Deans Newsletter to Student – Spring 2014

It is hard to believe that another academic year is coming to a close with Commencement just around the corner. I would like to take this time to update you on some important topics of interest within the School of Medicine.

2014 Residency Match

We are very pleased with the results of the 2014 Match for VCU School of Medicine. Fifty-eight students matched into primary care fields including Internal Medicine (31), Pediatrics (14), and Family Medicine (13). We had six students match into combined residency programs including Internal Medicine/Pediatrics (3), Internal Medicine/Family Medicine (1), Internal Medicine/Emergency Medicine (1), and Pediatrics/Psychiatry/Child Psychiatry (1). We had very good success matching students into specialties including Anesthesiology (21), Obstetrics and Gynecology (15), Emergency Medicine (14), General Surgery (10), Orthopedic Surgery (9), Diagnostic Radiology (8), Neurology (5), Psychiatry (5), Dermatology (3), Pathology (3), Otolaryngology (3), Plastic Surgery (2), Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (2), Vascular Surgery (1), and Radiation Oncology (1). When combined with our early match results including Urology (7) and Ophthalmology (6) as well as students who matched into military programs (3), we are very pleased that 98 percent of our students are matched into a PGY-1 position at the conclusion of the Match process.

We will continue to work with our unmatched students to make sure they are competitive for next year’s application cycle if they are unable to find an open position before then. Of note, all of our unmatched students at the end of the 2013 Match cycle are now fully matched at the conclusion of the 2014 Match.

The increasingly competitive residency match process will drive us to enhance our career guidance programs. Dr. Chris Woleben, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, is already looking at ways to enhance our career advising programs, particularly for those students applying to competitive residency programs by ensuring more students have parallel plans in place. This strategy is echoed amongst Student Affairs deans at other medical schools across the country, who found more highly competitive students unmatched this year than in previous years. Dr. Woleben will be presenting an update at the 2014 Group on Student Affairs National Meeting later this month on the data he collects regarding the Match Survey toolkit he uses to track the performance of fourth year students regarding interview offers. Utilization of this survey, released as a national toolkit by the AAMC in September 2013, allows him to intervene earlier to help identify students that may need to adjust their application strategy to ensure a successful match. When combined with the implementation of the new curriculum and the increased opportunities for electives and earlier entry into the core clerkships, our students will continue to have distinct advantages in future Match cycles.

Cost of Education and Financial Aid

When I arrived on the MCV Campus in 2005, I was determined to make medical education more affordable for our students. Through our sustained effort to hold tuition increases to a minimum, our medical school's tuition and fees are now the lowest in Virginia for in-state students and lower than UVA and EVMS for out-of-state students. Currently, the scholarships we offer lag behind other public medical schools, and to address this issue, the School of Medicine has launched the 1838 Campaign.
The $25-million campaign will build the medical school’s scholarship endowment into a resource on par with our peer schools.

The 1838 Campaign is a vital step toward our goal of providing meaningful scholarship support for students with financial need. The Campaign will give our school a competitive edge for recruiting top students who will thrive at VCU School of Medicine, reward student excellence, and reduce the burden of debt that is too often an inescapable part of choosing a career in medicine. A special thanks to all of the medical students who spent time with our alumni during the recent Reunion Weekend. Having students interact with alumni at events such as the Career Fair and Campus Tours makes a major impact on the decision of our alumni to make gifts to the School of Medicine. In 2012 alone, 1060 of our alumni contributed over $1.3 million in gifts to the School of Medicine, far exceeding the gifts received at other public medical schools across the nation.

In order for students will be better informed of where tuition dollars flow and how their entire education is funded, Pemra Cetin, Assistant Dean for Financial Aid and Student Affairs, will be offering a session during M1 Orientation this summer addressing this issue. Currently, we poll students each year regarding how the technical fees will be spent, but we have to decide on how to disperse other funds to provide students with a quality education. We will make this presentation available to all students so they are well informed about how their tuition dollars are spent.

Admissions

The Admissions office has been quite busy this spring. Members of the Admissions committee reviewed a total of 7830 applications and completed 1026 interviews for applicants being considered for matriculation into the Class of 2018 – both record numbers for the committee. As the workload for the committee continues to increase each year, we are actively recruiting new members to complete file reviews and/or interviews while looking at ways to further streamline the application review process. Currently we have over 80 members on the committee including four faculty members from the Inova campus as well as 16 fourth year medical students. Dr. Sara Monroe, Chair of the Admissions committee, and Mrs. Agnes Mack, Director of Admissions, are currently interviewing M3 students nominated for the M4 Admission committee participation. Many of these students will choose to complete the Administrative Medicine Elective during their M4 year where they will spend more time in the Admissions office while learning about other administrative roles in the School of Medicine during this month-long experience.

We have selected our four new tour guide directors for the upcoming academic year: Trina Chakrabortty, Sheinei Ja Saleem, Scott Hirsch, and David Ikeda. These students will be working with their classmates who have been selected as tour guides to ensure applicants are provided with tours of the academic and clinical facilities available to students on the MCV campus. Due to the timing of the new C3 Curriculum, selection of new tour guides will occur a bit earlier next year to assure a smooth transition and workload for MS-2B students who will be preparing for USMLE Step 1. A special thank you goes out to our VCU SOM students for helping on the student panels, serving as hosts for applicants, and providing campus tours at a variety of events throughout the year. Particular recognition goes out to Adrian Diaz, Akeem George, Suzanne Giunta, and Jennifer Tran who have now finished their duties at tour guide directors, dedicating a tremendous amount of time and energy to assure our Admissions process is student-focused.
If you are interested in volunteering with the Admissions office for any of our events including visits to your home undergraduate institution, please stop by to let us know. We are extremely grateful for all of the help we receive to make our programs a success which translates into creating a talented, diverse, and supportive learning environment.

C3 Curriculum

Feedback from MS-2A students consistently has been positive regarding the C3 Curriculum that has been implemented over the past year. As always with any new curriculum delivered in a brand new educational building with state of the art technology, there have been some minor issues along the way that have expertly been addressed by our course masters and Instructional Technology staff. Student Curriculum Representatives continue to meet weekly with Dr. Susan DiGiovanni, Assistant Dean for Preclinical Education, to assure student feedback is heard, and to make sure revisions to the curriculum are implemented in a timely manner.

Many students will be participating in a variety of summer research experiences at VCU School of Medicine and at sites across the world over the next few months. This year alone, 51 medical students will receive monetary support from the School of Medicine for student research with a VCU faculty member over the summer including 13 medical students in the Microbiology, Infectious Disease, and Public Health Epidemiology (MIDPH) Program. Dr. Gordon Archer, Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training is working to provide additional quality research opportunities for medical students by actively surveying and recruiting new faculty members to participate in existing programs. With the upcoming redesign of the School of Medicine website, there will be a page specifically for students conveying information about research, CME and community service opportunities to make it easier for them to know how to access this information.

Selected Student Honors

Congratulations to Jessica Regan (M-2017) who was awarded a 2014 Alpha Omega Alpha Carolyn L. Kuckein Student Research Fellowship to complete her research project entitled “The Impact of Interleukin-18 (IL-18) blockade on inflammation in a model of heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFrEF)”. Jessica will be working with Dr. Antonio Abbate, Associate Professor of Medicine, Physiology, and Biophysics in the Division of Cardiology, to complete this project over the upcoming academic year.

Kunal Kapoor (M-2017) was selected to participate in the Global Health Delivery Summer Intensive Program (GHDI) at Harvard School of Public Health. The GHDI program, co-founded by Dr. Paul Farmer, is intended for mid-career global health professionals who seek training in global health delivery concepts and skills. Participants take three courses: Epidemiologic Methods for Global Health, a case-based Introduction to Global Health Care Delivery, and Value-Based Management in Global Health Care Delivery.

Jacqueline Britz (M-2017) was selected to present a poster at Internal Medicine 2014 of the American College of Physicians in Orlando, Florida. Her abstract entitled “Exploring challenges and policy solutions for improving access to healthcare for vulnerable populations: Lessons from the UK National Health Service" was based on work she completed as part of her MSc. in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in collaboration with Doctors of the World UK.
Society Updates

The medical student Societies celebrated a banner year under the leadership of faculty Society Masters and student Society Leaders. The final event, the Society Field Day and the Strauss Cup Tournament, was held on Saturday, March 22. Students and family members from all classes attended this event at Abner Clay Park in historic Jackson Ward where a variety of team and individual competitions culminated in the selection of the Baughman Society as the inaugural Strauss Cup champion. We are looking forward to continuing the tradition of friendly competition between societies well into the future, with the main purpose of each society being a place where students can network and gain support from their fellow classmates and society leaders during their medical education experience.

Tompkins-McCaw Library

Some of you may have noticed that Micromedex, a drug reference database, is no longer accessible. A year of license renegotiation ended when the new database’s owner, Truven Health Analytics, would not strike a clause from their license that State law prohibits VCU from signing. The VCU Libraries are currently looking into alternatives, but in the meantime, there is a comprehensive guide to current drug reference tools at http://guides.library.vcu.edu/druginfo.

A new tool that will be of interest to many is BrowZine, an app for browsing and reading journals. You can download the free BrowZine app to Apple and Android mobile devices from iTunes or Google Play. The first time you sign on, choose Virginia Commonwealth University as your institution and then enter your VCU credentials to access many journal titles licensed by the VCU Libraries on your mobile device. Add your favorites to your bookshelf and save useful articles to your device. BrowZine is currently unavailable for Windows 8 devices. Please contact the library if you would like more information.

Coffee breaks during exam time return this year on Monday, April 28 - Friday, May 1 and Monday, May 5 - Thursday, May 8. Stop by the Tompkins-McCaw Library on these days for coffee, tea, and snacks from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. The Dogs on Call team will be in the library on May 5, and chair massages will be available on May 6, both from noon to 1:00 p.m. Tompkins-McCaw Library staff are working with a vendor to install a Keurig machine in the existing vending area for your everyday caffeine fix. Bring your own K-Cup or purchase one from the vending machine. The water is on us, but you’ll need to bring your own coffee mug!

You can always contact John Cyrus (cyrusjw@vcu.edu) or Karen Gau (gaukh@vcu.edu) directly for any questions related to the library’s services or resources.

Acquisition of Community Memorial Hospital

VCU Health System and Community Memorial Healthcenter (CMH) in South Hill, VA announced an agreement to join operations to expand the range and depth of healthcare delivery for residents of Southside Virginia and northern North Carolina. The agreement is expected to be complete by June 30 pending federal and state regulatory approvals. CMH will become a part of the VCU Health System and will be renamed VCU Community Memorial Hospital. With the affiliation, the VCU Health System will commit a minimum of $75 million in new strategic investments in CMH, including a new hospital facility, healthcare technologies, clinical initiatives and physician recruitment.
The affiliation brings together two high-performing organizations, combining the clinical expertise of the community-based hospital with the nationally ranked programs of the VCU Medical Center under the umbrella of the VCU Health System. CMH, which has received numerous state and national recognitions for quality patient care and customer service, is licensed for 99 acute care and 161 long-term care beds and provides a wide array of in-patient and outpatient services. It is one of the area’s largest employers with approximately 800 employees and 200 volunteers. Eighty-five physicians representing 30 medical specialties have privileges at CMH. With the affiliation, CMH employees join about 9,000 VCU Health System employees. The VCU Health System already has a presence at CMH through a partnership with the VCU Massey Cancer Center that provides outpatient medical hematology-oncology and radiation oncology. In addition, the organizations have a rich history of collaboration in providing other clinical and educational services.

**Patient Safety Initiatives**

We are pleased to welcome Gene Peterson, M.D., Ph.D., M.H.A., who has taken on a role for patient safety and quality care that is unique in academic medicine at VCU School of Medicine. Dr. Peterson’s responsibilities as Chief Safety and Quality Officer and Associate Dean for Patient Safety and Quality Care cross over traditional boundaries separating the domains of clinical, academics and research. He will integrate all of our medical students and residents into our efforts to address patient safety. This will have an immediate effect on the VCU Medical Center’s goal to become the nation’s safest health system. Perhaps even more importantly, it also will have a lasting impact on the U.S. health care system as our young physicians leave the MCV Campus for hospitals across the country.

**Commencement Exercises**

We are looking forward to the School of Medicine hooding ceremony to be held on Friday, May 9 at 3pm in the Stuart C. Siegel Center. Dr. Sheldon Retchin, M.D., M.S.P.H., Senior Vice President for Health Science for VCU and Chief Executive Office for VCU Health Systems, was selected by graduating students to provide the commencement address. He, along with other senior leadership at VCU School of Medicine, were instrumental in assuring that MCV Campus students will continue to receive a legacy diploma that recognizes the Medical College of Virginia Health Sciences Division. Additionally, the School of Medicine will cover the costs of graduation regalia for our graduates.

I am very proud of the accomplishments of our talented students, faculty, and staff within the School of Medicine – our combined effort results in a world-class educational experience.

Sincerely,

Jerome F. Strauss III, M.D., Ph.D.
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, VCU Health System
Dean, School of Medicine