



UNNM

SCHOOL *of* MEDICINE

Supporting Your
Medical Student From
White Coat Ceremony
through Graduation

Office of Medical Student Affairs
Office of Medical Student Wellness

Dear Family and Loved Ones of Our Students:

Welcome to the White Coat Ceremony for your incoming medical student. We hope that today is a very special and memorable day as your student takes some of the first steps to becoming a doctor.

These first steps are the start of a challenging journey. Learning about the human body in health and disease and developing the skills needed to care for patients are life-long tasks. Medical school will be a thrilling and rewarding time for your student, as well as a time of tremendous growth. Your student may however, face challenges along the way that lead to questions about personal values, priorities, abilities, and career choice.

This guide will help you find ways to support your student throughout his or her medical school experience. The idea for creating it came from the Indiana University School of Medicine and Suzanne Kunkle, PhD, Director of Counseling Services and Wellness there. We are grateful to Dr. Kunkle for her time and knowledge, and for her generous permission to use material that appears in the Indiana University guide.

If you have concerns about your student, please encourage him or her to reach out to one of the many sources of support available at the UNM School of Medicine. We are here to support the students in the Class of 2021 in any way we can on their journey to becoming competent, caring, and dedicated physicians.

Sheila Hickey, MD,
Associate Dean
Office of Medical Student Affairs

Liz Lawrence, MD,
Director, Medical
Student & Physician
Wellness

Important Things to Know about Medical School

- Most of your loved one's classmates were at the top of their undergraduate classes and accustomed to earning A's. This means your student might not be at the top of the class anymore. Please let them know this is all right and that they are still intelligent and amazing. There is nothing "average" about being a medical student.
- Your student might be surprised by how hard they have to work and how much time medical school requires. You might be too. You will both adapt, but allow time for adjustment.
- There will be fewer visits home, especially if you live far away from Albuquerque. At times, even though the student wants to come home, school has to come first.

Do:

- Still invite them to family events, but make it clear that it is OK if they can't come
- Assume your student is telling the truth when you hear, "I have to study" or "I am busy." Allow them the time they need for work
- Try not to give your student a hard time if they have to cancel something – even at the last minute
- Plan family trips well in advance
- If your student wants to balance medical school with other activities, encourage them to get involved at whatever level they are comfortable. They will be much happier and more successful if they believe these upcoming years are part of life rather than a sacrifice of life.
- Medical school can be an emotional roller coaster. You may receive calls full of tears, complaints, and self-doubt. Listen, remind your student of how special they are, and offer emotional support.

Four Tips for Communicating with a Medical Student

(From the AMA Alliance magazine, Physician Family, accessed at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/ama-wire/post/4-tips-communicating-medical-student>. There is a link to *Physician Family* magazine at this site.)

1. **Ask about what they are studying.** This is a great way to connect with one another, and it can help your student retain what they are spending time learning.
2. **Choose your moments wisely.** Wait until your student takes a break from studying, or set aside a certain time every day to talk about family, friends and future plans. Forcing conversations when your med student counterpart is deep into studying can lead to frustration.
3. **Keep a shared calendar.** Whether the calendar is on your fridge or shared online, both of you should add events, important test dates and other specific dates so you can spot conflicts early and plan accordingly.
4. **Talk about money.** A medical student's life can be expensive with textbooks, supplies, study materials and exam fees. It is important that you both know how much money you have, how you are going to budget and what you need to be saving for.

And two more...

5. **Get a class and exam schedule.** You will have a better understanding of good times to reach your student and of the weeks when they might be particularly busy.
6. **Don't judge how your student manages time.** Instead, ask them how their schedule is working for them and how you can be of help.

Tips for Spouses/Partners/Significant Others

- Help your student find a schedule that works for them AND for you. Some students stay at school to work when classes are over and take the evening off. Some students need a break after class and use the evening to study. Establish a routine that works for everyone.
- Create a loving safe home environment for studying and relaxing.
- You have needs too. This guide focuses on your student, but do communicate your own needs about time together, help around the house, time with friends, etc.
- Offer to help with some of the studying. Can you quiz your student on flash cards? Are you willing to have your student practice physical exam skills on you?
- If your partner cannot make it home for dinner, offer to take dinner to school occasionally so you can have an hour together.
- Encourage regular exercise - and, if appropriate, exercise together. Exercise has been shown to be one of the most important factors to help students manage stress and stay healthy during medical school.
- Remember, your student relies on you for love and support – even if they sometimes seem to be dismissive. Remind them that you know they will be a great doctor someday. Be patient. Be flexible.
- Try to get to know the significant others of your partner's classmates. You can exchange stories about medical school and offer each other support and perspective.
- On www.studentdoctor.net, there are forums for spouses and partners. Also, check out Physician Family Magazine at <http://www.physicianfamilymedia.org/about>
- The UNMH Alliance is for families of medical students and residents. Check them out at:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/unmmedspouses/>

Website: <https://unmhalliance.wordpress.com/>

Random Acts of Kindness

Sometimes students feel too tired or too busy to complete the errands of everyday life, and sometimes they can even feel too overwhelmed to accept an invitation for dinner. Our students are grateful when their family members, partners, and friends occasionally take the initiative to relieve them of other responsibilities.

Consider:

- Buying and delivering a week's worth of groceries
- Delivering some homemade meals that can be frozen and used as needed
- Dropping off healthy snacks prepackaged in individual serving size containers that the student can grab on the go
- Filling the car with gas
- Taking the car to the shop when it needs attention
- Washing a few loads of laundry
- Supplying some cleaning goods or household supplies
- Babysitting the kids or pets
- Offering to help clean or repair things
- Giving a gift certificate for a massage

Random Acts of Support

- Listen to your student – just listen. Don't judge, don't try to fix a problem – just listen. The student may just need to vent or have his/her story witnessed.
- Send texts/e-mails/voice mails/cards of encouragement. Do not be offended if your gestures go unanswered or unmentioned for a few days.

When Students Should Seek Help

Sometimes, students need to speak with a trained professional. Here are some reasons to encourage them to ask for help:

- When they seem to be isolating themselves from you or other close associates
- When they seem to be hiding details about feelings or experiences they would normally have shared
- When they describe feeling isolated and having no one care about how they feel
- When they feel badly or down for weeks and don't "snap out" of feeling this way
- When they seem stuck in a behavior, thoughts, or feelings that they want to change but seem unable to.
- When they might want the perspective of a trained professional.
- When they believe their work and/or relationships may be compromised by how they are feeling, thinking, or behaving.
- When they want to learn a specific coping skill, i.e. relaxation, biofeedback, assertiveness, etc.
- When they want help communicating better with those they love.
- When their self-esteem seems to be draining away and/or they feel overwhelmed with responsibilities.
- When they are using alcohol or illicit drugs to "self-medicate" or to make them feel better.
- When they describe themselves as burnt-out or emotionally exhausted.
- When they want to work on emotional health and personal growth.

UNM School of Medicine Resources for Student Support

- Dr. Sheila Hickey, Associate Dean, Office of Medical Student Affairs and Dr. Teresa Vigil, Assistant Dean, Office of Medical Student Affairs. (505) 272-3414. SHickey@salud.unm.edu, or TVigil@salud.unm.edu. The Office of Medical Student Affairs is the main office providing students with academic advising and with information on away rotations, time off, class schedules, residency applications, Board exams, and the day-to-day logistics of being a medical student. Dr. Hickey and Dr. Vigil are available to meet with any student who has concerns or wants to discuss their progress in medical school.
- Dr. Liz Lawrence, Director, Medical Student and Physician Wellness, Office of Medical Student Affairs. (505)272-3414. Elawrence@salud.unm.edu. Dr. Lawrence is committed to seeing that UNM medical students graduate from the School of Medicine as healthy or healthier as when they entered. She is available to meet with any student who has concerns about health and wellness, stress, anxiety, nutrition, sleep, exercise, or integrating school-home life.
- Pam Devoe, PhD, Program Director, Office of Academic Resources and Support. (505)272-8972. PDevoe@salud.unm.edu. Dr. Devoe and her staff are available to meet with any student concerned about study habits, study strategies, grades, testing anxiety, evaluation, remediation, and mentored scholarly projects.
- Cheri Koinis, PhD, Clinical Psychologist. (505)272-3898. CKoinis@salud.unm.edu. Dr. Koinis is available to meet with students for counseling related to depression, anxiety, relationships, grief, academic pressures, stress management or academic-personal life balance. She is also the ADA liaison for all Health Sciences students.

UNM School of Medicine Resources for Student Support, *continued*

- Dr. Jeffrey Dunn, Psychiatrist. Dr. Dunn is available to meet with students for diagnosis and treatment of depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues. He can be reached at JeDunn@salud.unm.edu or 272-6130.
- Dr. Jonathan Bolton, Director of Health Sciences Center Office of Professionalism. (505) 272-6663. JWBolton@salud.unm.edu. The Office of Professionalism is dedicated to promoting humane medical care, effective teaching environments, and a respectful work environment. Dr. Bolton and this office are available to respond to reports of unprofessional behaviors and concerns about professionalism.
- Each student in the Class will be assigned to a Learning Community, led by a faculty member dedicated to medical education and student support. Encourage your student to check in regularly and often with their Learning Communities mentor about any academic or personal concerns.
- The University of New Mexico Student Health and Counseling (SHAC). Students may walk into SHAC on the main campus Monday through Friday 10:00AM to 4:00PM or may call (505) 277-3136 for an appointment Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Crossroads is a student advocacy organization promoting the health and well-being of all medical students. The membership consists of elected representatives from each class and several physicians at large. For additional information, contact HSC-OMSA@salud.unm.edu.
- Agora is a hotline for students to talk about personal or academic problems they may be having. Volunteers at Agora are trained peer counselors who offer compassionate and non-judgmental listening. The Agora hotline is (505)277-3013. Their website is <http://www.unm.edu/~agora/index.htm>

Sexual Harassment and Assault

The University of New Mexico is committed to maintaining a campus environment that is free from sexual harassment and assault. To ensure that the best and most effective services and process for handling sexual assault on campus are available, UNM has created a Sexual Misconduct and Assault Response Team (**SMART**).

SMART is part of the university's overall efforts to reduce sexual violence on campus. It is a victim centered, victim controlled coordinated response team composed of community and university organizations to quickly respond to cases of sexual violence while providing appropriate services to all parties involved. SMART responders make services for victims a priority. Victims of sexual assault may choose to activate one, or all, components of the response team: medical, counseling, law enforcement, and/or the student conduct process.

If your student has been sexually assaulted it is important to remember the assault is **not the student's fault**. Seek the appropriate services so all of the students' needs can be met. If the student wishes to be accompanied by a trained and sensitive advocate, he or she can **call the Rape Crisis Center's 24-hr hotline at 266-7711** and an advocate will meet the student.

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) 24-hr hotline **505.884.7263**
- Rape Crisis Center of Central New Mexico 24-hr hotline **505.266.7711**
- Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) 24-hr number **505.277.3136**
- UNM Police Department (UNMPD) 24-hr number **505.277.2241**
- Dean of Students **505.277.3361**

Other contacts:

The LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center provides a safe and welcoming environment for students to receive support and advocacy services for a number of areas. It can be accessed at <http://loborespect.unm.edu>

The UNM Office of Equal Opportunity provides information on UNM's response to campus sexual assaults <http://oeo.unm.edu>

Equal Opportunity

The University of New Mexico is committed to providing equal educational and employment opportunity regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sex, sexual preference, ancestry, or medical condition. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance by way of grant, contract, or loan. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is similar in its prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

Issues regarding equal opportunity should be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) at 505-277-5251.

The Office of Medical Student Wellness at the University of New Mexico (UNM) School of Medicine is committed to all of its students graduating from medical school as healthy as - or healthier than - when they started their training. Our curriculum includes explicit teaching to help our students manage stress, integrate their personal and professional lives, and incorporate self-care into their professional identity.

Please consider a contribution to the Office of Student Wellness to help us fulfill our mission. Your donation will greatly assist us in some of the following core areas: provide a meal for a student support group; sponsor activities at our annual Wellness Retreat; buy exercise equipment for students; or, cover the cost of materials and snacks used in workshops and classes on medical student health, wellness, and resiliency.

We want and need our students to thrive in medical school and in their future careers as physicians and leaders in New Mexico. Through your generous support at any level, you can help us achieve this goal.

Thank you.

To make a gift, please follow the link below:

<https://www.unmfund.org/fund/medical-student-wellness/>