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2025 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS:

Robert Ball, Jr., M.D., '70, and Mabel Purkerson, M.D., '56.

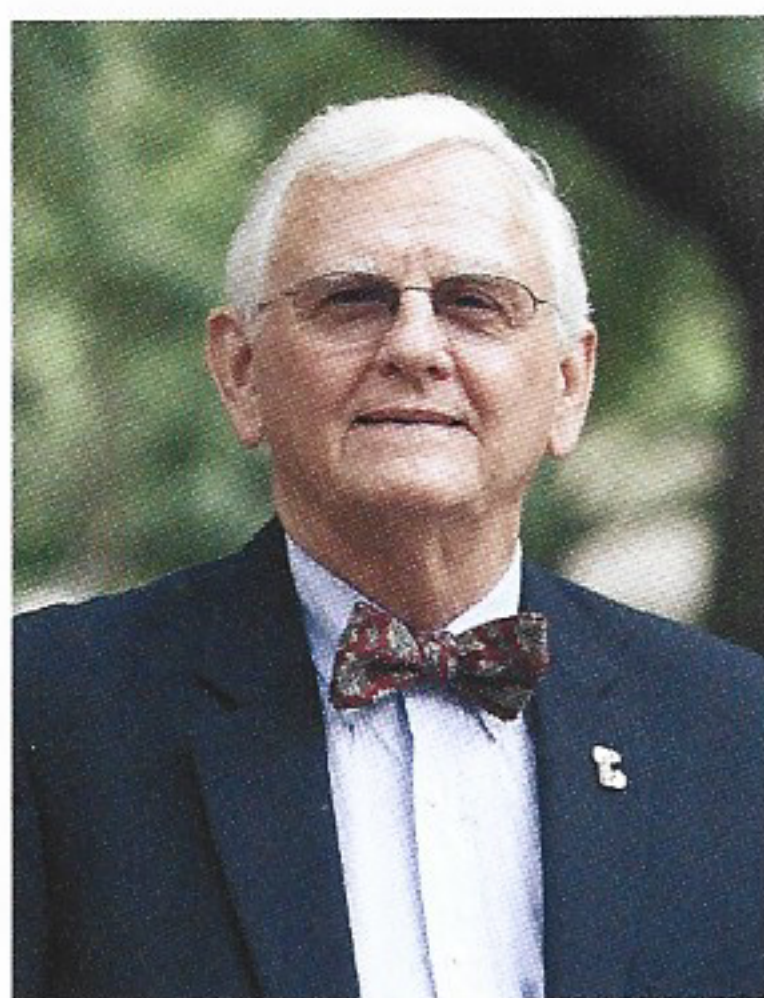
See page 4 for the other winners and to learn more about the celebration.



MUSC Alumni Awards

On February 5, 2026, we celebrated the achievements of this year's Alumni Award recipients. The following honorees from the College of Medicine have had a significant impact on current and future health care in our community and beyond:

ROBERT BALL, JR. M.D., '70 Distinguished Alumni Award – Community

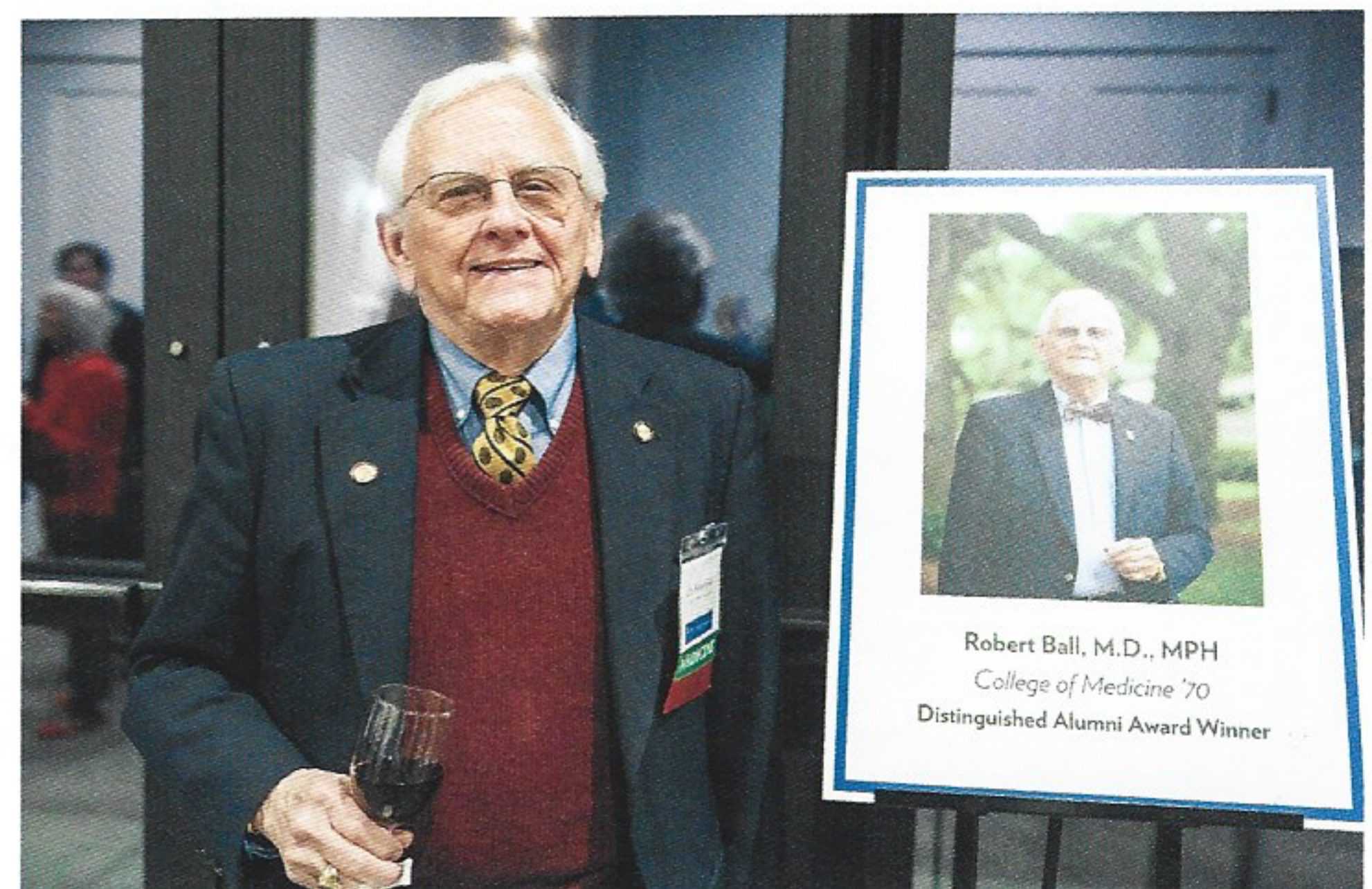


Robert Ball, a seventh-generation MUSC physician, specializes in internal medicine, infectious diseases, public health and epidemiology. He diagnosed South Carolina's first AIDS and Zika cases and spent a decade in private practice after completing his MUSC Infectious Disease Fellowship.

Ball served as a hospital chief of staff, chaired multiple committees and later moved into public health after experiencing financial hardship as the state's first "AIDS doctor." He earned a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology and Biostatistics while working as an infectious disease consultant for the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. He went on to become medical director of the state's AIDS/STD Division, director of the

Ryan White Program and leader of the state's Pandemic Influenza Taskforce.

Ball has published more than 30 medical papers and two textbook chapters. He has served on the board of trustees of the SCMA Bioethics Committee, as editor of the SCMA Journal and for more than eight years on the S.C. Board of Medical Examiners. He has taught at the College of Medicine



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for more than 50 years. He co-authored a 2024 ASM textbook chapter on pandemic planning and published a 2025 article in the AMA Journal of Ethics on infectious-disease existential hazards.

Ball and his wife Betty Gore, an MUSC graduate and retired DHEC registered nurse, established the Ball Family Medical Heritage Endowed Scholarship, and he currently serves as president of MUSC's Waring Historical Library Society. He also serves as senior warden and treasurer of St. John's Parish Berkeley/Strawberry Chapel, his family's historic 1725 chapel. He and Betty remain active in Charleston.

ASHLEIGH VAN METRE HEMPHILL, M.D. '18 Emerging Leader



A Wofford College alumna, Ashleigh Hemphill earned B.S. and B.A. degrees in biology and Spanish, graduated magna cum laude, was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa and received the "Heart of a Terrier" Leadership Award during her time in the upstate.

A fourth-generation naval officer, she was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha and received both the College of Medicine Academic Achievement Award and the Glasgow-Rubin Certificate of Commendation while at MUSC. Her commitment to service included volunteering with the CARES free clinic and at a local homeless shelter.

From 2023 to 2025, Hemphill founded and directed obstetrics rotations for multiple military and civilian residency programs across Okinawa, California and Hawaii. As manager of the Obstetric Referral Center for all military treatment facilities in



the Indo-Pacific, she coordinated access to essential women's health care across a complex region. She also served as Credentialing Officer for her department and was one of six staff physicians at one of the United States Navy's busiest overseas obstetric centers, providing care in a setting with roughly 900 deliveries and 250 annual gynecologic surgeries.

She returned to MUSC in August 2025 to begin a Maternal-Fetal Medicine Fellowship. She has seven publications, most recently "Selected Pregnancy Complications" (2024).

BENJAMIN INGRAM, M.D. '05 Military Service Award



Col. Benjamin Ingram, '05, currently serves as an assistant professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and is a student at the U.S. Naval War College. Since 2021, he has been the medical advisor and director of the Joint Medical Branch for Allied Special Operations Forces Command (SOFCOM) at Supreme

Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium. In this role, he was the senior medical advisor to the SOFCOM Commander, director of the Joint Medical Branch, a member of the NATO Military Health Care Working Group Executive Committee and chair of the NATO SOF Medicine Panel. He led strategic development of NATO Special Operations Forces medical education and clinical support systems across 32 member nations.



A Phi Beta Kappa and cum laude graduate of The Citadel, Ingram received the David Hooker Soldier Physician Award during his Family Medicine Residency at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center in 2008 and has continued to advance steadily within military medicine. He has served as a platoon leader 360 instructor and medical career mentor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and as Core Faculty and Research Coordinator for the Family Medicine Residency Program at Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Bragg.

Board-certified in both family medicine and sports medicine, he previously taught biology and coached wrestling at Sumter High School before entering MUSC. His additional accomplishments include serving as team physician for Army football (2013 to 2016), pioneering the integration of primary care sports medicine into Fort Bragg's THOR3 Human Performance Training Facility, providing primary care in Iraq with the 14th Combat Support Hospital, and authoring seven publications and three book chapters.

MABEL PURKERSON, M.D. '56 Distinguished Alumnus Award – Academic



A professor emerita of medicine at Washington University since 1998, Mabel Purkerson, '56, has made enduring contributions as a physician-scientist, mentor, advocate for women in science and as a medical historian. "My father, James Clifton Purkerson, was a 1926 graduate of the medical college's School of Pharmacy. He knew so

much about the school and about Charleston. When I decided that I wanted to study medicine, he said that if I was accepted in medical school, he would support me with tuition and living expenses – with a caveat – 'Only if you attend medical school at the Medical College of South Carolina.' I came to appreciate how he felt about the school and Charleston, and it became my adopted home," said Purkerson.

After graduating as a member of AOA from medical school, she completed her pediatrics residency and fellowship at St. Louis Children's Hospital and joined the Washington University faculty in 1961. She pursued nephrology within a renowned research group, conducting seminal studies on the metabolic, physiological and structural changes that drive acute and chronic renal failure. From 1971 to 1972, she served as a U.S. Public Health Service Special Fellow at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. In 1976, she became the first woman to serve on the dean's staff at the Washington University School of Medicine. She was promoted to professor in 1989 and later held key leadership roles including department chief, associate dean for curriculum, and associate dean for academic projects. She was also a founder and president of Women in Nephrology, affiliated with the American Society of Nephrology. Long before interdisciplinary work was commonplace, she crossed departmental boundaries to introduce innovative strategies and tools that advanced the field of renal physiology.

Since retirement, Purkerson has remained deeply engaged with the Bernard Becker Medical Library, advocating for its Archives and Rare Books collection, and is preparing a history of Wash U's School of Medicine in the 20th century. Over her distinguished career, she has published 82 peer-reviewed papers and 43 abstracts.

