**SOAR: SERVICE OVER AND ABOVE REQUIREMENTS AT THE SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY**

In 2017, the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) launched a formal effort to recognize and award employees who consistently go the extra mile in demonstrating UMB core values, both specifically in carrying out their job responsibilities and broadly in their interactions with patients and the UMSOD community of faculty, staff, and students. The initiative was the brainchild of the former director of the school’s Central Material Services and Central Sterilization, who sought to find a way to recognize and motivate the unsung heroes of these departments. The idea was quickly endorsed and sponsored by the UMSOD dean, recognizing that celebrating employee achievements enhances morale and makes for a more positive and productive working environment. The core planning team was challenged by the dean to extend the initiative school-wide.

There are two components of the SOAR initiative. The monthly SOAR Award, for which all corporate and state staff are eligible, and the annual Beacon of Light Award, presented to a previous SOAR Award winner who, throughout the year, has exemplified exceptional commitment to our core values. Each month, school departments are given the opportunity to nominate a team member who works 20 or more hours a week for a SOAR award. The dean and others in positions of leadership participate in the monthly presentation to the SOAR Award recipient. The Beacon of Light Award is presented at UMSOD’s annual joint faculty/staff retreat, where over 300 members of the school’s community are present.

The SOAR program celebrates UMSOD employees who model the behaviors and attitudes that the School of Dentistry values. We are proud of the growing list of SOAR and Beacon of Light awardees and proudly and prominently showcase them in our first-floor atrium for all to see.