

## First-year med students receive their white coats in an annual rite of passage

Friday, September 7, 2012

Ron Hartung

08/21/2012 12:36 am



Family members watch proudly from the audience as the students are called one by one to receive their white coats.

Some medical schools' first-year students have been waiting all summer for fall classes to begin. But at the Florida State University College of Medicine, the Class of 2016 already has wrapped up one semester, conquered the anatomy lab and begun wearing the timeless symbol of the profession: the white coat.

At the White Coat Ceremony in a jam-packed Ruby Diamond Concert Hall, one by one the 120 students were helped into their coats. Surrounded on this rainy evening by teary-eyed parents, smiling faculty members and wailing babies, the students were repeatedly reminded that this is not just any garment, not just any profession.

"Patients trust you," said the featured speaker, Dr. Luckey Dunn, dean of Florida State's Daytona Beach Regional Campus. "You have to be worthy of that trust . . . You make a difference one patient at a time." Telling them that they'd be entering a fast-changing medical world, he added: "What never changes is the value of a compassionate, competent physician."

Speaking without a script, Dunn cracked up the audience with a story about a cantankerous patient who monopolized his time — until he figured out how two quarters could solve his

problem. Retelling it here wouldn't do it justice. But you can see him tell the story if you watch the White Coat video.

Included among the students in new white coats was Dunn's son, Clint. He was one of six students who were "coated" by their physician relatives. Danny Miller, for example, was coated by his brother, Dr. Javier Miller Jr., an alumnus of the inaugural Class of 2005.

Before the white coats took center stage, 14 fourth-year students were officially inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society: Jason Boothe, Laura Davis, Amy Haddock, Zachary Hale, Brittany Jackson, Jennifer Owen, Shannon Scott, Shawn Shah, Joshua Smith, Heather Staples, Cindy-Sue Turco, Melissa Velarde, Sarah Weaver and Claudia Zapata. (Two inductees, Zach Folzenlogen and Austin Henkel, were unable to attend.)

Boothe provided one of the evening's most memorable moments when he performed a poem he had written from his medical student experiences. "I saw . . . I watched . . . a person . . . die today," he began. ". . . I can't stop thinking I'm the one who failed! . . . How Cold and Lonely Death must be." (See the complete poem below.)

The Class of 2016 is the 12<sup>th</sup> in the young medical school's history. The College of Medicine takes great pains to diversify its student body to help meet Florida's need for a more diverse physician work force. The college even works with middle and high schools to seek out and support prospective medical students who might return to their hometowns to practice.

More than any previous class, this one illustrates the effectiveness of those efforts. More than 20 percent of the students were admitted through College of Medicine outreach programs, resulting in a remarkable degree of diversity: Thirty-seven percent of the class is minority (13 percent black, 12 percent Hispanic, 11 percent Asian/Pacific Islands and 1 percent Native American).

College of Medicine Dean John Fogarty thanked all who attended for supporting their favorite students – and jokingly warned the families not to seek medical advice from them just yet.