Home for the Holidays

The air is getting a little bit chillier and the first few snowflakes are falling - all signs that winter is coming. It's time to cuddle up inside with your loved ones, drink some hot cocoa, and reflect back on the year we've shared. We've all come so far during 2019: the M4’s are getting ready to graduate, the M3’s have been putting their clinical skills to the test during clerkships, the M2’s are gearing up for Step One, and the M1’s have found their groove and are well on their way to becoming excellent physicians.

While medical school life moves at a break-neck pace, we'd like to urge our colleagues and dear readers to slow down for a second. Revel in the vibrant reds and oranges of autumn leaves. Marvel at the peaceful stillness of a fresh snowbank. And always remember that we are a family here at UICOMP and we will always support you. Whether you're an M1 just finding your footing in handling this whole "doctor" thing or you've been in clinical practice for decades, we share the similar struggles and have faith that we are able to overcome them. And that is something I will always be thankful for.

Anna Kolasa (M2)
World AIDS Day  
Saturday, November 30th  
11:00 AM; George Washington Carver Center  
Central Illinois FRIENDS is hosting their annual observation of World AIDS Day to raise awareness, memorialize, and reflect on the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic throughout the past few decades. Music, guest speakers, and refreshments will be provided.

Internal Medicine Career Specialty Webinar  
Tuesday, December 3rd  
4:00 PM; UICOMP C114  
Dr. Finn from Chicago and Dr. Lynch from Peoria will speak at this informative session on careers in Internal Medicine.

Personal Financial Health Workshop  
Tuesday, December 3rd  
5:15 PM – 6:00 PM; UICOMP A100-3  
This is a workshop that will cover basic consumer finance topics including credit scores, identity theft and how to avoid it, and pre-tax deductions and estate planning. These are important things that can help you maximize your financial wellness now and in the future! Click here to RSVP.

2019 Holiday Breakfast  
Thursday, December 5th  
7:30 AM – 9:00 AM; UICOMP cafeteria  
Please join us for breakfast to celebrate the holiday season! Music by Docapella at 7:30 AM. Please RSVP to sdoerr@uic.edu no later than Tuesday, November 26th.

UICOMP Unit Parties  
Wednesday, December 11th  
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM; UICOMP  
Food will be served all throughout the building. Please stop in for good food and holiday cheer.

OSF Children's Hospital "Kid's New Year's Eve" Volunteer Event  
Tuesday, December 31st  
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM; Peoria Civic Center  
Combine doing good and having fun by helping OSF CHOI run the Wii "Let's Dance" game at their booth during the Kid's New Year's Eve event, for any length of time. If interested please contact Caelin LaFary at Caelin.A.LaFary@osfhealthcare.org for further information.

SnowBall  
Saturday, January 11th  
6:00 PM - 11:00 PM; The Warehouse on State Street  
Come and enjoy dinner, drinks, and dancing! There will be a photobooth, a DJ, and a good time for all. Click here to register. Registration due by Monday, December 30th.

For a full listing of events, visit the Student Events Calender here
UMSC Updates

UMSC held its second meeting of the academic year on Saturday, November 16th, in Rockford. The meeting covered a number of topics germane to the student experience here at UICOM. Maureen Richards, PhD, named Rockford’s Assistant Dean for Medical Education and Evaluation in July of this year, addressed the Council, highlighting her ongoing efforts to improve access to clinical experiences in Rockford. She also discussed the challenges of managing regional variation in the context of an aligned, cross-campus curriculum, and her work with Chicago and Peoria to continuously improve the caliber of medical education.

Updates from our sister campuses at Chicago and Rockford featured work by CMSC (the Chicago Medical Student Council) to collect student questions about tuition and budgeting for Dean Van Neck and also their efforts, under the leadership of Pres. Natasha Mehta of Chicago, to advocate for CampusCare access to long-acting contraceptives. The UMSC representatives voted to create committees on each campus to assess contraceptive coverage, which will deliver information and recommendations to the Council at the third meeting on January 9th (WebEx). If you would like to be part of this important work, you can contact Rep. Max Ellithorpe (ellitho1@uic.edu) of Peoria, who will serve as the contraceptive access committee point person here in Peoria.

Other legislative points of note:

- Discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts across campuses resulted in the creation of a committee to deliver its findings in January, led by Ricky Ceppi of Rockford (eceppi2@uic.edu). The committee is seeking membership, and those interested in helping with DEI endeavors should contact him.
- A resolution, passed by majority vote, to standardize the school’s nomenclature as the University of Illinois College of Medicine, in order to avoid confusion with UIC-centric branding.
- A mental health review of services and gap assessment, with an interim report to be delivered to UMSC President Matthew Durst in December. Please contact Max Ellithorpe, committee chair, if you would like to help in the due diligence process.
- Increase financial transparency from the administration and a provision of equitable and valuable Step 1 resources across each campus, both of which were referred to the Committee on Tuition and Student Fees (CTSF), co-chaired by Rep. Nick Curran of Chicago (ncurra3@uic.edu) and Pres. Christian Schmidt of Rockford (cpschmid@uic.edu).
- That the College decrease in-state tuition whenever it decreases out-of-state tuition—passed by majority vote—to be passed on to the relevant administrators for consideration.
- Legislation slated for the January meeting includes improving gender equality between campuses, which is being led by Pres. Ellen Cealey of Peoria (eceale2@uic.edu) and Essie Ghafoor of Chicago (sghafo3@uic.edu).

Contact AJ Heaps, Communications Chair, at aheaps2@uic.edu for any UMSC related inquiries or comments.

Alex Matelski (M4)
Spooktacular Soiree
On Friday, November 1st UICOMP students took a break from the books to put their best costumed foot forward at the first ever Spooktacular Soiree Halloween Party, hosted by the Kickapoo Creek Winery. Attendees enjoyed a night of socializing, drinking and dancing to the scary sounds of UICOMP’s own DJ Catnap. The night’s masked escapades culminated with the solo and group costume contests, with Demetrios Maroutsos taking the top prize in the individual category as Stanley Yelnats from the book “Holes”. The group contest was won by Jordan Boyle and Brock Taylor as Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling in the movie “La La Land”. The chills and thrills of the night were capped off when revelers estimated the weight of the Giant Pumpkin (final weight: 44lbs!), and enjoyed homemade S’mores around the bonfire, keeping the Sunday Scaries at bay for at least one more day.

Craig Kym (M3)

Peds Halloween Party is a Spooky Success
Kids gathered the UICOMP halls October 26th, 2019 as Peoria hosted its annual UICOMP Pediatric Halloween Party for Children with Diabetes. I had a chance to talk to one of this year’s organizers, Danielle Klimas, about the event:

AJ: Talk to me about the purpose of the event.
DK: The event was aimed at showing support for the children in our community living with diabetes and their families. We hoped to show the children that despite living with a chronic illness centered on close diet monitoring they can still enjoy sugar-filled holidays such as Halloween just like any other kid.
AJ: I saw a little of what went on that day, but talk me through some of the activities you had that day.

DK: We put together lots of activities with highlights like making monster slime, spooky face-painting, bowling, and a wrap-the-mummy station. Of course, we had tons of candy and included handouts with nutritional information. The second major component of the event featured a student-created & run Haunted House which many children went through multiple times. We also had the pleasure of having Docapella perform a Disney Villain compilation for the kiddos.
AJ: Do you have a favorite part of the afternoon?
DK: Overall, I think my favorite part of participating in the event was seeing the care-free joy the festivities brought to the children who attended.

AJ Heaps (M4)
Interview with a Medical Student and Her Service Dog

Some of you readers might have noticed a new fuzzy face has joined the UICOMP family. Today, we’re interviewing Anna Serrano, M2 to talk about her service dog Benji, what life as a medical student with a service dog is like, and that burning question on everyone’s minds: Can we pet your dog?

So, Anna, can you tell me a little bit about your dog?

This is Benji, a service dog that’s trained to help me with my narcolepsy. He’s a Goldendoodle, 16-months-old, and he came from Paws: Giving Independence, an Illinois service dog program. Their mission is to train service dogs to assist people with a variety of different disabilities while providing support to encourage independence. They obtain many of their animals from shelters and rescue groups! Benji’s a calm dude and LOVES people. He’s real friendly and loves to sleep (He’s as much of a fan of sleep as I am!). He likes to cuddle, get pets, and he’s very treat motivated. Some of his favorite treats are carrots, My Dog’s Bakery cookies, and Starbucks Puppuccino’s. If there’s one thing he’s taught me, it’s to go to shelters and adopt dogs. You’d be surprised with their amazing potential and they really need homes.

How does Benji help you?

Benji wakes me up when I fall asleep by barking or nudging me when he sees my head fall. He also helps me wake up with my morning alarms and during naps. He’s able to lead me to a chair when I get tired, and bring me my medication. He definitely keeps me awake.

Is that everything Benji can do?

Of course not! He’s a really smart dog. He can turn on and off lights, open doors, pick things up off the ground (phones, pencils), get his leash, play catch, and even sit on a chair. His bedside manner is great! He’s a solid homie and is there for me when I need it. When I need some loving, he’ll put his head on my lap and keep me calm.
Interview with a Medical Student and Her Service Dog (cont.)

What was the process like to get Benji?
It’s a funny story. I applied for a service dog 5 years ago. At the time, Paws Giving Independence did not train service dogs for narcolepsy so I was out of luck. But, around January of this year, I received phone call saying they had successfully trained a dog for narcolepsy. So now, I have Benji. We go to classes every Tuesday evening for 2 hours to work on basic commands and connect with each other. I still remember the first weekend I received Benji to see if he’d be a good fit with my family. He’s stayed with me ever since. Now, we continue to go to 2 hour classes every Tuesday and every day we do training for 1 hour.

What’re his favorite hobbies/food?
He loves playing catch. Loves it! It doesn’t matter what toy you’re throwing him (but he prefers squeaky tennis balls). His favorite toy is a squeaky purple dinosaur. His favorite food is the doggie cupcake from Sprinkles Cupcake.

What’s it like having a service dog as a medical student?
I’m not gonna lie, it’s a lot of work. Every day is a training day. Just like humans, dogs have their off days too. Some days he’ll listen, other times he’s in his own world. I’m glad I have a support system to help me take care of him. But overall, it’s a blessing. I didn’t realize how much he actually improves my life. We have our good times and our RUFF patches, but I look forward to waking up and going to class with him every day.

So... Can we pet him?
Good question. Majority of the time, if you ask, I will most likely say yes (as long as I’m not in a hurry). But the biggest thing is to ask. I need to make sure to give him the command to go and say hi to people. This is key to his training. Some days he’s not focusing so I’ll have to say no, but just come back later and hopefully he’s doing better that day!

If you’re interested in learning more about Paws Giving Independence and would like to donate or volunteer, visit their website at http://givingindependence.org

Anna Kolas (M2)
In this section we ask you, the readers, about the student interest groups that you’re involved with. Each month, we highlight a group and find out what they do and why you should join.

What made you start this SIG?
The Christian Medical and Dental Association (CMDA) is a national organization that was started for Christian medical students, residents, and healthcare professionals to have an opportunity to fellowship together and perform outreach activities both locally and internationally. Our local chapter has been on our campus for several years and has been a great outlet for students to share their experiences and learn from Christian physician mentors. We are also affiliated with the physician group, the Christian Medical Association.

Who should join?
Anyone interested in being part of a Christian community and having a group for fellowship and encouragement while going through medical school or learning more about being a Christian physician should join.

What does your SIG do?
We have weekly lunch meetings for prayer and devotions on campus. We also have monthly potlucks and events with the physicians of the local Christian Medical Association. We have also recently started worship nights and volunteering together at community events.

What are your SIG’s goals for this year?
We’re hoping to increase our visibility on campus this year and increase our outreach in the community. We also hope to have more representatives attend CMDA conferences and global health conferences in the future.

When is your next meeting?
We have lunch meetings each Monday on campus. These meetings are informal and everyone usually brings their own lunch. You can email to be added to the mailing list for reminders and locations.

For those who want to join, who should they contact?
Anyone who is interested in just hanging out or has any concerns about what it’s like to live this career with a spouse and children they can feel free to reach out to me, Andy Meister, or Leah Beth Carter. I have been married for almost 7 years now and with 4 kids at home it can be a lot, but you can totally do it! I just want to make sure that it is possible to have a loving home life they want AND the career they want. It’s a lot of work but it’s worth it. We have been able to build relationships with many families in tons of specialties so it you want to get some mentorship from people further down the career path let us know!

Amith Rao (M3)
Know of anything Pons-tacular?

We are always looking for stories, events, or accomplishments that happen around UICOMP. If you have a story you’d like to see included in the Peoria Pons, please email written articles to Anna Kolasa or Christine Pak. Please keep all articles to 250 words or less; photos are always encouraged. Deadline: 25th of every month.

THE LIST OF STUDENT INTEREST GROUPS AND CONTACT INFO
Click here

THE LIST OF ELECTED STUDENT LEADERS 19-20
Click here

University Medical Student Council (UMSC) Quarterly Meeting

Thursday
January 11th
10:00 AM
@ Urbana

YOUR PMSC 2019 - 2020
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