For the first time in a decade, James O. Woolliscroft, M.D., will serve a different role for tonight’s annual event honoring top Medical School faculty and staff. As dean of the Medical School from 2006-15, Woolliscroft hosted this gathering, doling out awards to approximately 20 honorees each fall. Now, he is on the other side of the podium as recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Medical Education.

An internationally recognized leader in medical education, Woolliscroft has spent his entire professional career at Michigan. He came to the U-M in 1976 as an internal medicine resident. Upon completion of his chief resident year, Woolliscroft joined the department as a general internal medicine faculty member. He soon became associate chair for undergraduate education and, thus, began a long and distinguished career in administration. He has held posts as chief of staff and director of graduate medical education (GME) for the Health System, as well as assistant dean for clinical affairs, associate dean for GME and executive associate dean of the Medical School.

No matter the position, he has remained an articulate advocate of education at all levels and has worked for nearly four decades to strengthen the school’s educational mission. Among his contributions: the introduction of new methodologies to assess learners’ skills across a wide variety of competencies and the movement of medical student education into the ambulatory care setting. He also shepherded the school through two curriculum changes, including adoption by the faculty of the current program designed to make U-M medical graduates leaders and change agents in medicine.

“In my opinion, the fundamental reason the University of Michigan Medical School exists is to educate and train future generations of physicians and scientists,” says Woolliscroft, the Lyle C. Roll Professor of Medicine. “Throughout the Medical School’s history, it has been recognized as a national and international leader in medical education. Being recognized as contributing to this legacy is an honor.”

His contributions have been recognized with receipt of the Society of General Medicine’s (SGIM) Career Achievement in Medical Education Award in 2004 and election to the National Academy of Medicine in 2013. In 2014, he received the Abraham Flexner Award for Distinguished Service to Medical Education—the highest honor bestowed by the Association of American Medical Colleges, in recognition of outstanding leadership in transforming medical education in the modern age. In 2015, he was recognized as a Master by the American College of Physicians (ACP) and received the Laureate Award from the Michigan chapter of ACP.

“Jim is, at his heart, one of the most caring, principled, fair and transparent individuals I have ever met. He not only ‘walks the walk’ in education, but he also is a person whose values are unquestionably of the highest level, and who has treated everyone with respect and dignity.”

— Rajesh S. Mangrulkar, M.D., Marguerite S. Roll Professor of Education and associate dean for medical student education