

## MEDICAL SCHOOL LIFE

# 4 ways organized medicine helps medical students grow as leaders

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Leadership in medicine takes on many forms, and it is never too early to get started. Hundreds of leadership positions in organized medicine can be an entree to a career as an advocate on behalf of patients and the profession.

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Alex Tolbert, a second-year medical student at the Florida State University College of Medicine (FSU), outlines some of the benefits for those looking to build their

leadership experience through organized medicine.

## Barriers to entry are low



*Florida State medical student Alex Tolbert.*

Medical students may start their undergraduate medical education with little policy or advocacy experience, but Tolbert said that should not be a barrier. Now a member of the [AMA Medical Student Section](#) (AMA-MSS), she started her leadership track with the local AMA chapter at FSU.

Tolbert attended one of the AMA Special Meetings held virtually during an earlier phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was just there to listen as a bystander. It was so fascinating. I knew I had to get involved in it somehow," she said. "I applied for a standing committee, still not completely knowing what I was getting myself into, but eager to explore the opportunities the AMA has to offer further."

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## Opportunity is ample

Standing committees function under the governing councils in [AMA member groups or sections](#). Tolbert joined the AMA-MSS Committee on Legislation and Advocacy and is currently on the Advocacy and Engagement subcommittee. The group just

sponsored a webinar for medical students and physicians on the firearm violence public health crisis and its impact on the practice of medicine.

"It's been captivating to see how one's ability to engage with the AMA is what you make of it," Tolbert said. "Whether you want to take a small role or a larger role, there is a place for everybody, and I think that's really heartening to see as a medical student with the inclusivity and support that the AMA offers."

The [AMA Succeeding in Medical School series](#) offers tips and other guidance on a wide range of critical topics, including preparing for USMLE<sup>®</sup> exams, navigating clinical rotations, publishing scientific research, and maintaining optimal health and wellness.

## You can learn by doing

Through her involvement with the AMA-MSS, Tolbert has found the opportunity to engage her peers as a speaker. She recently presented to a large group of medical students in Washington during the [AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference](#). The topic of her presentation was expanding the [number of available residency positions](#) through a mental health lens.

"I like to dig deeper into advocacy and just kind of see what opportunities are out there," she said. "When the opportunity arose to apply for a speaking position at the conference, I thought to myself, 'why not give it a shot?' To my delight, my application to speak at the conference was accepted. The chance to speak on this issue was truly an honor, and it was really exciting, too. Being able to talk to students and legislators afterward about expanding residency positions was really meaningful to me. When I gave the speech, I took care to emphasize the critical role of mental health aspect in this conversation."

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## You get to pursue your passions

The issue of reducing [firearm violence](#) resonates with Tolbert. But the opportunities to shape the future of medicine are voluminous.

“There’s no better way to start than joining the Medical Student Section and applying to a standing committee or getting involved in your local chapter,” Tolbert said. “There really is a place for everyone in the MSS. And if you have an issue you are passionate about, we value and welcome new perspectives. We want to hear what you have to say. We want to know how not only we can serve our patients better, but also how we can serve our medical students better.”

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