

Matches made in medicine



Photos by Maria Belen Farias and Jesse S. Jones

Kelly Tepedino (right) matched in dermatology at UF. Her husband, Miguel Tepedino, a 2006 UF College of Medicine graduate, joined her on stage at Match Day held March 17.

BY CHRISTINE VELASQUEZ

Standing on stage, Patrick Duff, MD, lobbed a ball to UF softball player Stacey Stevens. It was a ceremonial first pitch to kick off Match Day—held at the J. Wayne Reitz Union and viewed around the world as family and friends tuned in to celebrate the UF College of Medicine class of 2012 and watch as they uncovered where they would be spending the next several years of their medical careers.

“I couldn’t have wished for a better school,” said Avan Armaghani, a fourth-year medical student who bravely approached the lectern, reading her letter for the first time in front of the crowd. With her parents by her side and her grandparents watching from Iraq, Armaghani—whose brother is a 2010 UF College of Medicine graduate—learned that she received her first choice: a residency in internal medicine at UF.

“I was born and raised in Gainesville and I know that this program is the best fit for me. I know I will receive the best training,” she said after the ceremony.

Armaghani was one of 129 soon-to-be graduates

of the UF College of Medicine who learned where they matched for their residency training during the college’s annual Match Day ceremony, held March 17.

“This is about to be a very profound moment. Thank you in advance for the great things you are going to do for the profession of medicine,” said Michael Good, MD, dean of the College of Medicine.

This year, the top three specialties of the class were medicine, emergency medicine and pediatrics, with a total of 33 percent of students choosing a primary care specialty, such as family or internal medicine, pediatrics or obstetrics/gynecology.

Twenty-three percent will stay in Florida for their residencies, with 12 students staying at UF to complete their residency training, said Duff, the college’s associate dean for student affairs.

Jennifer Sbicca’s parents remember when they arrived at UF for their training.

“We didn’t have to go through this match process when my wife and I were in medical school. It’s very exciting,” said Sbicca’s father, Bill Grisaitis,



Fourth-year medical student, Jennifer Sbicca (center) was joined by (from left) her brother, William; her husband, Joshua; and her parents, Bill Grisaitis, MD, who completed his internal medicine residency at Shands at UF and Anne Claiborne, MD ’79.



Avan Armaghani (center) with Patrick Duff, MD (far left), and her parents.

MD, who completed his internal medicine residency at Shands at UF and whose wife, Anne Claiborne, MD, is a class of 1979 UF College of Medicine graduate.

“This is 10 years in the making,” said Sbicca, who matched in dermatology to her first choice, the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Good later noted that while many students do leave UF for their residencies it is important to remember that many will be welcomed in from other schools throughout Florida and the nation.

Overall, UF continues to have a significant impact on Florida’s physician workforce, Good said.

“UF in Gainesville and Jacksonville bring approximately 200 physicians each year to Florida to train.”

To view a recording of the event and additional photos and stories, visit us on Facebook at facebook.com/ufdrgator.

Dooley Noted

Dean Good hits the road

Several UF medical alumni have graciously hosted College of Medicine Dean Michael L. Good, MD HS '88, at informal gatherings around the state that allow the dean to share his vision for the future of UF medical education with their classmates and colleagues.

“Just as George Harrell had a vision for a new way to educate future doctors, we are defining our own vision as we reach a similar crossroad,” the dean said at a recent gathering. “It is our responsibility as the state’s elite medical school to revolutionize medical education—to develop the best and most innovative ways to teach the next generation of students.”

In the last year, Good has traveled to Tampa, Sarasota, Pensacola, Boca Raton and Ocala for the alumni meetings. In March he stayed close to home for get-togethers in Gainesville, and he will meet with alumni in New York later in the spring. If you would like information about a Dean’s visit in your area, please call the Office of Medical Alumni Affairs at 352-273-7986.

Is there a new doctor in the house?

Lauren Van Eldik grew up in a family with plenty of physicians. On May 19, the Van Eldiks will add one more doctor to their clan. Lauren is one of seven members of the class of 2012 with an immediate family member who also received a medical degree from the University of Florida. “I always knew she was going to be a physician, and her going to UF and becoming a Gator doc is an ultimate dream come true,” said Lauren’s dad, Richard Van Eldik, MD '80, a gastroenterologist from Ocala.

Congratulations to all soon-to-be Gator docs who will graduate in May!

Primary care training at the VA

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently approved a new Physician Assistant Residency Pilot Program in Primary Care at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System—just one of six such programs in the country. The program, which will begin July 1, is a collaboration between the Veterans Health System and the UF College of Medicine School of Physician Assistant Studies and includes two residency positions.

“This PA residency program will fill an important and currently missing educational need in the training of physician assistants,” said Good.

Pioneers in gene therapy

Twelve years ago, Earl and Christy Powell strengthened UF’s internationally recognized gene therapy program with a \$2 million contribution that established the Powell Gene Therapy Center within the College of Medicine. With many of the therapies pioneered at the Powell Center about to cross over from the lab to mainstream medicine, the Powells made another gift to help accelerate help for people with genetic diseases.

The Powell’s \$5 million gift in December established the Earl and Christy Powell University Chair in Gene Therapy and Genetic Research.

“Through strong endowments such as those by the Powells, the university and the Health Science Center are able to recruit and retain the best minds in medicine—scientists and physicians who shape the future of health care,” said UF President Bernie Machen.

Close Encounters

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM AND JESSICA JINAH SONG

For Gainesville family practitioner Daniel Rubin, MD '98, his preceptorship in the Florida panhandle during his first year of medical school at UF cemented his desire to pursue a career in primary care.

Now, the UF College of Medicine alumnus is a preceptor himself, helping current UF medical students gain valuable clinical experience for the first time.

The UF College of Medicine’s 130 first-year students completed the Introduction to Clinical Practice preceptorship in December. Pairing up with primary care physicians, students focus on taking a patient’s history, acquiring physical exam skills and helping with minor procedures.

“This is their first really significant patient contact,” said Robert Hatch, MD, a professor and director of medical education at the College of Medicine.

Not all medical schools offer preceptorships to first-year students, he said.

“It’s been relatively eye-opening,” said UF medical student Stephen Pape of his preceptorship with Rubin. “I think it really shows you how important preventive medicine is.”

This year, 37 students—the highest number ever—were assigned outside the North Central Florida area, including six students who completed preceptorships in other states, said Cynthia Freeman, coordinator of UF’s Area Health Education Center Program.

That was due in part to a cut in state funding that helped pay for students’ transportation and housing for North Central Florida preceptorships, said Hatch. So this year, assignments were made that allowed more students to live at home while doing their two-week preceptorships.

Casey Luckhurst said her preceptorship with David Remmer, MD, a family practitioner at Family Medicine at Haile Plantation in Gainesville and a 2001 UF COM graduate, was helpful.

“I think a lot of it is gaining that confidence and being comfortable with patients,” she said.

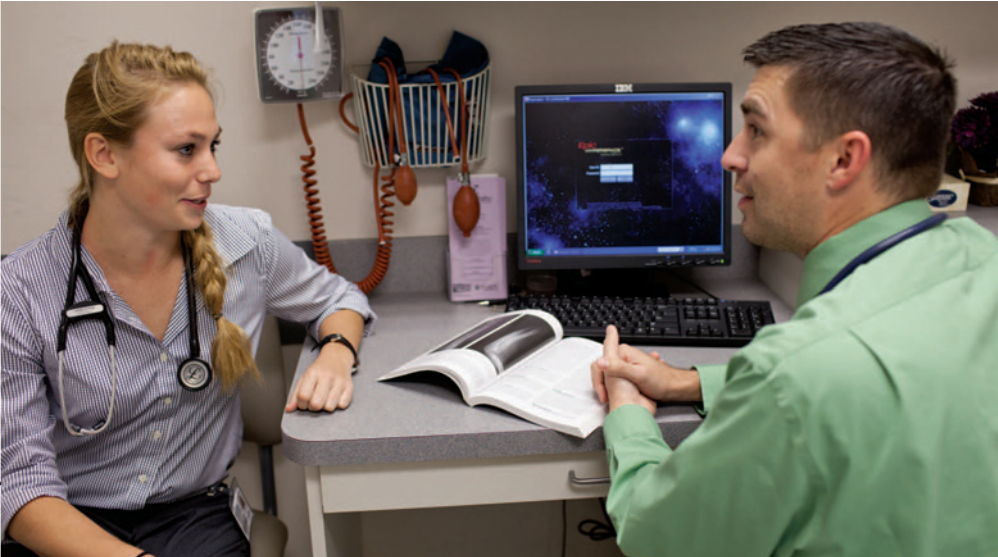


Photo by Jesse S. Jones

Preceptorships give first-year UF COM students, like Casey Luckhurst (left), clinical experience by pairing them with strong physician role models who demonstrate the relevance of basic science to the clinical practice of medicine. Luckhurst was paired with David Remmer, MD '01, a family practitioner at Family Medicine at Haile Plantation in Gainesville.

UF’s Road to Diversity

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM

Reuben Brigety, MD, began his journey in 1965 as the first African-American student to graduate from the UF College of Medicine, but the college’s road to diversity wasn’t without its challenges.



Photo by Maria Belen Farias

Reuben Brigety, MD '70, the UF COM’s first African-American graduate, stands with medical students Dan Alexis and Jessica Covington. Alexis and Covington are two of the current UF COM students who attended Brigety’s Jan. 12 History of Medicine lecture.

In fact, at the end of his first year of medical school, Brigety said he was given the option of repeating his first year or transferring to a historically black medical school.

“I said I’ll repeat the first year,” said Brigety, who was determined not to give up. He and classmate Earl Cotman, MD, were the first two African-Americans to graduate from the UF College of Medicine in 1970.

The Jacksonville obstetrician-gynecologist told his story Jan. 12 as part of the college’s History of Medicine lecture series.

Brigety, born in 1944, grew up in Daytona Beach during Florida’s Jim Crow segregation laws.

The Hon. Stephan Mickle, one of Brigety’s best friends who grew up with him in Daytona, also broke racial barriers. Now a federal judge, Mickle became the first African-American to receive an undergraduate degree from UF in 1965 and the second black student to graduate from the UF College of Law in 1970.

“Students wouldn’t talk to him, teachers wouldn’t engage him, people wouldn’t study with him,” Brigety said. “So I will always thank the judge for paving the road to diversity at the University of Florida.”

Brigety said he realized years later there were people who were pulling for him at UF, even if it wasn’t always obvious. He completed his residency in OB-GYN at Duval Medical Center in Jacksonville, and his feelings gradually warmed toward his alma mater.

“Life is full of chapters...some of them are bad chapters,” Brigety said. “But if you give up, you know where that book is going to end—on that bad chapter.”

Timeless Friendships

Alumni couple support UF COM over past 40 years

BY MELANIE STAWICKI AZAM

Drs. Jim and Nell Potter’s connections with the University of Florida run deep.

The couple are both 1963 College of Medicine alumni, Jim completed a pathology residency at UF and Nell discovered a love of adolescent medicine while working at UF’s student health care center.

The Potters settled in Pensacola, but they never forgot their ties to UF.

“Anytime that you get something from somebody, you kind of have to give back,” Nell said. “The medical school was certainly responsible for our being successful, so you feel like you have to give back to help others be able to be the same.”

Over the past 40 years, the Potters have donated generously to the university, particularly the College of Medicine. The couple’s overall support totals more than \$600,000, and Nell has served on the UF medical alumni board for 20 years. Nell also serves on the UF Foundation Board of Directors.

During a recent UF Foundation Board Stakeholders Weekend held in Gainesville, Michael L. Good, MD, dean of the College of Medicine, presented the Potters with a clock, signifying their timeless support and commitment to the college.

The couple’s most recent gift to the College of Medicine was a \$400,000 unrestricted endowment in Nell’s name for adolescent pediatrics, which is a bequest. Nell’s interest in adolescent health care began when she worked at UF’s Student Health Care Center from 1967 to 1972. She found she enjoyed working with young adults and teaching them to take responsibility for their own health and decisions.

“It was just a fun group to deal with,” she said.

Jim and Nell Potter have fond memories of their own days as students, although life was hectic. They met during their freshman year of medical school, married sophomore year and welcomed their first child during junior year. Nell was only one of two women who graduated in the class of 1963.

“I finished a rotation on midnight Saturday and fortunately she was born at 10:29 a.m. Sunday,” Nell recalled. “So I never went to sleep that night.” Their second child was born the year after medical school, and her third child was born her first year in practice.



Photo by Maria Belen Farias

Michael L. Good, MD, dean of the College of Medicine, presented Drs. Jim and Nell Potter with a clock, signifying their timeless support and commitment to the college, at a recent UF Foundation Board Stakeholders Weekend held in Gainesville. The couple are both 1963 UF College of Medicine alumni.

They later moved to Pensacola, where Jim worked as a pathologist and Nell was in private practice as an adolescent and young adult physician and a physician of student health at the University of West Florida.

The Potters have also supported the UF College of Medicine in its push to raise funding for a new medical education building.

They helped organize their class of 1963 in raising a \$25,000 alumni challenge donation and have personally hosted a Dean’s Conversation event in Pensacola.

Nell said it’s hard to find the original medical education building, which is surrounded by new structures. And with all the changes in technology over the past 40 years, it’s obvious that new infrastructure is needed, she said.

“Certainly the state’s not going to give money, so you’ve got to ask the people who benefitted,” she said. “Anything you value you have to support, that’s kind of the bottom line.”

Forming bonds between alumni and students

BY MINA RADMAN

Traveling across the nation to complete residency interviews can be expensive for budget-conscious medical students. The costs for airfare, hotel and food quickly add up, leaving students clamoring for cash and limiting the number of residency programs they visit.

Karina Reyner, a fourth-year medical student, chose to combat the high costs of interviewing by participating in the UF College of Medicine’s H.O.S.T. program. The H.O.S.T. program, which stands for Help Our Students Travel, matches fourth-year medical students to UF alumni living in various cities nationwide. The alumni provide students with a free place to stay during their trips, recommend sites to visit in the city and offer advice on residency training.

“The expenses of interviewing are really overwhelming,” Reyner said.

“When I looked more into (HOST), it worked out perfectly.”

In December, Reyner traveled to Denver to interview for the emergency medicine residency program at Denver Health and stayed with Jason Shofnos, MD ‘01, and his family. Shofnos, a cardiothoracic surgeon at St. John’s Hospital hosted four medical students in the span of a week.

“It’s nice interacting with the students and hearing their perceptions on medicine nowadays,” Shofnos said.

Shofnos and his wife, Tara, provided Reyner and another student, Kari Mader, with a key to their home, their guest room and the food in their kitchen.

“They offered to pick us up from the airport,” Reyner said, “but we both had rented cars.”

Shofnos said the students were often gone for most of the first day, participating in interviews and dinners held by the program, but most stayed an extra day to learn about Denver and spend time with his family.

“My kids love whenever we have company,” he said. “My daughter had broken her arm when all these people were staying with us, so they all gave her gifts and cards.”

He said he thinks participating in the program is a good way to give back to the university.

“I feel like UF did a lot for me, so this is the least I could do for people being trained,” Shofnos said.



Karina Reyner (far left) and Kari Mader (second from left) stayed with Tara and Jason Shofnos, MD, (far right), a UF College of Medicine class of 2001 graduate, as part of the H.O.S.T. program during their visit to Denver in December.

Get Social

Did you hear that the MCAT is changing? Or that families and friends of UF COM first-year students came to campus for a visit? Have you met our fourth-year students who are preparing for graduation or our student bloggers who shared how it felt to learn about the brain? ‘Like’ our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter @UFMED to stay updated on news like these and much more!





Dr. Gator

Dr. Gator is produced by UF&Shands Communications for alumni, faculty and friends of the UF College of Medicine.

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UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Stay Connected and Help Build the Future of Medicine

Building the FUTURE OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
ALUMNI WEEKEND / OCTOBER 19-21, 2012

By BRIANNA SWALES

Each year UF College of Medicine alumni take The Gator Nation by storm as they come back to Gainesville to relive old memories and create new ones. This year is no different, as Gator docs are invited to campus Oct. 19 – 21 to join classmates, friends, faculty and current medical students to celebrate their graduation anniversary and to learn about the latest developments taking place at the College of Medicine.

Weekend festivities will kick off on Thursday night at Emerson Alumni Hall with an exclusive event for George Harrell Club members in honor of their philanthropy.

Events will continue through Friday with educational workshops, campus tours, a notable alumnus lecture and a student “lunch and learn” panel. A dinner Friday night at the Hilton UF will honor the 10 celebrating classes, beginning with 1962 and including 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007.

On game day, alumni will have the opportunity to sport their orange and blue at a pregame tailgate party at the UF Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine Institute as they gear up to root on the Florida Gators against the South Carolina Gamecocks. For those not attending the game, a viewing party will follow.

Events will wrap up on Sunday at the Hilton UF Albert’s Restaurant with a breakfast with Dean Michael L. Good, MD, and faculty to learn about college news and future plans. For additional details, visit drgator.ufl.edu/aw.

Connect with us before, during and after the UF College of Medicine Alumni Weekend 2012.

Tweet your thoughts and favorite moments using #UFCOMaw and “Like” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ufdrgator to get involved in all the fun activities we have planned for the weekend!

Parting Shot



Photo by Jesse S. Jones

At a recent Conversation with the Dean gathering, UF College of Medicine Dean Michael L. Good, MD, shares the university’s plans to build a new medical education building. Good used photos and renderings to help demonstrate the need for new and improved spaces that correspond with the medical school’s restructured curriculum.

Scaling great heights for his patients

By JESSICA JINAH SONG

Hanging several feet in the air by a rope and no way to turn back, Raymond Benza, MD, took a leap of faith and jumped over a large gap from one side of the mountain he was climbing to another. But he missed.

His body slammed against hard rock of the Grand Teton, in Wyoming, and he saw stars. In the midst of confusion, pain and fear, all he could hear was his climbing trainer’s shouts, instructing him.

“Trust me, grab on the rope, and don’t look down!” the trainer yelled. “Don’t look back or too far ahead. We’re going to take one step at a time.”

Benza, a 1989 UF College of Medicine graduate, realized then that what the trainer told him was exactly what he tells his patients who suffer from a rare disease called pulmonary hypertension. The disease, for which there is no cure, affects 200,000 people worldwide and is characterized by continuous high blood pressure in the arteries that carry blood from the heart to the lungs.

Benza took up mountain climbing because of his patients, and one in particular.

“I would come into her room every day, knowing she was dying and feeling upset that there was nothing I could do,” said Benza, professor of

medicine at Temple University and the program director of advanced heart failure, transplant, mechanical circulatory support and pulmonary vascular diseases at the West Penn Allegheny Health System in Pittsburgh. “She’d sit me down and tell me it’s okay that I can’t help everyone, that I can’t move every mountain.”

His patient’s reference to mountains engraved a powerful image in Benza’s head, transforming the mountains from an obstacle to an opportunity. He decided that he would climb a mountain to raise awareness and money for pulmonary hypertension research.

Benza overcame that frightening slip and reached the summit of the Grand Teton in 2008. Two years later he tackled a greater height—Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa.

Benza, determined to make it to the top, battled the symptoms that accompany high altitude, which are similar to those of pulmonary hypertension, including shortness of breath and chest pain.

“As physicians, it’s important that we know how our patients feel on a daily basis,” Benza said. “It helps us to be more empathetic and understand their pain.”

Photo provided by Raymond Benza, MD



Raymond Benza, MD '89, (center) poses at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Benza and two colleagues, Robert Frantz, MD, and Jessica Lazar, PA, climbed the mountain to raise awareness for pulmonary hypertension.



Scan this QR code or visit drgator.ufl.edu to learn more about Raymond Benza, MD '89, who was recently knighted!