Beverly M. Yashar, Ph.D., M.S.
Professor of Human Genetics

Beverly M. Yashar, M.S., Ph.D., came to the Medical School in 1994 as a senior research fellow in the Department of Biochemistry. Like many professionals who relocate to Ann Arbor, the Rhode Island native found all that she needed in her new city. In fact, Ann Arbor reminded Yashar of her home state, a place she could traverse in 35 minutes. Then, Yashar experienced more of the state of Michigan, and also the power of medicine at Michigan.

In 1999, Yashar began participating in the Pediatric Genetics Clinical Outreach Program — a clinical service supported by the University of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Community Health that serves families in Gaylord, Traverse City and Marquette. She quickly found that families traveled up to five hours to participate in the program, many decked out in University of Michigan maize and blue.

“I learned about the central role U-M plays in providing medical care to families who could not afford to make the journey downstate, and realized that they also see U-M as an emotional home and take great pride in belonging to our community,” she says. “These experiences really helped me understand the role the University plays beyond those circumscribed by our services and to know that being able to say ‘Go Blue’ is much more than the rallying call at sports events — it is all encompassing.”

Back in Ann Arbor, Yashar is a molecular geneticist and board-certified genetic counselor. She is director of the Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling in the Department of Human Genetics, and is the sequence director for the M1 Medical Genetics course. She also is co-author of “A Guide to Genetic Counseling,” the leading textbook in the field. Yashar’s dedication to education has earned her induction into The League of Educational Excellence and, now, the Kaiser-Permanente Award for Excellence in Pre-Clinical Teaching.

Colleagues say Yashar is an outstanding teacher and mentor of pre-clinical medical students and graduate students in genetic counseling. They say she has a unique role as a basic scientist who is committed to translating her field and making it accessible for those in clinical training. A major participant in the design of the new medical student curriculum, Yashar is a champion of innovation and has helped her basic science colleagues through the task of better weaving basic science with clinical training.

“I love the fact that I have the freedom to apply my love of genetics and genetic counseling in so many different ways and to be part of a community that is really at the cutting edge of discovery in my field,” she says. “The work I do with so many different learners allows me to share my passion for genetics and try to help others demystify my discipline.”

“I have been constantly impressed by her dedication to teaching, her enthusiasm for genetics and its intersection between science and medicine and her efforts to support student learning and success whenever possible.”

— Austin Lin, M.D., Class of 2017