

Class of 2009 Graduation Speech

By Corinne Brann, Class President

Good morning, faculty, staff, friends, family and the Class of 2009. I stand before you today with the opportunity to speak as this Class of 2009 closes one of the biggest chapters of our lives. Today minds are racing with the memories of the last four years: some good, some bad, some will have undoubtedly changed our lives forever. The memories formed here at the FSU College of Medicine will be everlasting, and I will cherish every one. Today I would like to reminisce with my classmates and give you a glimpse of the past four years.

First, to help set the stage, you must know we have had the opportunity to spend these past four years with some of the kindest and most intelligent people one will ever meet. The first week of medical school orientation we each met 72 strangers whom we now call our friends, the ones graduating today. By the end of the first week, which also happened to be my birthday, one of these strangers made cupcakes to help me celebrate. I knew then I was surrounded by peers who would help me survive the next four years.

The next week anatomy began. We felt like we had just jumped onto a moving treadmill without time to stretch or warm up. We entered anatomy lab and stared death in the face for the first time. My team's cadaver was a bus driver who lost her battle with cancer. We spent the summer learning the basics of the human body from our first patients. Our anatomy professor, Dr. Payer, explained it was his job to open a fireman's water hose of information onto us and we were to catch whatever we could over the next three months. By the end of the summer, we were soaked.

During that time we also moved into our new homes. Not the apartments we were paying rent for but the learning centers on the second floor of the college. There we claimed a room and made it our own.

In addition, we began learning clinical technique in our clinical learning center, also known as the CLC. There we were videotaped while interacting with patient actors. We practiced our heart and lung exams as well as the more sensitive GU exams. In the CLC a student often forgets the most basic medical knowledge secondary to intense anxiety. I am convinced the faculty is hiding a video of CLC bloopers somewhere in the building. I must say, however, the faculty members were always kind when offering constructive criticism following even the most pathetic performance, using the sandwich method. They would give us feedback such as, *"You did a spectacular job listening to all five heart sound locations, but I must tell you the heart is actually on the left side of the body, not the right. Keep up the good work!"*

First year flew by. With the survival of neuroscience, anatomy, biochemistry and physiology, we were rewarded with a summer off when we worked, conducted research and traveled. We felt we had run a marathon and soon learned we had endured only one quarter of the race, with the most difficult stretch to come.

After these heavenly months we entered second year, which presented us with many challenges and a heavy course load. The year began with the dreaded lottery for our regional campus assignment. We tried everything to ensure we would be assigned to our preferred campus.

Second year was like no other. Dr. Klatt intrigued us and Dr. Ryerson sang to us. Our faculty pulled out all the stops to prepare us for STEP 1. We studied constantly, forgot friends' and family's birthdays and even forgot to pay bills. I know I came home more than once to an apartment without electricity.

We were also the survivors of many self-diagnosed illnesses. As each pathology lecture was presented we developed symptoms of new diseases ranging from lupus to ulcerative colitis, cardiomyopathy and pulmonary hypertension. Fortunately we all quickly recovered from our self-diagnosed ailments.

My class never fostered competitiveness. We shared notes, e-mailed article summaries and well-organized charts. We were rewarded at the end of the year with a 100% STEP 1 pass rate.

Following our STEP 1 success, we all parted ways to our assigned campuses and prepared to begin third year. We learned a number of lessons that year.

Surgery taught us how to multitask. I gained the skill of falling asleep standing while never easing on the retraction I was instructed to hold.

Pediatrics was full of surprises. We would walk into a room to find an angel on the exam table that quickly turned into a screaming mad child as soon as we reached for the otoscope. I quickly learned to examine the ears last and that I am easily over powered by anyone over the age of 12 months.

Obstetrics and gynecology taught us the importance of epidurals and shoe covers.

Family medicine and internal medicine demonstrated the importance of our PDAs. We were able to covertly research a pimp question, answer it correctly and take full credit for the knowledge. *Thank you, IT department!*

Finally there was Psychiatry, where we learned to listen. During the rotation we had the opportunity to delve into our patients' personality – whichever one it happened to be that day.

Fourth year was the year we had been waiting for since the first week of anatomy lab. It was everything we dreamt it would be. We were no longer concerned about grades. In fact, I stopped requesting my scores, figuring someone would notify me if I had not passed a rotation.

During fourth year we had a chance to regroup, find ourselves and reconnect with the world. Many of us traveled across the country in search of the perfect residency program and across the globe for international medicine and language experiences. We matched into exceptional programs and are now planning a new life, one we dream about and one that terrifies us: residency.

Over the past four years we learned our teachers were not always our attendings and professors. We were also taught by patients and nurses. The child with leukemia who never allowed anything to slow him down because life is for living. The homeless woman who reminded us of our own good fortunes. And even the unsuspecting dentist and bus driver who taught us human anatomy.

Today is a celebration of friendship, camaraderie, hard work, endurance and support.

Thank you to our friends and family who have built the platform on which we accept this great honor today.

Thank you to our administration and faculty for supporting us and teaching us lessons beyond medicine.

Thank you to my class. Thank you for the cupcakes, the low lottery number when it was needed most, the article summaries, the impeccable charts, the laughs, the friendships and the experiences. I will miss every one of you.

Finally, congratulations to the Class of 2009.