

Steven L. Berk, M.D.

What do you think the white coat symbolizes to these students?

0:08

All of these students have made incredible sacrifices, they've all had to do very, very well in college, the average GPA is 3.85. So you know that that means that they made all kinds of sacrifices over those four years. And all of them have been very committed to this profession, Otherwise, they wouldn't have made it as far as they have. So the white coat ceremony when the faculty puts the white coat on the student, it means we're welcoming them into this honorable profession. And it means that they accept all of the responsibilities that come with being committed to a physician lifestyle. And it's really wonderful to have the family there to watch that because in many cases, it's been the family that's made all kinds of sacrifices to help their students get where they are.

What are some highlights about this incoming class?

1:16

There's a lot of diversity. Of course, what they have in common is high MCAT scores, and high GPA. But after that, they have developed excellence in many different ways. We are always amazed at how many excellent athletes there are in varsity, varsity teams, in baseball, football, water polo, you name it, we have students who excelled in those sports. We have students who have excelled in music. One student is in a four man band that has won awards for Texas country music. We have students that are already very committed to research and have written research papers. We have several students who are in the military and three or four different prestigious military awards that some of our students have already won. So they're a very diverse group. But what they have in common is excellence, not only in academics, but in many other areas that they have worked for students who have committed to service, so many students who have already done some type of missionary work, or worked for the homeless, or actually worked in our free clinic. So service is also a very important characteristic of a lot of the students.

Why do you think diverse backgrounds are so important for students going in to medicine.

3:02

So the truth is that, you know, all of these students are smart enough to finish the coursework that's required to be a medical student and to graduate. All of the students if they put their mind to it can do very well on pretty much all the exams. But there's a lot more to being a physician than just getting good grades. So how you relate to patients. And a lot of that will depend on the various experiences you've had with diversity and with cultural competence. So so many different types of things that you can do in your college years, will help prepare you to be a good physician, beyond just the grades that you get. And that applies to research as well. Not all of our students will want to go into research. But we need some students to continue to look at new cures and new diagnostic methods because we don't know everything we need to know to care for patients. And so the fact that some students have already started to look at

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their own kind of research and different things that they want to investigate. That is a very important part of our overall class as well.

Where are most of the students coming from?

4:29

We have 180 students, 43 come from different colleges, 70 from Texas Tech University, that's the most we've ever had from Texas Tech. We have 20 come from UT Austin. So 70 from Texas Tech 20 from UT Austin. I say that, that sounds like a football score, but that's just how they have they've divided up we also have quite a few students from Texas A&M from UT Dallas. And we have six students from Brigham Young, always the school that has the most students from outside of Texas.

Why is it important that so many students are from Texas?

5:14

So our admissions committee wants to get the best possible students from wherever they come from, especially in Texas, we're a public medical school. And it's important for us to meet the needs of the state of Texas, and to meet the needs, West Texas. So, of course, most of our students 166 out of 180 are going to come from Texas. And we have wonderful students from Houston from Dallas, from San Antonio. But when we see someone that has a high level of achievement from a small town in west Texas, we really have to look at that student carefully, because we know how hard it is to meet the needs of the rural Texas hospitals. And so we love to find outstanding students that come from the rural areas and from the small towns.

Can you talk about the special programs and dual degrees that are offered?

6:22

So we have several innovative programs and dual degrees. The Family Medicine accelerated track is the most innovative primary care tract in the country. And we've had success with it for 10 years. And there's about 12 other medical schools that have basically copied the foundation of our FMAT program. So when we find a student who knows they want to do family medicine, they can come into Texas Tech School of Medicine, graduate after three years, go into one of our family medicine residency programs. And that's why we're one of the medical schools that produced the most family medicine physicians. We've also had a innovative MD MBA program for many years innovative because you get your MD and your MBA, in just four years, most programs are five years. And so that's been very popular, I think we have 14 students going into that program this year. And the point of that is these are students who want to be physicians. But they know by learning some of the basic principles that you get in an MBA, they may have a better practice. Or they may be able to figure out how to best take care of a group of indigent patients, or even to do various type of missionary work, and figure out how to do that financially. And now, the MD MPH is becoming more popular. With this spread of the pandemic, we've all realized how important public health is in taking care of patients, and in a

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physician's Now, overall knowledge. So those are all dual degrees that we encourage. And we have an MD PhD also for students who know they want to be physician scientists.

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Just in the past two years, we've worked with Texas Tech University to develop an MD PhD in engineering, no graduates yet. But we think that this is very promising program to produce physicians who will really have some excellence when it comes to devices and procedures, and the latest in the scientific work that can be done with an engineering degree.

Why is it important that we let students write their own oath?

9:09

I think the Hippocratic Oath still has a lot of important things for students to remember. But with the way medicine has changed. We have found that getting the entire class together in small groups, to come up with suggestions for their own oath really is been an excellent an excellent project for the students themselves. And when the students graduate, and I've seen I think 13 groups of students now go from the white coat to graduation. We review the oath that they took at their white coat ceremony and show them how they He fulfilled that oath.

What else should people know about this ceremony?

10:04

In addition to the white coat that the students will receive on Friday, on Saturday at the scrub party, they will get their scrubs and also a stethoscope engraved with the double t. And we tell the students that the stethoscope has a symbolic meaning. It means that you're committed to listening closely to your patient's body for clues to disease, the heart and lungs and abdomen but it also symbolizes listening to your patient himself or herself and getting all the important clues about disease that you get from carefully listening to your patients.