

## **A New Beginning**

By Leslie Davis-Singleton, Class of 2009 Valedictorian

Congratulations, everyone! If it was not for the support of our family and friends, many of us would never have reached this occasion. This is an exciting time for all of us. Right before your very eyes we are transforming from humble medical students into confident physicians. Four years ago it seemed as though this day would never be reached. But here we are, ready to start our new lives as interns. Before we realize, we will be taking in the sights and sounds of our new institutions wearing crisp, new white coats with large smiles on our bright and shining faces. Well, at least before the sleep deprivation sets in. We are ready to take on new responsibility and embark on a never-ending quest for knowledge. Along with this newfound responsibility come long hours, sleepless nights and even more sacrifices than before. However, it is accompanied by a certain satisfaction. For we understand that this is what is required to allow us to grow and develop into the physicians that we desire to become.

We have been called into a truly unique profession, one with high expectations and extraordinary responsibilities. To become an effective physician, more is required than just the possession of knowledge. As we depart today, I would like to share a few principles the College of Medicine has taught me and that I believe will assist in sculpting us into the exceptional physicians I know we all have the potential to become.

To whom much is given, much is required. As physicians we will be in a position that most people could only imagine. We will be provided with many opportunities and be looked upon as leaders in our communities. However, attached to this honor are certain responsibilities that go beyond the hospital walls. John D. Rockefeller Jr. stated "every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty." We must make serving others our mission.

Success is not measured by monetary worth. Dr. Ben Carson, head of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins, once said, "What is important, what I consider success is that we make a contribution to our world." We entered into this profession based on our desire to help others. While we will have great earning potential, we must remember where true success lies.

Listen to your patients. Pay attention to what they are actually saying as well as their nonverbal cues. Remember what we learned in first-year doctoring, that a good history of present illness can be the most important clue to the actual diagnosis.

Learning does not end at graduation. We must commit to staying up with the current literature. We will be constantly bombarded with new evidence. In order to best serve our patients we will have to stay informed of the information that is appropriate for our practice.

Remember that we are part of a team. The team not only consists of our fellow residents and attendings but the nursing staff and other individuals who allow the hospital to function on a daily basis. Our patients will receive the best results when we all work together.

Lastly, practice with excellence. If we search out and develop our strengths and strive to practice to the best of our abilities, while avoiding shortcuts, we will be able practice medicine the way we would like it to be practiced on ourselves.

As we begin our residency training this July, let us take with us these principles the College of Medicine has endeavored to instill within us. And as we walk down the halls of our new hospitals, we can walk with pride, for we know we have been well-educated and well-trained and are ready for the challenges that lie ahead. Congratulations, class, we did it. We are now doctors, and we are the class of 2009.