

Profiles in Scholarship

College of Medicine students benefit from Alumni Foundation scholarships.

While attending medical school is often a dream come true, fulfilling that dream requires hours of study and pressure to perform. The monetary costs of a medical education can compound that stress exponentially, influencing a student's selection of a specialty or practice location upon graduation. According to the American Medical Association, the average medical school graduate in 2008 graduated with \$154,000 in educational indebtedness.

Medical school debt is driven by rising tuition. According to AAMC data, tuition at public medical schools rose 133 percent between 1984 and 2004. Tuition at Upstate Medical University for New York state residents is \$22,800 for 2009-10. With housing, books, and fees, the total annual cost averages more than \$38,000.

Easing that burden is a major goal of the Medical Alumni Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Medical Alumni Association. The Foundation actively solicits gifts from College of Medicine alumni and friends in an attempt to provide increasing amounts of scholarship support to current students. At present, the Medical Alumni Foundation bestows 100 annual scholarships with a total value of more than \$250,000 to students on the basis of various criteria: academic merit, student involvement, scholarship, creative accomplishments, and citizenship.

The following are just two examples of the many students whose medical school experience has benefited from Medical Alumni Foundation scholarship support.

JEWEL APPLETON

Jewel Appleton '10 is not a follower. It's just not in her nature to sit by and let things happen. "I'm pretty determined," says the native of Antigua. "I think it's my Caribbean heritage—I have to say what's on my mind."

That's an understatement. Appleton, who grew up in the Bronx, has funded her entire undergraduate and medical education herself. She attended Colgate University, where she majored in biology. After graduation, she worked for two-and-a-half years to save money for medical school—first as a litigation paralegal working on a major pharmaceutical lawsuit, then as lab coordinator at a New York hospital, where she performed various endocrinology immuno-assays and diagnostic tests necessary for patient care and research.

Appleton was lured to Upstate, in part by an annual Alumni Scholars Scholarship. "I was still waiting to hear from other schools' admissions offices. Jennifer Welch and Sharon Huard called from Upstate personally to recruit me," she recalls. "Finally, they said, 'what if we were able to offer you a scholarship to help you out?'"

Once at Upstate, Appleton dove into both her studies and student life. She's been active with the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), the minority student organization and, as president, recruited 18 students to attend the SNMA national conference in New York City. Through SNMA, Appleton has been active in community service, such as performing free blood-pressure checks, and tutoring and mentoring other students.

Appleton, who is currently applying for residency programs in radiology, is a student member of the College of Medicine Admissions Committee, a student member of the Medical Alumni Association, and was in the first group of students appointed by President Smith as Presidential Student Ambassadors.

As a second-year student, Appleton received the Student Citizen Award for her community service efforts, and as a third-



Fourth-year student Jewel Appleton takes a patient's blood pressure.



Michael Fitzgerald reviews a patient's brain scans with first-year student Tara Holter and Dr. Barry Berg, Coordinator of Gross Anatomy

year, she was awarded the Bucholtz Scholarship, given to students who are interested in teaching. "I've done a lot of tutoring and I imagine some sort of teaching will be part of my professional life," she says.

Despite the increasing demands on her time, she continues to make a special effort to tutor and mentor younger students of color. "I try to make sure I'm there for those students who need that connection," she says. "It's important for them to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

MICHAEL FITZGERALD

An aspiring orthopedic surgeon, Michael G. Fitzgerald '10 has been a top student throughout his medical school career. He's received the Merit Scholarship, awarded to the top four students in each class, every year, and also received the McGraw Hill Lang Scholarship for completing his first year as one of the top two students.

Fitzgerald grew up in Fredonia, New York, and attended LeMoyne College in Syracuse as an undergraduate. He applied to

the College of Medicine through Upstate's Early Assurance Program at the end of his sophomore year, receiving word of his admission early in his junior year.

Fitzgerald attributes his success to focus and study. "Medical school has been a tough road," he says. At least for me, it's been a lot of studying, a lot of hard work."

That hasn't prevented him from other involvements, however. Fitzgerald has volunteered at the SC Hope free clinic downtown; with Pediatric Relief, a student organization that provides company to pediatric patients allowing their families a respite; and ACE Mobility, an extended physical therapy service that provides ambulation and mobility to University Hospital patients. He has also served as a College of Medicine admissions interviewer, and through AOA, as a tutor to younger students.

As a third-year student, Fitzgerald was awarded both the Fischer and Simeone Scholarships, offered to students with an interest in surgery. "It's extremely humbling to receive these awards," he says. "It's nice to be rewarded for hard work and it has certainly made it a lot easier financially."

Fitzgerald has spent the beginning of his fourth-year in two month-long acting internships in orthopedics, first at the University of Vermont, then at the University of Wisconsin. "It's the field I want to go into so I'm trying to learn as much as I can before I actually start."

After residency training, Fitzgerald hopes to return to Western New York to practice and give back to the community that nurtured him. "A lot of people have been very generous to me," he says. "My dream is to become a successful physician. Hopefully, when I achieve that goal I can do the same for the people coming up next. I'd like to be in a position to help others later on down the road." ■