# Welcome UICOMP Class of 2026!

This past summer, UICOMP introduced its next class of bright-eyed first-year students to its campus. Following a week of orientation, they had the privilege of receiving their white coats during Peoria's annual White Coat Ceremony: a reminder that a physician is more than a title, but a duty to keep humanity within the healthcare industry. From the rest of the UICOMP, we wish them the absolute best as they rise to the occasion and navigate through their first semester of medical school and gain the skills they will need to one day serve their community.

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**Upcoming Events**
- p. 2
- Class of 2026 Tackles Block 1
- p. 3
- Student National Medical Association
- p. 4
- Step 1: New Scores, Same Exam?
- p. 5
- Throw A P(h)ie!
- p. 6
- Service/SIG Spotlight: American Red Cross Blood Drive
- p. 7
- Other Announcements
- p. 8
- Staff Credits
- p. 8
Upcoming Events

Ob/Gyn SIG Feminine Hygiene Drive
Now through Tuesday, November 1
This week is the last week the ObGyn and Family Medicine SIGs are collecting feminine hygiene products! Collection boxes will be in the front lobby of UICOMP and the student breakroom at OSF. Donations can also be made via Venmo @uicomp_obgynsig. All donations will be entered for a raffle prize at the end of the donation period!

Surgery SIG Escape Room
Friday, October 28, 4-7pm
JUMP Virtual OR
The Surgery student interest group is hosting a surgery-themed escape room! Spots are available from 4-7 pm. Assemble a team of 2-6 players and work together against the clock to figure out what surgical procedure your patient needs before time runs out! The team that solves all the puzzles in the shortest amount of time will win the grand prize!

RSVP at the link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSczxomAGqg3ZHq3unSHMyuzOwlkUIFAomEgGCKKUj258SssHQ/viewform

EMIG: Austere Medicine Night
Wednesday, November 2, 5-8:30pm
Join the Emergency Medicine Interest Group and get excited to learn about the intersection of wilderness and medicine with activities including splitting, medical kit packing, fire building, search and rescue, and more. Food will be provided and EM Residents and Attendings will be there. More information will be sent out the week of!

Sign-up: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DNBgsNuk-YRpInJ5FD5fEulkav86CSL7obTmVwCQ/edit#gid=0

South Asian SIG - Diwali Celebration
Friday, November 11, 6-9pm
UICOMP Lobby
The South Asian SIG cordially invites you to UICOMP's first-ever Diwali celebration open to UICOMP students, residents, faculty, and staff. Diwali, "the Festival of Lights" is one of the biggest festivals in India. Join us for an evening filled with a Diya (candle) lighting ceremony, Bollywood music, Indian food, and dances! Food will be catered by Indian Tadka (free for UICOMP students, $10 for faculty/residents).

RSVP by Monday, Nov 7: https://forms.gle/Cmbrx8RezDcY3zCK8
Med school! What an accomplishment. We all pictured the day we would receive our white coats and walk the stage while being cheered on by our friends and family. The day we would take super cute aesthetic pictures in our white coats for the gram--- also the day our mothers would all upload their pixelated, low-angled photos of us on Facebook. But, all that matters is that we made it…

Actually, not quite yet.

What they don’t tell you about medical school (or at least, no one told me), is that medical school isn’t necessarily super difficult, it’s just a lot. I think the moment I realized this was the third time a faculty member here at UICOMP repeated the analogy “drinking water out of a firehose” on day 2 of orientation. Luckily, we got placed at the right campus.

Students were quick to help each other transition into the first block by being inclusive and helpful. I personally think that being the first class post-quarantine has really brought everyone together. Everyone quickly adjusted to this new setting by organizing outings and spending days in the library together. The faculty here at UICOMP has also supported us and emphasized their goals of seeing us succeed. I’m not saying Block 1 was easy (quite the opposite actually), but our initial foundation definitely helped. And not to flex, but we all got through it with a decent attitude. Here’s to an even better Block 2. Enjoy some memes!

Ranya Naser (M1)
Student National Medical Association, also known as SNMA, is not a student interest group. It is a historical organization that, while inclusive to all, has been and will always be dedicated to their Black and Brown future physicians.

SNMA was founded in 1964 as a subdivision of the National Medical Association (NMA), the nation's oldest and largest organization representing African American physicians and health professionals in the United States. The NMA was founded in 1895 during the Jim Crow Era: the origin of what we know today as structural violence against Black and Brown folk through racially exclusive laws.

Our honorable ancestors have always stood up and sought justice and liberation against forced subjugation. Although Black and Brown people were subject to injustices brought upon them by a dual medical care system, they became physicians and sought admission to professional organizations such as the American Medical Association. Read more here: https://www.nmanet.org/page/History

From the leadership of W. Montague Cobb, MD came the initiative to include medical students. The founding SNMA chapters were two Historically Black Colleges and now over 193 SNMA chapters exist. UICOM has a chapter for each respective campus site. Peoria's SNMA chapter currently houses two co-presidents, Elisheba Odei (M3) and Zaphrirah Chin (M2), who have inherited the tradition to uphold the national SNMA mission: SNMA is committed to supporting current and future underrepresented minority medical students, addressing the needs of underserved communities, and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent and socially conscious physicians. Follow the UICOMP SNMA IG @uicomp_snma and attend the General Body Meetings to learn more info!
With mild fanfare, the class of 2024 has recently completed a milestone that no other class has: taking the USMLE Step 1 exam as a pass/fail exam. Up to this point, the exam was scored with a number that corresponded to a percentile score. Before the switch, the graded exam was a primary factor used by residency program directors to evaluate applicants. Yet many felt the high pressure to get the best score was detrimental to student mental health.

At UICOMP, members of the Office of Student Affairs noticed some effects of the changes quickly. Former Academic Advisor Kristina Peckmann noted “step 1 dedicated is always a high-stress time, but, this year, students weren’t worried as much about getting the high 3-digit score. That definitely removed some of the stress for some students.”

Yet some things were unchanged. Students seemed to test and defer in similar patterns to recent years. According to Peckmann: “as a whole, it didn’t seem much different. We’ve always had a few students take it very early and the majority of students take it in March... the deferral rate was not very different from the class of 2023. The class of 2022 is not a valid comparison due to testing center closures and the Class of 2021 was lower, but that was pre-pandemic.”

One concern about the change is that it would shift pressure from step 1 to other areas: “Step 1 used to be in the top five of criteria that were considered by program directors, as indicated by the NRMP program directors survey. In the absence of a scored Step 1, applicants will need to focus more on other parts of their residency application, primarily: clerkship grades, Step 2 CK, obtaining good letters of recommendation, CV content, and personal statement, in the context of their career and residency goals. I’ll add the caveat that every student and their application will be unique and individual advising is essential for a successful residency application” said Dean Doherty.

For current M2s, Peckmann had some words of advice they begin to consider step prep: “work with your advisor to prepare and execute a sound study planning process, which will include daily and weekly plans, assessments to determine readiness to sit for the exam, and treating dedicated as a full-time job - meaning 40+ hours a week of study.”
Phi Delta Epsilon finished their annual Stand For The Kids (SFTK) fundraising week with their “Throw a P(h)ie event. Eligible faculty to be pied were nominated and voted on via donations. Angela O’Bryant was the winning faculty member, although Dean Aiyer and Dr. Christison also participated. Over $1400 went directly to the Children’s Hospital of Illinois at OSF, where it will fund critical care, medical equipment, and other aspects of charitable care.
In this section, we ask you, the readers, about service opportunities or student interest groups that you’re involved with. Each month, we highlight a group or cause to find out what they do and why you should join.

In this edition of Service/SIG Spotlight, we catch up with David Qi (M3) to share some information about the American Red Cross, their most recent blood drive, why it is important, and how you can get involved.

The American Red Cross helps with maintaining a safe blood supply for the entire country. When a certain area is impacted by inclement weather or other disasters, as was the case with Hurricane Ian's landfall over South Florida last September, the Red Cross can jump in to support those impacted in several ways. We can send blood from areas not impacted to support the affected area for any patients in need. Also, the Red Cross will send volunteers and supplies to those areas to help them recover. By donating blood with the American Red Cross, you are supporting our Nation's blood supply and supporting an organization that assists those who need it the most.

How important are blood drives at UICOMP?
The demand for blood is constant. In fact, every 2 seconds someone in the United States needs blood products. This is what makes the blood drives such as those at UICOMP so vital. These drives, and the volunteers who come to set things up, help in securing the needed blood products for us to maintain a healthy and safe blood supply during times of crisis.

How often do they come by?
Typically we do three drives a year in October, January, and April/May.

And for students who might be interested in helping, how can they get involved?
Feel free to contact the regional manager, Caleb Liggin, at the American Red Cross (309.273.4235 or caleb.liggin@redcross.org) to help answer any further questions or to get started on volunteering!

Tahsin Zaman (M4)
Know of anything Pons-tacular?

We are always looking for stories, accomplishments, or pictures of events that happen around UICOMP. If you have a piece you’d like to see included in the Peoria Pons, please email written articles to the Pons team. Keep all articles to 250 words or less; photos are always encouraged. Deadline: 20th of every month.

THE LIST OF STUDENT INTEREST GROUPS AND CONTACT INFO
Click here

THE LIST OF ELECTED STUDENT LEADERS 22-23
Click here

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