



AW *Student* Bulletin

Charter Issue - January 2008

On behalf of the AWS Student Committee, I'd like to introduce the first issue of our newsletter, specifically written for students to support the mission and goals of our committee:

Mission:

- ❖ *To develop resources to support, educate and inspire women medical students pursuing a career in surgery*

Goals:

- ❖ *To encourage women medical students to consider a career in surgery*
- ❖ *To provide peer to peer networking for women medical students exploring a career in surgery*
- ❖ *To facilitate the finding of surgeon mentors for women medical students*

2007 was a great year, and with Juliet and Maya leading the way in 2008, I know it will be a successful year for the AWS Student Committee. I have truly enjoyed my experiences with AWS and have made valuable contacts and wonderful friends along the way. Along with the entire committee, I wish you all a safe and happy new year.

Lucy Lee, Immediate Past-Chair
Stanford Medical School, Class of 2008

Members:

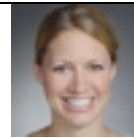


Chair

Juliet Emamaullee attends the University of Alberta and is a postdoctoral fellow in transplant immunology. She is interested in transplant surgery. She is also the mother of two little girls and wife of a high school English teacher.



Megan Hayduk attends the University of Alberta and is planning to pursue a plastic surgery residency in Canada. She is also getting married in June to a fellow medical student.

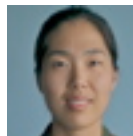


Claire Nicholas is a fourth year medical student at Emory and plans to go into Plastic & Reconstructive surgery. Claire loves to run and is currently training for the Arizona Ironman.

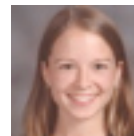


Vice-Chair

Maya Babu is a joint MD/MBA candidate at Harvard. She serves as Vice-Chair of her state's Medical Student Section and is passionate about health policy and improving healthcare delivery for the underserved.



Nicole Hsu attends the Uniformed Services University and serves as an active duty Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. During her free time, she has been busy planning a double September wedding for her and her twin sister.



Rebecca Snyder is a fourth year medical student at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. She is currently applying for a general surgery residency and is interested in pursuing a career in which she can be involved in medical student and resident education and mentoring.



Emma Westermann-Clark is completing her Ph.D. thesis on ABO and crossmatch incompatibility in kidney transplant at Harvard. Afterwards, she plans to complete her fourth year of medical school at her hometown school, the University of Florida.



Leslie Hutchins is a student at the University of Texas-Southwestern, and is interested in neurosurgery. She enjoys outdoor photography, painting, yoga, camping, and jet skiing. Leslie lives in Lewisville, Texas with her husband Brian, a graduate student in military history, and their cat, Tiger.



Holly Mewhort is in her second year of medical school at the University of Alberta. She is interested in pediatric cardiac surgery and enjoys research. She also enjoys drawing, running with her pup, and according to a recent facebook survey, watches way too many movies.



Immediate Past-Chair

Lucy Lee is a senior at Stanford University with interests in neonatology and pediatric surgery. She is married to a pathology fellow, and has two little boys (3 and 1).

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Finding a Female (or Male) Mentor – Maya Babu, Vice-Chair

Whether you are looking for a mentor for your research or for someone to shadow in the clinic, or even a mentor for your AWS chapter society, there are certain questions to keep in mind to make the process rewarding and meaningful: How do I find a mentor who is right for me? When should I go about finding a mentor? The following suggestions will hopefully guide you as you ask these questions and make these decisions:

(1) Do Your Homework

Before approaching a professor or surgeon to serve as your mentor, make sure you read up on what that this person does and her interests. Many students make the mistake of seeking out a mentor based upon seniority or title, but some of the most enthusiastic mentors can be junior faculty or new surgeons eager to interact with and teach students. It is more important to find a mentor whose research or public health interests match yours, rather than seeking out a mentor based upon his or her rank or prestige. In addition to scouring academic websites for biographical information, consider approaching advisors or other faculty members and inquiring whether they know of anyone who matches your interests. It may also be important to ask other professors and surgeons whether the mentor you have identified might be a good fit; faculty often have a strong sense as to who is eager to take on students or who may be too busy to assume a mentorship role.

(2) Approach Your Mentor Early in the Year

Even though the beginning of the year can be a stressful, hectic time, reach out and connect to your mentor! Postponing the process until late in the fall will be difficult for you both; as the academic year progresses more and more responsibilities accumulate making it difficult for you and your mentor to meet. A short meeting the week that school begins can be a great launch point. Your mentor can be one source of support as you continue through the year, and it is nice to have someone with whom you can discuss your course work and stresses over the course of the year.

(3) Consider the Type of Person You Approach

If you are looking for a surgeon to shadow, the type of person you choose could really make or break your experience. I have several classmates who had been paired with young surgeons, and had been initially wary about the youthfulness of their mentors. However, these classmates have ultimately grown to love the experience of being mentored by a younger surgeon. Finding someone who may be only a few years senior to you in their training can be a terrific way to answer the important questions you've been wondering about: how can I balance work and family? Can I define my hours? How can I pay off my student loans? Much as younger surgeons might help you think about the transition from student to surgeon, older mentors can be a reservoir of wisdom and inspiration. One of my friends draws great motivation from shadowing a 78-year-old kidney specialist who, as my friend puts it, "knows absolutely everything." From anatomy of the neck, to the physiology of nerves, this clinician scholar inspires students with his depth of knowledge and his ability to use his knowledge to help his patients. When choosing a mentor, think about what types of questions you have, and what interests you, and move forward from there!

(4) Consider Connecting to a Variety of Mentors

One of the biggest mistakes a medical student can make is finding a mentor, and not reaching out to find additional mentors. Once you find a good mentor with whom who have a strong working relationship, take the time to get to know at least one other mentor. This can seem challenging, especially when schedules become hectic, but it is important to have several mentors from whom you can seek advice and get an opinion. Approach a variety of mentors with diverse backgrounds and experiences so that when you have a challenging question (such as, "what should I do with the rest of my life?"), you hear lots of perspectives and can make the most informed decision.

(5) Look for diversity in practice style and setting

Community-based clinics look a lot different than academic practices, which look a lot different than private practices. Think about expanding your horizons and getting a perspective on life in a community-based practice or in an underserved setting (such as a prison) by finding a mentor who works in such a practice. One of the complaints I hear most often from fourth-year students is the lack of exposure they have had to practice styles outside of academia. Consider shadowing a few individuals in diverse practices, and if one practice environment seems interesting, then work on finding a mentor in this setting!

(6) Define a Role for Your Mentor Early On

If this person is your research mentor, it is important to frequently check in with him or her, even in between projects. If you learn of other clinical or public health interests your mentor has, inquire as to whether you can help. If this person is more of an academic advisor, check in with this person periodically, and consider meeting with him or her once every 3 to 6 months. You don't need to formally call your mentor your "mentor" but you can and should be clear about the fact that you want to get their feedback often. It can be difficult to find reasons to meet with your mentor to check in, so be up front that you want to frequently meet with her and get her feedback so that you have a clear reason for your visits!

Ultimately, finding a good mentor can be challenging and can take a while, but having a strong relationship with a supportive mentor can bring tremendous rewards. Don't get discouraged—it can take a few tries for you and your mentor to click—but, hopefully, you will emerge from the process energized and renewed!