FROM THE EDITOR

Hello All! Welcome to Washington D.C. and the spring edition of StudentDO! As I am writing what will be my final letter as StudentDO Editor, I have mixed emotions. As I am sure all of you know, my school was affected by the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech. Despite the sorrow from these events I have had the pleasure to once again witness amazing deeds by future osteopathic physicians as they stepped up to the plate and tirelessly worked to help their community overcome fear and sorrow. At a time when images released by mass media have come under close scrutiny, I would encourage you to spend some time pondering the snapshots presented in this issue of StudentDO. Take a moment to reflect on the photos submitted by your peers, and to enjoy some advice given by your colleagues. Be well in all your endeavors, and strive to change the world!

John Casey, OMS III
VCOM
SOMA Newsletter Editor

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SOMA presents the winners of the 2nd annual photo contest!

By John Casey, OMS III

It is my pleasure to present the winners of the 2nd annual SOMA photo contest in this spring edition of StudentDO. There were many entries for this year’s contest covering a wide variety of osteopathic medical student interests. From serious to outlandish all of the photos reflected the very best of the experiences we all have in common. The judges were impressed by the quality, variety, and style of the submissions this year. Congratulations to all of the winners, and thank you to everyone entering a photo making the contest another huge success!

Grand Prize Winner
Submitted by Jeremy White, OMS IV (VCOM)

It’s never too early to plan: Medical school mentors, goals & other thoughts

Written by Draion M Burch OMS IV, Ann Brieck M.S., and Patricia Burnett, Ph.D.

As I plan to begin my first year of residency, I think back to my journey over the past four years. From medical school interview days, to the first day of orientation, to my current post-doctoral studies in obstetrics/gynecology, many factors intertwined to produce a successful learning trip. Many exams and late nights behind me, I still remember clearly my feelings as I joined my enthusiastic but apprehensive peers in the medical school auditorium. Coming into freshman year, I was challenged with the unknown. I was scared, and those fears led me to ask, “What am I going to do?” “Why did they pick me?” “Am I going to make it? All these people are so smart!” I thought, “Am I going to be a good doctor?” Eventually, I successfully completed a quarter, and then another. I finally remember looking around the classroom at an end of the quarter exam thinking, “Wow, I know just as much as you!”

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began more comfortable about this learning adventure and my future in medicine. I began to dream of larger goals—dreams to do research, to start a free clinic, to enter academic medicine, to publish, and to lead. These goals were beyond passing my next exam, and I knew I needed a plan, even as a fledgling medical student.

Developing Mentors

Mentors became an integral component of my career plan. I developed mentors throughout life, and they enlightened my pursuit of personal goals. Even as a child, I looked toward my parents, teachers, and friends to show me the way. My mentors came with varied characteristics—they were highly educated/uneducated, younger/older, professional/non-professional, and male/female. One of the main ingredients I valued in my mentors was their ability to help me mold my aspirations. My mentors had the expertise I admired, the characteristics I wanted to emulate, as well as the willingness to share their time—time for me to observe, model, learn and practice. My mentors were role models who challenged me to improve through professional and personal growth. Regardless of my success, I always benefited from the guidance of a mentor. Looking back at my medical school experience, I realize how important it was to develop mentors early in my medical career. Residency would be too late to identify my first medical school mentor. Now I begin residency with a deep level of support I developed beginning as an OMS 1, and I look forward to cultivating new mentors throughout my post-doctoral training.

As I gained confidence as an “exam passing” student, I was ready to pursue additional interests. An opportunity evolved quickly when an alumnus visited campus. He lectured on health disparities, combining a medical practice with research and designing a career in academic medicine. At the end of his lecture, I immediately walked up to him and shared that I wanted to pursue clinical research. He gave me his contact information, and I began to plan a project even though I did not have my protocol written. This relationship grew over my four years of medical school, and it was characterized by respect and the openness of critique. Our joint efforts produced a clinical publication during OMS 4. My ongoing research efforts with this clinician began with a handshake during my freshman year.

I also wanted to conduct bench research, research that I chose. In search of a topic that was meaningful to me, I walked into the science labs to watch what they were doing and to discover my interests. During this process, I interviewed researchers, observed methods and asked questions. This route led me to an opportunity to do bench work during the summer after my first year. I began work with a professor who taught during the renal block. I liked her, and I liked physiology. So, I approached her and told her that I wanted to work with her. This was the beginning of a new mentoring relationship, one with a basic scientist.

As I conducted my lab work, I developed future goals related to my project. I wrote a protocol based on my investigation, and I learned about a critical research component—the Institutional Review Board. Looking ahead to how I could maximize my research, I organized a lecture with my mentor’s support. Hoping to enlist my peers to conduct “spin off” projects, I put up flyers urging students interested in research to contact me. Through this process I recruited co-investigators on several sub-projects. As they joined my research team, I let them know what I was about, how I work and what their duties would be.

I picked classmates for the project who wanted to explore research and were highly motivated. By my last year of medical school, my research team had produced 5 papers, won 7 poster contests and presented regionally and nationally. Because of my initiative in building a peer research team, I am a co-author on all of the projects. I created the foundation and provided the consultation.

I shared my peer team approach with two of my mentors, and they com
Finalist
Submitted by Dustin Sulak, OMS III (AZCOM)

Finalist
Submitted by Maria Alikakos Fout, OMS II (TUCOM)
As a member of SOMA, you have the opportunity to take advantage of many discounts and services with our partners. I would encourage all of you to check these out and keep your SOMA business-like discount card handy in order to save some money. Below are the companies that SOMA currently partners with:

- **Student Loan Management through Graduate Leverage** ([www.graduateleverage.com](http://www.graduateleverage.com)) Graduate Leverage is a unique loan management and advisory service that I highly recommend you check out! Hopefully, you will hear their presentation on your campus soon!

- **15% discount with Choice Hotels** which includes: Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion, Cambria Suites, Mainstay Suites, Suburban, Econo Lodge, and Rodeway Inn. Just call 1.800.258.2847 and give them the SOMA discount code: #00802016

- **Car Rental Discounts** with: Alamo - ID#233443, Phone (800)354-2322
  Avis - AWD#B451900, Phone (800)698-5685
  Budget - ID#T503500, Phone (800)455-2848
  Hertz - CDP#76057, Phone (800)654-2200
  National - ID#5708406, Phone (800)227-7368

- **SOMA health insurance** with excellent rates ([www.somainsurance.com](http://www.somainsurance.com))

- **PDA programs discount through Skyscape** ([www.skyscape.com/soma](http://www.skyscape.com/soma))

- **Book discounts at the SOMA bookstore** ([www.somabookstore.com](http://www.somabookstore.com))

- **Have your personal statement professionally edited with EssayEdge and ResumeEdge**. Go to essayedge.com or resumeedge.com and enter SOMA as the coupon code to receive a 20% discount

- **STA Travel and the ISIC Card.** If you are traveling internationally anytime soon, make sure to purchase an ISIC card for $22 which will save you so much more money around the world on transportation, hostels, museums, and many more services. Check them out! ([www.statravel.com/](http://www.statravel.com/))

If you ever have questions about any of these services or any suggestions, please feel free to e-mail me! Thanks, Robert Anderson [robert.j.anderson@dmu.edu](mailto:robert.j.anderson@dmu.edu)
Sometimes it is important to have more than one mentor

As I developed a variety of professional goals during my first two years, I cultivated accompanying mentoring relationships. As I got to know and trust several faculty and administrators, I asked them to serve as my career consultants. These mentors reflected the knowledge and characteristics I wanted for my career. My mentors consist of academicians, clinicians, researchers, teachers, and administrators. I like to think of combining all of their skills and characteristics to see myself in the future. I set a standard of “that’s what I want to be like,” when I put together my mentoring team.

Mentoring relationships occur on multiple levels, sometimes concurrently and for varying periods of time. They can be short lived or continue for years. I find the best mentoring relationship to be long-lasting, durable, dynamic, and meaningful. I share personal things about myself with my mentors because I trust them. I rely on their input when I make important decisions. The other important piece I remember is that I am giving something to the mentor and not just taking. Mentoring is a relationship of collaboration.

The “take home message” from my story is that it is important for you to develop your mentors and develop them early in your career. Don’t wait for them to initiate the relationship or to stay in touch. Check in with them to make sure you are on the right path. Once you gain their respect and they really like you, you will enjoy the benefit of long conversations and invaluable advice. Sometimes my mentor will drop everything just to talk to me. My mentor has invested time in me, and I am important. My mentors have matured into my life coach and my cheerleader. A word of warning—be prepared to request honest critique and feedback. I opened myself to a level of vulnerability to receive sound and effective critique. I’m always cognizant that my mentors want me to do better because they believe I have what it takes. Most of my mentors have been hard on me, and I am thankful for that.

Looking Ahead: Tips for Planning, Organizing & Other Thoughts

Although I was a first year student focused on passing the next exam, and I had no idea for a specialty choice, I set goals that went beyond the class room. I developed 5, 10 and 20 year plans. Even when my plans changed as I gained more experience, they provided a focus for my career development. My plans remind me to network with people who could support my journey and to look beyond the next class room assignment for my professional development.

I write my goals, and I look at the short term ones every day, and then weekly, and monthly. I produce benchmarks to gauge my progress. It is like a road map that leads me to the next place. Being organized has been very important to me. Before I go to bed, I look at my schedule for the next day to anticipate problems and opportunities. I always think a year ahead. During my first year, I planned for the following summer by being a tutor for the Center of Excellence Prematriculation Program. Tutoring really helped me prepare for boards by confirming my knowledge base. I also want to enter academic medicine so I approached my professors requesting permission to give a lecture on my research. I have created quite a series of lectures both on campus and in the hospital setting using this process.

In addition to setting goals and creating plans, I journal daily. I write things in my journal, and then I look back to see what I was thinking a month ago. I like to see if I’m on track. It gives me the opportunity to readjust my strategy. If I meet a new contact, I add them to my resource list and wonder how I might work with them in the future. Every time I get an opportunity to develop professionally, I just do it. I never know what door it might open. Every person that comes into my path is someone I look at and say “What can this person teach me that is not obvious in this moment?”

I am also proactive with my contacts. If I e-mail someone and don’t receive a quick response, I don’t take it personally. I think, “Maybe they don’t check their e-mail often.” So, I pay them a visit. It is important to ask associates and...
mentors what is the best way to contact them. I have different approaches for different contacts. Some I call, some I e-mail and some I meet face to face.

Finally, I urge you to document, document and document your experiences and accomplishments by building an academic portfolio. I know it seems overwhelming to add to your resume as you prepare for the next exam or rotation. But, organizing and documenting my accomplishments have saved me many hours of searching through books and papers just to add to my resume or build my portfolio.

To Sum It Up

1) Set your goals...envision them...do not wait...do it now—even in first year. Don’t think about your future too late; 2) Take the opportunity to develop mentors and to mentor others. The more you invest in yourself and others through mentoring relationships, the more you learn about yourself; 3) Always ask for feedback.

Remember, don’t forget your future while you are trying to pass your next exam!