dis-orientation guide

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE IN ST. LOUIS

2021 – 2022

Find Dis-O online: diso.wustl.edu
By WUSM students, for WUSM students
The official student-produced guide to our school, city, and life in medical school

First-year medical students write the *Dis-Orientation Guide* for the next incoming class, making it the definitive source for how to happily survive and thrive at Washington University School of Medicine.

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Special thanks to Melinda S., Sneha C., and Christina S. for designing the cover. Photography provided by students, except where noted.
Welcome

Welcome to Washington University School of Medicine! As you prepare to enter the next chapter of your life, the *Dis-Orientation (Dis-O) Guide* will introduce you to the ins and outs of life as a medical student.

Each *Dis-O Guide* is specific to the experiences of the class. If you are curious about something that is not presented in this year’s guide, we highly recommend checking out the *Dis-O* archives.

Before you enter this year’s guide, take in some words of wisdom from the dean of the School of Medicine, the dean of admissions, and the medical student editors of the *Dis-Orientation Guide*. 
Dear Members of the WUSM Entering Class of 2021,

Welcome to Washington University School of Medicine. You were each selected from a highly gifted pool of applicants based on what we believe is your potential to be one of the health care leaders of tomorrow. But just as importantly, you chose us. We are extremely fortunate that you have decided to begin your medical career at our school, where you’ll find a medical program designed to support your unique talents and goals.

The school’s mission — to conduct groundbreaking research, provide skilled and compassionate patient care and prepare the next generation of leaders in biomedicine — is complex, and its success requires the dedication of the community of scholars of which you are now a part.

As you experience the challenges and rewards of medical school, you’ll be surrounded by a diverse group of peers with extraordinary talents and abilities, as well as distinct perspectives. You will learn with them and from them as you form connections that will influence your personal and professional pursuits for years to come.

One of the School of Medicine’s greatest strengths is its faculty, whose members have an impact that reaches far beyond our school, into our community and communities around the world. They have chosen Washington University, as well, as the institution where they work to promote the mission of health care by training the next generation of physicians and scientists.

Mentorship is one of the hallmarks of the school, and students consistently cite their interaction with faculty as a highlight of their experience here. As you take your place within our collaborative learning environment, you’ll be encouraged to use your talents and time to advance science and serve others.

Like the school itself, the city of St. Louis is rich in culture and history, and it serves as an ideal location for you to gain an understanding of the challenges of modern medicine. Step outside familiar learning spaces and immerse yourself in the city’s diverse communities, many affected by disparities in health care.

You have chosen to begin this significant chapter of your life at an institution committed to helping you acquire the knowledge and skills you’ll need to achieve your full potential. I first chose the School of Medicine as a faculty member, and now I’m honored to lead this exceptional institution. Together, we will shape the future of medicine.

Best wishes,

David H. Perlmutter, MD
Executive Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs
Spencer T. and Ann W. Olin Distinguished Professor
George and Carol Bauer Dean, School of Medicine
Welcome

From Dean Valerie Ratts

The editors have graciously given me room to say, “Welcome to Washington University School of Medicine and the Dis-O Guide.” This is a document truly written by our first-year students for you. In our medical school, there are traditions, but much of what we do is consistently evolving. The Dis-O Guide provides a very up-to-date look at our school — its people, its spaces, and its strengths. This year’s guide also provides some background on how our students transitioned to (and thrived in!) St. Louis given the constraints and challenges of the pandemic. As you read this guide, you may be an applicant contemplating a big decision about where to attend medical school or a matriculated student moving into the Core getting accustomed to the Central West End neighborhood and eager to meet new classmates and to engage in the Gateway Curriculum. Since 1987, the Dis-O Guide has been produced to give you an inside look into what Washington University School of Medicine (WUSM), our medical students, and the St. Louis region have to offer. Hopefully, while reading, you will smile and recognize a part of yourself in the descriptions.

The Washington University School of Medicine mission statement calls for the training of the next leaders in biomedicine in a culture that supports diversity, inclusion, critical thinking, and creativity. Attracting the very best students — as we have done and are dedicated to continue doing — is a key step in meeting this goal. The next step is to make sure we provide the knowledge, experiences, resources, and mentorship to support our students in the journey to an amazing medical career. For those still making a decision, this guide will show you some of the possibilities available here. For those who have made their decision, I like the suggestion that the Dis-O Guide will provide “insider advice” to a great medical school and education.

What advice can I give you? 1) Get to know your classmates. Like you, they are amazing. Many will become lifelong friends and colleagues. 2) Do not lose your enthusiasm. You are starting down a pathway that will require diligence, sacrifice, and hard work, but will also bring tremendous reward. Doctors play truly special roles in the lives of people. It is an honor and privilege to practice this profession. 3) Rely upon the skills and characteristics that have brought you to this point. Attitude makes a huge difference. You were chosen because you have unique, elite attributes that will allow you to contribute to meeting the challenges of health care and biomedical research in the future. And remember, as you grow in medical school, a famous quote by Robert Louis Stevenson, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant.”

There are so many people at WUSM who wish to mentor, support, and develop young physicians. We hope the Dis-O Guide will be one source of information to assist you on your path to an unbelievably satisfying medical career.

Valerie S. Ratts, MD
Associate Dean for Admissions and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
This year, 105 students choose Washington University School of Medicine. Here, see some of the reasons we chose WUSM.

SECTION EDITOR: BELLA MELENA
Elizabeth J.D., M1

Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis is the perfect place to go if you want to become a leader in the medical field. What I believe sets WashU apart from other institutions is the emphasis on a quality medical education with cutting-edge research in a collaborative environment. The living expenses are also a plus because St. Louis is a very affordable city. Students here are also passionate about addressing health disparities, which was a strong attraction for me to come here. I felt like the faculty here valued my interests in being a good physician-scientist and giving back to my community and made me feel like I belong. Coming here, I can vouch that this is still true, and I am very thankful to be here.

The main attraction for me to attend WashU was the research opportunities that medical students could get involved in. Right off the bat, I could easily connect with professors and hear more about their research. One of these professors was Dr. David Gutmann, whom I met with on Zoom. He shared all the fantastic work he is doing with pediatric patients with neurofibromatosis and the research happening in his lab. I knew that this would be a community where I could follow exciting questions and not compromise in the local community's involvement level. Now that I am here, I have also found many mentors at various levels who are willing to share their experience in neurosurgery and radiation oncology.

Most importantly, I wanted to learn in an institution that prioritized community engagement. This substantial portion of the new Gateway Curriculum exposed students to learn about health disparities and ways to engage with the community sustainably. Now that I am here, I am thrilled that I am part of a medical school that cares about these things and is invested in changing things for the better. The exposure to patient care with a diverse population of patients was also significant, and it has been something I feel good to be part of every day. I believe WashU was the best institution where I could catapult my career into being a leading scientist and physician, and become involved in changing the structural barriers of health for vulnerable populations.
Jenny J., M1

When I was applying to medical school, I didn’t expect to end up at WashU. After leaving Southern California to go to college in Oklahoma, I missed living near a large city and had hoped that I would be able to go to medical school in a place like Los Angeles or New York City. However, I was pleasantly surprised. St. Louis combines the convenience of a metropolis with the low cost-of-living of a smaller city. There’s always something new to explore, from Forest Park to the Saint Louis Art Museum, and many of these activities are free!

Additionally, although it sounds cliche, I really loved how I immediately felt at home when I came to St. Louis for my interview. The students seemed to know the faculty and each other really well and it felt like such a tight-knit community. Despite all of the difficulties that come with only being able to interact with most people on Zoom, I feel like everyone has tried their best to make sure that no one feels left out. All of the upperclassmen and faculty have also been extremely welcoming and are always happy to talk about their experiences and share their advice.

Finally, the new curriculum was also something that drew me to WashU. One of the things I found to be very unique was the Explore curriculum. While there are opportunities to get involved in research, advocacy, education, and innovation at other schools, there aren’t many schools that provide students with dedicated time to explore their interests in these areas. I also really like how WashU includes longitudinal courses on community engagement and health systems science in our curriculum. Additionally, shortening our preclinical curriculum to a year and a half gives us more time for subinternships and electives before residency applications. Although I was a little apprehensive about going to WashU when the school is transitioning to a completely new curriculum, the fact that all of the students I talked to said they felt like the administration is very responsive really alleviated my concerns and reinforced my decision to come here.

Navigating a new curriculum amidst a global pandemic has definitely made starting medical school a bit more challenging and unpredictable, but I have really enjoyed my time here. The people at WashU are some of the smartest and most accomplished people I have ever met, yet everyone is so down-to-earth and supportive. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to be here, and I am excited to see where the next few years will take us. If I were to choose again, I wouldn’t choose any other school.
Kendall J., M1

As I was making my way through the rigorous medical school application process, I had two main goals: Get into medical school (of course!) and find a school where I would truly thrive. While thriving means different things to every person and even shifted dramatically for myself due to the pandemic, WashU was the medical school that to me displayed a clear commitment to wanting their students to flourish and supporting the student body. All the students I spoke with appeared to be clearly enjoying themselves in medical school, indicating to me that WashU students had the room to explore their interests outside of the classroom, the balance to take care of themselves, and the immense support of their peers and the school. “WashU pours 110% into every student,” stated one M1 during our virtual second look weekend. I believed her then. And now, three months into medical school, I know she was right.

Whether it’s M4 mentors taking time to teach us extra skills in our clinical mentoring hospital sessions; Big Siblings thoughtfully delivering care packages after the completion of our first module; professors going out of their way to check-in on us in the time of virtual learning or share their stellar Spotify playlists; fellow students jumping in to support one another or plan safe, pandemic friendly events to keep us all connected; or the school’s commitment to minimizing financial barriers, it is clear that WashU is a place where people will go out of their way to invest in you.

I am also constantly in awe of our class. We jumped headfirst into medical school in the midst of a global pandemic and at a school undergoing a complete curriculum renewal. Clearly, we love a good challenge. But more importantly, we are committed to being the best physicians we can be and recognize that the Gateway Curriculum will enable us to become those physicians. Even three months in, I know I made the right decision for me. In particular, I was drawn to the fully integrated curriculum with a 1.5-year pre-clinical phase, the opportunities for material patient engagement early on, and the emphasis on community engagement and health equity.

WashU is undoubtedly a renowned medical school with amazing faculty, countless research opportunities, and a long history of graduating successful medical students. But ultimately, it was the people and the community that drew me here. It may seem obvious, but medical school is hard. Make sure you find the place where you will not just survive, but where you will thrive. WashU is undoubtedly that place for me, but it’s up to you to decide where that place is for you!
Sabrina G., M1

After my interview, I knew that if I was fortunate enough to be offered a spot at WashU, it would be one of my first choices. The Gateway Curriculum seemed like every medical student’s dream, the research and community engagement opportunities were incomparable, the faculty I met were kinder and more supportive to me than my own college professors, and the current students seemed genuinely happy and healthily self-assured. It was evident that WashU students were the best of the brightest and were amazing and brilliant in their own rights, but their personalities seemed very down to earth and very personable. Unlike some, as a Californian who went to college on the East Coast, I didn’t “mind” the idea of ending up in the Midwest — in fact early on I saw the benefits of living in St. Louis that many don’t learn until moving here: incredibly affordable cost of living, great young up-and-coming energy of the Central West End, rich history, and plenty of opportunities for fun and a good time (barring a global pandemic, of course). Safe to say I was over the moon when I was offered a spot in the WUSM 2020 entering class.

Fast forward to summer of 2020. Second Look — cancelled. Orientation — 90% virtual. White Coat — no families and in small groups. I couldn’t believe that the start of medical school, something I had fantasized about for years, was going to look so drastically different than expected. Luckily, it ended being an incredibly happy and exciting time period of my life, thanks to the faculty, administration, and fellow classmates at WashU.

Current students at my interview boasted about the kind and receptive administration, but it wasn’t until I realized how great our voice was as incoming M1s that I understood what they meant. WashU admin held weekly town hall meetings with an agenda set by our incoming class. As the situation surrounding COVID changed drastically and quickly over the year of 2020, they consistently prioritized our safety and learning, and invested their seemingly unlimited resources into preserving the positivity of our student experience and happiness. At each step of the way, they not only invited student input but requested it.

Even with strict social distancing restrictions in place, I was able to cultivate a close group of friends early on in the school year. Our 106-person GroupMe chat turned into a space of support, teamwork, and acceptance, and the class quickly turned into one big family.
The Gateway Experience

The new Gateway Curriculum lends itself to a new type of medical school experience. Hear from some of the members of the first class to go down the new path.

SECTION EDITORS: PAUL LEE AND REBECCA LIN
Curriculum Related

Class Resource Development Group (CRDG)

Since this was the first year learning from the new Gateway Curriculum, our class’s student government has created a student committee called Class Resource Development Group (CRDG)! CRDG makes it easier for students to share their study resources with each other, and so far, CRDG has compiled and hosted a set of student-developed study guides, Anki card decks, and lecture transcripts. The wealth of study resources that are shared before each exam is a testament to how collaborative all the students are at WUSM!

Paul L., M1

Clinical Immersions

The Gateway Curriculum gives students the opportunity to complete three 3-week Clinical Immersion experiences during Phase 1. Students will get to rotate through Ambulatory/ED, Inpatient, and Procedural settings, and develop their clinical skills, knowledge of social and health systems sciences, and professional identity. Altogether, the Clinical Immersions provide an in-depth look at different types of specialties that goes beyond a single shadowing encounter. Gaining this type of exposure so early in your medical education is invaluable, whether you have an idea of what you might want to pursue or have no clue at all. As an undifferentiated medical student, the Clinical Immersions were a key factor in my decision to attend WashU!

Rebecca L., M1

Coaching

Our class is divided into 12 “coaching cohorts,” each with around eight students and one physician coach who we will be with during our four years of training. Our coaching sessions have ranged anywhere from discussing social inequalities to serving as a safe space for dealing with any struggles we are facing. For me, coaching has been a useful time to deconstruct what we are learning in school, reflect on pieces of our professional development, and serve as an opportunity for longitudinal relationships within our class and with a physician mentor. It is something I look forward to every single week!

With COVID-19 this year, our coaching sessions remained one of the few face-to-face sessions in our curriculum, which became an invaluable opportunity for me to see others and find support from classmates as we all began this journey during such a strange time. We weren’t able to have our traditional White Coat Ceremony this year but instead celebrated the beginning of our medical journeys with our coaching groups. Sharing that experience with my coaching cohort is one of my favorite memories of medical school so far and something I’ll treasure forever!

Christina S., M1
Community Engagement

As someone who is interested in integrating community engagement with her medical career, I was initially skeptical about choosing WashU given the institution’s historical emphasis on the biomedical sciences. I then learned about the new Community Engagement thread in the Gateway Curriculum. A quote that stuck with me after Second Look was that community engagement in the new curriculum would not just be “taking blood pressure at a supermarket or volunteering at a free clinic.” The curriculum creates a space to critically reflect on where we really stand on the spectrum of community engagement as medical students.

I can now say that I have not been disappointed by my decision. The Gateway Curriculum provides a solid foundation in community engagement for all students and is grounded in the unique, complicated context of St. Louis. Audrey Coolman and Kaytlin Reedy-Rogier, our amazing Community Engagement leads, are also incredibly collaborative in allowing students to shape the curriculum. They are always open to meeting about new initiatives and are just generally incredible resources because they are well-connected with different organizations and institutions in St. Louis. And trust me, there will be no shortage of new ideas and opportunities to collaborate with your fellow classmates on issues from environmental justice to intimate partner violence to voter rights, just to name a few. I am constantly inspired by my classmates’ commitment to racial and social justice and their willingness to delve into difficult conversations. There is no doubt that practicing anti-racist medicine and promoting health equity is much easier said than done. During our Community Engagement sessions, we are pushed to confront this uncomfortable reality and reflect on how we can actually incorporate these principles into our unique paths in medicine.

Shannon C., M1

Explore Pathways

The Explore component of the Gateway Curriculum allows students to discover their interests in the medical field outside of classwork. The program encourages the students to think about the different career paths they can take when they become physicians: educator, innovator, researcher, and/or advocate. Thus, there are four pathways that the students can choose: Education, Innovation, Research, and Advocacy & Global Health.

During Phase 1, students are invited to weekly noon sessions to learn about some of the activities or research associated with each pathway. These sessions are great opportunities to connect with faculty and find potential mentors. There are also fantastic Pathway Leads who are more than happy to guide students during this process.

There are four weeks of a required Explore Immersion in spring of Phase 1, where students get to learn more about the foundational concepts of the pathway they selected. This is continued in Phase 2, where students are provided
opportunities to further explore their career interests during clinical rotations. During Phase 3, students can have up to 16 weeks of elective time for another immersive engagement with their projects and can even choose to pursue dual degrees based on their projects!

Kouen L., M1

**Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP)**

Washington University in St. Louis has one of the largest Medical Scientist Training Programs (MSTPs) in the country; our first-year class has 21 students! This means that they have the funding, structure, and support to train successful physician-scientists. Something that makes our program the best in the nation is how dedicated the directors are to recruiting students from diverse communities. To me, that was really important in deciding to choose WashU because I am a DACA student. I wanted to go to a place where I felt included, and this has been more than true here. Our program leadership is very receptive to student input. A few of our program’s strengths that stand out are that our program offers fantastic cutting-edge research, an inclusive community, and flawless integration with the medical school curriculum.

To me, it was essential to go to an institution that could provide me with cutting-edge research opportunities in basic immunology. WashU has a track record of training superstars that go on to change the medical field. We have 24 Nobel laureates, with 18 in physiology or medicine. We are also one of the top NIH-funded medical schools. Faculty here are very responsive and supportive of training medical and graduate students. When I went to virtual second looks at other schools, I noticed that some of their rockstar faculty had, in fact, trained at WashU MSTP!

WashU also has a strong community of international students who are caring and willing to mentor you. There are international students from nine different countries in my cohort, and the MSTP does a great job in promoting diversity within the program. When our program directors were approached about not doing enough to recruit Black students, they didn't shy away from the conversation. Instead, they offered to hold a town hall session about this issue, and they committed institutional funds to create a summer program to recruit and mentor underrepresented students in medicine. I feel safe being a DACA student here. The program directors assured me that if my immigration status changed, they would have my back. So, I encourage people to join this welcoming community where MSTP leadership truly listens to its students.

Finally, our MSTP is well-integrated into the medical curriculum. We have weekly longitudinal journal clubs that are aligned with the medical curriculum and keep us engaged with discussions with upper-level students and faculty. Overall, WashU’s MSTP is the best choice I could have made for my training. All students who want to get a foundational training to become a physician-scientist should consider joining WashU MSTP!

Elizabeth J.D., M1
Medical Student Government (MSG)

Serving in the Medical Student Government (MSG) has been an incredibly rewarding and eye-opening experience for me. For the first time, I have been able to see all of the work and time that goes into creating and delivering a world-class medical educational experience. Furthermore, I truly feel privileged to represent my classmates, all of whom are astoundingly insightful and motivated future physicians. Being involved in MSG has shown me that our faculty and administration really are here to help us succeed. I could not be prouder to be a part of an institution with both caring faculty and amazing students.

Yupeng L., M1

Pass/Fail

In my opinion, the grading system is one of the most important considerations when choosing a medical school. While going through the process myself, I knew that my study techniques and stress levels of undergrad could not be sustained throughout another four years. I needed a medical school that cared about my school-life balance and encouraged individual competence over competition. So, discovering that many schools opt for a pass/fail pre-clinical grading system was life-changing!

This system of learning lets us be self-motivated, devote extra time to topics that interest us, and engage in extracurriculars without agonizing over achieving a certain letter grade. Especially while adjusting to a new school with a new curriculum in the middle of a pandemic, I would say that we all appreciated this peace of mind even more. Don’t get me wrong, achieving competency or “just” passing in med school is a challenge in itself, but I can honestly say that the shift in my approach to schoolwork when moving away from traditional grades impacted my mental health for the better. And true support from classmates, in the form of (so many) shared study materials and the willingness to help out anyone struggling, really made me feel like we were all on the same team and we all are capable of being successful, rather than competing amongst ourselves.

Abigail B., M1

Phase 1 Modules/Integration

The Class of 2024 is the pioneering cohort of the School of Medicine’s Gateway Curriculum, a novel accelerated medical curriculum that is divided into three phases. In Phase 1: Gateway to the Foundations, students learn most of the scientific foundations of medicine. This phase is the equivalent of a traditional curriculum’s pre-clinical years. In Gateway, this phase is divided into seven modules based on body/system and function (e.g. Brain and Behavior, Circulation and Breathing, etc.). Spaced throughout these modules are three 3-week Immersions, where students will rotate across various hospital settings and develop valuable clinical skills to associate with their expanding knowledge. Phase 1 also features Explore, a month of structured activity that allows students to explore areas of interest in medicine ranging from research to global health.
In contrast with older curriculums that essentially sort content areas into isolated blocks, a hallmark of the Gateway Curriculum is that it features integration of various topics and disciplines at both micro- and macro-levels of the curriculum. From a broad perspective, it places an emphasis on integrating community engagement and clinical skills longitudinally throughout Phase 1. In any given week, students will cover a range of interdisciplinary topics such as the genetics of B-cell lymphoma, community-level strategies to reduce firearm violence, and the financial burdens of living with cancer. The integrative nature of the Gateway Curriculum equips students with the necessary knowledge and experience to best serve their patients and communities, whose problems reflect the systemic complexity of the real world.

Yupeng L., M1

### Clubs & Extracurriculars

#### American Medical Association (AMA)

Joining WashU’s chapter of the American Medical Association (AMA), which also represents our chapter of the Missouri State Medical Association (MSMA), is a great opportunity to get involved in health policy and advocacy at the regional, state, and national levels. As part of the AMA, you get to learn from the many educational events that our chapter hosts throughout the year, connect with other advocates at conferences, and write resolutions to help directly shape policy. Although these events obviously look a little different this year, advocacy has been more important than ever. I recently had the chance to attend the first virtual AMA Medical Student Section (MSS) national meeting and was incredibly inspired by hearing fellow medical students voicing concerns about everything from bias in clerkship grading to health access and equity issues exacerbated by COVID-19. If you are excited to learn more about health policy and to find a welcoming community of people who share that passion, definitely consider joining the AMA!

Evaline X., M1

#### American Medical Women’s Association (AMWA)

One thing I have always known about WashU is that this institution values strong female leadership. As an applicant, I met our various female deans and medical students who told me stories about hanging out with Dean Ratts after an American Medical Women’s Association (AMWA) dinner at her house. As a high schooler, I used to drive up to WashU for research with Dr. Susan Mackinnon, former chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, and the Mini-Medical School lecture series led by Dr. Cynthia Wichelman, an emergency medicine specialist. To bring things full circle, one of our first AMWA talks this year was also by Dr. Wichelman, who taught us invaluable lessons about self-advocacy, salary negotiation, and how to “squinch” our eyes. (Look it up!) One of my favorite
parts about Dr. Wichelman’s renowned lecture was that her lessons were important for all of us to learn, and many students of all genders and classes tuned in. Another great talk was from Dr. Vicky Fraser, chair of the Department of Medicine, who gave us tips for our CVs and lots of great book recommendations. Though COVID-19 has made it difficult for the student-run organizations to have in-person events, hearing from these female powerhouses has always been insightful and left me with practical advice. Not only has AMWA connected us to amazing medical leaders, but we’ve also had fun social events like flower arranging and a book club, as well as opportunities to introduce medicine to students at Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls. In addition to mentoring young women interested in STEM, I am excited to become a mentee myself when we get paired with our AMWA faculty mentors. Time and time again, WashU has proven to be a strong pipeline for women in medicine, and I am grateful to both be a part of it and continue building it for those who will come after me.

Sai P., M1

Art to Heart

Koeun L. and I connected the summer before arriving in St. Louis over our shared interest in visual arts. When we discovered that a student group dedicated to visual arts didn’t already exist at WUSM, we were excited to build it ourselves. We touched base with the Student Affairs manager, Andy Wiegert, and the existing Arts Commission group to see how to get our group started, and then it was smooth sailing. Upon the start of the semester, we also recruited a fellow art lover, Eve M., and founded WUSM Art to Heart — a new group of medical students who come together to appreciate visual arts and use arts as a tool to connect and serve St. Louis and the surrounding community. Our goal is to create a space and community for members of WUSM to pursue visual arts projects, perform community outreach using art as a medium with community partners, foster a community to appreciate visual arts, and collaborate with other WUSM groups such as those hosting the yearly Art Show. I remember being struck by how easy the school makes it to host events in terms of funding and support. We had an idea for a virtual paint night and within two weeks, we collaborated with WUMS Wellness and it happened! Along with the fun virtual paint nights, we also have an initiative to collect face masks made by our very own student body to donate to local health-care facilities! If you like winding down with arts and crafts and are interested in using visual arts to serve the St. Louis community, Art to Heart is here for you!

Amanda L. and Kouen L., M1
Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA)

WashU’s chapter of the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA) provides opportunities for students of all backgrounds to promote health advocacy and outreach to the Asian Pacific American populations of St. Louis. Even with COVID-19, APAMSA has had opportunities for us, such as pairing students with an Asian Pacific American physician mentor, having students teach a virtual class on diabetes to elderly Chinese participants, and hosting virtual Medical Chinese classes! Normally, APAMSA would also regularly host health screenings via its Chinese Clinic or health fairs that are run together with Saint Louis University School of Medicine’s APAMSA chapter, where students get to practice taking a history and physical exam and brush up on their medical vocabulary in Chinese. Even though we haven’t been able to host cultural festivals like Diwali and Lunar New Year this year, we’ve still had virtual and socially distanced events (with free snacks!) to build our own Asian Pacific American community here at WashU. If you’re interested in learning more about what you can do to help the underserved Asian Pacific American community, APAMSA is definitely the place for you.

Amanda L., M1

Christian Medical Association (CMA)

If you are looking for a school that will support you as a student and as a Christian, WashU is the place for you. I love being Christian, and having a fellowship of people who share the same faith is very important to me. Therefore, I am very grateful for the Christian Medical Association (CMA), which encompasses students from different fields of medicine who share the Christian faith. The weekly Monday meetings have been a blessing to me during these COVID times, as sharing the Word and praying with WUSM Faculty and other students have helped me manage my stress and expel any negative vibes or energy. I especially appreciate how the CMA leaders were able to organize socially distanced events at Forest Park, where we could sit on the grass and enjoy the gift of nature while sharing our experiences and reflecting on the Word together.

Favour G., M1
**Class Show**

They say that laughter is the best medicine, and we take that seriously here at WashU. The WUSM Class Show is a long-standing tradition in which each class hosts and performs an original production based on their experiences that year. Each show consists of various acts and skits, which highlight the class’s creative talent and unique character. Many of the recent years’ class shows can be found on YouTube. Medical school has its ups and downs, but through it all you will be relying on and making memories with your classmates. Participating in the show is a great way to laugh about and celebrate these unique times.

*Jacob S., M1*

**Dance Club**

If you are the kind of person who loves to dance (whether you know how to or not), or loves to learn new skills, or wants to do something different to relieve the stress that comes from being a medical student and a million other things at the same time, WUSM Dance is the place for you. I was part of the dance team at my undergrad, where I enjoyed dancing as a therapy to get away from life’s stressors. When I learned about WUSM Dance, I was excited to know that I will still have access to my ‘get away from stress’ card. Even with the pandemic, this dance club did not disappoint. The club leaders have done a great job of organizing online dance classes for the students, and I love how the dance classes reflect the diversity of the St. Louis community. This year I learned how to salsa and bachata. I am very grateful for this experience because I would not have learned them on my own.

*Favour G., M1*

**Dis-Orientation (Dis-O) Guide**

If you’re reading this section, then you probably already know what the Dis-Orientation (Dis-O) Guide is. The Dis-O Guide was an invaluable resource for me when I was deciding on a school, and it even helped me out after I committed to WashU in helping me look for an apartment! Knowing how important it can be for prospective students, I didn’t hesitate to be an editor-in-chief for the guide. As one of the editors-in-chief, I’ve had a great time brainstorming with the other editors about how we could make this guide unique to our class — especially given our circumstances of starting a new curriculum in a pandemic. Recruiting people to write was also a breeze considering our class is so engaged and collaborative! It has been an incredibly fun experience to learn about my classmates’ perspectives, hobbies, and lives outside of the classroom and to see this guide come to life, so I hope you all enjoy reading it as much as we’ve enjoyed creating it!

*Frances A.S., M1*
Histones

The Histones is an a cappella group that welcomes students throughout the Medical Campus. The group has historically performed for the WashU community and for patients at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. Although COVID-19 has made things a little difficult, we have continued to hold rehearsals outdoors in preparation for a virtual concert. All students are welcome to join regardless of experience. It is a great way to learn a wide variety of music and meet some interprofessional colleagues!

Sarah V.S., M1

Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)

In short, the mission of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) at WashU is to empower medical students of all backgrounds to advocate for the health of the Latinx community. Everyone is welcome to join and be involved, whether that be through our social events like our Welcome BBQ or WashU/SLU meetup, our Medical Spanish program for teaching and certifying medical students to be bilingual providers, or our community outreach efforts, which include our bi-monthly health screenings at El Torito, a local Latin American supermarket. As is to be expected, COVID-19 has limited some of our usual activities this year, but we’re looking forward to restarting our monthly Spanish charlas with faculty (and food), health screenings at El Torito, and dance outings soon! We’re so excited to meet you, whatever your interests in LMSA or the Latinx community at WashU and in St. Louis may be. Follow us on Instagram at @lmsa.washu!

Miguel S.M.B., M1

LouHealth

LouHealth is a new advocacy organization that was started last summer by WashU students in response to issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It now includes almost 200 students from different graduate and professional programs across St. Louis working together with local community organizations on issues such as health access and equity, criminal justice reform, intimate partner violence survivor advocacy, and environmental justice. Recent initiatives have included promoting the Missouri Medicaid expansion ballot initiative (which passed over the summer!), supporting the Close the Workhouse campaign, and helping register voters for the November 2020 election, just to name a few. LouHealth is really driven by the ideas and motivation of students, so if you are interested in advocating for a cause not already listed here, LouHealth is a great place to find the support to do so!

Evaline X., M1
Pediatric Life Savers

Pediatric Life Savers is a student-run organization that works with the St. Louis Children’s Hospital. Phase 1 students are given the opportunity to go in twice a week and lead sessions to teach infant CPR to parents of infants in the NICU. This year, we were able to get CPR certified but have not been able to go in and teach yet due to COVID-19 guidelines. We are hoping to get this back up and running in the spring.

Lili B., M1

Student Interest Group in Neurology (SIGN)

The student interest groups at WashU are incredible, and they have excellent faculty support. They can help facilitate research and shadowing, and they’re a great way to get to meet people in your class and the class above, as well as some of the faculty. The Student Interest Group in Neurology (SIGN) has been one of my favorite extracurriculars to participate in since coming to WashU. While everything has had to be virtual, we’ve had presentations on the neurological signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and on the life of an attending neurologist at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. The faculty mentor is amazing. After our first meeting, I wrote her an email asking if she had any recommendations about who to talk to for my particular interests. Within a day she’d set up a Zoom call with another physician for me, and given me the names of three other physicians who I should talk to in order to best explore my interests. Later, when I had questions on various aspects of academic medicine, such as compensation, hours/work-life balance, research, and teaching, she sent me an incredibly thoughtful email with a thorough discussion of all of my questions and the names of two more physicians who I should talk to. While the pandemic has made it harder to build relationships, the student interest groups have been a great resource to start!

Jared G., M1

Student National Medical Association (SNMA)

The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) is a national organization committed to meeting the needs and concerns of medical students of color, especially those of the Black community. Our local chapter’s mission is to generate a close-knit, well-resourced community of underrepresented students, amplify cultural humility within our broader school body, and confront disparities in health and education. We are also involved in student recruitment and provide mentorship for minority students throughout the schooling pipeline. We lead a number of programs dedicated to the above including the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience (CSMB) program, the Minority Association of Pre-health Students (MAPS) mentorship program, and, in conjunction with the Public Health Interest Group (PHIG), the Health Outreach Programs (HOPs). In our free time we host faculty dinners, panel discussions, hangouts, open forums, and whatever else our community needs to thrive. Our dedication to minorities in medicine appeals to all groups of
students and professionals, so please feel free to reach out and discover how you can be a part of our initiatives! Follow us on Instagram @washu.snma!

Michael R., M1

WUSM-GO

Believe it or not, people actually do have the time to game in medical school. I definitely was anticipating having to give up gaming once I got into medical school, but a lot of other students and I have found time to keep it as one of our hobbies.

WUSM-GO is a gaming group with fellow students and even faculty who are down to play. People play on all consoles and play all types of games (Smash, League, Among Us, even the console exclusives). We organize game nights open to any game throughout the year. Whether you are a try-hard (we respect the grind, don’t worry) or just newly interested, everyone is open to play. I definitely recommend WUSM-GO to anyone trying to pick up a new game, flex on your classmates, or just have a good time.

Ian M., M1

Yoga Club

Practicing yoga is a great study break that lets you release any stress and tension that may have built up during the week. The WUSM Yoga Club is open to people of all levels of experience and programs of study (MD, MSTP, PT, OT, etc). This year, the club has met every Tuesday evening for an hour in Hudlin Park when the weather permits (and otherwise over Zoom). In the past, classes took place indoors in the King Center, which has floor-to-ceiling windows and a beautiful view of the sunset. Yoga Club rotates teachers from the community to allow students to sample different types of yoga, such as vinyasa flow and Kundalini yoga. In order to compensate the teachers, dues are typically $25 per semester, which is about $2 per class and significantly cheaper than most yoga studios. The first class is free, so I highly recommend trying it out to see if it’s right for you!

Rebecca L., M1

Study Styles

Anki Only

Anki is a flashcarding software that is great for improving memory recall — but beware how you use it. In my opinion, it needs to be supplemented well if you want to maximize its potential. There are several great Anki decks for medical school, but the “AnKing” deck is probably the best organized deck covering the entirety of Phase 1 materials. Before each lecture, I usually watch either the Boards and Beyond, Sketchy, or Pathoma videos related to the topic at hand and unsuspend each of the AnKing cards associated with those lectures. After
that, I read the textbook and skim the PowerPoint during lecture to patch up any lapses in knowledge from the videos and make Anki cards off any of those gaps. While the AnKing deck is highly useful, it is not omnipotent. The same applies for our lectures in class. Using both to supplement each other constitutes my effort to fill those gaps.

I have found that it takes significantly less time to read through the textbook than it does to sit through the lectures themselves. As a result, most of my learning comes from self-teaching, but I always reach out to my professors if I have any questions I find are not answerable through the video recordings or PowerPoint. Every day, I wake up in the morning and tackle Anki first thing (1.5-2 hours). Having a set time to do your cards is critical because if you do not have a set time, it is likely you’ll run into time issues and miss certain days. I appreciate how Anki helps remind me of material I covered months ago; if I notice I am missing several cards regarding a certain past topic, I make a note to briefly review that topic later. In this way, I stay up to date on not just the current block of material, but also past blocks.

On average, I do around 700 cards a day. Regardless of how many you choose to do, ensure that you give yourself enough time to supplement with other material as well as enjoy some personal time to enjoy for yourself!

Aravinda G., M1

Carrels

I personally have always been someone who loves studying on campus. I don’t struggle that much to focus at home (though I am more likely to take naps), but I’m generally more energized/focused when I’m studying with friends. The carrels are honestly nicer than most of the study spaces I’ve experienced in my life (that could be a "me" problem though). There are conference rooms, access to the larger lab classrooms, and really nice study spaces with nice lighting and views of campus, many of which are equipped with large screens and whiteboards for collaborating. They also have nap pods, massage chairs, and the necessary kitchenette for you to heat up dinner during extra chaotic exam weeks.

During pre-COVID times, I think a lot of the random lunch talk leftovers used to get dropped off in the carrels so it will eventually also be a hotspot to get free low-to-medium quality takeout leftovers. Anyway, the carrels are great for both small group study with friends or individual studying, and definitely something I recommend you check out as you get settled into medical school.

Evan L., M1
On Going to Class

One of the only upsides to the pandemic was that we could attend class from the comfort of our own homes in pajamas while often eating breakfast (although even without Zoom school, I know I would’ve still been a class-goer). It’s definitely not for everybody and I encourage you to experiment in the beginning of Phase 1 to see what fits your learning style, lifestyle, and preferred daily schedule. I realized that my attention and focus tend to be sharper when class is “live” since I know I cannot pause and rewind. I also like that attending class keeps me on track and builds in a natural routine to my day. Moreover, I enjoy getting to interact with the professors and classmates — even if I don’t have any questions, the fact that I have the opportunity to ask during class keeps me more engaged and curious. Lastly, now that Step 1 is pass/fail, I feel less pressure to gear my studying to boards and can align my studying wholly with our curriculum.

Sabrina G., M1

On Skipping Class

Why should you let administrators and the people in charge of the Gateway Curriculum's schedule dictate how you live your life? If you don't want to wake up for an 8 a.m. lecture to look at blue and pink pictures of skin cells, then don't. Watch it at 8 p.m. instead. Maybe you're jetting off to exotic time zones every day (in the post-COVID era) or maybe you stayed up until 5 a.m. watching YouTube highlights of Judge Judy; when you skip live lecture, you are the master of your fate, the captain of your soul. Is the idea of watching lecture online not infinitely more attractive than hauling yourself over to the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center every day? A video recording will never judge you for wearing the same clothes four days in a row. In addition, while mere human lecturers are bound by the sluggish nature in which the brain converts thought to speech, video recordings have the ability to reach speeds man can only dream of. I will often find myself opening a beast of a lecture spanning two or three hours, but when I click the 10x button, in the words of the great Lightning McQueen, I am speed.

David C., M1

Research and Anki

Research opportunities

I’m sure you have heard of the incredible, cutting-edge research being done at WashU, but what you may not know is how easy it is to get involved in research even within the first few months of medical school if you so choose! I joined a basic science laboratory sometime during the first few months of medical school simply by sending an email to a few PIs whose labs I was interested in joining. Several of my friends found clinical research opportunities by attending lunch talks or even just attending class! We also receive emails several times a month with research opportunities available for medical students, and specific interest groups have generated lists of PIs who are currently looking for new members. In
addition to the ample opportunities, I have found it to be very manageable to do research alongside schoolwork. PIs are very aware of the time and work commitments of medical students and allow incredible flexibility week-to-week based on your schedule. WashU has definitely exceeded my expectations for research opportunities available to med students!

**Anki**

Anki has been the perfect way for me to incorporate learning the curriculum material with Step 1 study materials. I downloaded the AnKing deck during the first week of medical school and I unsuspend cards that directly correlate with the class material based on tags already generated in this deck. I usually find that the cards in the decks correspond very well with our lectures, and this helps put context behind all of the cards.

I typically only spend around 1-2 hours per day doing Anki and any associated outside resource videos. Anki for me is a supplemental resource that will allow me to retain my memory for what we are learning in class throughout the entire curriculum until I take Step 1. Most of my time is spent attending lectures, reviewing lecture materials and studying with classmates.

*Jessica D., M1*

**Studying at Home**

By this point of the pandemic, I am sure we are all well accustomed to working/studying from home. In undergrad, I was always someone who studied exclusively at the library or in coffee shops, but in the past few months I have spent most of my time studying at home due to the flexibility it gives me. With medical school lectures entirely online and one or two on-campus activities a week, our schedule has provided the freedom to study in whatever way works best. I have actually found myself going to lectures much more than I anticipated simply because I can roll out of bed ten minutes before class starts and jump on Zoom. My roommate and I also bought a large kitchen table at the beginning of the year, and it’s been great to have this space to study together and with friends. Additionally, as an avid snacker it helps that my kitchen is always only a few steps away. Overall, I enjoy being able to dictate my own schedule and study where I am most comfortable.

*Karina S., M1*

**Studying in Library**

In undergrad I quickly discovered that I need a clear separation between my relaxing space and my work space. Knowing this about myself, I gladly make the drive to Becker Medical Library almost every day of the week to escape the many distractions of my apartment. I usually go in the late afternoon once the Clayton Garage is no longer charging for parking (it’s free for students after 2 p.m.). I’ll then store my packed dinner in the fridge that’s on the seventh floor and find the spot that will work best for that study session. If I feel like studying alone, I will
go to the basement floor which is almost always empty, whereas if I’m studying with friends I’ll usually go to the fourth floor study rooms or the seventh floor. And although COVID-19 certainly made studying in the library somewhat more complicated, the staff at Becker have taken excellent steps to make it a safe environment for everyone, making sure to promote social distancing and mask wearing. If you are like me and can’t resist the call of your bed while powering through hundreds of Anki cards, definitely give Becker a try!

Christian M. H., M1

Traditional Study Methods

When I started at WashU, I thought that I had to change my study methods drastically, but the reality was that I only really needed to fine-tune them. After watching lecture and making notes on the PowerPoint slide, I go back and create a written review sheet of the most important concepts and points to review later on and before the exam. From my notes, I make my own Anki cards and supplement with some cards from AnKing if I need more practice in a subject. When reviewing for exams, I tend to write out a lot of concepts on a whiteboard as well as go over my review notes that I’ve made along the way. You know best how you learn, so just start off with what you know works for you and you can adjust from there.

Bella M., M1

Only at WashU

Big Sibs/Little Sibs

I was never part of a fraternity or sorority in college, and felt a bit of skepticism about the Big Sib/Little Sib program before school started. Now, however, I couldn’t be more grateful. I’ve turned to my Big for advice about where to live, where to eat and have fun, how many extracurriculars to join (I still joined too many), and how to manage school. It’s been so nice to have someone to turn to who has already taken a ride on this roller coaster and can remind me to take a deep breath, relax and just get out of my head. While not everyone finds a perfect match in their Big, I have found this chance to meet and interact with upperclassmen to be invaluable to my adjustment to the WashU community and St. Louis.

Caellagh M., M2

Coaching

Our weekly coaching sessions are a great addition to the new Gateway Curriculum, especially since in-person sessions are rare with our mostly virtual curriculum (due to COVID-19). Each coaching group includes 7-8 students that meet with their coach every week to discuss different topics, like the transition to medical school and how to address implicit bias. I have really enjoyed learning more about all the people in my coaching group, doing fun activities like building marshmallow/pretzel towers,
and creating a movie script of our lives. Our coach is also incredibly supportive and easy to talk to, and in addition to our larger group sessions, the coaches meet with us one-on-one to go over standardized patient sessions and our progress during medical school. Coaching provides both a safe, reliable space for us to share and discuss important topics, while taking a break from the more rigorous content in the rest of our curriculum.

Sneha C., M1

**Societies**

At the beginning of orientation, we are sorted into three societies: Cori, Erlanger-Graham, and Lowry-Moore. Each society has a faculty advisor and eight society student leaders (four M1s and four M2s) who work alongside the OSRs to set up fun events within the WUSM community. Students can earn “society points” by participating in these society-related activities; the society with the highest points at the end of the academic year wins the “Society Cup,” a true honor you would not want to miss. Things have been quite different this year due to the pandemic; nevertheless, the highlight of my medical school journey so far has been making new friends through “socially-distanced social events” organized by societies. Some of my favorites include the Society Cup Tennis Night, Forest Park scavenger hunt, mug cake baking on Zoom, and pumpkin carving. We may be “divided” into three different groups labeled with different names and crests, but the purpose is really to bring the community together and have a great time!

Rohana G., M1
The Gateway Experience

Art to Heart paint night kits being assembled in FLTC — students got to take home their very own canvases, paint, and brushes to create works of art.

Society pumpkin carving (from left: Rohana G., Amanda L., Rebecca L.).
SNMA members huddling for a photo at the 2020 March MedBall.

Members dressed spicy red at the annual AMWA Red Dress Affair.
Moving can be scary. Here we have valuable information that can help make your transition a little bit easier.

SECTION EDITORS: JARED GARLAND AND EMILY TERAIN
General

Buying (& Renovating) a House

When I was applying to med school, house hunting was not exactly my first priority. However, after settling on WashU, I realized how insanely inexpensive and unique real estate is in the STL area compared to where I grew up in the northeast. I kid you not when I say my jaw dropped while driving by the rows of historic stone mansions in the surrounding neighborhoods, and I knew I had to have one of these pieces of history for my own.

Now, buying a house for the first time is an understandably daunting process — but that’s what a great realtor is for! Seriously, my realtor saved me a number of times and opened my eyes to options I’d never even considered. Be sure to vet a few realtors thoroughly to find one that fits with your goals. For me, location was the most important factor. I wanted to be near school and in a safe neighborhood, so I spent hours driving up and down street after street. I printed out a map and marked each block either red, yellow, or green based on factors such as how well the houses were maintained, if kids were out playing, and what businesses were nearby.

I ended up settling on a larger home in the Central West End built in the 1800s and in need of some serious TLC. It ended up being over my original budget, but one thing to consider is finding some roommates to spread out the monthly costs. Also, if you’re open to putting in some work yourself, I suggest using the rule of thumb to pick the worst house in the best neighborhood. Don’t underestimate the extent or cost of the work required, but in the end, you’ll have something uniquely yours. I am in the middle of some fairly major renovations, which can be stressful, but I’m a little crazy and would choose this over Netflix any day.

Patrick D., M1

Buying a Townhouse

As a born-and-bred Californian, I was accustomed to astronomical housing costs. I therefore never expected to be able to live in my own place at age 22. St. Louis real estate prices, however, made buying property feasible. In fact, the affordability of real estate in St. Louis was one of many factors that led me to choose WashU.

Since I had only spent two days in St. Louis prior to moving, choosing where I wanted to live for the next eight years seemed impossible. To give myself more time to explore the many unique neighborhoods, I found a WashU resident (via RotatingRoom.com) who was subletting a room for two months. With a deadline in mind, I spent my afternoons and weekends biking around the city to check out the places I’d identified after hours browsing the seemingly-endless properties in my price range on Zillow.

Having only a slight idea of what I wanted as well as a very minimal understanding of real estate, I interviewed a couple of realtors so that I could choose one that had the time and patience to put up with my naiveté and indecisive
nature. I’m especially glad that I did because I really put her patience to the test. She ended up showing me 26 properties all across town so I can now say with confidence that St. Louis truly has the property for anyone. Whether you’re looking for a 100-year-old home with lots of character (ie. stained glass windows, stone fireplaces, and a horror movie-esque basement), a four bedroom house with a half acre of lawn to mow, or a modern, apartment-style condo, you’ll have plenty of options within a 10-minute drive of campus.

I ended up deciding on a modest townhouse (though it merits pointing out that I get access to a pool and a backyard large enough to host COVID-friendly gatherings, neither of which I actually have to take care of) that allows me to be within walking distance of campus and many of my classmates. From there, my realtor took care of the rest and twenty days later I had the keys to my new place.

Now, actually furnishing the place has been a different story. While the only IKEA in Missouri is just down the street and Facebook Marketplace has some great inexpensive options, getting furniture has been more difficult than actually buying the place. I guess that just goes to show how manageable buying a townhouse in St. Louis really is.

Rochelle E., M1

Finding a Roommate

I always knew I wanted to live with a roommate, but like many of my classmates, I didn’t know any other incoming medical students. I was definitely nervous about finding someone who I would live well with — we’ve all had those rough roommate experiences! Luckily, WashU sets up a great housing spreadsheet where you’re able to input living preferences and information about yourself. The spreadsheet also contains a ton of general information on different apartment buildings, including personal experiences from M1s and M2s, as well as information on the different areas to live around St. Louis. Due to COVID and the fact that we lived on opposite sides of the country, my roommate, Shannon, and I met virtually over the summer via that spreadsheet. We talked on the phone and quickly realized that we had similar living preferences and both wanted to live in the same apartment building. Because St. Louis is such an affordable place to live, we were easily able to find a spacious two-bedroom/two-bathroom apartment in Montclair for a very reasonable price. Obviously, there is no guarantee that you’ll find the perfect roommate, but I can confidently say that having a roommate (especially another M1!) was one of the best decisions I made. Especially during COVID, there is nothing better than having a built-in friend to help you adjust to medical school, explore a new city, and attend (virtual) lecture with!

Sarah F., M1
Living Alone

After living with roommates for the past four years in university, I wanted to try living alone once I moved to St. Louis. Though I had heard housing was affordable here, I really came to appreciate that when I was apartment hunting: I settled on living alone in a studio, and am currently paying about as much as I was when previously living in Los Angeles in a one-bedroom with two roommates. So far, I’ve found living alone to be very comforting; I enjoy the freedoms that come with having my own place such as being able to play music out loud and be as messy as I want to be. Though living alone could be a little quiet for others, I personally don’t mind going out to see my friends and study if that means being able to come back to my own place where I can relax at the end of the day.

Maggie B., M1

Before coming to WashU, I had never lived alone. For all four years of undergrad, I lived in the dorms with a roommate, and I shared a room with my sister for most of my life at home as well. I have always been a person who enjoys company and is used to having other people around, so I was definitely a bit nervous about moving to a brand-new city all by myself. While the initial stages of moving in and getting my footing in St. Louis were nerve-wracking and a little lonely at times, I have actually really appreciated living alone and would not change my decision. It has been awesome to set my schedule during the day. I usually like to wake up and go to sleep earlier than most people, so it has taken some stress off in the morning to know that I can walk around and make my coffee without worrying about waking anyone up. At night, too, I have always been a bad sleeper, so I really appreciate having more control over my sleeping environment. This has been huge in helping me stay grounded and healthy during med school! And, especially with the pandemic this year, being able to make my own decisions about how safe my living space feels has been important to me.

With regards to making friends and building community while living alone, I have found that there was no reason to be worried! There are tons of students living close by in the Central West End and other areas near the Medical Campus. If I ever need anything, I have several classmates in my building (and probably 30+ more who are only a 5-minute walk away). It has been super easy to meet up with people for runs in the morning, walk together to school, and run errands for one another. Also, the library and study carrels on campus are always open to medical students and are a great resource for finding company while studying. WashU does a great job of fostering a tight-knit community among students — so I have never really felt like I was alone.

Hana H., M1
Living with a Medical Student

Living with another first-year medical student has been one of the highlights of my time at WashU so far! My roommate and I met through the housing spreadsheet for accepted students and we’ve both had a great experience. Because of virtual classes, everyone is spending a lot more time at home this year, so having a roommate has really helped me not feel isolated. The first year of med school is a big change, and it’s nice to be able to share the experience with someone who is going through the same situation. My roommate is also my go-to person for studying, talking between lectures, and cooking dinner. If you’re someone who enjoys living with others, I definitely recommend looking for a medical student roommate. It’s a great way to meet someone in your class and form a lasting friendship!

Arohi S., M1

Living with a Non-Medical Student

I opted to live with two of my friends from college — one law student and one pre-med. It has been a blast living with friends, and I am constantly immersed in a different atmosphere and community outside of the medical school. It has been nice to be able to separate school from life and friends and not have medical school be a constant topic and stressor. It is always nice having different perspectives around and somebody to get my eyes off the computer. None of us are ever on the same schedule, so when any of us have a busy day, somebody can always help out with groceries, cooking, cleaning, or other chores. At the same time, however, I am not as active in our class as some others since I am already living with friends and am not as immersed in the WUSM environment, though this is also likely due to social distancing as much as anything else. 10/10, would do again!

Andy B.

I live with one of my middle school (in Beijing!) best friends who went to WashU for grad school and is currently working from home as an architect. We’ve been friends for 14 years, so she’s basically family to me at this point. One of the perks of living with a non-medical student is getting to meet people outside of med school. Moving to a new city during a pandemic was quite scary; I could not have done it without the help from my roommate and her group of friends. My roommate and I have very different schedules, but it worked out pretty well — she cooks for me when I’m busy cramming for exams and vice versa!

Rohana G.
Renting for the First Time
I lived on campus for all four years of undergrad and applied directly from school, so I had absolutely no idea how to do adult things like rent an apartment! Even over summer breaks, I had alternative housing options that did not require signing a lease. I personally found the *Dis-O Guide* (yeah, this one!) to be a really helpful introduction to some of the popular housing options for medical students. Over the summer, current students also sent out a housing spreadsheet with even more detailed information about apartment buildings and a way to find roommates. Every leasing office I spoke with was very patient and understanding, so don’t worry about asking “dumb” questions — they’re probably actually really important ones! If this is something you’re nervous about, you can also do what I did and start with a year-long lease at The Core, where you don’t need to worry about utilities or commute or anything like that, and then take your time once you’re in St. Louis deciding if you would rather live somewhere else.

Lydia S., M1

Neighborhoods

Central West End
The Central West End (CWE) is the area where the Medical Campus is situated, so it is a very short walk (10-15 minutes) from many apartment buildings and living complexes in the neighborhood that are popular among med students. It’s also conveniently located on the east edge of Forest Park, so you have easy access to all the running and biking trails, fields, and attractions that the park has to offer. In the other direction is downtown St. Louis, which is only about a 10-minute drive away. The CWE itself boasts a ton of great restaurants, stores, and coffee shops, in addition to a movie theater and library, among other things, including a centrally located Whole Foods.

Jenna B., M1

Demun, Clayton
Demun is a wonderful little neighborhood just off the western side of Forest Park. Living in Demun sandwiches you between the aforementioned Forest Park and a lesser-known beauty in Concordia Park. Demun is famous for having the original Kaldi’s Coffee location, as well as a slew of great dining (Louie’s is a must-try!) and hangout spots (Sasha’s Wine Bar and Barrio). The neighborhood also has Clementine’s Naughty and Nice Creamery (on Oprah’s O List)! Demun is centrally located, with Richmond Heights just below it and the Delmar Loop located a short drive above it. You can bike through Forest Park to the Medical Campus when the weather permits, but realistically you would need a car to get around. I’ve found rental prices in the neighborhood to be a little cheaper than in the Central West End. Among medical students, this neighborhood flies under
Living in U City

Living near the Delmar Loop is a unique experience — you get a slice of the bustling excitement of the WashU undergrad life, where you see students walking around drinking boba tea or eating sandwiches in front of their laptops. Local residents are also seen lining up for their favorite burgers at Blueberry Hill and vibing to a musician playing his saxophone. University City offers a kind of diversity that provides both comfort and experience, as you can be part of anything but still find room to explore new things.

Jenny is the first friend I made in St. Louis. She moved to University City thirty years ago because she was hoping to raise her adoptive children in a diverse neighborhood. She wanted her two children to grow up in a place where they were accepted, where they did not stand out as strangers because of the color of their skin. When I was looking for a place to live, she told me about University City. “Come live near with us,” she said, “you’ll love it here.”

I can’t say if it is the great restaurants, cool cafes, and boba stores that will make you like this place, or the affordable apartment housing dominated by lively undergrads but scattered with graduates, or the Midwest hospitality of your neighbors too keen to take me and my family under their wings. If you like listening to local musicians play at Kingsbury Avenue on summer afternoons while eating Cuban sandwiches with your neighbors, that works. If you are more of the secluded type and like to play games in your little den eating to-go Thai food, that works too. Whoever you are, you will see yourself belonging here.

Skinker-DeBaliviere

We love living in this neighborhood. Pershing Ave has a row of apartment buildings where many medical students and graduate students from the Danforth Campus live. My partner and I are just a 5-minute walk from the Missouri History Museum located in Forest Park, and we’re fairly close to the Danforth Campus gym if you need a break from studying or want to walk through the park while re-listening to that lecture. There is a MetroLink stop just down the street that takes me right to the center of campus, and the Delmar Loop is right around the corner. This neighborhood offers much more affordable housing than the Central West End but is still conveniently close for biking or taking the Metro. If you’re worried about traveling at night, WashU offers a free shuttle that will take you back to your apartment. It’s a great spot!

Zachary R., M1

Koeun L., M1

Caellagh M., M1
The Grove

The Grove has so much character and charm and has been a fantastic place to live! It is right across I-64 from the medical school, so it is incredibly close to campus. From award-winning, Southern fried chicken at Grace Meat and Three to Afghani food at Sameem, there are so many restaurants, breweries, and bars that are within walking distance of my apartment. If you need a study break, The Grove is also close to both Forest Park and Tower Grove Park, depending on where you live in the neighborhood!

Bella M., M1

Apartment Complexes

5630 Pershing Avenue

Price: $550 + gas/electric/internet, renting room in 2-bedroom/1-bathroom from owner.

Pet policy: Size limit on dogs.

Amenities: Combo washer/dryer in each unit, free community washers and dryers on each floor, balconies in unit, separate storage closet in building, two elevators.

Parking: One gated off-street parking spot included. Plenty of on-street parking available.

Commute to campus: 30-minute walk to campus; 3-minute walk to MetroLink and 5-minute ride; 5-minute drive.

About: I decided to rent a room from a classmate who bought a place, so I didn’t have to deal with a lot of the usual headaches of moving into a new place. It’s a pretty good setup for me, and it’s fun to watch a classmate figure out how to be a homeowner. The building itself is very quiet, and most residents are adults and other professional students. There are a few other med students in the building — all MSTP students in their graduate years. The units are large and open, with the kitchen open to the living/dining room. There can be some noise from Forest Park Parkway some nights, but having Forest Park be so close definitely makes up for it — Forest Park is amazing. The ceilings are a bit low, but this has the benefit of soundproofing you from your upstairs and downstairs neighbors. The neighborhood itself is filled with large apartment and condo buildings, so this building isn’t the only choice. There are also some new developments coming soon, like a grocery store. Would recommend!

Miguel S., M1
Aventura

**Address:** 4431 Chouteau Ave.

**Price range:** $1350+ for a 1-bedroom; $1700+ for a 2-bedroom; utilities not included.

**Amenities:** Full in-unit laundry, private balcony with outdoor storage, dog park, swimming pool, fitness center, fire pits, nice outdoor common areas with grills.

**Pet policy:** Pets allowed for extra $20/month rent, plus $150 fee and pet deposit, weight limit on dogs. Very pet friendly — there’s a dog park right next to the complex!

**Parking:** Free gated parking for residents, carports available for $50/month extra. Very small guest parking area but guests can street park outside the complex.

**Commute to campus:** ~12-minute walk to campus.

**About:** Aventura is very quiet and perfect for someone that doesn’t want to be bothered by loud neighbors or music. It’s located just a few blocks north of The Grove, which has a great strip of shops and restaurants/bars. There are great outdoor common areas to hang out with people (especially during COVID). The balconies and in-unit laundry are wonderful features that are hard to find in St. Louis, and the apartments are very well-renovated and new. The gated parking and security give quite a bit of peace of mind in St. Louis, where car break-ins are not uncommon. The maintenance is also very quick, and they are usually there within a day when I submit a service request. The only drawbacks for me are that the apartments are pretty small and relatively pricey, it can be hard to have a lot of people over because of the quiet hours after 10 p.m., and most people (at least in our class) live in the Central West End instead of The Grove. But I personally enjoy living here and think it’s a great option if you want to live within walking distance of campus.

E’lysse S., M1

Del Coronado

**Address:** 4949 W. Pine Blvd.

**Price range:** Studio for $960; 1-bedroom for $980/$1,280; 2-bedroom for $1,280/$1,680 (unrenovated/renovated pricing); utilities usually around $50-$80/person.

**Pet policy:** Pets allowed for one time $150 deposit and $20/month.

**Parking:** Gated parking lot for $75/month; uncovered garage parking for $100/month; covered parking garage for $125/month.

**Amenities:** Laundry machines on every other floor, gym, package pick-up, bike room, occasional free breakfasts, conference and lounge areas, coffee machine in lobby (during pre-COVID times!)

**Commute to campus:** ~10-15-minute walk.
About: Del Coronado (DelCo) offers several different floor plans, both unrenovated and renovated, to fit your specific needs. DelCo is conveniently located in the Central West End, a lively neighborhood with many restaurants, shops, and more close by. Additionally, DelCo is just a short walk away from campus and Forest Park, which is right across the street! Many of my classmates either also live in DelCo or live in the many other apartment complexes within the vicinity, which has been great. Some downsides include that the building overall is still undergoing some renovations and that the package system is less than ideal right now due to COVID precautions. In addition, the gym is small, although it has enough equipment to cater to most needs. Overall, I am happy with my decision to live in DelCo, and would recommend it to anyone looking into it!

Chris W., M1

Metropolitan Flats

Address: 4535 Forest Park Ave.
Price range: $1,300-$1,595 for a 1-bedroom; $1,700-$2,495 for a double; electricity and WiFi around $50/month.
Amenities: Dog park, in-unit laundry, small gym, courtyard with grill, food mart, valet dry cleaning.
Parking: Underground in secured lot for $125/month.
Pet policy: Allowed for a $300 fee and $25/month.
Commute to campus: 5-7 minute walk.

About: I live in a 2-bedroom/2-bathroom apartment (1,170 sq. foot) with my roommate, who is also an M1, and we have absolutely loved it here so far! This apartment complex is on the medium to higher end in terms of rent but the tradeoff for comfortability, location, and large space has made it worth it. We are close to school and also to Forest Park and all that CWE has to offer. The management and maintenance have been nothing but kind and attentive.

Metropolitan Flats (Metro Flats) is in the Central West End right across from the hospital and is about a 5-7 minute walk from the Medical Campus. The building and apartments were renovated last year and there are 1-bedroom/1-bathroom and 2-bedroom/2-bathroom layouts available. The appliances are updated, and there is in-unit laundry! The building has a small fitness center for residents, a courtyard, a small mart with food and things, and — my favorite — a dog park! Underground parking is available with a monthly fee. Some of the ground-level rooms have little patio areas, and we are on an elevated floor that has a small balcony. If you’re looking for a comfortable place near campus in CWE, are able to buy in this price range, and want to see cute puppies everyday, I recommend Metro Flats!

Christina S., M1
Parc Frontenac

**Address:** 40 N. Kingshighway Blvd.

**Price range:** Studio for ~$1,000; 1-bedroom for ~$1,000-1,400; 2-bedroom for >$1,600, utilities typically around $100/month with WiFi.

**Amenities:** Large rooftop with furniture and amazing views, gym, communal laundry in basement, 24/7 doorman, package reception/storage, located right across the street from Forest Park, bike storage, management company hosted events (such as free beer tasting, cooking class, yoga, etc.)

**Pets:** Pet friendly (dogs - max 50 lbs., cats, birds, fish) for a $300 deposit and $20/month fee.

**Parking:** Underground garage for $100/month; covered garage across the street for $75/month.

**Commute to campus:** ~10-minute walk.

**About:** Parc Frontenac has been a great place to live, especially given how much time I have spent at home this year. I was a bit nervous to move into an apartment that I had only seen via Facetime, but I am very happy with the choice I made. The apartments are relatively large, and many have been recently renovated to include hardwood floors and new appliances. I think there is a bit more noise being right on Kingshighway Boulevard, but you can’t get any closer to Forest Park. I spend a lot of time on the rooftop, which has gorgeous views of the city and ample space to hang out with friends. It’s slightly more expensive than other buildings, but I find the extra space in my apartment and numerous additional amenities (gym, parking, security) are well worth it. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions!

Ilana O., M1

Park 44

**Address:** 4444 W. Pine Blvd.

**Price range:** Studio for $755; 1-bedroom/1-bathroom loft for $1,240; 2-bedroom/1.5-bathroom townhouse (call for details); utilities around $95/month.

**Pet policy:** Cats and dogs allowed. Maximum of one pet, 25 lbs. or under. Rent $15/month, deposit $300.

**Amenities:** AC, heat, and water heater included in rent. Cable and internet ready. Some units have patios or balconies. Dishwasher and appliances including refrigerator, microwave, electric stove, and oven. Communal laundry on second and fourth floors. Parking garage with bike racks. Really big central courtyard with grill and cornhole.

**Parking:** Free street parking; surface lot for $55/month; garage parking for $85/month.

**Commute to campus:** ~14-minute walk, ~5 minutes by bike or Lime scooter.

**About:** Going into the apartment search process, I was focused on finding a place with really good quality to price ratio, practical location, close to other students and yet distant enough to connect with local young professionals, and responsive
staff. I also wanted a relatively quiet space and that was spacious enough to live comfortably. Park 44 has been great for me regarding most of these goals. I find it is incredibly cost effective as a single person in a studio. My rent, internet, and utility expenses are just under $1000/month. Schnucks (your standard grocery store), Whole Foods, campus, and Forest Park are all under a 15-minute walk, so I’ve been able to live comfortably with just my feet and a bike. Because of COVID, I unfortunately did not have a chance to visit the studio I selected (550 sq. ft.), but while it looked small initially, I have found it to be spacious enough to fit a full-size bed, 90-inch couch, dining table and adjustable office table and still have room for yucca plants and stretching. I have not had any noise issues, though I can sometimes hear thudding and the occasional singing neighbor. I have also found the maintenance team is overall available and quick responding. I had to have my AC filter changed twice, which they completed the following day.

Selina and management are likewise very responsive and willing to work with you — I have not had issues with getting answers regarding my lease or questions I had. I have also experienced zero pest problems. Our courtyard space is also nice and very large, with retro furniture, barstools, cornhole and a large central gazebo, so if you are into outdoor parties, they’ve got you. One drawback I have experienced is that few M1s are staying here this year, which adds an extra barrier to socializing. If you are concerned about this, I would recommend confirming beforehand that classmates are staying here. There is also no fitness center, communal laundry, or parking or print station, and the garage is tight fitting, so make sure your parking game is on point if you bring a car.

Michael R., M1

ParkLux Apartments

Address: 5560 Pershing Ave.
Price range: Studios for ~$700; 1-bedroom/1-bathroom for $800-$1,050; 2-bedroom/1-bathroom for $1,000-$1,188; 2-bedroom/2-bathroom for $1,200-$1,400; 3-bedroom/variable bathroom for $1,300-$1,800; utilities included.
Amenities: In-unit washer/dryer, bar, gym, stainless steel appliances.
Pets: So many dogs! (But there is a fee.)
Parking: Free street parking; gated uncovered lot for $50/month.
Commute to campus: 30-minute walk, 10-minute bike, 6-minute drive.
About: Pershing Avenue has tons of apartments! It’s a really cute street with a lot of beautiful trees and the buildings made of brick make it very picturesque. I love to take walks around the neighborhood, and it feels very safe. The population is mainly young people (and many dogs). There is a cute bar on the street called Mack’s that has HUGE chicken wings. There is also a vegan cafe and yoga studio right around the corner as well as a hair salon, tailor, specialty gym, and a cafe down the street. The major drawback for most people is the distance from campus, but I chose to live here because I don’t mind driving or biking through Forest Park to school/CWE and wanted a bigger space for a cheaper price.
The building itself is older. There are both renovated and classic units with dishwashers, garbage disposals, AC/heat, and in-unit washer/dryer. I will say that my move-in experience was pretty rough: The apartment was not cleaned or painted, there were a few light bulbs missing, and some other cosmetic issues. However, since that time, there has been a change in management and the new team is very responsive and even plans occasional little events or puts out free grab-and-go breakfast items.

Carly D., M1

The Core

Address: 718 & 818 South Euclid Ave.
Price range: $750 - $1,700, with a mix of studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom apartments (utilities included).
Pet policy: One pet (25 lb. limit) per unit in 718 building; $200 deposit and $100 fee.
Amenities: Fully furnished (with in-unit washer and dryer and Smart TV), 24-hr gym, utilities, cable, internet, game room, rooftop, group study library, BBQ/picnic areas, and secure package receiving.
Parking: $79-$85 fee depending on lot.
Commute to campus: 2-3-minute walk.
About: I am the kind of person that enjoys having my own space. I appreciate the ease of transitioning to life in a new city without roaming store to store looking for apartment furniture when all I want to do is relax in my new apartment and explore the community around me. If you want that too, The Core apartments are the place for you, and it has the added benefit of being less than a 5-minute walk from campus. At The Core, you can get a fully furnished studio (256-380 sq. ft with in-unit washer and dryer) for a great price without having to worry about paying extra for utilities. You also get to enjoy living with a community of students from your class, with amenities like the rooftop, game room, and library where you can hang out together.

Favour G., M1

The Lofts @ Euclid

Address: 625 N. Euclid St.
Price range: Studio for $1,150; 1-bedroom for $1,400; 2-bedroom for $1,800; electric and internet/cable not included but usually ~$75 total.
Amenities: Rooftop oasis, indoor club room, gym, downstairs grocery store.
Parking: Garage (tandem) for $150/month; garage (single) for $100/month; outdoor for $50/month.
Pet policy: Allowed.
Commute to campus: 20-30-minute walk; 6-minute drive.
About: The Lofts@Euclid has been a great place to live thus far! It’s in a renovated historical building (built in the late 1800’s!), and so everything is new, nice, and functional. I’m in a small studio (~500 sq. ft), but it feels larger than it is because
of its ample storage space, super tall ceilings, and big windows. It also feels like a studio/1-bedroom apartment hybrid. My bedroom and bathroom are distinct rooms but the square footage is studio-esque. The building has several amenities like a rooftop “oasis” (outdoor fireplace, hot tub, lounge), gym, and a grocery store on the first floor. The management has been very nice and helpful as well. It’s a 20-30-minute walk to campus which to some might be a con, but it’s also nice to have some separation between school and home. At the end of every month, I pay a little less than $1,200 including utilities and parking. I would definitely recommend the Lofts!

Rowan G., M1

The President and Park Royal

Address: 4615 Lindell Blvd.
Price range: Studio for $850+; 1-bedroom/1-bathroom for $1090+.
Amenities: First floor laundry (free), water, utilities, and WiFi included in rent, fitness center, communal library, communal patio with grills.
Pet policy: Pets allowed for a fee.
Parking: Garage parking for $80/month.
Walk: 15-18 minutes, door-to-door.
About: The management in the President/Park Royal is amazing — the landlord agreed to hold my apartment for an extra month free of charge last minute when WashU changed our start date, and maintenance responds to work orders within an hour on weekdays. The units are unrenovated but kept in great condition, and they are incredibly spacious. The gym and patio/grill area are huge perks. Although The President/Park Royal is a 3-5-minute walk farther from campus than some buildings on Laclede or West Pine, it is literally a 1-minute walk from Whole Foods and within walking distance from Schnucks. Plus, it’s much quieter, as you don’t hear the ambulances at night. The distance, in my opinion, is negligible if you just walk a bit faster! :)

Sabrina G., M1

The Residences at Forest Park

Address: 4910 W. Pine Blvd.
Price Range: Studio for $1,335; 1-bedroom/1-bathroom for $1,540; 2-bedroom/2-bathroom for $1930; utilities around $75-95 per person, including WiFi.
Amenities: gym, bike storage, complimentary coffee, two outdoor patios with grills (one is the dog park and one is the human park), postal package service, washer/dryer in unit!
Pets: Many doggos! Have met many in the dog park.
Parking: Gated uncovered lot parking for $60/month.
Commute to campus: 10-minute walk. The hospital is only two blocks away but class is a little farther.
**About:** The Residences is an apartment complex with tons of beautiful, spacious, and modern apartments. After living in notoriously bad college apartments (think many things breaking and maintenance being MIA), my roommate and I wanted an apartment complex with responsive management, and the Residences had some of the best reviews online. In our time living here, management has been super responsive to any issues (of which there have been very few — mostly just lightbulbs going out).

While our rent is a little more than some other places in the area, I felt like it was worth it to live in a nicer apartment complex with more amenities. Also, living with another M1 roommate has made it much more affordable. We live in a 2-bedroom/2-bathroom with an in-unit washer/dryer, and our apartment is very spacious, with lots of big windows and natural light. The apartment complex has a huge lobby with an additional communal kitchen and tables for studying. In addition, there’s both a human park (outdoor patio area) and a dog park where lots of residents will take their pets! Parking is $60/month for a gated lot, which isn’t too bad compared to some neighboring apartments, and there’s also a free visitor’s lot for when friends/families/partners come to visit. There’s a gym in the basement with a few cardio machines, a squat rack, and free weights, which is super nice in the era of COVID. Plus, you can’t beat the location, as we are only two blocks away from the medical center and across the street from Whole Foods and Shake Shack (which we frequent often). Overall, I have loved my experience living in the Residences, and will definitely be renewing my lease!

**West Pine Terrace**

**Address:** 4530 West Pine Blvd.

**Price range:** 1-bedroom/1-bathroom for $800-$1,000; 2-bedroom units available for a similar price; utilities typically $25/month.

**Pet policy:** Cats only.

**Amenities:** Laundry units on each floor, water and heating included in rent.

**Parking:** Surface parking for $50/month; garage parking for $75/month.

**Commute to campus:** 10-minute walk.

**About:** There are several smaller apartment complexes in the Central West End that you can find easily through apartments.com or by looking at Zillow. While a majority of our class lives in larger apartment buildings, I would definitely recommend checking out some of these other buildings! There are some gems in the area for similar, if not lower prices. West Pine Terrace is about a 10-minute walk to class, within a 2-minute walk to Whole Foods, and is nearby the other large apartment buildings.

The complex is only four floors, with a total of 40 units, so it’s pretty small. I personally like living in a smaller building because I feel like my landlord is more responsive if I have any major maintenance issues (which I haven’t!). One major perk is just how close this building is to campus, and another is that there
is garage parking — this was something that was super important for me since it can snow in St. Louis. Additionally, the apartment units don’t feel “old,” even though the hallways look a bit dated. Most of the units are becoming renovated, with stainless steel appliances and new bathroom countertops. Overall, West Pine Terrace is a fairly affordable 1-bedroom option, especially given its location.
Apartment at Metro Flats on Forest Park Ave. and Euclid Ave.
Perspectives

Delve into the unique perspectives of our diverse student body — including our cultural backgrounds, relationships, and religion — and see how they impact the study of medicine.

SECTION EDITOR: SHIREEN ROY
Disability/Chronic Illness

As someone living with multiple chronic illnesses/disabilities, it was really important for me to go to a medical school/grad school that had good health-care coverage and the flexibility to work with students needing accommodations. The medical coverage here is phenomenal — everyone at Student Health Services is super friendly, there is essentially no wait time for appointments (you can get in and out within minutes!), Dr. Winters is always available after hours via email if any urgent matters arise, anything done at Student Health (blood work, tests, etc) is fully covered, and most specialists within the WashU network are covered with only a $20 copay. Dr. Winters is wonderful at coordinating care with all my providers, and helped me establish a medical team to manage my multiple chronic medical conditions (diagnosed both prior to and during my time at WashU). Dean Moscoso is a true advocate for students needing accommodations — she arranged for me to get testing accommodations for a medical condition I had before medical school, advocated for me to be tested for a learning disability (which resulted in a learning disability diagnosis) after some academic difficulties during the first semester of medical school, helped me get a second set of accommodations for the learning disability, and also guided me through the enormous task of applying for accommodations for Step 1. Finally, there is currently a new group being developed, the WashU chapter of the Alliance of Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses in Medicine (ADACIM). This group is connected to the larger ADACIM national organization and is being established to build community for chronically ill/disabled medical students and allies. Becoming doctors (unfortunately) does not make us immune to chronic conditions or disabilities, but I can confidently say that WashU is able to handle any and every situation that might come your way!

On Abstaining from Alcohol

I feel confident in my lifelong decision to abstain from drinking — largely influenced by understanding my own personality and family history — and have never felt held back from social events because of it. No matter your rationale, I promise that you will find your amazing WashU classmates to be very supportive and mature. My biggest advice is to not feel daunted about making your own choices! You will not be alone. Just remember to focus on being together and enjoying each other’s company rather than passing judgment. Whether it's post-exam partying, weekend clubbing, or late-night kicking back with friends, bonding with your classmates will be a major highlight of the first year.

Bruin P., M2
On Being Asian
Having been born and raised in Southern California, I have always been surrounded by a large Asian community, and there was no dearth of great Asian food. Truthfully, I was a bit apprehensive about moving to St. Louis because of the relatively smaller Asian population compared to San Diego. However, since moving to St. Louis, I have found that my fears were unwarranted. I have been able to find a great community of Asians at WashU, as well as those who share an interest in Asian culture. In terms of food, I was pleasantly surprised to find places for good Vietnamese food, ramen, sushi, and more. There are also huge Asian grocery markets nearby, with Asian snacks galore and every ingredient you would ever need to recreate your favorite dishes.

Cassidy T., M1

On Being Black
St. Louis is a city with a loaded history of racism, disparities based on race, and unequal access to opportunity for people of color (POC). WashU is an institution that is cognizant of their contribution to these harsh realities, and is invested in addressing these issues in the WashU community, as well as in the Missouri communities surrounding us. As a Black student, I feel immensely supported by Student National Medical Association (SNMA), the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and community organizations for POC, and know that my hopes for the betterment of POC in medicine and society are also a priority of theirs. Additionally, being in St. Louis, which has a vibrant POC community, has allowed me to interact with more POC organizations, communities, and individuals than I’ve ever had the opportunity to anywhere else I’ve lived. I feel empowered here, and I know that the fight for equality for POC is also being fought by my peers, educators, and mentors.

Ian M., M1

On Being Conservative
Like most universities, most WashU students and professors seem to lean blue. Several student groups and events promote single-payer health care, pro-choice, and similar ideas. And you’ll learn about the gender spectrum in Genetics and Anatomy. There currently aren’t many student groups for conservative ideas. That does not mean WashU is not welcoming to conservatives though! Your peer group will come from all around the country and the world. This broad range of students includes many viewpoints, including some that will have similar views as you. In my infrequent political discussions with classmates, I am often surprised by how much we agree.

Missouri is currently a red state (although nowadays being red doesn’t necessarily mean being conservative). St. Louis has had a Democrat mayor since 1953 and is predominantly blue. But you’ll see plenty of Trump bumper stickers on the freeway and there are pro-life marches and similar civic events throughout the
year. WashU makes an amazing effort to teach you about St. Louis’s history. During orientation, we learned of the failed attempts by the government to help its poor/disadvantaged. Nearly all of the government’s attempts failed or even made living conditions worse for the people it aimed to help. I lived in Baltimore for two years and St. Louis feels very similar. The historically left-leaning city government has struggled to fix some issues. Don’t get me wrong, I love living here. It’s a great city, but its history is instructive to me regarding certain policies and their effects.

My fellow conservatives and I could certainly do more at WashU to make our voices heard in the form of student groups, events, etc. Even so, the primary focus of everyone at WashU is helping students become excellent physicians. Most days, at school and at social events, politics are not discussed. When I have discussed politics with classmates/professors, each discussion has been civil and respectful. If only our politicians could behave similarly.

Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions when you get here!

Austin H., M2

On Being Latin@ in St. Louis

I was worried about not fitting in when I moved to St. Louis as an undocumented Latina with DACA, but I do have to say I was proven wrong in that aspect. I feel pretty safe and like I belong here. We have a vibrant community of students who identify as Latino here. Many of them are from all parts of the world. LMSA here is also popping. They host so many fun activities like the summer picnic in Forest Park, where we met other upper-level students and some residents over yummy tortas. Usually, there are also fun events where we go dancing to clubs like Viva and Dos Salas, which all have different Latin music, that I hope to go back to when it is safe. The food around the Medical Campus is also pretty bomb. There is a restaurant called Burro Loco that has the best tacos and ceviche around campus. There are also several grocery stores; the biggest one is El Torito. In terms of patient care, we have MedSpan where we can get certified as Spanish-speaking physicians and practice clinical scenarios. We also have the opportunity to volunteer at Casa De Salud, where patients are mainly Spanish-speaking. This year some of my classmates and I formed a student club called Rayos Contra el Cancer (RCC), which we hope to partner with some of the radiation oncology faculty and implement a curriculum to teach interested physicians in Guatemala about new methods and technology in oncology. Through RCC we also hope to develop a donation drive to bring necessary medical supplies to clinics in South America. The great thing about WashU is that you can get involved in the Latin@ community at different levels, locally and internationally.

Elizabeth J.D., M1
On Being LGBTQ+
My partner and I were curious about what it would be like for us to live in Missouri as an openly gay couple. So far, we have been warmly welcomed by the well-established WashU LGBTQ community! The student group LGBTQMed has been around for a long time and has partnerships with the faculty group OUTMed and the school administration. Every year they host small dinner parties with faculty, offering a chance to find mentors within the school. If you are more interested in the scholarly stuff, there is a strong interdisciplinary network across campuses, lunch talks hosted during the year, and a center on campus with a team of physicians from a bunch of different specialties who serve the transgender or gender diverse population, just to name a few of the opportunities. The city of St. Louis itself also has a pretty robust community of people with diversity of genders, sexual orientation and expression — historically located in The Grove just south of campus (with some great drag shows and clubs to visit when COVID isn’t an issue). Of course, like everywhere, there is work to be done — but there is also a strong and tight-knit community of people who are here to support you.

Caellagh M., M1

On Being Progressive
Locate Missouri on a county map of the 2020 elections and you will spot four pockets of blue amid the sea of red. Bluest among these is the city of St. Louis, where over 80% of votes cast went to Democrats. Not only does St. Louis as a whole lean liberal, some of its more progressive areas like the Central West End and The Grove are found right by the Medical Campus. And as you get to know your classmates, the faculty members, and the physicians at WUSM, you will likely find that many of them have left-leaning politics. All of this is to say, if you worry about leaving behind liberal bubbles for the Midwest, rest assured that you will find peers here who share your passion for progressive causes, whether it be racial justice, health equity, reproductive rights, poverty alleviation, or any other initiative. You will find faculty mentors eager to support your advocacy efforts. You will certainly find friends with whom to vent about the state of U.S. politics.

Hopefully by now I’ve convinced those of you who identify as progressive that you needn’t be apprehensive about moving to St. Louis, and that you will feel welcome at WUSM. But what I wish to convey to you, more importantly, is that you are needed here. St. Louis is a city deeply wounded by injustices both historical and extant, from the legacy of segregation and gentrification that formed the Delmar Divide, to the racial disparities in health outcomes that are now being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We as medical students have a responsibility to oppose these injustices and demand redress for harms done in partnership with local organizations. Since Missouri is a red state, it is important that we advocate for progressive policies, engaging openly and productively with those who hold opposing political views. We come to WUSM not merely to find
the comfort of an ideological bubble, but opportunities to serve those in our community who are suffering.

Tony Y., M2

**On Being South Asian in STL**

Having both grown up and gone to college in St. Louis, I can tell you there are an abundance of opportunities to celebrate your South Asian heritage within the area. First, there are cultural events put on by both SLU and WashU’s undergrad campuses, which are open to all students. These include celebrations for Holi, Diwali, Navaratri, Onam, and many more. There are also cultural showcases put on by both universities where cultural dance (Garba/Bhangra/Raas/South), garb, and food is shared with the community.

In terms of restaurants, there are plenty of opportunities to sample South Asian cuisine in the area. The closest restaurant would probably be Rasoi. It is in the Central West End so one could argue it is within walking distance. There is also an abundance of international grocery stores nearby, such as Seema, Ambica Foods, and Bombay Bazaar if you are looking for ingredients or snacks.

Finally, the biggest thing we love to do is share our culture with other classmates. I’m glad to have classmates with whom I can dance, discuss Bollywood movies, and even enjoy South Asian cuisine!

Aravinda G., M1

**On Finding a Research Mentor**

WashU is a great place to find a clinical research mentor. I reached out to a resident during the summer before school to express interest, and he helped me find a clinical mentor and get involved in a research project. We are currently working on a health-care policy project as well as a clinical outcomes project. Both my faculty mentor and the resident have been very responsive and supportive. There are a plethora of research opportunities — from the bench to big data and everything in between. If you need a mentor, all you need to do is ask.

Jake H., M1

**On Mental Health**

At my undergraduate institution, I was an employee of the Student Wellness Center and did a lot of outreach focusing on mental health and well-being. It was important to me that I attend a medical school that shared my emphasis on wellness and the mental health of students. I found that environment at WashU not only in administration, but also in my fellow students. WashU not only provides counseling available through Student Health Services, but also has students serve as Peer Advocates to whom you can reach out to discuss any concerns about school, life, or anything else. Members of student government also serve as members of the Student Wellness Committee, where they meet with faculty to discuss mental health concerns and how to address them. The
community of medical students at WashU is also very friendly and inclusive, which positively impacted my mental health especially during the pandemic. Overall, the resources and activities provided by WashU combined with the welcoming nature of the student body makes WashU a great place for medical education and preserving student wellness.

Nick F., M1

Relationships

On Being in a Long-Distance Relationship

Long-distance relationships can be difficult, and when coupled with the stress of medical school, overwhelming. My long-distance relationship is a bit “easier” than most as my girlfriend lives in Jamaica (similar time zone to STL), is of a similar cultural background as myself (my parents are Jamaican), and is a doctor. Living in similar time zones makes communication easier for obvious reasons; however, communication is possible regardless of time zone disparity. Being in different time zones requires a bit more organization, creativity, and, of course, sacrifice. The start of medical school marked the first time I would live away from home. While excited to begin this journey, I was apprehensive about being unable to hang out with my family and friends. Sharing a similar cultural background with my girlfriend makes me feel closer to home and is an example of one of the little things that helps me get through the day. Additionally, since my girlfriend is in the same field, we can bond over both medical and non-medical topics of interest. She understands the time and effort it takes to be in a medical program, and as such we try to balance our busy schedules to make time for our relationship outside of medicine. I feel fortunate to have found someone who shares these aspects of my life. However, I believe that any long-distance relationship can work as long as you remember to communicate with and make time for each other despite the demands of medical school.

Jordan P., M1

On Being Married

My husband and I adopted a dog on August 3, got married COVID-style on August 7, and moved across the country to St. Louis on August 9. While life can be crazy (and life in medical school can be even crazier), having my best friend by my side makes it a lot easier. When I’m studying for an upcoming exam, it’s nice to have someone else I can count on to cook a healthy meal or do the laundry before I run out of socks. Not to mention, partners make great practice patients.

Since moving to St. Louis, we have also had plenty of time to explore the city, go running in Forest Park, and enjoy each other’s company. While married students only comprise a small fraction of WUSM’s student body, many students are in long-term relationships, and the community is very welcoming to plus ones.
My husband has made close friends in my class, and so far, we’re both loving life as newlyweds in Missouri.

Karlee D., M1

**On Being Single**

Though it may seem like a lot of your peers are in serious relationships, there are plenty who are happily single! Being single in medical school is what you make of it. As anyone in our generation knows, there are plenty of dating apps around; and in a place with so many graduate and professional schools, there’s guaranteed to be a large dating pool of people. You may find a future partner on one of those apps, in your own class, or in one of your hobbies outside of school! Plus, your peers who have partners can make awesome wingpeople. And if you’re not actively looking for a partner, that’s great too! Medical school is all about finding your interests and passions, so being single can leave space and time for you to say yes to new opportunities and build relationships with your incredible new classmates.

Frances A.S., M1

**On Being the Non-Med Student Partner of a Med Student**

Being the partner of someone who is going through medical school has taught me a number of lessons and a few things about myself. First of all, I have started to understand just how strenuous the curriculum is for students. I had to learn to give her the space she needs every day to complete her strict study regimen (though my experience might differ from yours after the COVID "work from home" era is over). Next, I have learned to support her even though I cannot understand how difficult what she’s going through truly is. Sometimes that has been attempting to read some textbooks (that seem to be written in another language) and Anki cards out loud and sometimes it’s simply listening to her vent. Finally, I have learned that medical school can be incredibly overwhelming to spouses/partners, though in a different way than it is to the students. It’s important to be flexible and to understand that some plans might not always be able to come through because of the student’s responsibilities. Despite all of those things, I am incredibly proud to be along for the ride as she chases her dreams and climbs to unimaginable heights. I wouldn’t trade that for the world.

Jared T., Non-Med Student Partner

**On Dating Someone in Your Med School Class**

Congrats! You’re in now, which means you can start asking the real questions — what is dating in med school like? Well, as the randomly selected and sacrificial couple chosen to write the article "On Dating Someone in Your Med School Class,” we’re here to give you advice that we have absolutely no authority to give. Dating someone in med school is both very special and chaotic. On one hand, you save a lot of time explaining things to your partner because they are also navigating
the wild journey that is medicine with you. On the other hand, sharing the same life experiences also means sharing the same daily schedule and friend circles for your first year, which can be a lot sometimes. That’s why it’s especially important to communicate intentionally and continue investing in other friendships and interests that you value outside of your relationship. We also recommend you make sure to spend quality time together that does not consist of takeout and watching lecture at 2x speed in the carrels. Go explore some cute date spots in St. Louis on the weekends (bonus points when you inevitably run into classmates)! All of that being said, the start of medical school is an exciting time filled with new experiences and amazing people so don’t get too stressed about dating. But if you are lucky enough to find that special someone in your class, you might also have the privilege of writing this article in the Dis-O Guide next year.

Shannon C. & Evan L., M1s

On Dating Someone Not in Med School (non-long distance)

In my opinion, dating someone outside of the medical school is great, although it does pose some extra challenges — albeit ones that are not impossible to work around. One of the biggest demands of med school is your rigorous and often inflexible academic schedule. On top of that, you will likely be making a lot of new friends during the beginning of your first year, and will want to dedicate a lot of time to socializing and attending events (hopefully more than we were able to!). The most important thing is to be open with your partner about your needs and responsibilities but reassure them that they are still a very important priority in your life.

Since we do not live together, we purposefully set aside time in the week to spend quality time with each other. Partially due to this, I make a huge effort to plan my studying and practice good time management (which is something that I believe would benefit any med student, regardless of relationship status!). We check in regularly about expectations, and I warn him about upcoming exams or especially intense weeks. We also try to incorporate day-to-day activities into the time we spend together (like exercising, grocery shopping, cooking, etc.) so that we can see each other even when things are super busy.

My partner is a great sounding board and gives a great perspective to the goings-on of my academics and medical journey. It is incredibly refreshing to have such a great support system in one person who knows you so well. Even if they don’t understand the intricacies of medical school and healthcare as much as you do, they will always have your back. Plus, it’s nice to have someone to practice your physical exam on!

Sabrina G., M1
On Having a Family

Medical school at WashU is amazing. The professors, students, and entire med school community are talented and kind. However, I always hurry home each day to hold my daughter and kiss my wife. Before getting married, I thought being a doctor would help lead to a happy life. After becoming a husband and father, I know doctoring is a great career, but still only a career. While in medical school, I prioritize family time, but I’ve learned that flexibility is key. On a typical school day, I make sure to feed my one year-old daughter breakfast before school. At school, I call my wife to say hi. After school, we eat dinner together and I don’t study again until the baby is put to bed (normally by 7:30 p.m.). Most nights, I don’t need to study and my wife and I will have friends over or watch Netflix. WashU and St. Louis are great places to have a family!

Austin H., M2

School

On Being Heavily Involved in Extracurriculars

As someone who was heavily involved in extracurriculars in college, I was eager to start medical school and explore all of the opportunities available at WashU. There are a wide variety of student organizations here, from specialty interest groups to ones focused on advocacy and community engagement. Additionally, while it isn’t something that everyone is interested in, many WashU students are heavily involved in research. Students can also gain exposure to the business side of medicine through the Olin Grand Rounds and Sling Health, a student-run healthcare accelerator. I’ve found that the extracurriculars I am in have allowed me to explore my interests and learn from faculty members and peers. Everyone has been extremely welcoming and open to having me join projects even when I have little to no experience. I’ve also found that getting involved in extracurriculars has been a great way to meet people since there haven’t been many opportunities for us to connect with older medical students and faculty members due to COVID restrictions. Overall, my advice is to not overcommit but to be open to exploring new things. Who knows — you might find something that will become a lifelong passion!

Jenny J., M1

On Coming Straight from Undergrad

Looking back, I have been really happy about my decision to go to med school straight from undergrad and wouldn’t change it. I spent the summer after college not doing anything academic and that left me feeling recharged and motivated when starting med school. Academically, I felt really prepared and it was a fairly smooth transition to medical school, but I definitely changed my study style/habits from undergrad. With our small class size of about 100 students, I feel really
supported compared to being one of almost 2,000 students in undergrad. I have made some really great friends at WUSM with people who came straight from undergrad and those who have taken gap years — it doesn’t really make a difference when you’re here. Going from living close to my college campus in an apartment full of my classmates to not seeing my classmates very often in med school (due to the pandemic) has definitely been an adjustment. My social life is definitely really different in medical school but maybe it’s time to grow up (LOL). Overall, coming to WashU straight from college has been a really positive experience and anyone thinking of doing the same should be excited and eager about the next chapter!

Sangami P., M1

On Taking a Gap Year

Gap years have become pretty common for future med students, and I think that’s for good reason! I spent a year after college working in an emergency department with some clinical research on the side, and the more time passes, the more grateful I am for the experience. Specifically, I’ve found that working in a hospital before starting school gives the material in medical a more concrete grounding, particularly as an M1, when most of the learning is classroom-based. I also think time away from coursework and exams has improved my concentration and made it easier for me to focus on efficiency when I’m working so I can have some time off in the evenings. I would say (very unscientifically) that probably half of my classmates took at least some time off before starting med school. If you’ve taken a gap year, I’m sure that no matter what you’ve done you’ll find it makes you a better doctor in some way!

Zach N., M1

On Taking Many Gap Years

In undergrad, I studied economics and took a bunch of humanities classes for fun. After graduating, I worked as a business analyst for a year before deciding that I wanted to go ahead and take my science pre-reqs, take the MCAT, and apply to med school. My science course load was spread out so that I could fit the classes in with work. I ended up taking three gap years. When coming to WashU, I was nervous — it had been years since I was in school full time, plus there’s so much science that I’ve never seen before (anatomy, microbiology, etc). However, so far I’ve found that WashU does a good job at easing us into the workload and the expectations of what we need to know. Sometimes lectures are fast (I mean, it is med school) but the professors are great about responding to questions and there’s a plethora of outside study materials. In fact, I think that’s actually been the biggest challenge — figuring out what resources I want to use and what study routine works for me. However, I know that my friends and classmates are going through the same adjustment as I am, and it has been a huge relief to know that I am not alone.

Yuliya K., M1
Where We’ve Been

On Being an International Student from Europe

St. Louis is a hidden gem in the U.S. in terms of its international population. When I first arrived here about a year ago for my gap year, never did I guess that I would find over a hundred people from my country (Spain), with half of them affiliated with WashU. To my surprise, there were celebrations for the traditional holidays, Friday evening happy hours, and plenty of opportunities to miss home together, or to recreate home in St. Louis. Moreover, WashU is well known for being blind to citizenship when it comes to recruitment for students in their MD/PhD and PhD programs. This means that, for the entering class of 2020, over a third of our MD/PhD class was international, and most of the PhD students that I met during my gap year (which is definitely possible with the slots of free time that we have during M1 in non-COVID times) were from other countries. Finally, I would like to leave you with one thought — because WashU has a history of accepting international students in its various programs, you will rarely be the first international student to go through a certain problem, or the first international student in a certain program. Chances are that somewhere, in some spot of this thrilling network made up of the most amazing people that I’ve met in the U.S., there is someone that went through the same thing, and can help you.

Alina U., M1

On Being an International Student from Vietnam

The medical school application process as an international student can sometimes make you feel like you don’t belong: schools outright refusing to read your application, little-to-no financial aid offered, and interviews and student meet-and-greets where you’re the only international student. With that said, I feel very at home at WashU. A large portion of the class is made up of international students, we receive financial aid, the school has guidelines dedicated to F1 medical students, and there is student counseling available with international student-specific advice. St. Louis is also a city with a large immigrant population with a long history (fun fact, the third Chinatown ever built in the U.S. was in St. Louis). The easy access to immigrant communities, resources, and FOOD (!) makes one feel very welcome here. Additionally, the affordability of St. Louis renders financial concerns of an international student (especially one from a country with a weaker currency) a lot more bearable. I am so very glad that I get to call this place my home for the next half-decade of my life!

Khai N., M1
On Being from a Small Town

I was pretty nervous to be living in a city for the first time, especially one that has a reputation as a very dangerous place like St. Louis. However, I think the unique location of WashU has made the transition MUCH easier than I thought it would be. The area isn’t too busy or dangerous at any time of day, and you’re within walking distance of lots of cool restaurants and coffee shops. I also think having the park right across the street from me made adjusting easier, as it makes it feel like less of a city and more like home (go Idaho, whoop whoop!). Overall, St. Louis has surpassed my expectations and it’s been a great experience living here!

Nick R., M1

On Being from STL

St. Louis is my home and has been my home since I was born. I am passionate about St. Louis and love it, for all its beauty and its scars. I went to WashU for undergrad, and am now here for the foreseeable future — and I could not be more excited. While exploring a new place is always exciting, I appreciate the comforts of knowing my surroundings, having a favorite park, and a go-to brewery. It is nice being able to take a break from medical school and spend an afternoon with family without driving more than a few minutes. It is also fun being the local and able to showcase the city for all of its culture, charms, and hidden gems. Along with the benefits of family/friends and familiarity with the environment, being in medical school has allowed me to interact with the city in a more unique and intimate way. I feel that I have learned so much more about my hometown in the few months at WUSM than in the four years of undergrad, and it has only served to strengthen my passion for the city and desire to serve here. It’s the same city, but WUSM is an entirely new way to experience it. If you are worried about staying in your hometown, don’t be — I have fallen in love all over again, and have not once regretted my decision to stay.

Andy B., M1

On Being from the East Coast

For East Coasters, sometimes anywhere you can’t reach on Amtrak’s Northeast Regional can seem a world away. I grew up in a small town in Rhode Island and went to college about 30 minutes from home, so when I drove the 17 hours out to St. Louis it definitely felt pretty far away. But most people will only make the drive once, and in the context of fast, easy, and frequent flights to most cities back east, St. Louis doesn’t seem nearly as far away from home as I thought it would. While there are definitely some cultural differences, there is some truth to the saying that St. Louis is the country’s “southern-most northern city, northern-most southern city, western-most eastern city, and eastern-most western city.” No matter where you come from, you’re likely to find several things that feel familiar and many others that are new. Most U.S. cities have a good deal in common, and with
almost three million people in the St. Louis metro area, you’ll likely find almost anything you’re looking for here. America is a big place, and for me the chance to live in a new part of the country has been a fantastic learning experience.

Zach N., M1

On Being from the Midwest

As someone who was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago and went to undergrad in Chicago, I was happy to be staying in the Midwest for medical school. St. Louis is a unique city, so you definitely will feel like you’ve made a change in moving here, but you’ll also feel very at home! From the many frozen custard places (a place called Ted Drewes is a St. Louis favorite, but they also have familiar chains like Andy’s and Culver’s) to the classic Midwest niceness, St. Louis is home to many Midwest staples. One difference for me between my hometown and St. Louis is the weather. There have been days where it snowed in the Chicagoland but not here in St. Louis, so for those of you looking for a break from the super harsh winters with an actual fall (Forest Park is BEAUTIFUL in the fall), St. Louis is your place to be. Finally, it’s nice to be driving distance away from home, especially because it makes moving in so much easier and means you can travel home without sorting all your liquids.

Emily T., M1

On Being From the Mountain West

Unfortunately, for those of you who don’t already know, St. Louis doesn’t exactly have the mountains, or desert landscapes you can find in Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, or Montana. (I’ll note here that the highest point in Missouri is Taum Sauk Mountain at a whopping 1,722 feet.) But St. Louis does have convenient access to most types of outdoor recreation, including hiking, fishing, tubing/kayaking, mountain biking, and rock climbing. During the fall of my M1 year, I’ve gone mountain biking or climbing outdoors at least once per week, while maintaining a good dose of Forest Park running and indoor climbing gyms during the weekdays. None of the outdoor spots here will blow you away, but their proximity to campus (most destinations are within an hour drive) is pretty unbeatable given the workload you can expect to have later on in your medical education. After four years on the East Coast for college, I can assure you that St. Louis is a more than legitimate stop on your way back to the Mountain West!

Jackson B., M1

On Being from the South

I grew up in a rural town in Georgia and attended my state school for undergrad, so coming to WashU was definitely a little out of my comfort zone. I knew I wanted a school that gave me that small-town feel (where people truly care about you and take a real interest in helping you) yet had the academic prowess of a large institution. This was apparent at my interview at WashU and in all of my experiences
thus far. When I bonded with one of my interviewers over our love of Chick-fil-A, I knew that I could fit in at WashU. Midwesterners might not have the southern drawl or as good of food, but the people here are so genuine and honestly rival southern hospitality. St. Louis overall is not an overwhelming transition if you are coming from a small or mid-sized town, which was a draw for me. The Central West End is an amazing place for WashU to call home, and I could not have asked for a better school to branch out to.

Ashley H., M1

On Coming from a Big City

After being in New York City for four years, St. Louis definitely feels like a pretty big change. While there will always be things I miss about NYC (like Joe’s pizza at 3 a.m.), St. Louis has everything I would want in a place to live. Forest Park has all the appeal of Central Park with open spaces to study, multiple different museums, and even a zoo. And I have to say, the Saint Louis Zoo beats the Central Park Zoo any day (plus it’s free!). The Central West End is walkable enough and the MetroLink gets me where I need to go when I need it (it’s also free for students — see the theme here?). There are plenty of great restaurants and farmer’s markets all throughout St. Louis that I can go to without needing a reservation a month in advance or worrying about being crammed in next to ten other people. I think the best thing about being in the Midwest though, and something I’m not even sure I realized I was missing in New York, is the feeling of community everywhere I go. Not to mention I happily traded my tiny apartment in the East Village for twice as much space at half the price in the Central West End.

Paighton M., M1

On Coming from a Big/State School

During the med school interview process, I was always intimidated by the number of students from Ivy Leagues or other prestigious universities. I was concerned that I might be looked at differently for coming from the University of Florida, which has over 50,000 students. But at WashU, that seemed to be completely different. Our class is made up of students from dozens of schools — big and small, public and private — all over the country and world, which makes me feel extremely comfortable here. I have also really enjoyed the transition to such a small class of 105. At my undergrad university, there were so many people that it was difficult to make friends unless you joined a club or organization. With such a small class here, you quickly are able to meet almost everyone and make great friendships. Another big difference is the availability of mentors and advisors. At WashU, all of the faculty are extremely eager to help you in any way they can, whether that is through research opportunities, networking, or advice. The individual attention is a great change after coming from a big school.

E’lyss S., M1
On Coming from the West Coast

I’m from Southern California, so my biggest concern moving to the Midwest was the weather. Honestly, it hasn’t been as drastic of an adjustment as I expected. The summers are more humid and the winters are a lot colder than what you’re used to on the West Coast, but if you dress appropriately then you’ll be perfectly fine. Definitely invest in bug spray (plenty of people here say they don’t use it because it’s a hassle or they don’t like the way it feels — I think mosquito bites feel a lot worse and you WILL get them in the spring and summer without spray). The food scene isn’t as robust as some of the bigger west coast cities, but there is plenty of variety in St. Louis, with vegan and vegetarian options all over. My biggest piece of advice is to lean into and try to enjoy the parts of the city that are different from the West Coast. Flying in for the first time, I was shocked by the greenery of Forest Park, and have made it a point to walk in the park whenever weather permits just to enjoy that aspect that I don’t get back home. If you’ve never lived outside of the coast, expect an adjustment and give yourself grace in dealing with the transition, but I promise it will only get easier and you will find plenty to love about St. Louis in the little free time you get as a med student.

Caden H., M1

Something I was asked on multiple interviews was if I would be willing to leave California. I always thought this question was a bit strange because I thought that if a medical school checked my boxes as an institution that I wanted to be a part of, location wouldn’t be a dealbreaker. However, when I was deciding where to go, a couple of considerations came to mind.

First, I wanted to live somewhere with reasonably nice, affordable housing that was somewhat walkable. I’d seen some room/apartment/house tours on the Second Look Facebook page for WashU, and thought housing looked nice. Later, I learned through panels and other forms of communication that housing was pretty affordable; currently, I pay about the same amount for housing in a studio with ample room for one person that I did for a one-bedroom shared with two roommates in Los Angeles. In terms of walkable, I found that my basic wants were generally met in the surrounding area: I could get to some solid dining options, a selection of cafes, Forest Park, and a Whole Foods by foot. While I enjoy walking, I do have a car which has made the city very accessible. In particular, having a car has helped me get to some restaurants and grocery stores such as Trader Joe’s and Aldi that are a bit further away.

On that note, food-related concerns that I had were if I would have enough restaurant options, and if would have access to Asian groceries. As someone who prefers to eat plant-based, I was pleasantly surprised by the options available; there is a large spreadsheet that is circulating with vegetarian/vegan spots in St. Louis that I am slowly making my way through, and I’ve found a couple of
spots through Yelp that I frequent pretty often. For example, Meskerem, an Ethiopian food restaurant, has a delicious vegetarian combo that has no eggs, butter or milk! As for Asian groceries, I have found that Olive Supermarket (about a 20-to-30-minute drive away) is about as good as any market that I would have back home in Southern California.

Overall, St. Louis has been a great place to live as someone who has grown up on the West Coast, is most concerned about the above things, and has mostly indoor hobbies. I think most people who asked if I was open to leaving California were referring to, in some capacity, the weather, and I have found the adjustment to local weather quite easy and honestly quite pleasant. Summer is a bit more humid than it is in Southern California, and fall and winter are colder here, but I don’t think I have made any drastic changes due to weather. On a more positive note, I have really enjoyed seeing the seasons change, and genuinely believe that St. Louis has prettier sunny days. For me, the biggest question in terms of location boiled down to “Does the school’s location have the food/green space/bookstores (insert what makes you happy here) that you would need to enjoy your time outside of school?” , and I found that St. Louis fit the bill.

Maggie B., M1

On Coming From WashU Undergrad

When looking into medical schools, I wanted to find an environment that would challenge me to step out of my comfort zone and that would wholeheartedly support my academic and personal endeavors. Having spent four years in the “WashU bubble,” I was initially hesitant that WUSM would feel like an identical environment, yet I could not have been more wrong. Not only is life as a medical student (even over Zoom!) drastically different from the undergraduate experience, but living in a new part of the city has allowed me to expand my horizons of what St. Louis has to offer. The flexible schedule of medical school has also given me time to explore new parts of the city and surrounding areas, from restaurants to hiking trails to vineyards. Additionally, I found a built-in support system through fellow WashU grads at WUSM — both in my class and in the years above — who greatly helped to ease the transition and have been wonderful mentors. Feeling familiar with the area and having support systems across the park at the Danforth Campus have also helped to make medical school feel exceedingly comfortable right from the start. Go Bears!

Larissa L., M1
Our Furry Friends
On Having a Cat

I grew up in a house with pets, so I knew early on that I would want a pet in medical school to help me feel at home and ease stress. Little did I know I would end up with two! A friend of mine was re-homing two cats that I ended up adopting before coming to St. Louis. It was fairly easy to find an apartment that was pet friendly and had plenty of space, and through the WashU roommate spreadsheet I was also able to find a roommate okay with pets (who has grown to love them as much as I do!). Even with having two cats, taking care of them is a pretty low-maintenance task. Cleaning their litter box and giving them food and water takes a maximum of 10 minutes per day, and I probably spend less than $60 a month on pet expenses. I can honestly say that having pets in med school has been great for my mental health. Though they sometimes hop up on my keyboard and try to chew my headphones, it’s so nice to have a cat to cuddle and distract you when you get stressed. I know several classmates who have gotten cats from local shelters since being in St. Louis who would echo that sentiment. Our class in general is also very pet friendly, so I know that if I ever need a pet sitter, my cats will be in good hands!

Frances A.S., M1

On Having a Dog

My dogs are a huge part of my life, so I really had no choice but to bring them with me when I came to St. Louis. As I come from a fairly rural area with a lot of green, open running space, I wasn’t sure how caring for dogs in the city would compare — but as it turns out, we all love it here! Where I live, there are grassy patches along the streets right outside my apartment that I can use to take my dogs on quick potty breaks, or I can take them to Forest Park for longer, more scenic outings. People are always walking their dogs in this area, so there are plenty of opportunities to socialize your pets (or if your dog is on the shy side like mine are, there is more than enough space to keep to yourself as you walk). Not only is the general area great for dogs, but my apartment itself is also very dog-friendly, and the door attendant gives my dogs treats every time we pass by. Without a doubt, bringing my dogs here was the right decision, and I can always count on them to lift my spirits when classes get heavy!

J.B., M1
Adopting a dog before medical school was by far the best decision I have ever made. While it is a lot of work to have a high-energy Australian Shepherd in an apartment building, Percy brings so much joy into my life. The secret to having a dog in medical school is efficiency. I take Percy running in Forest Park with my friends most mornings, so I get to catch up with friends, exercise, and tire out my dog simultaneously. On our evening walks, I sometimes do Anki.

Being from Washington State, I was a little nervous about what to do with Percy over the holidays, as he doesn’t do well on planes. When I flew home for Thanksgiving, a couple of my classmates staying in the St. Louis area were more than willing to watch him for me. Another one of my classmates volunteered to take him home for Christmas (I didn’t even have to ask). This speaks to the kindness and supportiveness of the WUSM community; Percy and I are both happy to be part of it!

Karlee D., M1

On Having an Exotic Pet

After committing to WUSM, my boyfriend and I knew that we would have to find a way to fly our rabbits from California to St. Louis. Arthur and Judy have been in our lives for the past three years, and they have since become part of the family. Alaska and Frontier airlines made the experience a breeze, and apartment managers in St. Louis are amazingly receptive to all kinds of pets.

Aside from getting Judy and Arthur to Missouri, we were concerned about finding vets and other resources for our furry friends. To our surprise, St. Louis is home to one of the largest House Rabbit Societies in the United States. It is a fantastic place to volunteer, to meet other owners, and to turn to for help. They also offer boarding over breaks.

Sarah V.S., M1

Sports and the Outdoors

On Hiking/Exploring Nature

St. Louis has so much to offer for nature reserves and outdoor activities. The Medical Campus is located right next to Forest Park, which is one of the largest urban parks in the U.S. (yes, it is nearly 500 acres bigger than Central Park in New York City). It is easily accessible for jogging, picnicking, and meeting new friends with social distance. Within a 30-minute drive from campus, there are plenty of choices for hiking, such as Castlewood State Park, Rockwoods Reservation, and Cahokia Mounds (a prehistoric Native American city). One of my favorite hikes is at Pere Marquette State Park in Illinois. It is an hour away from St. Louis but features a terrific scenic drive along the Mississippi River, especially during peak foliage in late October.

Helen W., M1
On Playing Ultimate Frisbee

One of the first things I did after deciding to go to Wash U was to google: “ultimate Frisbee leagues in St. Louis.” I started playing ultimate Frisbee in high school and it has been one of my favorite activities ever since. Although joining the broader St. Louis community ultimate scene has been put on hold due to COVID, I have been so excited by the number of people in our class who have shown interest in learning the sport! Forest Park is an amazing space to have right next to the school, and the perfect location for some socially distant throwing. Although Frisbee this fall looked a little different than usual, it was still a super fun way to stay active, be outside, and meet people in the class.

An M2 ultimate player has told me that there is an active St. Louis ultimate community that is super welcoming and inclusive of players of all abilities. They organize a range of opportunities to get involved, including pickup games in several locations, summer league, club, and youth development at local high schools. Ultimate Frisbee is a fantastic sport and St. Louis is a great place to play. Everyone should give it a try!

Emma L., M1

On Running

If you’re a runner, St. Louis is the place to be. The city has so many beautiful parks and trails around where you can go for a run of any distance. Whether you want to be able to escape the heart of the city to go for your run, or you just want your run to be in your backyard, St. Louis has a fitting place for you. The hidden gem of this city, though, is most certainly Forest Park. For students living in the Central West End, The Grove, and other surrounding neighborhoods, this park is quite literally steps away. This beautiful park is a massive 1,300 acres and is full of surprises. Almost every time I go for a run, I find myself discovering a new path to follow. Forest Park has been an incredible asset for so many of us during this period of quarantine during COVID. Many of us have bonded by forming running pods of all speeds (quite literally we have a “fast” running group named “WUSM Running From Our Problems” and a “slow” running group named “Running Backwards”) and this has helped to keep us sane throughout the stresses of medical school. Also, there are so many other beautiful trails within a half-hour drive at Castlewood State Park, Weldon Spring Conservation Area, Cliff Cave County Park, Creve Coeur Lake, and so many other locations! Also, after COVID, many of us are looking forward to participating in the many races hosted in the city — including The Hot Chocolate 15K/5K, where you get some awesome swag and goodies, and the medal is a delicious, huge bar of chocolate! Whether you need to a quick study break or you’re training for a marathon, St. Louis parks have got you covered!

Ruple J., M1
On Starting a New Hobby

When you think of hobbies to take up when you move to Missouri, you don’t immediately think of rock climbing. While climbing in Missouri may not compare to out west, there are still a good number of opportunities to develop your skills. I’m from Florida, and have always wanted to get into rock climbing, and so I signed up for the ClimbRx discount at Climb SO iLL, the indoor climbing gym here in St. Louis. Through this new hobby, I’ve been able to make great friends and go on some really fun outdoor climbing trips. Starting a hobby from scratch is surprisingly easy here, since other students are so willing to offer help and even join you in taking up something new. I would highly suggest trying out different things and seeing what you might like — and even if it doesn’t stick, you’ll probably make some great friends and memories along the way!

E’lysse S., M1

Weightlifting

Lifting in med school is a lot easier than what I was expecting. With the flexibility in our schedules, you can gym before, after, or even during class if you’re feeling up to it. The Core gym is conveniently located and is a SICK gym with everything you would need for lifting and cardio. It’s also a place to run into your classmates, and meet other medical professional students that you normally never run into. When you are looking to flex on some young people, the Danforth Campus gym is a quick drive away and is a bigger, more open gym. I find deadlifting and Olympic movements easier to do at the Danforth Campus gym, since there are more platforms, but overall we have everything you could need to get jacked, lean, and everything in between.

Ian M., M1

Religions

On Being Buddhist

Though I was raised Buddhist by my parents, my own exploration of Buddhist thought and philosophy coincided with my interest in pursuing a career in medicine, both of which blossomed during my sophomore year of undergrad. Compared to other religions, Buddhism can have somewhat less of a community aspect, but the monastery just outside of my hometown was essential to my practice, knowledge, and development. As with most cities in the United States, there is a small but active Buddhist community in St. Louis; Wat Phra Sri-ratanaram is the main Theravada center, and there are more Mahayana options available if those are of interest to you. The humanism and compassion intrinsic to the teachings of Buddhism lend themselves very well to a career in medicine and were undoubtedly influential in my choice to make medicine and research my career; the tenets of medicine align very well with the Eightfold Path, and there are few other careers that are so inseparable from science while being
simultaneously based on generosity, virtue, and compassion. I’m not very vocal about my upbringing or practice due to the fear of being exoticized or categorized as “new-agey,” but if any of you reading this are curious about Buddhism or just want to talk, feel free to reach out to me, as I really enjoy talking about it!

Colin M., M2

**On Being Catholic**

Welcome to WUSM! WashU and St. Louis offer a vibrant Catholic community. Many students, residents, and physicians attend mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, a stunning church just around the corner from the Medical Campus. Others are active members of WashU’s Catholic Student Center, which offers everything from Bible studies and service opportunities to social events with graduate students across the university. Medical school is a whirlwind of a time filled with questions about human meaning, and I have been grateful for the support and guidance of friends and mentors within the Catholic community while exploring answers to these questions.

Christina S., M1

**On Being Christian**

St. Louis has a large Protestant Christian community with many churches within just a few miles of campus. I attend The Journey church located in Tower Grove, which has many young people that attend, including other WashU students. Other churches within a couple miles of campus that some WashU Med students attend include the Central West End church and One Family church, both of which have a relatively young congregation and are very welcoming. For those wanting to get involved in a Christian group on campus, there is a Christian Medical Association (CMA), which includes not just med students but PT and OT students as well. Even though practicing faith in medical school can be challenging with the demands of school, it’s a great opportunity to grow and connect with people in the community, outside the WashU bubble.

Elizabeth C., M2

**On Being Hindu**

St. Louis has a pretty large Hindu community for a smaller-size city. The biggest Hindu temple is a traditional South Indian temple in Town and Country, which is about a 20-minute drive from campus. It is a great place to worship. They have many events there throughout the year, and if you get on their mailing list you will be informed of most Hindu things going on in the area. If you go there around lunchtime on the weekends, they usually have a meal for prasadam as well. There is also a Chinmaya Mission Sunday School in Kirkwood on Sunday mornings, close to the temple. Their community is quite tight-knit, but it is mostly for children.
There is also an ISKCON temple near Saint Louis University, about a 30-minute walk down Lindell or 20 minutes if you use the MetroLink and get off at the Cortex. This is a wonderful community that is very welcoming. At their Sunday Feast program held on Sunday evenings, they have a full hour of kirtan, a full hour of lecture from various scriptures, and dinner prasadam. Many devotees here are heavily involved, so if you’re looking for a serious weekly congregation, this is the place you’ll find it. The ISKCON community also does a lot of home programs in families’ homes in the suburbs as well, which are wonderful and can really provide you with a family here. A Swamiji visits fairly often (I think four times a year) as well, and gives lectures in the temple and in people’s homes. I come here regularly, so I would love to introduce any newcomers to the community. There are many people in the community that are willing to give you a ride to/from the temple or any of the home programs if you need it.

Kushi M., M2

On Being Jewish in STL

When I initially committed to WashU, I was a little apprehensive that there would be limited (or no) Jewish life in St. Louis. To my surprise, I’ve been delighted to find that WashU and St. Louis actually have a vibrant Jewish life that is easily accessible. Central Reform Synagogue is only a 5-minute drive from the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC), and Chabad Central West End is similarly distanced. JGrads, an organization for Jewish graduate students and young professionals, is run through Chabad Central West End, and holds events, get-togethers, and services fairly frequently. This has included providing Erev Rosh Hashanah dinner, Sukkot services, and Hanukkah gift bags. The rabbi and his wife are exceptionally kind and interested in building relationships with Jewish graduate students, and they’ve certainly made me feel welcome in the Jewish community at WashU. Additionally, the Jewish Medical Student Association has held socially-distanced and virtual events, including a Zoom challah bake and a tashlich service in Forest Park. The Jewish students in the first-year class have a GroupMe that we’ve used to coordinate meals and check in with each other on the holidays. The opportunities are definitely here for the taking, and how much you choose to engage is completely up to you! Barnes-Jewish is a great place to be Jewish and to dive into this aspect of your identity.

Jared G., M1

On Being Muslim

Coming from a Catholic undergraduate institution, I spent four years before medical school hyperaware of being a Muslim minority, especially because of the hijab I wear on my head. However, these four years were critical in developing my religious identity and in my learning how to “be Muslim” in a setting where there were not many other Muslims around me. These are the experiences I brought into WashU with me, but being Muslim here at WashU is very different from being
Muslim at a Catholic university. Of course, with such a large medical center, there are people of all different religious backgrounds walking around campus, and that’s something that the institution recognizes. For instance, there are multiple interfaith chapels — one in the hospital and another right by Moore Auditorium lecture hall — where students can pray (prayer rugs included). There is also Friday prayer in the hospital chapel every week, which is a great opportunity to meet other Muslim students and faculty. There are multiple mosques around the city, including one right on the Saint Louis University undergraduate campus, about a mile away from FLTC. The Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis is a large mosque that has a very active community, and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved if you wish to do so. In addition, the CAIR Missouri branch is active and always puts on events around St. Louis, so that is another opportunity to work with the greater Muslim community. All in all, WashU does a great job of accommodating Muslim students, and St. Louis has a Muslim community that is not only welcoming but dedicated to their work in the city and the surrounding areas.

Arwa M., M2

The Arts

On Baking

Like many other people with a lot of pandemic angst and nothing to do about it, I started baking during quarantine. Though I’m not exactly ready for Bake Off, I really enjoy making cookies, cakes, and biscuits (and during one memorable instance, lemon sweet cream rolls!) for my family and friends. I was a little worried that I wouldn’t have time to bake during med school, but that hasn’t been the case at all. In fact, every time I’m so stressed I have a dream about macrophages, I pull out my mixer. The physical aspect of making something with your hands is so fun and calming, and it’s an extra that I will end up with something delicious at the end. Even if it’s not baking, I definitely recommend you find some sort of hobby during school that doesn’t involve your studying brain. The benefit of living close to so many other students is that there are plenty of people to share your baked goods with. I’m so grateful to have people to save me from eating the whole tray of brownies by myself.

Shireen R., M1

On Painting/Drawing

Having hobbies outside of school is a great way to destress, explore your passions, and change up the pace every once in a while. For me, I love to draw and oil paint. Ever since I’ve been a little kid, I’ve had a knack for art. I love to get in the zone and get creative. My favorite thing to do on a sunny afternoon in St. Louis is to grab my oil paint, a canvas, a blanket, and a speaker, and head to Forest Park to paint for a couple of hours. There are also lots of ways to engage with art through WashU. For
example, WashU Med’s visual arts student group, Art to Heart, hosted a virtual paint night over Zoom this Fall. There are also some facilities on the Danforth Campus that are available for use for creative purposes. The city of St. Louis has a prolific art scene, as well. There are many galleries around town that feature local artists. The St. Louis Art Museum, the jewel of Forest Park, is absolutely breathtaking and also absolutely free. Other lovely art spaces around the city are the Contemporary Art Museum, the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, the Luminary Gallery, the World Chess Hall of Fame, and more. There are also plenty of cool pieces of art in the WashU medical library and carrel spaces, some of which were created by other students and even by our professors!

Eve M., M1
Summer picnic with LMSA socially distanced at Forest Park.

Elizabeth, Alina, Christian, Mickey (L to R) during White Coat Ceremony.
A group of M1s at Castlewood State Park in September.
Nick's dog, Luna, looking majestic in Forest Park. Karlee's pup, Percy, on the day she adopted him.

J.B.’s two dogs, Max (left) and Ellie (right).

Frankie's two furry friends.
Life (in COVID)

Your one-stop shop for finding the trendiest restaurants, the best locations for your Insta pics, and the logistics to do it all. Find out what the city has to offer, even during a pandemic.

SECTION EDITORS: JACKSON BURTON AND ANUSHA SANKA
Food

Allergy-Friendly Eateries

I’ve had a severe nut allergy my entire life, so eating out can be challenging sometimes. But so far I’ve found a bunch of restaurants in St. Louis that are safe and super accommodating! Some of my favorites are Mission Taco, El Burro Loco, Salt and Smoke BBQ, Charlie Gitto’s, and The Post Sports Bar & Grill. In general, there is a wide variety of restaurants to choose from and you should have no problem finding places that fit your dietary restrictions!

Amanda A., M1

Barbecue in STL

You may not think of St. Louis as being known for its food scene, but it really comes through with its barbecue! In fact, last year a renowned local favorite, Pappy’s, was ranked #1 for ribs in America by the Food Network — it is definitely the place to go if you’re craving an authentic barbecue experience. Salt and Smoke is another top choice, and one of their locations is conveniently located in the Central West End, just a 15-minute walk from the Medical Campus. This is a personal favorite of mine because of their abundant options of delicious sides — their white cheddar cracker mac is to die for! There are plenty of other amazing options as well, such as Sugarfire and The Shaved Duck, among others.

Jenna B., M1

Desserts

If you’re ever in need of a sweet fix, there are tons of places around St. Louis to find ice cream, cookies, pastries, and more.

For ice cream, one of my favorites is Clementine’s Naughty and Nice Creamery, which is about a 10-minute drive from the Central West End. They have some great specialty flavors (with my favorite being their Italian Butter cookie which tastes like the Biscoff cookies you get on airplanes). If you’re in the mood for something a bit more ~wild~, Ice’s Plain and Fancy uses liquid nitrogen to make their delicious ice cream. Lastly, a classic WashU go-to is Jeni’s Splendid Ice Cream, which is a short walk from the Medical Campus and offers some pretty unique options such as goat cheese and berries.

As for other sweet treats, John’s Donut’s in Soulard has some of the best apple fritters in STL and they’re only a dollar. Meanwhile, La Patisserie Choquette has some beautiful and tasty macarons, along with some crepe cakes and eclairs.

Lastly, and most importantly, some classic St. Louis desserts include frozen custard and gooey butter cake. Ted Drewes offers some of the best custard in St. Louis, so I would definitely recommend checking out their selection first. Gooey butter cake can be found pretty much everywhere, but some of my favorites are from Park Avenue Coffee and Russell’s on Macklind. Clementine’s has some of the best ice cream in St. Louis.

MaeMae H., M1
Eating Vegan

Whether you’re a day, a year, or a whole decade into your vegan lifestyle, or you’re just trying to adopt a more whole food plant-based diet, St. Louis can satisfy your taste buds (and your wallet) to help you stay on track. The most popular vegan restaurants near campus include Lulu’s Local Eatery, PuraVegan Café, Frida’s, and Seedz Café. Also, although not exclusively vegan, almost all CWE favorites, including Pi Pizzeria, Medina’s Grill, Mission Taco, Rasoi, and Retreat Gastropub have vegan-friendly options, which has made it more than convenient to tag-along on foodie adventures with my omnivore classmates. For local produce, the Soulard Farmers Market is open year-round, and there are more than a dozen other markets in the city that are active between early spring and late fall. Conveniently, Trader Joe’s is just a ten-minute drive west from campus, and if you ever find yourself missing an essential ingredient last minute, or you’d simply like to bring cookies for your coaching group, you can easily find it at our campus-adjacent Whole Foods!

Nora A., M1

Eating Vegetarian

So many restaurants in St. Louis have great vegetarian options! Some general favorites include Lulu’s Local Eatery, The Mud House, and Treehouse, and my personal favorite for brunch is Rooster (which has GREAT vegan sausage). Even restaurants that don’t have a lot of different vegetarian options usually have at least a few, so almost anywhere you go you will be able to find really tasty meatless meals.

Sarah R., M1

Food Around Campus for When You’re Feeling Lazy

There are many amazing restaurants in the Central West End and the rest of St. Louis to explore. But we’ve all had those times when we are either too busy or too lazy to go far for our food. Fortunately, WashU’s Medical Campus also has some great options. The medical school has Shell Café and Farmstead Café that are open during the day. We also have food trucks that come about once a week offering foods from local St. Louis restaurants, including Blues fired Pizza, K-bop (most peoples’ favorite!), and Guerrilla Street Food. There are a couple of options right near the medical school too, including the cafeterias at Barnes-Jewish and Children’s hospitals (great for late at night when everything else is closed) and a Chick-fil-A on the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy campus right next door.

Joshua T., M1
Places for a Birthday Dinner

Congratulations on surviving another year! Now that’s time to celebrate, here are some of my favorite places. For the high rollers, or if someone is paying for you, Olio does fantastic Mediterranean small plates, and iNDO, headed by one of Food and Wine’s Best New Chefs in Nick Bognar, is a Southeast Asian fusion place with incredible cocktails and wine pairings. For a reasonably priced night, check out Drunken Fish for sushi and sashimi or Salt + Smoke for St. Louis-style barbecue. And if you really just want a low-key time with friends, El Burro Loco’s margaritas (and portion sizes) are comically large!

Jared G., M1

Places to Brunch

Brunch is probably one of the best meals, and STL definitely has its fair share of brunch places. The Clayton area offers some great options including Half & Half (an all around classic brunch place) and City Coffeehouse and Creperie (excellent sweet and savory crepe options). East of campus, Egg on Gravois offers an industrial, contemporary vibe with some great shakshuka and cornbread + egg options. If you’re in the mood for a fancy brunch, The Polite Society is a great choice for a sophisticated, classy outing that is still within a medical student’s budget.

MaeMae H., M1

Places to Take a Date-date

iNDO in Tower Grove is a great restaurant to dine at if you are celebrating something special. Award-winning chef Nick Bognar leads the kitchen and has created some creative (and delicious) Southeast Asian dishes. My partner and I were able to grab some street food-style dishes and have a picnic outside due to COVID restrictions, but we look forward to trying iNDO again to experience the full dine-in menu when restrictions are eased.

Birk E., M1

Puerto Rican/Caribbean Food

Knowing how difficult it is to find good and authentic Puerto Rican food, I was skeptical when a restaurant called MayoKetchup came up in a cursory Google search. A group of Latinx students got together to try it out, and I can say that I was not disappointed. Their pernil bowl with arroz con gandules and tostones reminded me of home! While it may not taste exactly like my abuela’s cooking, it is a great spot to try out here in St. Louis if you’re craving Puerto Rican/Dominican/Cuban style dishes at a decent price.

Frances A.S., M1
St. Louis Greatest Hits

If you’re looking forward to trying some St. Louis cuisine, you won’t be disappointed. Personally, when I first moved here, I was most excited about barbecue, and I was not let down. Probably the most famous option is Pappy’s Smokehouse (try the ribs), but I also love BEAST and Salt + Smoke.

If you’re not a barbecue person, St. Louis has no shortage of other cuisines to try. Pick up some čevapi from Balkan Treat Box, or head over to The Hill for Italian. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention a St. Louis specialty, toasted ravioli (a misleading name — it’s actually deep fried). You can find it at any number of Italian restaurants including Mama Toscano’s or Charlie Gitto’s.

When it comes to dessert, you can’t go wrong with another St. Louis original: gooey butter cake. I pick mine up at Kaldi’s Coffee on Euclid because of its convenient location, but you might try Park Avenue Coffee for their huge flavor selection.

Erika S.S., M1

Trendy, Reasonably Priced Restaurants
To Catch Up With A Few Friends

The Medical Campus is surrounded by some of the coolest parts of town, which each house some real gems of restaurants and bars. In The Grove, my favorites for hanging out with friends are Rockwell Beer Co., Urban Chestnut Brewing, Seoul Taco, and Layla. In the Central West End, Mission Taco Joint, and Jeni’s Splendid Ice Creams are also frequent go-to’s as well.

Ify I., M1

When you’re craving … Burgers

What is a burger but two pieces of bread intimately cuddling the main nutrition meant to sustain you for the next few hours? In St. Louis, there’s a decent number of burger joints that COVID has prompted me to try during numerous lazy takeout nights, and so I leave you my humbled Yelp reviews. I’m partial to Shake Shack in Central West End as a New Yorker, but the best burgers I’ve had were downtown at Mac’s Local Eats. Other favorite joints: Grace Meat and Three, West End Grill and Pub, Stack’d Burger Bar, and Layla’s for an added shawarma component.

Wilson W., M1
When you’re craving … Chinese
As an international student from Beijing and a former New Yorker who had Chinatown as her backyard, I was a little worried about my food options after moving here to STL. BUT, I was pleasantly surprised! STL actually has a decent amount of Chinese restaurants that taste like home. There’s a great variety too—Shanghainese, Szechuan, Dim Sum, Taiwanese, and even hot-pot! Corner 17, Tai Ke, Cate Zone are some of the places we frequently order takeout from. I also highly recommend Private Kitchen, a hidden gem that specializes in Shanghainese cuisine yet their best dish is Peking Duck.

Rohana G., M1

When you’re craving … Ramen
Recommended by my roommate who has lived in St. Louis for the past four years, Nippon Tei’s tonkotsu (pork bone) ramen is a must try. The restaurant is a bit out of the way (20-minute drive from campus), but it’s near Pan-Asia supermarket so we would sometimes make a stop for ramen after grocery shopping. Nudo House and Nami Ramen are also great choices and they’re closer!

Rohana G., M1

When you’re craving … Sushi/Poke
There are quite a few good sushi places—some in the Central West End like Drunken Fish, and some within a ~10-minute drive, like Sushi Ai (which normally also has all-you-can-eat lunch and dinner specials) and Blue Ocean. PokeDoke is also a very good poke place, conveniently right across the street from campus.

Melinda S., M1

When you’re craving … Tacos
There are plenty of fine places to fulfill your taco needs in St. Louis. Seoul Taco provides a great twist on the classics with their Korean-Mexican fusion fare. El Burro Loco has great food and great ambiance for a Friday night with your friends. Mission Taco is a chic cantina with a diverse menu of delicious tacos and top-shelf Margaritas. But above them all, a few blocks north of CWE, stands the crown jewel of St. Louis’ taco scene, The Bell. One would think that when the indigenous peoples of the Valley of Mexico first invented the taco, it was a finished product; there was no possible way to improve upon what seemed like a flawless culinary design. And yet, The Bell has done just that. One bite of a mouthwatering Nacho Cheese Doritos® Locos Taco followed by a refreshing sip of Mountain Dew® Baja Blast is enough to make anyone a believer. So when you’re craving tacos in St. Louis, think of The Bell, and live más.

David C., M1
When you’re craving … Thai

St. Louis has some great Thai food options. A big favorite — especially amongst people who went to WashU for college — is Thai Country Café, which is located on the Delmar Loop, near the Danforth Campus. If you’re looking for something close to the Medical Campus, Thai 202 is a good and convenient option located in the Central West End. Other options include Fork & Stix, King & I, and Chao Baan.

Melinda S., M1

Drinks

Cocktail and Wine Bars

Narwhal’s Crafted
Narwhal’s is a fun cocktail lounge with patio seating just a 7-minute drive from campus. It features a large list of unique frozen cocktails, including a yummy strawberry peach bellini and a creative take on a St. Louis classic — gooey butter cake! They even have hot cocktails that are perfect for when the weather cools down.

Bailey’s Chocolate Bar
For those of us with a big sweet tooth, Bailey’s Chocolate Bar offers the perfect combination of desserts and drinks. With dark chocolate to tiramisu martinis, it’s a chocolate lovers’ dream! If the sound of those makes you fear cavities, they also offer champagne, beer, wine, and non-chocolatey cocktails along with savory charcuterie boards perfect for sharing with your friends.

Retreat Gastropub
Located right in the Central West End, Retreat Gastropub is a modern American pub. Not only do they have a solid food selection like loaded mac and cheese and a beer glaze chicken sandwich, but also a number of gin, bourbon, rum, and tequila cocktails.

Frances A.S., M1

Coffee Shops in STL

Kaldi’s
A St. Louis classic that you’ll find near campus on N. Euclid Ave and on campus in the Mid Campus Center (among other locations). It’s a pretty run-of-the-mill coffee shop with decent study space. Equitable pricing to Starbucks with (in my probably contentious opinion) lower quality coffee.

• Mid Campus Center (MCC), 4590 Children’s Place, St. Louis, MO 63110
• 52 N. Euclid Ave., St. Louis, MO 63108
A&O Co. Market and Cafe
Eccentric market with a collection of offerings, a small barista station, and a separate room dedicated to liquor and cigars. Not great for studying, but an interesting place with good coffee that’s definitely worth the visit for a date or just to feel a little ritzy perusing the wares.

• 1641 Grove Ave., St. Louis, MO

Road Crew
Combination bike shop and coffee shop with friendly baristas, a small assortment of baked goods, and decent coffee. If you’re really into biking, or just trying to explore more of the St. Louis coffee scene, this one is worth adding to the list. It’s got a few tables inside as well, in case you want a new place to study.

• 3172 Morgan Ford Rd., St. Louis, MO 63116

Rise Coffee
Cute shop with a couple outdoor tables. They offer locally roasted coffee and teas with baked goods and some other light food options. This one is another good hangout/date spot, but I wouldn’t suggest it as a study space as it’s been pretty populated and talkative when I’ve gone.

• 4176 Manchester Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110

Starbucks
There is one in the CWE and one on the St. Louis College of Pharmacy campus. I hope you already know what Starbucks is. If not, well done, you’ve probably spent significantly less money on coffee than I have.

• 4656 Maryland Ave., St. Louis, MO 63108
• 4573 Parkview Pl., St. Louis, MO 63110

Catalyst Coffee Bar
This tiny, retro cafe doubles as a small art gallery, with rotating pieces from local artists up for sale. They make primarily espresso drinks, but have a few teas and baked goods as well. It is located in downtown St. Louis, so not walking distance from anywhere in the CWE, but worth the trip if you have a car or are already headed downtown.

• 1223 Pine St., St. Louis, MO 63103
Maypop Coffee & Garden Shop
An outdoor coffee shop attached to a beautiful and reasonably-priced plant nursery. About a 15 minute drive from the CWE in Webster Grove, this cafe is worth the visit just for a chance to wander around the nursery and maybe grab a cute, low-maintenance plant like a succulent for your apartment.

- 803 Marshall Ave., Webster Groves, MO 63119

Caden H., M1

Places to go Dancing
During COVID, the best place to have a dance party is probably in your own apartment with your small pod of friends. However, in the real world, there is an abundance of places to fit any style you could hope for. Close to campus, Club Viva offers themed nights, often bringing in DJs of varying cultures to diversify playlists and mixes. Farther downtown, a perennial favorite is Ball Park Village (BPV), which is located conveniently right in front of Busch Stadium where the Cardinals play. BPV is actually a group of eight different bars, all with their own themes playing their own genres of music (pop, country, rap, old school, etc). If you’re feeling bold, try riding the bull and see how long you can stay on!

BPV is located close to Tin Roof, which is another favorite bar for many students. Open until 3 a.m. on non-COVID nights, this is the spot for late nights out, if you’re a fan. Tin Roof usually boasts a live band in supplement to their own music, so this is a top spot for dancing, as well as cheap drinks!

WashU’s Medical Campus is located close to The Grove, which has enough bars to bar crawl on its own. Favorites include Atomic Cowboy, HandleBar, and Sanctuaria — all within walking distance of each other!

In another area a little farther downtown, Soulard, you can find another string of bars worth checking out. Molly’s, Big Daddy’s, and McGurk’s have more of a college vibe to them, but if that’s your style, pay them a visit!

Finally, a favorite we can’t skip out on mentioning is Mike Talayna’s Jukebox. If you’re a fan of karaoke, dancing, drinks, and lights, this is the spot for you. Drinks are cheap, vibes are good, and you’ll walk out with a smile on your face for sure. If you’re in the area, be sure to check out Nick’s Pub as well. Although a little more chill of an area with a smaller dance floor, the bar does offer $1 drinks on Thursdays, so that’s something of interest.

Aravinda G., M1
Rooftop Bars

What makes for better pictures than a drink in your hand, friends beside you, and the Gateway Arch in the background? Rooftop Three Sixty is easily the most popular rooftop bar in St. Louis, as it sits in the heart of the city, populated next to several other bars and places of interest. Enjoy creative cocktails, outdoor fire pits, and incredible city views either from inside or outside. It is a little on the pricey side however, so if you are looking for a better budget deal on a rooftop, try checking out a new college rooftop bar known as Upbar STL. Located right next to Saint Louis University with a great view of Midtown STL, not only does this bar have drinks at half the price that Rooftop 360 does, but it also offers Bottomless Sunday Brunch for just $15!

For more upscale snacks and drinks, try checking out either Form Skybar atop Hotel Saint Louis or Cinder House Bar and Sky Terrace atop the Four Seasons Hotel. Both bars offer an incredible view of the city’s skyline, as well as their own extensive list of cocktails and wines. Form Skybar is located indoors and boasts more of a sit-down vibe, whereas Cinder House Bar and Sky Terrace offers seats as well as areas to stand and socialize. Another bar farther downtown, known as Art Bar, offers both indoor and outdoor rooftop lounges with an incredible view of, you guessed it, the skyline and the famous Gateway Arch. Plenty of wines, cocktails, and small plates to choose from here, but be prepared to spend a little more if you’re hoping to check out the view!

STL Beer Scene

St. Louis is Beer City U.S.A. Our city boasts more than 80 members in the brewery guild, from the world-famous Anheuser-Busch, to the German-crafted Urban Chestnut, to top-rated and rare beer Side Project. St. Louis is continually rated as one of — if not THE — best beer cities in the nation. Don’t believe me? Visit Square One for some Old STL Charm, or Ferguson Brewery for the best combination of beer and food, or Center Ice Brewery for Blues-themed brews. We even have a cidery (Brick River) and a non-alcoholic (WellBeing).

Top 10, Andy’s List!

**Urban Chestnut:** German-inspired, American-guided brewery with a Bierhalle in The Grove and a Biergarten in Midtown. A must visit! Try the Dorfbier or the STLIPA! During non-pandemic times, the Urban Research Brewery is a great way to get the best pizza in STL while sipping on experimental brews. Grab some traditional German food while you’re at it. Prost!

**4Hands:** Second-largest craft brewery in STL, located in LaSalle Park. Known for fantastic IPAs and unique stouts. Try the Chocolate Milk Stout or the Incarnation IPA!
2nd Shift: Unique, tiny, popular, and underrated. 2nd Shift is located in a warehouse on The Hill and produces both traditional and revolutionary brews. Grab a Liquid Spiritual Delight for those cold nights in need of a stout, or an Art of Neurosis for that IPA kick.

Schlafly: STL’s largest craft brewery has three locations and a phenomenal year-round lineup. Try the traditional kölsch during the hot STL summers, and grab one of their coffee stouts during the chilly winters. Thee unique locations with great German, pub, and American food.

Rockwell: Quirky shipping container environment, fantastic shoe-string fries, and a constantly rotating and always great line up of beers marks Rockwell as a must visit mid-town haunt. Truly, they have anything for anybody. No beer here is a wrong choice.

Civil Life: Old-world, European-inspired brews, Civil Life focuses on the British Isles and Germany for its brews. Their pub in the sleepy south end of Tower Grove is a great place to grab a brew or two during a cold winter. Try the American Brown, it’s unbeatable.

Perennial: In the far southern reaches of STL lies a hidden gem. Perennial attracts people from across STL for their unique stouts of sensational and innovative brews. Grab an Abraxas while they last, any number of their seasonally rotating beers.

Heavy Riff: Understated, hidden, and hard rockin’ is what describes this brewpub in Dogtown. Heavy Riff is a brewery that combines the best of STL — great beer, great BBQ, great music. Try their Velvet Underbrown while ordering their BBQ sliders — you won’t regret it.

Earthbound: Quirky brewery in the old Cherokee Street Brewhouse, Earthbound literally dug out their lager cellar to bring you some phenomenal brews. Their mainstay Blonde is surprisingly spicy, and their Gose brings a Sonic Cherry Limeade kick to the traditional German Gose. Visit here and explore the booming Cherokee Street while you’re at it.

Bluewood: Located in the old Lemp brewery, Bluewood focuses on BIG beers. Everything they have is something you’d want to enjoy around a fire or in an old brick patio. Try their Battlesteg Imperial Brown, or any number of their innovative seasonal beers such as the Thin Mint or the Pumpkin King.

Andy B., M1
Urban Chestnut: Urban Chestnut is a local St. Louis Brewery with a few locations open during COVID. The Urban Chestnut Beerhall on Manchester is the closest brewery to campus, located in The Grove. It is quite honestly my favorite brewery in the area. During COVID, they have extremely reduced the capacity of the dining space while also keeping their outdoor patio open and safe. In addition to a long list of dope beers (from your Kolsch’s, to your Hefewiesen’s, to your west coast style IPAs) they also serve INCREDIBLE homemade pretzels and wood-fired pizza. If you don’t feel like sitting inside, you can easily pick up cheap six-packs and very aesthetically pleasing growlers filled with your favorite beer of choice. Also, everyone who works at Beerhall is SUPER friendly. In the warmer months, the Midtown Urban Chestnut location has a great outdoor Biergarten which is totally worth checking out as well. Generally, the beer is cheap at Urban but the pizza can get a little pricey.

Rockwell: If you want the most dank shoestring fries and burger with your beer, totally check out Rockwell. This brewery is also local and also in The Grove. Their shipping crate aesthetic is super cool from the outside, they have plenty of parking (for both bikes and cars), and their beers are quite varied and all amazing. They have indoor, distanced seating as well as an outdoor patio with heaters.

2nd Shift: 2nd Shift has some very unique beers and has an outdoor space that has been open during the pandemic. The “Art of Neurosis” IPA is my go-to but you can try out their wide variety of unique styles if you’re not an IPA person. This brewery is located a bit further southeast of The Grove but is still close by and its great to support a local brewer.

Kenzie L., M1

Fitness

Basketball

There are basketball courts in every direction from the Central West End, so where you play depends on how far you want to go! The outdoor courts we’ve used are A.B. Green Park (in Richmond Heights) and Tilles Park (a little further south). There are courts closer to the area but these two are well-maintained. Once the Sumers Recreation Center on the Danforth Campus reopens, there will be access to its indoor courts too.
Biking in STL

With tons of trails, wide streets, and less traffic density than most metropolitan areas, getting around by bicycle in St. Louis is a great way to explore the area (or get an awesome workout in!). Close to school, check out Forest Park’s Wheels Path which circumnavigates the park in an approximately 6-mile loop. The St. Louis area is also known for some great rails-to-trails options. Cross the Missouri river to the Northwest, and you will find the Katy Trail, a hard, packed gravel trail suitable for all kinds of bikes that travels some 240 miles to Kansas City. Inside the city, look-out for Grant’s Trail which rides for 10 miles south/southwest of the city. If crossing state lines is your thing, be sure to check out the trails along the Mississippi on the Missouri side and cut over to Illinois to explore the excellent MCT trail network. The trails are paved and the riding smooth and flat. If you are a cyclist, make sure to connect with the medical school’s cycling club: the Kreb Cyclers (reach out to Adam Ostergar, adamo@wustl.edu, for more info).

For the competitive cyclist, there is a large racing community in the area. Be sure to check out racing for the collegiate club team, which is run from the Danforth Campus (wustlcycling@gmail.com). One more shout out to the Penrose Park Velodrome which is an oval track with steep banks for racing on fixed gear bicycles. It was recently resurfaced and is one of only 27 velodromes in the United States.

Nick L., M1

Climbing

Missouri climbing is, unfortunately, not world class. But that is not to say it doesn’t exist. There are multiple gyms in the city, including Climb So iLL where WashU students receive reduced membership cost. They have a location downtown (10 minutes from campus) as well as a larger and newer location in St. Charles (30 minutes from campus). If you want to get outside, the closest large bouldering area is two hours away at Elephant Rocks, where there are tons of problems on super sharp granite. The closest sport is actually in Illinois, at Pere Marquette about an hour away, with a good mix of face and crack climbing on limestone. There is also good quality — and significantly taller — sport about three hours away outside of Columbia. The Red River Gorge is a 6-hour drive, which makes it perfect for a weekend trip to one of the best crags in the country. If you rotate between locations, there is more than enough opportunity to keep you entertained for however long you stay in St. Louis, and there are certainly enough climbers here for you to find regular partners.

Matt J., M1

Dance

There are quite a few dance studios in the area, but Central Studio is just a hop, skip, and jeté away — that is, about 10 minutes from the FLTC. They offer adult classes in a variety of genres (ballet, contemporary/jazz, tap, and more), and you can either attend on a drop-in basis ($16/class) or buy a class pack! Pro tip:
Wait for their Black Friday sale, when you can snag a bundle for ~$11/class. Most classes are offered in two levels, with Level 1 being geared towards beginner dancers and Level 2 towards intermediate/advanced dancers. Ballet class is even more fun post-Anatomy — you’ll find yourself intimately familiar with each and every muscle activated by that plié.

Jennifer L., M2

Mountain Biking

As someone who grew up in Park City, Utah — one of the premiere mountain biking destinations in the world — I’ve been pleasantly surprised at what St. Louis has to offer. There is a very strong mountain bike community here with about 50-70 miles of well-maintained trails within a 30-minute drive from the Medical Campus. A lot of the trails are converted hiking trails with a combination of fun, technical rocky features and newly constructed switchbacks and flowy berms. Overall, there’s plenty here to keep a mountain biking fanatic or new rider happy. I’d recommend taking a break from lecture and getting out during the week to skip the weekend crowds!

Jackson B., M1

Racquetball

My class made a GroupMe to coordinate playing and it has been a great way to take a break from studying and to get some exercise! There are two places to play racquetball that are absolutely free — Forest Park and Hudlin Park (literally right next to The Core and Becker Medical Library). The courts are “outdoor” which means that they have an opening in the upper quarter of the back wall. While I was skeptical at first, I have been pleasantly surprised with how well the courts have worked.

Josh M., M1

Running

While gyms and indoor spaces may be limited for the fitness fanatics out there, the great outdoors still has plenty of space to work up a good sweat and carve out a few miles. Whether it’s a donut run with friends (routes for assessment and caloric balance abound) or a MSG-sponsored 5K race in Forest Park, there are trails and sidewalks that are perfect for the intrepid med student to prepare for the day or burn out some study stress. It’s been fairly easy to distance from others on the trail or run with a buddy staggered six feet apart! Can’t wait for you to catch up!

Elijah F., M1
Soccer

Although WashU intramurals have been postponed until it is safe to participate in them again, soccer is still an excellent way to stay active and do something outside of school. There are many places to play whether that be on the SLU or WashU campuses or in Forest Park. When the weather is nice, there are always people willing to shoot around on the weekend. I personally like to play at the SLU intramural field because it is not too far from campus and it has nice goals and turf. Depending on your preference, you can play casually as a relaxing study break or have an intense workout!

Josh K., M1

Swimming

The Danforth Campus gym, which is about a 9-minute drive from the CWE and is accessible by the MetroLink, has a nice Olympic pool which is free for you to use. You also get your own lane reserved this year (maybe the only good thing about COVID?). Six of us drive out there at least once a week to work out together, which can be a fun way to spend time with classmates. If you live elsewhere in the city, there are also a couple of local YMCAs which have pools.

Evan L., M1

Tennis

There are so many public tennis courts in the area and it’s such a great activity to do with classmates, whether you’re just starting out or have been playing for years! For people who live near the hospitals, the most convenient (although not the nicest) courts are the six in Hudlin Park, literally next to Barnes-Jewish Hospital on the Medical Campus. The six courts on WashU’s Danforth Campus are also just across Forest Park, and they are in amazing shape and have lights that stay on for as late as the Athletic Complex is open (but it’s good to be aware of when the varsity and club teams practice). Just northwest of the Danforth Campus in University City are the five courts at Flynn Park, which are also in good condition but can be pretty full of other community members depending on what time you go. Some other peripheral options are two courts at A.B. Green Park, and eight courts at Heman Park, four of which have lights.

Jenna B., M1

The Core Gym

The Core gym is an awesome gym and is very conveniently located. It is a 2-minute walk from the Becker Medical Library and the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC), where you’ll find most classes and study spaces. It’s even closer for students who live in The Core Apartment Residences (same building). The facility includes all the traditional amenities, such as plenty of cardio machines (e.g. treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes, rowing machines, and stairmills), as well as weight machines and free weights. The Core gym also has some more unique amenities, including
punching bags, a deadlift platform, and monkey bars. We currently do sign-ups for 90-minute blocks and there are always times before, after, and in between classes to workout. The gym overall is never too packed and I never any issues waiting for equipment to open up. Overall, It’s a really great gym that I use most days of the week and would recommend to everyone.

Ian M., M1

**Ultimate Frisbee**

Although the St. Louis ultimate leagues and pickup games are on hold for now, socially distant throwing in Forest Park has been an amazing way to stay active and enjoy the outdoors with classmates! There are beautiful fields in the park that are always open just a ten-minute walk from the Medical Campus. Whether you have been playing ultimate for years or have never touched a Frisbee, throwing and playing mini games masked in the park with classmates is so much fun and a great stress reliever!

Emma L., M1

**WUMS Well**

How do WashU students get connected with all the wellness-related programming and helpful resources that are around? The answer is through WUMS Well! Through super useful wellness newsletters that let you know what’s happening around St. Louis to WashU-specific programs like the peer advocates that help support students, WUMS Well is able to connect students, faculty, and the community in all kinds of fun ways. Some highlights for me have been seeing my faculty coach’s insta-story takeover and then discovering in a wellness newsletter that St. Louis has a cherished Taco Week with deals all over the city! WUMS Well truly is a stellar showcase of the interconnectedness and support found at WashU.

Elijah F., M1

**Yoga**

There are so many different ways to practice yoga in St. Louis! The WUSM Yoga Club holds weekly evening classes (outdoors when the weather was nice, then transitioned to Zoom) for a small, one-time fee. On Saturday mornings, there is also donation-based outdoor yoga at Tower Grove Park (a quick bike ride or short drive away from the Central West End) during the Farmer’s Market. I have also seen yoga classes at the Grand Basin in Forest Park, though I have not attended one there myself. I have yet to check out any local indoor studios due to COVID but have had plenty of opportunities to practice yoga regularly despite the circumstances.

Ilana O., M1
St. Louis Attractions

Chess Hall of Fame

The Chess Hall of Fame is not just a venue to learn about chess! They are currently displaying two floors worth of Keith Haring pieces in an exhibit that will be open until June. It’s an intimate three-floor gallery in a neat historic building, and it’s rarely very busy. So, you basically get a private showing of some awesome art. Not to mention, the Chess Hall of Fame is free, and it’s located in the heart of the CWE! Fun fact: They have the largest chess piece in the world!

Rowan G., M1

City Museum

City Museum defies description, but it should be one of the first places you stop when you visit St. Louis. Unlike your typical museum, the City Museum is a warehouse-sized work of artistic vision that allows you to explore your way through caves, castles, and other curiosities. Next time you are in town, put on some sneakers and an old pair of jeans to head straight over for an experience unlike anything you can find anywhere else.

Rob S., M1

Forest Park

Forest Park is one of my favorite parts of living in St. Louis, hands down. It is huge, beautiful, and amazingly convenient because it’s right across the street from the Central West End and the Medical Campus. There is so much open space, great trails, and lots of cool (often free) attractions like museums and the zoo! Whether it’s going for a run, taking walks between classes, or playing outdoor games, there are so many ways to have fun and get fresh air.

Alice S., M1

Gateway Arch

A symbol of westward expansion, the Gateway Arch stands 630-ft. high off of the west bank of the Mississippi River. The base of the arch contains a museum that features 201 years of history ranging from colonial St. Louis in 1764 to when the arch was built in 1965. Visitors can also take a tram ride to the top to see a beautiful view of St. Louis.

Anusha S., M1
Grant’s Farm
If you need an experience that is a little “out there,” look no further. Grant’s Farm has it all: animals (from Budweiser’s famous Clydesdales to camels), historical tours (the property was originally owned by Ulysses S. Grant), a German village, and beer. Best of all, it is free!

Sarah V.S., M1

Lone Elk Park
Lone Elk Park is a fenced-in wildlife area about 20 minutes from WashU where elk and bison roam freely. It’s free for the public and there are hiking trails and a driving route through the park. I highly recommend going for a drive early morning on a weekday (when there’s not too much traffic) to see the bison which will come up right to your car (low key, a little scary even).

Yuliya K., M1

Missouri Botanical Garden
The Missouri Botanical Garden is one of the coolest places in St. Louis. Opened in 1859, it’s the nation’s oldest, continuously operating garden. There’s lots to see — rose garden, lily ponds (with world record-sized water lilies), a tropical “Climatron” green house, and areas dedicated to different climates and regions of the world. In the winter, there is a festive garden light show with smores, hot chocolate, Christmas music and themed light exhibits.

Yuliya K., M1

Missouri History Museum
Since the Louis and Clark Expedition in 1803, St. Louis has flourished in the early 20th century, hosting the 1904 World’s Fair and Summer Olympics in Forest Park and what is now the WashU Danforth Campus. The rich history of St. Louis is vividly displayed in the Missouri History Museum, which is a 5-minute drive away from campus and offers free admission to all (advance reservation is required during COVID-19 to maintain capacity). It is a great place to spend an afternoon with friends, exploring the past of the city we now call home.

Helen W., M1

Saint Louis Art Museum, Forest Park
Free (!) art museum in the heart of Forest Park (they also bring in a touring exhibit each season, for which you must purchase tickets). The building is gorgeous and the museum is world renowned, with a collection spanning 5,000 years of cultures and genres. Originally founded as an independent entity within WashU and housed downtown, it moved to Forest Park right after our famous 1904 World’s Fair (see the movie Meet Me in St. Louis!), into the Palace of Fine Arts fair building. The museum then separated from the university in 1908. An impressive collec-
tion of European masters, the world’s largest Max Beckman collection, and ample artifacts, tools, clothing, weapons, and furniture from various cultures throughout history comprise the permanent collection. A perfect rainy day activity.

**Saint Louis Science Center**

When you need a break from school, but still want some educational stimulation, there’s no better place to go than the Saint Louis Science Center. The Science Center has a variety of exhibits and attractions ranging from a Mars Rover simulator to a fossil lab. It also has a hyperboloid Planetarium and a fancy Omnimax theater with a screen that wraps almost 360 degrees, making for an incredible movie going experience. The center also hosts monthly events such as Science on Tap (learn about science and explore the museum while sipping on some excellent local craft beer). The best part of the museum? Free admission!

*Vinay P., M2*

**Saint Louis Zoo**

If you like seeing animals from all around the world, then you’re in luck! The Saint Louis Zoo is consistently ranked as one of the best zoos in the nation and is home to over 18,000 animals. From penguins to seals to lions, there’s something there for everyone. And admission is free!

*Blake S., M1*

**St. Louis Blues Hockey**

The St. Louis Blues are the city’s professional hockey team and play their games at the newly renovated Enterprise Center downtown. For the first time in franchise history, the Blues won the Stanley Cup in 2019 and the city could not have enjoyed the ride more. Whether you’re a fan of the sport or just looking for a fun evening activity, Blues’ games are always a blast. Enterprise Center is easy to reach via Metro and as a student, you can often get Student Rush tickets to games for as low as $25!

*Joe B., M2*

If you like watching grown men strap blades to their feet, arm themselves with bent sticks, and punch each other out on ice, then hockey is the sport for you! Seriously though, as a longtime hockey fan, I was fired up to move to St. Louis right as the Blues won their first ever Stanley Cup. Sports has a magical way of uniting people and has personally helped me to feel much more integrated into this community. Not to mention, the playoff atmosphere in Enterprise Center (only 15 minutes away via MetroLink) is absolutely UNREAL. I still love my hometown NHL team but … Let’s Go Blues! Play Gloria!

*Bruin P., M2*
**St. Louis Cardinals Baseball**

Rejoice, sports fans! Not only is St. Louis home to the 2019 Stanley Cup Champions, it is also host to your 11-time World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals! Come join Cardinal Nation at beautiful Busch Stadium, a short 15-minute MetroLink ride from campus, and watch the Redbirds soar through the postseason as they embark on their journey towards another World Series!

*Sherwin N., M2*

**Steinberg Skating Rink**

The area's largest, outdoor ice skating rink is right across the street from the Medical Campus. As a Floridian, I didn’t know what to expect of the winter, but winter comes with its perks. The admission price to get on the ice is $10 and skate rentals are $8. After skating for a bit, you can enjoy a latte or hot chocolate from the cafe next to the fire pit. If I had to give one tip to someone who has never ice skated before: Don’t be intimidated by falling!

*Sathvik P., M1*

**Tower Grove Farmers’ Market**

I can’t say enough good things about the Tower Grove Farmers’ Market! Located just a short bike ride or car ride away (about three miles) from the Central West End, each Saturday morning tons of local vendors, families, adorable kids, and dogs (!) all make their way to the park. Whether you’re looking to shop for produce or to start your weekend with a mimosa, there are tons of different stands and food trucks with something for everyone. This summer, everyone at the market was masked and lines were generally respectful of social distancing. When the weather is nice, there is no place I would rather be on a Saturday morning.

*Ilana O., M1*

**Travel**

**Commuting by Bike**

Traveling around St. Louis by bike is surprisingly convenient! Most of the roads around here have bike lanes or are bike friendly, so a bike is a great investment for getting around and running random errands faster. There’s a number of bike shops close to campus as well, so getting repairs or parts is pretty straightforward.

*Justin Y., M1*

**Life with a Car**

While it’s not absolutely necessary to have a car, it definitely makes life easier. St. Louis is a very driveable and affordable city — unlike Chicago, NYC, etc., where traffic is so bad and parking is so expensive that it’s not even worth it to have a car. The area right around the hospitals in the Central West End is very walkable,
so for most people driving to campus will probably not be necessary. However, a lot of other local destinations (e.g., grocery stores/shopping centers, restaurants in other neighborhoods, etc.) are easier to get to by car. There are also a lot of fun activities within driving distance, such as hikes, farms, and vineyards, or even road trips to Chicago, Nashville, Memphis, Kansas City, etc. So if it is within your means to have a car, I would recommend it!

Jenna B., M1

Life Without a Car

I attended college on the East Coast where I had access to buses and trains to take me wherever I wanted to go without having to spend money on gas, car insurance, or parking. When I decided to attend WashU in the Midwest, I was concerned that I might have to get a car to be able to survive as a student here. However, I can assure anyone that this is not true. The city of St. Louis has a reliable Metro system that can take you to grocery stores, to the airport, to visit a friend, and wherever else you might want to go. I am also happy to say that we have a mind-blowing student community in WashU where classmates with cars love taking other classmates to go shopping together, which makes it a whole lot more fun.

Favour G., M1

Parking on Campus

I park at the Clayton Garage which is only about a 5-minute or less walk from the center of the Medical Campus. You can sign up for a monthly rate of $77 or pay daily ($3 to $8). You can get a discount if you use a WUSM pre-loaded debit card, and if you get to campus after 2 p.m. you can park for free with your badge.

Zachary R., M1

Shopping

Grocery Stores

There are tons of grocery stores to pick from! In the Central West End there is a Whole Foods within walking distance and a Schnucks a little bit farther out. In Brentwood — approximately 10-15 minutes from campus by car — you’ll find Trader Joe’s, Target, and Dierberg’s. If you don’t have a car or are trying to save time, you can also get groceries delivered through an online service like Instacart.

Sarah S., M1

International Groceries

As an international student and someone who has lived in very diverse cities in the past, I was genuinely surprised with the options St. Louis offers in terms of international groceries. Most start with United Provisions, a posh-ish, Korean-oriented
grocery store located in the Delmar Loop. Another very popular option is Jay’s International Market; I personally really like this one since it offers items from around the world (European, Caribbean, Central and South American, Asian … you name it)! Farther from campus are the Asian grocery stores on Olive (which is informally St. Louis Chinatown, if you will); these have fresh seafood for sale. I wouldn’t hesitate to say that, whatever international grocery item you want, chances are you’ll be able to find it in STL!

Khai N., M1

Outdoors

Eckert’s Farm

Whether you want to pick berries and peaches in the summer, stroll through the apple orchard and pumpkin patch in the fall, or cut down your own Christmas tree in the winter, Eckert’s has something for every season. The Belleville location is the largest and is just a short drive from St. Louis. While you’re there stop in the country store for some apple cider donuts or any of their other mouth-watering treats!

Paighton M., M2

Float Trip

Imagine your friends sitting in inflatable inner tubes floating down a clean, spring-fed river at 5 mph (even the cooler holding beverages of your choice gets an inner tube)! A float trip is the Missouri way to cool off in the summer. Some of my fellow WashU buddies and I went floating on the Upper Meremac River before school year began. Bring lots of sun protection, water, and food. You can pull on the side of the river at one of the many gravel bars and enjoy your lunch while admiring our state’s natural beauty. If you bring a net, you can catch little fish and frogs too. We were lucky enough to find a rope swing in good condition, so we got our adrenaline fix!

Sathvik P., M1

Other

Haircuts

Nearby campus, you can check out Paul Mitchell The School. The hairdressers are students there, so the cuts are very affordable. Over on Olive Blvd., you can find Paul’s Salon which has great options as well.

Justin Y., M1
Student Health Service

One big perk about WashU’s Student Health plan is that our health insurance is automatically covered in our tuition, so you don’t have to worry about extra costs or a formal sign-up process. The Student Health Service clinic is located right on campus next to the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC). I’ve gone a few times for things like birth control and the annual flu shot, and it’s been incredibly easy. They accept walk-ins for those things, so I’ve been able to just walk over after class, tell them what I’m there for, and be in and out in 10 minutes! For appointments, scheduling is still very simple. You just have to call their office and they’re able to schedule you in to see Dr. Winters fairly quickly. Any lab work you may need is also covered in the plan, and so are referrals made outside of Student Health should you need to see a specialist after your appointment. Overall, my experiences with student health have been very accessible and positive.

Frances A.S., M1

Life (in COVID)

Medical School in a Pandemic

Moving to St. Louis in the fall, I felt just about every emotion in anticipation of starting medical school. I was nervous about meeting new people, excited to explore a new city, and sad to be moving away from home. Just when it already seemed tricky enough, there was the extra challenge of navigating all of this during COVID times. Although our experience so far has been different from what we anticipated, there have still been plenty of silver linings to med school in a global pandemic.

Virtual school is different! I was always a person to go to class. Suddenly not being able to, I was fearful about not getting the same experience as meeting face-to-face. Luckily, the curriculum staff and administration have made learning online effective and engaging and are very receptive to our feedback and concerns. We have large lectures but will also break into breakout rooms on Zoom to have smaller discussions and the opportunity to get to know our classmates more. They also worked hard to still allow us to complete a few in person sessions safely. Those became some of my favorite sessions and it makes me look forward to when we are able to actually all get together in person in the future. (And a bonus perk of virtual classes is a little bit more time to sleep/eat/study as we spend less of it commuting!)

I love exploring new cities. Moving here, it felt like there was so much I wanted to do and see and eat! COVID has limited some of our options this year, but it hasn’t made it impossible. The businesses, museums, and restaurants in STL have adapted well and the majority have protocol for staying safe while still being able to explore. During my first month here, I signed up for time slots and went to every museum in Forest Park on my days off. We took class trips to Eckert’s Farm
apple orchard and a sunflower patch, and ran 5Ks in waves to maintain smaller groups and social distancing. Every week, my friends and I try to order takeout to support local business and safely explore while being able to hang out in person at the same time.

It already feels like forever since the words “social distancing” entered our vocabularies. Medical school in COVID and being more socially isolated from others has taught me about what is most important for my self-care and has emphasized the idea that we need to best take care of ourselves before we can best take care of others. We are so fortunate to have some of the best faculty & staff here who uplift us and help us tend to our well-being. I started doing yoga, scheduling daily calls with friends and family, and the green space in STL has made it easy to go outside and take brain breaks while still being safe. COVID forced us to face the balance of life and school head on as we began seeing the spaces where those take place merge together in our apartments and homes. Med school in a pandemic has put into perspective just the sheer responsibility the health care system has in society, the roles that we are all going to take on as physicians and scientists in the future, and how to best take care of ourselves and lean on others to be able to best fill those shoes.

Christina S., M1
Life (in COVID)

Here's a photo of some tasty Chakchouka from Egg!

Roommates Paighton and Christina apple picking at Eckert's Farm.

Tonkotsu Ramen take-out from Nippon-Tei.

Fun day apple picking with the girls.
Life (in COVID)

Trip to the sunflower fields.

Floating on the Meramec River one hour away from St. Louis.

Hike at Lewis and Clark Trail.
St. Louis Arch run before classes started.
Finding Community

SECTION EDITOR: KEVIN YIN
Finding Community

Art to Heart

I love art and have been painting ever since I was a little kid. During my undergraduate studies, I was able to engage in a visual arts community. I knew that when I got to medical school, I would want a similar community of creative peers. After I committed to WashU, I joined the Groupme of our incoming class. The Groupme buzzed all summer long with memes and musings about what the school year would bring us. But one particular message really caught my eye: it was about art. It was from a girl who I had never met named Koeun L., who said, “kinda wanna start an art club here ... don’t think there is one.” Lots of classmates chimed in, including myself and another classmate, Amanda L., supporting this awesome idea. Amanda and Koeun connected that summer over their shared interest in art, and I connected with them later on in the fall when we all got to St. Louis. I was ecstatic to connect with people who shared not only similar artistic passions, but also an interest in medicine.

Amanda and Koeun hadn’t missed a beat with planning the art club. They brought me into the fold, and we decided to call our effort “Art to Heart.” Art to Heart’s mission is to foster a community at WashU to appreciate/create visual art and to use art as a tool for community engagement within the greater St. Louis region. For our first programmed event, we organized a virtual paint night for medical students over Zoom, in true Bob Ross fashion. To prepare for the event, Amanda, Koeun, and I made several trips to Blick, an art supply store on the Delmar Loop, in search of the art materials we needed to distribute to our classmates who were participating. We got boba tea after each trip to Blick, which has quickly become one of my favorite traditions. It is a joy to share our interest in art not only with each other but with many of our classmates. We had over 40 participants, and it was such a fun and relaxing way to spend the evening with everyone. We could not have done it without institutional and peer support, which we got in spades. Our next effort is to make masks for non-profit organizations in St. Louis who are in need of PPE. It’s inspiring to see peers coming together and applying their skills to help others. I feel quite lucky to have found a creative community in Art to Heart and look forward to what we can craft next.

Eve M., M1

Making Friends During COVID

To be honest, I was actually quite worried about starting med school. I had spent almost my entire life in California, from three years old to the moment I moved here. I had made lifelong friends with whom I had gone through all the various stages of early adulthood chaos, and who I felt knew me more fully than anyone. I had also spent four months living with my parents while working remotely during the early COVID-19 lockdowns, so I was pretty sure I didn’t even know how to interact with people my age anymore. The thought of starting over with a bunch
of potentially gunner med students in a very foreign environment frankly sounded kind of terrible.

I am very, very relieved to tell you that I worried for no reason. I had been afraid of not having the closeness I had with my friends from home, and to be honest, there is inevitably a period where you have to rebuild that with your classmates here. That being said, I found it really natural to find people I enjoyed spending time with (and there were a lot of them, fortunately), and found it similarly easy to make and deepen those friendships. Your classmates will be such an incredibly talented yet kind, well-rounded, and down-to-earth group of people (people always joke that WashU chooses really well, which I always rolled my eyes at until I got here). Even with COVID, people have been incredibly willing and creative with finding safe ways to meet and spend time with each other. The hilarious thing about going to med school is some people are extremely organized and a little type A, so there is no shortage of open-invite spreadsheets and group chats to check out various restaurants/ spots around the city. Similarly, people are 1) very fit, so if that’s your jam, you will have plenty of people with whom you can exercise/explore new activities and 2) generally willing to try new things and meet new people. I’ve had so many warm (but safe and socially distanced) memories here — potlucks, swimming, brewery nights, hot pot, running, coffee shops, cat cafes, trying takeout from new restaurants, climbing, dinners in the park, dog walking, ice skating, zoo trips, drive-in movie nights, and of course, all the other med school experiences like squadding up in the library and celebrating after tests. Overall, I’m really grateful for our class community and for all of the colorful friendships I’ve been lucky enough to find here. I also hope and trust that you will find your people here, no matter what that looks like.

Evan L., M1

**MSTP Journal Club**

One month prior to beginning their first research rotation at WashU, the incoming MSTP students developed a journal club with a curriculum focused on social justice and anti-racism for the summer of 2020. Through this journal club experience, we not only covered important topics related to the communities we were about to serve and the history of marginalization and racism in science and medicine, but we also bonded as a cohort … over Zoom! At a time when health, safety, and social connection are dramatically impacted by the global pandemic, our journal club created a unique opportunity to socially connect with future classmates over topics critical to effectively addressing health and safety in our medical and scientific communities. After three planning meetings and five journal club sessions, we all felt significantly (yes we did stats) more comfortable contributing to a diverse array of discussions surrounding race in science and medicine within our MSTP cohort. Once we arrived in St. Louis, it was evident that the journal club had dramatically enhanced class bonding, purely through Zoom encounters where we taught each other and discussed relevant social justice topics. Students became
acquainted through personal discussions and preparing presentations in groups. We were honestly genuinely surprised how well we got to know each other and how much we learned, so we decided to write an op-ed for FASEB and we are continuing the journal club throughout the year. We hope to assist the incoming class to plan a similar MSTP journal club as well.

Kenzie L., M1

**Mug Cakes**

What is the only thing that will inevitably cheer medical students up when it's cold and dark outside and school work is piling up, when we can’t hang out or study with our friends freely without wearing masks and being socially distanced, and when everything feels gloomy? Free food, of course! And what kind of food? MUG CAKES!

Mug Cake Monday began during the first module as a wellness pop-up event to relieve some stress before our final module exam. It was a virtual event in which a team of students compiled ingredients for 10-15 different flavors of mug cakes that our classmates could sign up for. We had flavors varying from “Bring Back Summer Strawberry” to “Pumpkin Cheesecake” to “I miss traveling - Biscoff inspired.” After picking up the ingredients, we all participated in a Zoom “baking party” on Monday night to assemble and bake our mug cakes together. The event was a huge success, with over 80% of our class participate in the event! While we were baking, we all got to socialize and talk about anything and everything on our minds. We met so many people so fast through the class-wide Zoom and it was overall just such a fun experience to be a part of! Mug Cake Monday quickly became a tradition in our class and we made it a goal to have at least one mug cake event per module as an “end of module celebration.” Recently, it has even gotten implemented into our Society Cup competitions to see who can make the most creative and cute mug cakes to score points for their society! This event has been so fun to put together and participate in, and we hope to carry on this tradition even when in-person classes begin again (hopefully soon). We look forward to you all joining in the baking fun and hope to pass on the reigns of this yummy tradition to your class once we transition out of Phase 1!

Ruple J., M1
Resiliency Group

Some M1s chose to participate in a pilot resilience group facilitated by an M4. Each week, this small group of WUSM students across different class years met over Zoom and participated in a discussion based upon a “Resiliency Toolkit” written by a local St. Louis therapist. This space provided a unique opportunity for us to check in with one another and share personal experiences relating to this topic. I really enjoyed getting to know members of my M1 class in a deeper way through these sessions and found the practical tools we learned extremely valuable. Developing a support network is a critical part of transitioning to life in medical school, and this group made it easy to create those connections.

Ilana O., M1
Finding Community

M1s trying their best to not have their gingerbread house collapse for a society competition.

Showing what we've learned in our Halloween costumes.
Advice

Adjusting to medical school can be difficult. Here, graduating M4s and some of our M1 class’s most popular WUSM faculty share words of wisdom on how to make the most out of your time in St. Louis.

SECTION EDITOR: LYDIA ZHONG
From Eva Aagaard, MD
Office of Education, Senior Associate Dean for Education, Associate Vice Chancellor for Medical Education

Welcome! I hope each of you takes a moment to take pride in your accomplishment and to thank those who have helped you to achieve it. You have earned your place in this class, you absolutely deserve to be here, and we are so glad you are here. I have had the privilege of teaching, mentoring, advising and supporting medical students and residents for over 20 years now — it has been one of the greatest gifts of my life. Here are a few things to consider as you progress through medical school and the rest of your career:

• Reflect on what you enjoy and what you don’t enjoy. When you have a really great day, ask yourself what about it made it great? When you have a bad day ask the same. Look for patterns so that you can know what things really motivate you and will keep you happy and engaged in your career for the next 50 years — yes, it likely will be that long. :)

• Learn about the different specialties and what the day-to-day of work in those careers is like. Often, we come to medical school with fixed assumptions about what we want to be or what specific careers are all about. Try to push those biases aside and really experience it and what it would be like for you if you were doing that work. Talk to people about their jobs, what they love about them, what they like less. See how much those things align with your own self-realizations about your passions and interests.

• Take care of yourself. Each person has different things they need to be well — exercise, time with friends, reading for pleasure, cooking. Figure out what yours are and prioritize them. You will struggle to perform well if you are not doing well. You will benefit from these habits and patterns for the rest of your career.

• Get to know your patients. We can get wrapped up in only learning the medicine, but our patients have amazing personal stories and those stories help us understand who they are so we can tailor their care. Moreover, when patients feel seen and heard, they experience better care.

• Get to know each other and the other students on campus, the residents and fellows you work with, and the faculty. You are part of an amazing community of people who care deeply about your education and your interests, but also about you as a person.
Advice

• Ask for help when you need it. We have a variety of resources from peer advisors, to the medical student government, to Student Affairs, the ombuds office, Dr. Winters and Student Health Services, and, of course, your administration, faculty, and peers. We are all here to support you!

Finally, enjoy the ride. You will work hard — likely harder than you have ever worked in your life. You will see and experience things that are unfair and unjust. You will have the privilege to share some of the happiest and saddest moments of your patient’s lives. You will learn more than you ever thought possible. And, you will serve others and feel the joy that only a career of service can bring. Ultimately, you will help to make the world a better place. What could be better than that?

From Koong-Nah Chung, PhD
Associate Dean, Medical Student Research

You will spend the next four plus years at WUSM with your peers, and they will be your lifelong friends and colleagues. Form strong bonds with your classmates, collaborate, and support each other. Get to know the faculty, administration, and staff. We are here to help you succeed. Find an advisor or mentor who takes an interest in you. Your mentor will help you navigate medical school, and if you’re lucky, you may get a home-cooked meal out of it. Stay grounded by volunteering in the community. Have fun and stay sane by getting involved in school clubs and continuing with your hobbies. Get to know St. Louis; there is no shortage of entertainment, including the world-champion Cardinals and Blues, the world-famous Saint Louis Zoo, the Saint Louis Science Center, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the Botanical Garden. In addition, there is a world-class symphony, many music venues, and plenty of nightlife. Pay attention to your academics. Take your basic science courses seriously. They will come in handy in later years, and your future patients will thank you. Don’t worry about your residency match yet. Most importantly, get enough sleep, exercise, and have fun. Oh, and if you want to do research, just email me (chungk@wustl.edu).

Visit Dr. Chung for guidance on research opportunities and to ask her about her favorite rapper. (Hint: He’s slim, and he’s shady.)
From Amber Deptola, MD

Assistant Professor of Medicine, Associate Program Director in the Internal Medicine Residency Program, Director of the EXPLORE Program

As you embark upon this next stage in your lives, it is normal to feel a weird combination of excitement and fear. Changes are tough and, for many entering medical students, medical school will be the most challenging period yet. Given this, it’s important to remember that medical school is not only about working hard, it’s also about community and personal and professional growth. Over the coming years, you will come to understand yourself better than you may have before. You will likely face many challenges, both personally and professionally. Remember to see these challenges as opportunities for learning. And when you have particularly tough moments personally, remember caring for yourself is a priority.

Self-care is critical to the work we do as physicians, but it looks a bit different for everyone. Sometimes it’s finding a way to socialize or exercise. Sometimes it’s spending time alone or resting. Take time (start now!) to reflect on how far you’ve come already, and what gives you fulfillment and peace. Find ways to purposefully integrate those fulfilling activities into your new identity as a medical student.

St. Louis can be a great place for exploration, growth, and restoration. The parks, museums, zoo, restaurants, breweries, and festivals are unmatched. More locally, our WUSM community is here to support you in whatever way you need. Reach out. Stop by. Ask questions.

I look forward to meeting you and supporting your needs in scholarship in beyond!

From Connie Gan, M4

Congratulations on matriculating to medical school! You have worked so incredibly hard to get to this point, so take a moment and celebrate that. Medical school can be tough, so it’s wonderful to try to remind yourself from time to time of who or what motivated you in the first place. Personally, swimming has been a huge part of my life and a general framework for my advice:

• "Stay in your own lane." The medical school journey is long one, and everyone has their own timeline. Some may need more time to study for major exams, some learn in their own unique way, some know exactly what research they want to do and some have no idea what specialty they’re interested in. Don’t be afraid to keep an open mind, try multiple study strategies or specialties and focus on your own path. The administration is incredibly supportive with vari-
ous accommodations and student health is a great resource for physical and mental health. It's okay to change your mind, I know I have!

- "Spend time getting to know your ride or die teammates." No one quite knows what medical school is like except for your classmates. This is such a unique experience, and it's so important to get together, decompress, and celebrate each other's victories. Your classmates will not only become your future colleagues but also your strongest support system.

- "Give yourself grace." This one is simple — everyone makes mistakes and falters at one point or another. We are often quick to forgive and encourage others but often forget to give ourselves grace. Be kind to yourself.

- "Take care of your own wellness." To be your best self at school or in the hospital, setting a good habit of recharging the tank is essential. Whether that's hanging out with classmates, family or friends or maintaining hobbies or trying something new, don't feel guilty for taking the time to step away from school and enjoy these moments. They are equally as important in your future career. St. Louis is a gem of a city with so many unique neighborhoods, festivals, and establishments. I would encourage you to try something new, be it a restaurant, coffeeshop, or park every so often.

Enjoy your time in medical school — it goes by in a flash! It's the perfect time to make mistakes, build the foundation of your future, and make lifelong friends.

**From Shariq Khan, M4, MPH**

I spent many long hours throughout the first three years questioning whether I made the right decision in coming to medical school. Everyday there was another reason why I should just call it quits. I felt like everything was interesting enough, and I was getting good grades, but it just didn’t seem like I was thriving in the way that I’d always dreamed. At an “elite” medical school filled with amazing students, there’s such a pressure to appear 100% confident and sure of your goals. I’m just here to say that if you’re feeling this way, you’re not alone! I know that this feeling is way more common than we are willing to admit.

I ended up finding my home in medicine in a very small specialty that I wouldn’t have had exposure to unless I sought it out myself. You’re at an institution which has opportunities in every field imaginable, even in areas that are only peripherally related to the traditional scope of clinical medicine. Take advantage of these years when you are encouraged to explore!
Secondly, I tricked myself into a mindset of always keeping the end-goal in mind, thinking that it’s ok if medical school isn’t at all fulfilling or enjoyable because in the end, it’ll all be okay as an attending. But putting off your own happiness will become an unsustainable pattern as you go through medical school, residency, and beyond. Try to see every day as another opportunity to explore and learn and realize that it’s all part of the process!

**From Samantha Lund, M4**

Welcome to WashU and to St. Louis! Congratulations — you belong here. You can not only survive, but really thrive, if you do what is right for you. When I started med school, a role model told me “always stay in your own lane,” meaning make decisions based on what you need or want. You are surrounded by some pretty smart people (and you are one, too, by the way), but it’s important to figure out how you do things to succeed and what excites you. What works for you might not work for your best friend and that’s ok. Here are just a few short tips on finding your way:

- In preclinical years, experiment with different study techniques. Find what works for you so when you are in clerkships with less time and higher stakes, you are confident in yourself.

- Get involved in whatever makes you happy. Spend a lot of time and energy on your passions — be they at the med school or outside of it. You need balance in your life, and I found these activities gave me the energy and drive to get through some of my less thrilling classes/rotations.

- Spend time on friends and family. The unwritten curriculum will say you can’t go to a friend’s wedding, travel home to see family, run a marathon in a different city — but here’s the thing: you totally can and should. Our administration is so supportive in making school work for you, so don’t put life on pause!

- Reach out when you need it. To Dean Moscoso, to friends, to family, to a counselor, or to whomever. Just know you are not alone and this community cares for you.

These will be amazing years, full of learning, growth, and fun. Take full advantage of what WashU provides and always remember, be kind to yourself. You are enough.
Hello! I can’t wait to meet you. I am one of a team of people who are here to support you on the road to becoming a doctor. There will be many joys and challenges on this journey. As you begin medical school, it will be important to develop a community of support — to celebrate your joys and to team up with you in your challenges. By all means, attend to the important business of maintaining relationships with your people, and be sure to invest in growing relationships here as well. One thing the past year has taught me is the importance of staying connected.

What you have heard is true: Medical school will be demanding. There will be stretches of time when balance will be difficult. However, with a little attention, and assistance if requested, you will learn important tools and techniques to regain and maintain a healthy balance. Here are a few bits of advice that you may find useful:

- Build and maintain warm-hearted relationships. Quality is important here, not quantity. Remember that lifetime friends, colleagues, mentors, and advisors surround you. Let them in — the sooner the better.
- Remember what brings you joy and intentionally carve out time for it.
- Do what you love.
- Respect others in your actions and words.
- Assume positive intent in your colleagues.
- Stay connected to your people.
- Play. Outside.
- Laugh as often as possible. Choose companions who multiply laughter.
- Notice something beautiful today.
- Be grateful for a moment every day.

We are here for you. Ask for our support when you need it. You may not know exactly what it is you need or what we can provide, so ask and we’ll figure it out together.
From Jonathan Mullin, MD

Course Director, Clinical Skills

The “reminiscence bump” is a psychological phenomenon where older adults preferentially remember autobiographical information from adolescence and early adulthood. Researchers think this is because these memories contribute most to one’s sense of self. You are now (most likely) at an age that you’ll remember for the rest of your life. Most physicians (this one included) would tell you that their profession is a part of their identity. And your process of becoming a physician starts now. Like it or not, these are the times of your life you’ll look back on often.

That said, my advice is that medical school probably matters less than you think it does. “Being a doctor” will only be a part of your identity. Don’t let yourself believe that your success is solely based on what and how you do in school for the next 4+ years. Don’t forget to focus on life outside of the classrooms, hospitals, clinics, and studying, so that you can have experiences that you’ll want to remember.

Think for a minute about all it took for you to be here starting medical school at Wash U: where you came from, the people supporting you, your hard work and commitment to others, sweating the MCAT, capitalizing on what makes you you, crying in organic chemistry lab because you discarded the solution and not the precipitate (don’t pretend that was just me). Each of your classmates had an equally as interesting journey to medical school. The same is true of all your instructors. Even more so, your patients all live interesting lives, and are a part of amazing communities. One awesome privilege you’ll have as a medical student is meeting and developing relationships with people that you wouldn’t have otherwise. Learn from them all. Let them pull you outside of your comfort zone. Be curious. Share yourself with others. The work of medicine will cause you to grow as a person. Let your experiences outside of medicine do the same. Those two things aren’t mutually exclusive. Have fun. The future of your memories depends on it.
Welcome to Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. On your arrival, you will be captivated by the history, vitality, and progressive spirit of the Central West End, our home. You will also find that not everyone in the St. Louis region is reaching their full health potential. Several blocks from the medical center you will find neighborhoods grappling with generational poverty, food insecurity, joblessness and unsteady housing, and health disparities. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the roots and immoral nature of those racial and ethnic health disparities. Early in the pandemic, it became apparent that COVID-19 cases were largely clustered in medically underserved regions in North St. Louis City and County, regions that are overwhelmingly African American.

Subsequent analyses noted that testing inequities existed, and that those inequities were a driver of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. As the pandemic reached full steam, the data confirmed that Black Americans are three times as likely to become infected with COVID-19 compared with whites, and twice as likely to die from COVID-19.

We now know that those modifiable factors contributing to the COVID-19 disparities also include structural racism. The pandemic creates an opportunity for you to acknowledge and address past injustices by learning how to engage in clear and honest communications with your patients, prioritize transparency and meaningful community partnerships, and advocate for accountability with Black and Brown communities. The path forward must recognize past bias, both overt and unconscious, and include “radical collaboration” with the communities that have been hardest hit to ensure we do not see another generation of unjust outcomes. It starts by placing a racial equity lens on our efforts to understand and mitigate health inequities, particularly the spread of COVID-19, including measures to increase uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. Within St. Louis, due to deep-seated distrust, only 30-40 percent of the African American community plans to take the vaccine. Increasing trust in the community will require extraordinary leadership, including clear and honest communication by health care providers, policymakers, and both secular and faith-based community leaders.

As an incoming student, you should indeed immerse yourself in the fascinating world of scientific discovery and medical innovation, but you should never forget the true purpose of medicine is the uplift of the human condition. The new Gateway Curriculum will assist you in gaining the tools you need to become empathic healers. The skills you will gain to address the racial disparities are urgently needed and need to be systems-oriented, community-driven, and guided by the unique social and historical context of race in the St. Louis region. In your years in medical school, make every effort to connect to the greater community, experience the tremendous personal satisfaction of service,
and acknowledge the marked difference you can make on the lives of those less fortunate. Allow yourself to be trained, in essence, in a medical center without walls. Your overall experience as a medical school will then be much more rewarding, at Washington University. In St. Louis.

From Timothy T. Yau, MD
Course Director, Clinical Skills

Welcome to Wash U! My name is Tim Yau, and I am one of your clinical skills directors for the Gateway Curriculum. Our team is here to teach you all the “non-science” stuff that is necessary to becoming a great physician.

The qualities that will make each of you outstanding doctors is so much more than test scores, which all of you already are capable of. We’ll teach you all the things you expect — how to talk with and examine patients, how to formulate diagnoses, how to interpret labs and tests. But you will also learn how to see your patients as individuals, how to involve them in patient-centered decisions, and how to navigate the complicated societal and structural barriers to their health. The amount of information you will learn in the next four years is both staggering and intimidating. Your learning will not end with medical school, and we hope to light a fire for you to never stop learning!

During medical school you will have opportunities over the next four years to do things that you may never again do in your lifetime. I am a kidney specialist, but I still delivered plenty of babies as a third-year medical student! Learn for the sake of learning (rather than just to pass the test) and you will find the pursuit of knowledge more worthwhile, more meaningful, and longer lasting. Your individual path to fulfill your potential to be a great doctor will be decided by you. Faculty like myself are your mentors, role models, guides, and colleagues in this journey.

Lastly, we hope you are eager to learn, but also want you to ENJOY your medical school experience. Some of the strongest bonds are forged here, and you will need support from family, old friends, and the new friends you will make. Get outside, eat some good food, and have a drink to relax. Take time to enjoy things that make you happy, whatever they are! This advice sounds generic, but I live by my own words: Playing music kept me happy during medical school, and even now at the age of 40+ I enjoy competitive video gaming. In 2018 we even started the official WashU Gaming Club! Even with all the craziness of the pandemic, we’ve been able to play plenty of Among Us. When things get back to normal, I have instruments and consoles in my office, and you’ll be welcome to stop by for a game or to play a tune!
Advice

From Wayne M. Yokoyama, MD
Director, Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP)

It’s exciting to be a first-year medical student! You will learn how the human body works in detail, from head to toe, from gross anatomy to subatomic structures. However, some of the current concepts and “facts” you will learn will prove to be wrong. That’s right (actually still wrong!). It’s not that you’re being deliberately taught misinformation. It’s just that we don’t know our own ignorance (yet). Keep in mind, what you’re learning is how we understand things, circa 2021. But we don’t know what we don’t know.

While it is certainly much easier to learn the materials if you just try to absorb it verbatim, my advice is to spend some time thinking about what you’re learning. I can now reflect on the lectures I heard as a medical student touting that the cause of peptic ulcer disease was too much acid. In retrospect, that couldn’t be right because acid is always there! I didn’t think about it then, but I should have, because now we know (I think pretty conclusively) that ulcers are often caused by a bacterial infection! Keep track of things that don’t make sense to you along with those that are incompletely understood. (There are lots of them!) For aspiring scientists, they will be great projects on which to work in the future. For future clinicians, they will be the ones that you will reflect on, and cause you to go back over your old med school texts and notes — if not when you’re practicing, certainly a great retirement project!

From Nichole Zehnder, MD
Associate Dean for Educational Strategy

It seems like only yesterday that our admissions team was telephoning you, congratulating you and telling you how our Committee on Admissions thought you would be an outstanding addition to this year’s entering class. Some of you cried. Some of you screamed. Some of you were speechless. In that moment I was, and continue to be, so proud of each and every one of you. I’m unbelievably excited to get to walk alongside you as you start a new chapter in your life.

As you begin the journey into the breathtaking, beautiful and completely imperfect world of medicine, my advice is this — be courageous. In the small moments, with your peers, your patients, and yourself.

What does it look like to be courageous with your peers? Once, long ago when I was an early faculty member I was feeling exhausted and worn out. I was feeling all the pulls of a new leadership role, a young family at home, and a heavy clinical load. A colleague and I went to dinner and I was brave enough to tell her my story. She told me hers. Her story wasn’t perfect and really, it was
just as messy as mine. Because of her courage, I didn’t feel alone. Be courageous enough, in small moments, to care about your peers and colleagues as you go on this journey together. Courageous enough to really listen, to really care, and to be ready to hear the true answer to the question, “How are you feeling?”

It isn’t just about colleagues. Be courageous, in the small moments, with your patients. Your role on the healthcare team as a medical student is right around the corner. Over your career, you will take care of hundreds, thousands, of patients and you will know, deep in your heart, when our health care system isn’t providing them with the best care possible. Advocate that they have a seamless follow-up plan and the right resources. Push when you think your team isn’t following a plan that’s comprehensively holistic. Be willing to resist the urge to call it a day when you know, deep down, that what your patient needs most is for you to pull up a chair and hold their hand. Do this even when you’ve had a long day and you’re juggling nine million things. I’m asking you to be courageous even when it’s hard.

Finally, I want you to be courageous with yourself. As a person, as a unique and remarkably incredible individual. Our Committee on Admissions has spent countless hours reviewing your applications. You talked about the family members who inspired you to go into medicine, your identity as children who immigrated to the United States, and your pride for being the first in your family to go to college or medical school.

As you embark on your journey in medicine, be courageous enough to celebrate your own story. In a medical world that sometimes force physicians into pathways and protocols, which is often good for patient care, never lose sight of the quiet beauty that comes with being you. Your culture, your passion, your values, and your individual identities make up the fabric of the true diversity we need in medicine.

Entering Class of 2021, congratulations again and I can’t wait to get see you!