty members and the families of the graduating class. Instead of the traditional commencement ceremony, UMKC plans on offering another way to commemorate the students for their

academic achievements.

“In May, we fully intend to find a fun, creative way to celebrate your graduation and commencement virtually. We have ideas, but want to hear yours,” Chancellor Agrawal said.

Though the university is trying to make up for the lack of a ceremony in May, some students had made preparations expecting a spring commencement.

“I’m very hurt that I can’t walk the stage next month,” said Ituwa Lubani, a senior studying health science. “I made a lot of preparations and my family was

very excited to see me walk, but it is what it is.”

UMKC sent out a survey to get student feedback about how to celebrate the students’ accomplishments virtually.

In a press release from the University of Missouri System, president Mun Choi addressed the UM schools, all of which are doing virtual commencement ceremonies.

“We know how disappointed our students, parents and families are that we won’t be able to hold our commencement ceremonies in May,” Choi said. “Hundreds of UM faculty and staff take part in these ceremonies each year, and it brings us great pride to celebrate our students’ accomplishments alongside them and their families. This May, we will have to adjust how we celebrate to ensure the safety of our university communities.”

Despite the changes, UMKC seniors are still pressing forward to finish this semester well.

“I’m still proud of my accomplishments and finishing strong even through all of this,” Lubani said.

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## OPINION

### When the messaging matters: the fall of Bernie Sanders

**Brenden Hill**

Staff Writer

Though most news nowadays is about the coronavirus, one story broke out of the corona-barrier: Bernie Sanders dropping out of the Democratic primary.

There was a time when it seemed that Senator Bernie Sanders was going to win it all. Instead, former Vice President Joe Biden, who bounced back on Super Tuesday after previously finding mediocre success, clinched the Democratic nomination.

Biden’s chances soared as many of the moderate candidates he competed with dropped out of the race. Additionally, Biden got the endorsements of these candidates, as well as substantial backing from the Democratic establishment.

No matter how this primary went, there was always going to be a moderate/establishment pushback against a surging Sanders. Senator Elizabeth Warren had to also deal with this same backlash when she had started rising in the polls. She soon lost her momentum. It was only a matter of time for Sanders.

The fundamental problem is that Sanders didn’t help himself in pursuing a maximalist strategy when it comes to his messaging. This left him more open to the establishment’s push back and also likely hurt his ability to win over the voters he needed to back him in important races.

This is most clearly seen in

Sander’s labeling himself as a democratic socialist. This label isn’t something that strikes fear in the hearts of many young voters, but for the electorate at large, this self-assigned title comes with significant baggage.

An NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll conducted in February showed that “Asked about their impression of socialism, 28% of adults said they have a favorable view, while 58% said they had an unfavorable one.”

Another poll conducted by Gallup in January showed that “Just one group tested -- socialists -- receives majority opposition. Less than half of Americans, 45%, say they would vote for a socialist for president, while 53% say they would not.”

However, Sanders as a person is quite popular among Democrats. As the New York Times points out, “His net favorability rating at 53%, is higher than any other Democrat in the race.”

That means that if Sanders was able clearly to outline his reasoning for defining himself as a democratic socialist to the Democratic electorate, he might have been able to lessen that hit he took for that labeling.

In a 2019 speech, Sanders said, “Today, in the second decade of the 21st century, we must take up the unfinished business of the New Deal and carry it to completion.”

While inspiring, this speech does not demonstrate why Sanders calls himself a democratic socialist. It makes Sanders sound like a progressive

Democrat. This isn’t a problem, considering he would likely be even more popular and politically successful if he did label himself as a progressive democrat instead of adopting the baggage-laden title of democratic socialist.

This kind of maximalist messaging from Sanders is also seen in how he has handled his core policy proposal, Medicare for All. Sanders has disagreed with prominent progressives like New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has spoken about how at the end of the day a compromise on health care that ends up becoming a public option is an acceptable possibility. According to Sanders, “My view is that Medicare for All, the bill that we wrote, is in a sense already a compromise.”

There isn’t a policy problem with Medicare for all (a form of Medicare of all should be the ideal goal of any progressive agenda) the problem is Sanders isn’t even leaving the option for compromise, which is needed for both persuasion and legislating. This is especially true in an election where one is trying to get more voters to support their campaign and many voters won’t fully agree on everything in a candidate’s policy agenda.

Electorally, Sanders banked on his message of revolution bringing out new voters, specifically young voters who are more favorable to his agenda but rarely vote. At the end of the day that just hasn’t happened.

Looking at the Texas primary, an NBC exit poll estimates



(FiveThirtyEight)

24% of the Texas primary voters were over 65. That is up from 18% in 2016 and 13% in 2008.

While getting more young voters to turn out to vote is a laudable goal, it would have been more productive for Sanders to try to make sure his messaging connected more to the voters that would actually show up.

The most frustrating thing is that Joe Biden isn’t a strong candidate, and his push for the nomination has been built on a weak policy agenda. Sanders has a clear progressive vision that is both all-encompassing and would help millions domestically on top of his ambitious foreign policy ideas.

The fact that many late deciders on big voting days like Super Tuesday went with Biden shows that Sanders messaging didn’t help bring people into his fold, but instead was a factor that likely pushed more people to Biden.

To get that progressive vi-

sion done, it would be more useful to not speak in terms of a revolution, but instead, talk about how these “radical” ideas are broadly popular with most Americans. These ideas are common across the world, and many have clear ties to legendary American historical figures like Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, Harry Truman, Eisenhower and even Nixon. One doesn’t want to romanticize that past by any means, but using the past to help connect these policies to people has clear value.

To get the needed progressive agenda done, progressives have to win elections. Sometimes to do that, bridges have to be built and coalitions have to be made. Setting a clear goal is important, but we shouldn’t get so concerned talking about a revolution that we are never able to make that progressive vision a reality.

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## NEWS

## UMKC defends COVID-19, cont.

Lynch's phone shows an email exchange between her daughter and the law professor. The student suggested a teleconference, and the professor wrote back saying they would prefer an in-person meeting.

"She was afraid of the teacher, so she said, 'OK, I'll go,'" said Lynch.

According to Lynch, after the student went to campus for the meeting, she immediately went to her doctor and learned she had a fever of 102.8 and bacterial pneumonia. The student was admitted to the hospital on March 20 with a fever of 103.5 and low oxygen levels, and she tested positive for COVID-19 the next day, Lynch said.

After testing positive, the student gave her mother a list of those at UMKC she may have exposed to the virus, Lynch said. The mother said she then began reaching out to those individuals as early as March 21.

Lynch said doctors informed her that her daughter contracted the virus approximately five days before she was diagnosed with COVID-19 on March 21.

The university issued a campuswide notice on March 25 stating that a student had tested positive for COVID-19. The letter did not mention that the student was in the School of Law, nor that she'd been on campus on March 16.

Multiple sources at UMKC denied that the university had any knowledge of the student testing positive for COVID-19 prior to March 25.

"The mother made several contacts to campus on March 20-21, regarding her student's diagnosis of pneumonia and to discuss the impact of illness on the student's coursework," said UMKC spokeswoman Stacy Downs. "At no

time did she say that the student had been tested for coronavirus, much less that the student had tested positive."

Interim provost Dr. Jennifer Lundgren also addressed the allegations in an interview with UNews.

"There's been some misinformation swirling out there," said Lundgren. "We received notification from the health department that there was a positive case on March 25. We did not have any information before that about a positive test result."

Obie Austin, UMKC Student Health and Wellness Administrator, confirmed that he heard word of a student's positive test result on March 25.

"I received notification from the Kansas City Health Department on the 25th of March that a student had tested positive for COVID-19," said Austin. "I immediately notified the administration that we had a positive test."

After learning of the positive test, the university followed the health department's protocol and assisted health officials in reaching out to individuals who may have been exposed to the virus via contact with the infected student, Lundgren said.

Lundgren also noted that, in any case, the university would not move forward with information regarding a positive case of COVID-19 without confirmation from the health department.

"If an individual or their immediate family would come forward and tell UMKC they have COVID-19, we either ask them to contact their local health department and have the health authorities officially verify and then notify us, or ask the individual for permission for us to seek confirmation

through the health department," Lundgren said.

Additionally, Lundgren denied allegations that a faculty member had forced the student to come to campus on March 16.

"The mother has portrayed the student as being coerced to come to campus for a meeting with a faculty member on March 16. That is another inaccurate statement," Lundgren wrote in a letter to faculty, staff and students of the School of Law on April 6. "The student contacted the faculty member and asked for a meeting. They mutually settled on a meeting on campus. Keep in mind that on March 16, UMKC had just moved to online classes and faculty were still working on campus, with guidance to engage in CDC-recommended social distancing practices. President Choi's stay-at-home order for campus did not begin until March 23."

Lundgren sent the letter to the School of Law after UMKC's Student Government Association expressed concern about the allegations made in The Star's article and the lack of information in the March 25 notice.

In a statement released via Twitter on April 1, leaders of SGA wrote of their disappointment upon hearing of the allegations raised by the student's mother. SGA urged the university to be forthcoming with all relevant, non-identifying information regarding the student who tested positive.

Lundgren told UNews the university had to comply with the rules of both HIPAA and FERPA, and it felt uncomfortable sharing specific information that could have made the infected student identifiable.

"We were not in a position where we wanted to or where we could share specific information about this student," said Lundgren. "We were trying to balance protecting this student's right to privacy with the protocol that the health department officials were having us implement."

In the wake of this controversy, UMKC administrators met remotely with leaders of SGA and students in the Law School in attempts to ease some of the fear and anger regarding the situation.

On April 9, SGA president Justice Horn released a statement to UNews, in which he again criticized the university for not disclosing the law student's academic unit.

"The only thing students wanted was clarity of information at the time the positive case was made public," wrote Horn.

"After asking point blank if the Health Department advised against releasing the academic unit of the student, the Interim Provost refused to give a yes or no answer," Horn said. "I personally feel that this administration continues to put their reputation before the health and safety of students. Administration potentially imperiled the health and safety of 300-plus law students—and the families they went home to—to protect themselves from unlikely litigation. That is simply shameful."

"I am formally calling for upper administration to apologize to the entire UMKC student body," Horn said.

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## COLUMN

Celebrating Women in STEM:  
Dr. Izzy Jayasinghe

**Madalyn Weston**

Staff Writer

The heart is a necessary and interesting requirement for human life. The size of an adult fist and weighing around one pound, the heart pumps close to 2,000 gallons of blood through your body each day. The cardiovascular system as a whole contains over 60,000 miles of blood vessels. This incredible system requires incredible care. One woman in STEM tackling the challenge of imaging the cardiovascular system is Dr. Izzy Jayasinghe.

Jayasinghe completed her undergraduate education, with first class honors, in cardiovascular biology in 2006 at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. She remained in Auckland for her Ph.D. in physiology, which she finished in 2011. Her thesis on optical microscopy methodologies applied to the cardiovascular system won the Vice Chancellor's "Best Doctoral Thesis" award.

After graduation, Jayasinghe accepted a postdoctoral position at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. She developed new ways to image fine membrane structures in skeletal muscles, including 3D imaging and direct stochastic optical reconstruction microscopy (dSTORM). In 2013, she moved to the United Kingdom to accept a research fellowship at the University of Exeter. She continued to work on super-resolution imaging for cellular organelles and biomolecules.

In 2015, Dr. Jayasinghe became a faculty member in Cardiovascular Sciences in the School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Leeds. She led the Nanoscale Microscope Group in developing new methods for mapping proteins with a resolution of near 10 nanometers (for reference, a human hair is about 60,000 na-

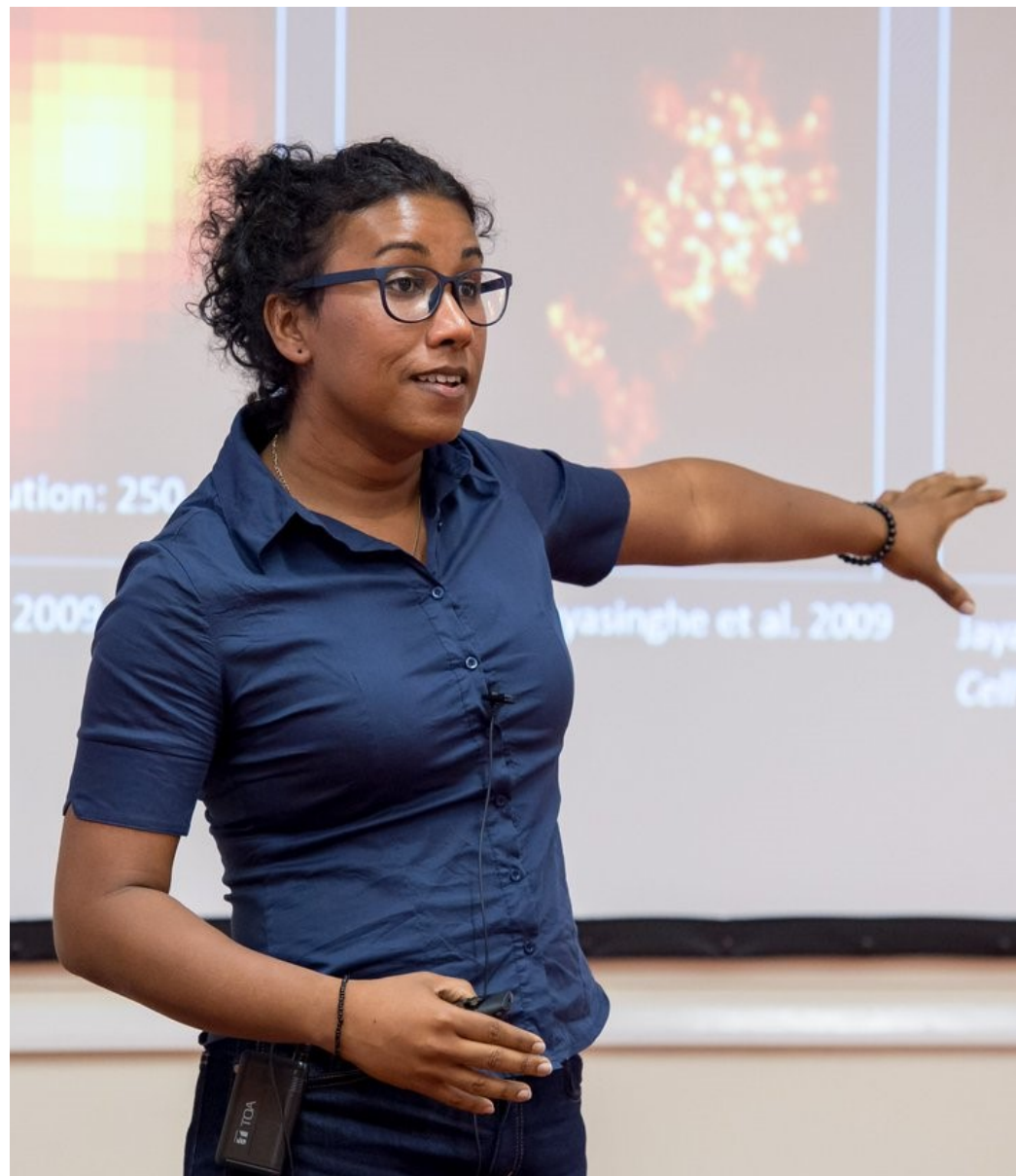
nometers wide). In May 2020, Jayasinghe will be joining the Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at the University of Sheffield. She's bringing with her a curriculum vitae that includes over 20 publications, multiple book chapters and a couple dozen invited seminars and talks. She's also a committee member on the Life Sciences Committee of the Royal Microscopical Society.

Jayasinghe has won multiple awards and grants throughout her career. In 2007, she won a three-year scholarship from the Auckland Medical Research Foundation, worth NZ\$97k (almost \$80k USD). In 2010, she won the Hubbard Memorial Prize from the Physiological Society of New Zealand. In 2018, she was nominated for the Medal in Life Sciences by the Royal Microscopical Society. This year, she was awarded the UK Research and Innovation Future Leader Fellowship, a six-year grant worth £1.13 million (over \$1.4 million USD).

In addition to her decorated career in microscopy, Jayasinghe is also passionate about diversity and education. Her own experiences with homophobia and transphobia kept her in the closet for much of her career. In 2018, she became a fellow of the Higher Education Academy, U.K. In 2019, she joined TIGERinSTEMM, a group developed to further discussion about equality, diversity and accessibility in the U.K. science, technology engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) education system.

*Are you interested in empowering women in the STEM fields? The Women in Science (Wi-Sci) group wants you! Email President Emily Larner ([emily.larner@mail.umkc.edu](mailto:emily.larner@mail.umkc.edu)) for more information.*

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Dr. Izzy Jayasinghe (source: Twitter @i\_jayas)