



Medical Alumni

FALL 2007

▼ NEWSLETTER

▼ Scranton Alumna Receives Simmy Ginsburg Humanitarian Award

By Pamela Taffera, D.O., M.B.A., '02

A member of the Class of 2002, Kristen Semanision, D.O., was honored with the Simmy Ginsburg Humanitarian Award upon her commencement from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) in June 2007. This award is dedicated to the PCOM student who has demonstrated integrity, kindness, compassion and genuine love for life, and who has had a positive impact on the lives of her fellow students, medical colleagues and patients.

The Simmy Ginsburg Humanitarian Award is presented each year by Harry Ginsburg, D.O. (PCOM, 1942) and his family in loving memory of Dr. Ginsburg's wife. During her undergraduate years at The University of Scranton, Dr. Semanision balanced her pre-medical studies with numerous activities. She was actively involved with Collegiate Volunteers, making service trips to Washington, D.C., and North Carolina and coordinating numerous charity and community events in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

While studying at PCOM, Dr. Semanision continued to lead by example. She inspired her peers to join her as a Sunday School Instructor at Holy Name, an underserved Latino parish in Camden, New Jersey. At Holy Name, Dr. Semanision mentored children and families. She served on the executive board of the PCOM student chapter of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians and coordinated the "Warmth for Winter" clothing drive, as well as National Primary Care Week.

After completing her second year of medical school, Dr. Semanision dedicated a year of her life to serving the people of Duran, Ecuador, with Rostro de Cristo, the Christian Mission Organization. Her weekly e-mails home from Ecuador recounted her experiences of teaching English to children, creating a soup kitchen in a rural area, and educating the women of this poor section of the country in basic public health. Dr. Semanision also played a major role in creating a Primary Care Clinic in Duran, which continues to struggle financially. Beyond her work in programming and funding, Dr. Semanision built lifelong relationships with neighbors of the local community, sharing prayer, mealtimes and conversation with them.

Dr. Semanision returned to Philadelphia from her year in Ecuador with photos, stories and countless memories of the lives she touched and the souls she enriched. Affected so dramatically by her experience, she plans to return to Ecuador on a regular basis, knowing that even the efforts of one individual at a time will make a difference. Dr. Semanision generously dedicated the financial component of the Simmy Ginsburg Humanitarian Award to continued efforts in Ecuador and Rostro de Cristo.

Currently, Dr. Semanision is a family medicine resident at New York Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.



Dr. Kristen Semanision
in Ecuador

▼ The Future of Science Education at Scranton

According to Joseph H. Dreisbach, Ph.D., dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, 50% of University students in the sciences participate in research: 45% of these students write a formal thesis, and 38% author or co-author a publication and/or conference paper. The outcomes from this way of educating students are impressive. In the eighth edition of Franklin and Marshall's *Baccalaureate Origins of Doctoral Recipients*, Scranton is listed as ranking 15th in its category (of 75 institutions formerly designated as Master I) for having the most alumni going on to receive doctoral degrees in the sciences. In the life sciences, the record is even more impressive – 5th out of 70 – and even more so in chemistry specifically – 2nd out of 61. The acceptance of Scranton students into medical programs is equally striking. Of the 252 senior applicants to medical schools over the last six years, 84% were accepted.

Members of the science faculty are helping to shape the concept for a new science facility, incorporating the rich traditions of science education at the University with a special focus on enhancing interdisciplinary teaching and learning. They conceptualize a new facility as a place that provides learning spaces throughout – in flexible classrooms, in experimental laboratories and in lounge areas that allow for students and faculty to mingle informally. The future of science education at Scranton will include a journey into new programming but retain emphasis on the place of student research with our wonderful and committed faculty. It will include broad interdisciplinary work in the context of our uncompromising commitment to educate students in the Jesuit tradition.

Med School Placements

The self-reported data on medical school placements for the Class of 2007 was not available at the time of publication. The matriculation report will appear in the newsletter's spring 2008 issue.

▼ Survey Says: Medical Alumni Interested in Council Involvement, Networking Opportunities, Placement Information

By John Mercuri '07

This past spring, the Medical Alumni Council commissioned its second Medical Alumni Survey at the suggestion of Gerald P. Tracy, M.D. Dr. Tracy oversaw the first survey in 1994, the same year that the MAC was founded.

The new survey, conducted from April to August of this year, was a resounding success. Approximately 25% of the University's 1,700 medical alumni responded, which represents a relatively high response rate for such a survey. Every class year from 1941 through 2006 was represented, with the Classes of 1990 and 1996 posting the most respondents.

The most significant result of the survey, however, was not necessarily a set of percentages. Rather, it was the overwhelming allegiance to the University that its medical alumni possess. For example, 56% of respondents said that they would like to participate as an active member of the Medical Alumni Council. The current members of the MAC, as well as members of the University's Alumni Office, were pleased to learn that such a large number of the University's medical alumni have a strong interest in the Council. A similar percentage of respondents

also expressed interest in attending medical alumni networking socials, which has prompted the MAC to investigate the logistics of hosting regional receptions.

Additionally, high percentages of respondents expressed strong interest in programs that would benefit the current pre-medical students at the University. Nearly 89% of respondents said that they would be willing to be included in a medical alumni contact directory, with 62% of those respondents also willing to participate in a pre-medical mentoring program. In response to these numbers, the University's administration is considering ways to implement effectively such a mentoring program and alumni directory.

Furthermore, when asked about the content of future issues of the *Medical Alumni Newsletter*, survey respondents were most interested in the placements of graduating seniors in health professional schools and the residency placements of young medical alumni. Several respondents added additional comments that expressed strong interest in networking with those Scranton alumni who are currently in medical school and residency. Again, these results have prompted the University to begin cataloguing medical school and residency placements for networking purposes.

The survey also contained a free response section where respondents could comment on how their Scranton education has helped in their professional career. Literally all of the comments were overwhelmingly positive, and they can be best summarized by the following comment of one respondent: "The Jesuit concept of 'the life of the mind' is real. While most colleges and universities can offer a solid education in the sciences, it is the rare school that is able to combine this with a broad-based liberal arts education. Scranton's strength is in its requirement that all students obtain an education that includes a heavy dose of the humanities. I am proud to have graduated from Scranton and consider my education superior to that which is currently offered at many schools of greater stature."

The University's medical alumni should also be proud to know that Scranton continues to offer this holistic education. Having just graduated from the University this past May, I too appreciate the strong liberal arts education that I received at Scranton. Not a day goes by in medical school that I fail to utilize the non-science aspect of my Jesuit education.

Ultimately, to borrow the words of President Scott R. Pilarz, S.J., the University's medical alumni are certainly "Scranton Proud."

John Mercuri '07 is a first-year medical student in the M.D. program at the New York University School of Medicine.

MAC Executive Committee

Joseph P. Bannon, M.D., '83 ▼ *Scranton*
Richard Bevilacqua, D.M.D., M.D., '83 ▼ *West Hartford, Conn.*
Jean-Paul Bonnet, D.O., '76 ▼ *Sparta, N.J.*
Joanne Calabrese, D.O., '91 ▼ *Jim Thorpe*
Paul R. Casey, M.D., '71 ▼ *Gwynedd Valley*
LTC James F. Cummings, M.D., '88 ▼ *Chevy Chase, Md.*
W. David Fitzpatrick, M.D., '88 ▼ *Scranton*
Lawrence F. Gallagher, D.M.D., '82 ▼ *Scranton*
Patrick J. Kerrigan, D.O., '80 ▼ *Hanover Township*
James J. Kuchera, M.D., '72 ▼ *Convent Station, N.J.*
Karen Langan, O.D., '98 ▼ *Washington, D.C.*
John J. Lepore, M.D., '88 ▼ *Lafayette Hill*
Gregory J. Lynch, D.O., '79 ▼ *Philadelphia*
John R. Mariotti, D.D.S., '75 ▼ *Scranton*
James T. McGlynn, M.D., '77 ▼ *Wallingford*
Joseph J. Mowad, M.D., '57 ▼ *Danville*
David J. Nagurney, D.D.S., '74 ▼ *Scranton*
Robert J. Noto, V.M.D., '93 ▼ *Dunmore*
Sheryl Lynn Oleski-Kim, D.O., '97 ▼ *Breinigsville*
Michael P. Platt, M.D., '98 ▼ *Boston, Mass.*
Kara J. Suche, M.D., '99 ▼ *Philadelphia*
Erin E. Tracy, M.D., '88 ▼ *Stoneham, Mass.*
Gerald P. Tracy, M.D., '63 ▼ *Clarks Summit*
Anthony J. Yanni, M.D., '88 ▼ *Scranton*
Amy Yavorek, M.D., '84 ▼ *Highland Falls, N.Y.*

University Personnel

Joseph H. Dreisbach, Ph.D. ▼ *Dean, College of Arts & Sciences*
Mary F. Engel, Ph.D. ▼ *Director of Medical School Placement*
Gerald C. Zaboski '87, G'95 ▼ *Associate Vice President, Alumni & Public Relations*
Robert P. Zelno '66, G'77 ▼ *Executive Director, Alumni Society*

▼ New MAC Chair Appointed

Paul R. Casey Jr., M.D., '71 as been appointed the next chair of the Executive Committee of the Medical Alumni Council. He succeeds Gregory J. Lynch, D.O., '79, whose term as chair expires on December 31. Dr. Casey earned a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from the University and a medical degree from Temple University School of medicine. He served an internship/residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in cardiovascular disease at the Hospital of the Medical College of Pennsylvania. He is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease and critical care medicine. He is affiliated with the Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia, P.C., and has been an active MAC member for the past six years. Son of the late Carbondale native Paul R. Casey, M.D., '42, Dr. Casey is married to the former Kathleen Toolan, daughter of Col. Paul F. Toolan '42. Dr. and Mrs. Casey live in Gwynedd Valley and are the parents of five children.

▼ MAC Symposium Receives High Marks

The Medical Alumni Council Symposium held on campus last May has received high marks from attendees who took part in a survey conducted at the event. Overall comments included “fantastic speakers” and “great program,” with results indicating that attendees were very pleased with the MAC Symposium in terms of the speakers’ knowledge, visual aids and quality of the presentations. Most felt that the sessions met their intended objectives. Participants also listed some topics they’d like to see presented at future events, including pandemic planning and information, and stem cell research and medical ethics.

Following are highlights from the survey.

- 71% of survey participants rated the presentation on “National Trends in Health Care: Pay for Performance, Quality Care and Information Technology” “excellent,” and 93% felt that they gained insight into specific, national current trends in the health care industry as it related to their own practice and careers, and found the session useful to their practice.
- Participants ranked both the quality of the presentation and the knowledge of the presentation on the proposed “Medical College of Northeastern Pennsylvania” at 89%. “As a pre-med student I found this presentation very informative and exciting,” said one participant. Others rated the speaker “extremely informative” and “great” with “true passion.”
- “Community Service Initiatives: Its Impact on International Medicine” rated very high (85%) in its insights into members’ international medical missions.



Joseph H. Dreisbach, Ph.D. (far right), dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, introduced a session on initiatives to improve medical education. Panelists included (left to right) Gerald P. Tracy, M.D., '63, Georgetown University medical student Chris Corey '04, New York University medical student John Mercuri '07, Linda Sebastian-Frantz, M.D., '81 and William B. Jeffries, Ph.D., '80, associate dean for medical education at Creighton University School of Medicine.

▼ Doctor's Rounds

Undergraduate students in the health professions took advantage of roundtable discussions with members of the Medical Alumni Council Executive Committee following their meeting in November. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on April 12, 2008, at the Annenberg Conference Center, Lankenau Hospital, Philadelphia, followed by a reception for medical alumni in the Philadelphia area as well as alumni in med schools.



Amy Yavorek, M.D., '84, an OB/Gyn physician at Keller Army Hospital, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, discusses her career with undergraduates in the health professions.



MAC Chair Gregory J. Lynch, D.O., '79 takes advantage of a break at the symposium to share a moment with his daughter, Mary Elise, a freshman biochemistry major.

Comments included “incredibly interesting and thought provoking” and “really displays the true ideas of a Jesuit education in ‘service for others.’”

- Dr. Gerald P. Tracy’s talk on “Issues in Medical Education on the Undergraduate and Graduate Level,” which addressed the American Medical Association’s proposed Initiative for Transforming Medical Education (ITME), was rated by 70% of survey participants as “excellent.”
- The presentation on “The Fight Against Malaria” enjoyed positive comments such as “great presentation,” “very significant research” and “incredible job done.”
- University facilities also received high marks in terms of location, conference rooms and staff. Accommodations were ranked “excellent” by 74% of respondents.
- Overall, 63% of participants felt that they received the information they had hoped to obtain at the Symposium, 52% felt they now had a better understanding of topics after attending, 48% stated they were better prepared to perform their jobs after participating, and 52% were satisfied with answers received to their questions during the presentations.
- Suggested topics for future symposia included computerized medical records and physicians’ plans for health-care reform.

▼ From Cosmetology to Radiology

By **Christine Policare G'00**

My high school years were not spent preparing for college but for beauty school. Fifteen years later, I find myself in the third year of residency in Radiology at the Hershey Medical Center.

I have not traveled this serendipitous path from hairstylist to physician alone. My husband, Greg, a Pittston city police officer for more than 20 years, retired from his former position as chief of police to allow me to pursue my goals. He began a new career as a special agent with the State Attorney General's office. My two children, Gabe and Madison, were 7 and 5 when we moved to Hershey, leaving family and friends behind.

As my children adapted to their new school, an unfamiliar neighborhood and mom's transition to medical student, my husband adjusted to his new job, increased household responsibilities and an overwhelmed and distracted wife. In time my family grew accustomed to our new lifestyle, which

included my never-ending workload, multiple study groups in our home, and my new circle of eclectic friends. Many evenings following dinner, the children and I spent time together doing our homework at the kitchen table. Often, after the children went to bed, Greg would be my study partner, quizzing me from my note cards or multiple-choice questions.

Some of my favorite memories include learning how to perform the physical exam in class and coming home to my family of "patients" on whom I would practice. Occasionally my colleagues also would come over to examine my kids as "practice" pediatric patients. My med school friends often remarked how lucky I was to have my family to go home to at night instead of remaining immersed in the world of medicine as they were with their med school roommates and on-campus housing.

The medical center was conveniently close to the elementary school my children attended, and often I moved from lectures to parent-teacher conferences. While keeping my priorities in balance, I occasionally skipped lectures to attend school functions such as school plays, "ethnic lunch," or field day celebrations. Many times I left the gross anatomy lab, with the smell of formaldehyde lingering in my hair and on my clothes, to take my daughter to dance class. As I recall, there were not too many mothers at that time who sat within sniffing distance.

If there was a school delay or just a day off, I would bring my children to medical school lectures, where we sat in the back row and I listened to the lecture while my daughter played under the desk with her small toys and my son did his best to follow the lecture. To this day, Gabe and Madison tell me those are some of their favorite memories.

Christine Policare G'00, mother of two, is a third-year resident at Hershey Medical Center.

▼ The Social Context in Which Our Patients Live

By **April Troy '02**

In college, we study diligently to become accepted to medical school. In medical school, we strive to gain acceptance to our chosen residency programs. In residency, we struggle to care for our patients afflicted by disease. Throughout this process, we often miss the most important part of being a doctor: forming a relationship with our patients to improve their health and provide them with the best care possible. While studying the science, diseases and treatments is important, when we focus only on the science and overlook the social context in which our patients live, we fail as physicians, as we are unable to truly heal our patients.

At Scranton, my major in philosophy and studies in the Special Jesuit Liberal Arts (SJLA) program began to prepare me for seeing the bigger picture for my patients. I learned that nothing in this world was black or white and that the true meaning of life – and so the true way to reach each of my patients – was to examine carefully the social circumstances that impact their medical care. I decided to pursue a Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) to prepare myself for both residency and my future career in medicine, to take the time to learn research skills, and to examine the social contexts that affect the health of our patients. I also spent time working at a free clinic. I struggled to help patients gain access to subspecialists and studies that they desperately needed and to enroll them in free medication programs through drug companies. Through this experience, I learned more from my patients than I had during my previous three years of medical school. I learned that even before coming up with a care plan for my patients, I had to consider their social circumstances.

When searching for a residency program, I was lucky to find the Community Health Track at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

In my program, I am given a month or two each year during residency to focus my time on health policy, advocacy work and health-care disparities.

The clinic where I will spend a half day each week during my three years of pediatrics residency is nestled in a Hispanic neighborhood in D.C. We are lucky to have a lawyer who works at our clinic to serve as an advocate for our patients, and this support empowers me to advocate for them as well. There are many who need advocates: the diabetic patient who cannot take insulin because his needles are being used by family members for drugs; the asthmatic patient who is homeless and moves from place to place with his mother, often leaving his asthma medication behind; and the 16-year old with a learning disability who can't get past 8th grade because his school won't offer any help. I am empowered each day to reach back in my mind to my studies during my M.P.H. and in SJLA, to search for the gray areas in my patients' lives, to understand how they impact their health, and to work toward achieving *cura personalis*.

April Puscavage Troy, M.D., '02 received her medical degree from John Hopkins University and a Master of Public Health from Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health. She is a first-year intern in a community health track at D.C. Children's Hospital.