

THE ACOM BEAT

Volume 2, Issue 4 | March 2015

The Official Student Newsletter of the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine

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D.O. on the Hill Day / SOMA

AMSA Recognized in Washington D.C.

By Ankita Mahajan, OMS-II

Nine ACOM students attended the national American Medical Student Association (AMSA) convention in Washington, D.C. in February to watch the AMSA-ACOM chapter get voted in and recognized by the AMSA House of Delegates.



AMSA-ACOM had a busy and exciting week in D.C.

United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD opened the convention with a rousing speech to the attendees. It wasn't long before ACOM made a splash at the convention. Our chapter won FIRST place in a national "Excellence in Advocacy" contest for Angel Tree, an event co-sponsored with the ACOM Pediatrics Organization. In November and December, the organizations collected donations and money to provide gifts for over 140 needy children, including 10 bicycles and over \$200 in cash.

"[I was] pleasantly surprised by this accomplishment for a first year program and chapter," said second year medical student and AMSA Public Relations Chairman Guy Hamilton. "[I hope] Angel Tree becomes an annual AMSA service event!"

In addition to reeling in recognition and honors, AMSA-ACOM sent a team to the national Simlympics competition, a series of simulation patient encounters designed to test medical students skills, critical thinking, and teamwork. The ACOM team consisted of second-year students Garrett Harrison, Patrick Huynh, Brian Nguyen, and first-year medical student Mindy Bottenfield. The competition was judged live by a panel of physicians from other schools and medical programs from all over the country.

"It was intimidating!" said second-year student Garrett Harrison. "We were on a stage surrounded by five judges on one side, facilitators on the other, and the audience to our backs.... There was some pressure."

If there was any pressure, then they clearly didn't feel it. Pitted up against rival Allopathic schools from across the country, the ACOM team progressed through their competition all the way to the semifinals before falling in a heated match to eventual champions Baylor.

On Friday evening, AMSA-ACOM members attended the Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine workshop and got the opportunity to manage one of four OPP tables. ACOM students were also able to participate in and write the "leave behind" notices to congressmen at Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill! Some other interesting workshops at the convention included one-on-one mock residency interviews with Kaiser Permanente, learning clinical skills like Airway Management, Basic and Advanced Suturing, and Manual Vacuum Aspirations.

All in all, AMSA-ACOM shined in Washington D.C. and definitely got our school's name on the national map!

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contributor, please contact
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The Second-Annual Tensegrity Ball

By Jacqueline Storer, OMS-I

The Second Annual Tensegrity Ball was held for first and second year students as well as faculty on February 7, 2015. This formal event is a wonderful way for students and faculty alike to take a break from their busy schedules and have some fun! The Ball featured music, dancing, and superlative awards given to individuals who were voted on by their peers. Such honor titles included "ACOM Resident," "JD and Turk: Best Friends Award," and "Gunner of the Year," to name merely a few.

The Student of the Year Award was given to one member of each class who truly exemplifies all of ACOM's core values of Integrity, Service, Passion, Innovation, Respect, and Excellence. Student Government's Director of Events, Adena Shahinian was voted as Student of the Year for the Class of 2017. Adena not only plans all of ACOM's events including this very Ball, but she is an excellent student admired by her peers, and is never seen without an infectious smile on her face. Her *joie de vivre* and optimism radiates in everything she does.



Adena Shahinian, OMS-II, graciously accepts her Class of 2017 Student of the Year award.



Shawn Hamm, OMS-I, was awarded Class of 2018 Student of the Year. Kaitlin Larson, OMS-I, was voted Most likely to brighten your day.

The class of 2018 unanimously voted SGA President Elect Shawn Hamm for their respective Student of the Year. He humbly states, "The entire Class of 2018 has worked hard to develop a culture of support and teamwork this year. The sharing of resources, study guides, and time has really lifted everyone up. I was humbled that my classmates recognized me as the Student of the Year. I truly believe that this award represents the commitment our class has made to continually support one another and work as a team, so that we can succeed together." Shawn has been both a representative and model student for the Class of 2018. He is always willing to help a friend or classmate, and esteem his diligence.

Both Adena and Shawn exhibit strong qualities of leadership, scholarship, and zeal that the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine strives to fortify in all its' students.

Faculty was also nominated by students for superlatives such as "Most Likely to Make you Laugh," and "Most Likely to Keep Order." There was also an award for Professor of the Year. Both the Class of 2017 and Class of 2018 universally elected Dr. John "Buzz" Giannini for this award. "Dr. G." is an Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and the Faculty Director of our Simulation Lab. He is constantly going above and beyond to prepare students for clinical practice, and is well-known for his phrase "Attention on Deck; Clinical Pearl!" His extensive knowledge, humor, and entertaining stories are just a few of the things that make him a fantastic professor. Dr. G. is beloved and respected by all of his students.

Tensegrity Ball is truly an enjoyable event that students and faculty look forward to each year.

2017 Student Winners

Student of the Year—Adena Shahinian

Next Top Model—Anthony Bianchi

Dr. Oz Award—Hassan Hashm

Patch Adams Award—Sean Sheehey

ACOM Resident—David Murphy

2018 Student Winners

Student of the Year—Shawn Hamm

Next Top Model—Alexa Fiffick

Dr. Oz Award—Kyle Allen

Patch Adams Award—Kaitlin Larson

ACOM Resident—Faysal Rifai

Faculty Spotlight: John Giannini, MD

By Robin Conley, OMS-II

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

– Dr. John Giannini, MD

John Giannini, MD is likely one of the most famous professors here at ACOM. Hailing from Louisville, KY, ‘Dr. G’ is a naval officer, trained surgical physician’s assistant, licensed internal medicine physician, associate professor of pathology, and director of simulation. Even with all those titles, he would tell you he’s a Kentucky boy lucky enough to be practicing medicine.

Dr. G has over 20 years of experience practicing medicine, with the first 3 years practicing surgery before transitioning to internal medicine. Dr. Giannini followed his father and grandfather into the medical profession. “In Kentucky, you either practiced medicine or you worked at the railroad or coal mines”. His father was a plastic surgeon in the Navy, and he describes his grandfather as a country doctor who rode a horse to visit his patients. Drop by his office if you’d like to see his grandfather in action. You’ll also see some pretty cool pictures of his daughter and twin sons.

We asked the newly-crowned Professor of the Year to share his experiences with us for this month’s spotlight and he jumped at the chance much like he jumped his way to victory at this year’s 3-point shoot out competition. Here’s what he had to say for some of our most burning questions:

ACOM Beat (AB): How did you get into medicine?

Dr. Giannini (JG): I served as a navy hospital core man for four years. When I got out, I was interested in medical school, but I couldn’t get in. So, I applied to Physician’s Assistant school at Duke University—actually the first one. It was a great experience. I practiced as a surgical PA for two years.

AB: Oh, so you have advice for non-traditional students?

JG: Just keep at it.

AB: What are some of the benefits you’ve found in being a physician?

JG: Interacting in people’s lives in a meaningful way, and not just medically but personally. Long-term relationships with people are

probably the biggest benefits. It’s a privilege to be a physician. It’s like we put on the white coat, we get instant credibility that we don’t deserve. So it’s important to treat patients well.

AB: What about the pitfalls?

JG: The hours can be rather difficult. It can also be stressful.

AB: How did you get into academic medicine?

JG: I wasn’t looking to teach, it just happened. I had a few students sent to me and I thought “that’d be kinda cool to have a few students follow me and see what I do”. After that, they called me and asked me to come on as full-time faculty.

AB: So, if you had to choose between practicing medicine and academic medicine, which would you choose?

JG: A little bit of both. If you’re going to teach medicine, you probably oughta do it.

AB: What do you remember about being a resident?

JG: You get down to your primal needs. When do I get to sleep? When do I get to eat? And, when do I get to poop?

AB: What advice do you have for the 2nd years going into rotations soon?

JG: Take all the medicine rotations you can no matter what you’re interested in. The best doctors are the best medical doctors. The more medicine you know, the better doctor you are.

AB: What’s your favorite SIM lab story?

JG: Four students were in the SIM lab for one of their first encounters. The patient’s condition turned bad, and the students looked frightened and were unclear what to do. So, I asked them what we ought to do. One of them looked at me and says, “we need to call a doctor”. I replied, “I just so happen to be one”. We talked it through, re-evaluated the situation, and examined the patient. The idea was to help them get ready for times when patients’ conditions decline.

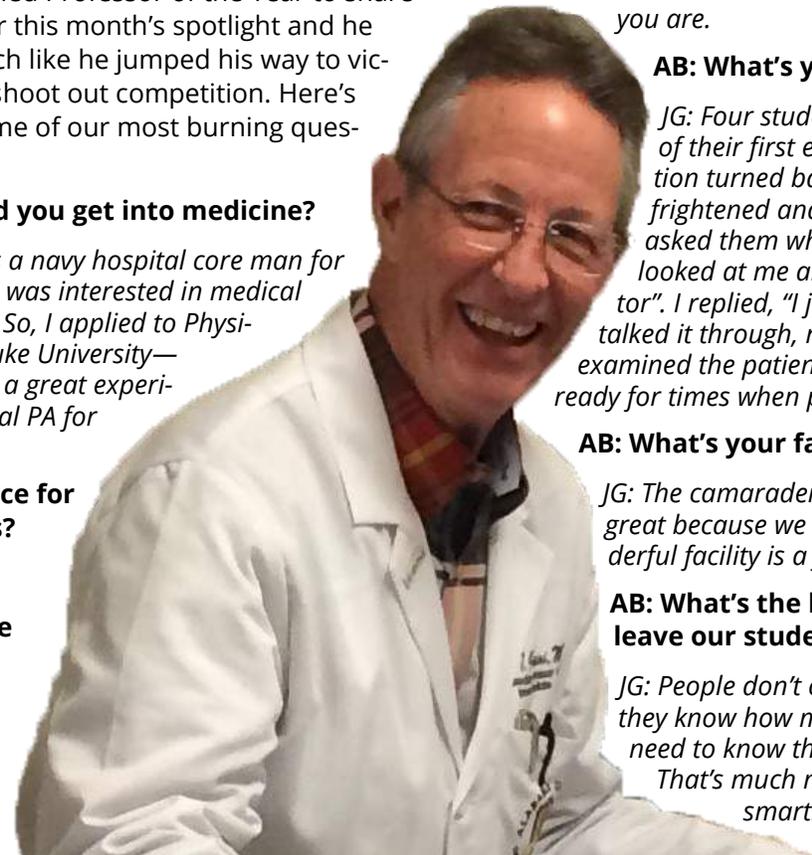
AB: What’s your favorite thing about ACOM?

JG: The camaraderie among the instructors is great because we truly work together. This wonderful facility is a joy to work in as well.

AB: What’s the last thought you want to leave our students with?

JG: People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. That means they need to know that you are there for them.

That’s much more important than being smart. And, if you don’t know how to care, you need to learn.



Faculty Spotlight is an ongoing series by The ACOM Beat

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ACOM Student Elected SOMA National Representative

By Heidi Chamula, OMS-II

As I stepped off the plane and into the airport, it immediately hit me that I was in Washington D.C. and less than a day away from D.O. day on the Hill. The airport was filled with business people in suits, eccentric looking hipsters, and the overall feel of urban culture.

I wove through the chaos, found the rest of my classmates, and we began the trek to the Omni Shoreham hotel. The cab ride was only the beginning of all the amazing sights we would see, from the snow, parks, and running paths, to the Washington monument just visible in the distance.

We arrived at the beautiful Omni Shoreham, settled in, envied each other's rooms and views, and set out for some delicious (and vegetarian) Ethiopian food. Later that evening we attended a mixer for students of all the D.O. schools who would be attending D.O. day. We met some students from KCUMB, LECOM, and DCOM, which were just a few of the schools represented that weekend.

The next morning we trickled in bright and early around 6 a.m., where we were able to enjoy some light breakfast and chat with Dr. Johnson, the chair of obstetrics and gynecologic surgery residency director of Oklahoma State College of Osteopathic Medicine. He introduced himself and we found out he used to work at the Helen Keller Hospital in Sheffield, where some of us will be rotating during our 3rd year.

As more students filtered in, dressed in their white coats from various schools, I started to realize the gravity of that day. It reminded me what a privilege it is to wear my white coat with my COM printed on the front, and that I am not only part of ACOM, but of the Osteopathic profession, philosophy, and legacy.

We found a nice row of seats in the middle, until Dr. Lenz arrived and enthusiastically prodded us to join him right in the front row. Incoming AOA president Dr. Robert Juhasz spoke to the crowd and received a standing ovation. Shortly afterward, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald spoke about the issues facing healthcare shortage and his plans to improve the efficiency of the VA. Other speakers discussed issues of easing the burden of education expenses on Osteopathic medical students, ensuring the future physician workforce, and reforming Medicare physician payment.

Throughout the day, we were getting weather updates about the snow- which eventually piled up so much that the government got a snow day and our representatives had to cancel all of our meetings.



ACOM was well-represented at the DO on the Hill Day in Washington DC.

We took advantage of our free afternoon, and despite the heavy wet slush, we put on our warmest gear and did some site seeing. We walked for hours and saw the Capitol building, White House, and the Washington and Lincoln monuments.

Following D.O. day was the SOMA convention, where all new board members were inducted, new chapters became official, and various workshops were held. I attended a pediatric OMT workshop, where we discussed and performed screening techniques for pediatric patients. The most exciting part of the convention, was when our very own outgoing ACOM-SOMA president, Anne Washofsky, was elected to be the National Region II Trustee of SOMA. It was inspiring to see Anne emerge as a national leader from a first year SOMA chapter.

On the last day of the convention we had a celebration to highlight the successes of SOMA that year and welcome the new national board members. We got to know the current national board as well as talk to other SOMA members from various schools. It was such a unifying experience; I felt connected to the other students simply through our shared mission in the osteopathic profession.

Going to D.C. was an eye opening experience, and a reminder of what a privilege it is to have the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine as the foundation of my medical education, to be part of the Osteopathic profession, and have the potential to shape future laws and decisions that will affect our ability to practice.



Anne Washofsky, OMS-II, was sworn in as SOMA Region II Trustee in Washington D.C.