

Dis-Orientation Guide

2022-2023



By WashU Med Students, for WashU Med Students!

**Washington University in St. Louis
School of Medicine**

Find Dis-O online: diso.wustl.edu

The official student-produced guide to our school, city, and life in medical school

The Dis-Orientation Guide offers valuable insight that you won't find anywhere else — because it's written by our first-year medical students.

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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 our year's guide, take in some words of wisdom from the Dean of the Medical School, the Associate Dean for Admissions, and the medical student editors of the Dis-Orientation Guide.

Dear Members of the Entering Class of 2022,

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 Endowed Dean, School of Medicine



David H. Perlmutter, MD

From Dean Valerie Ratts

Welcome to Washington University School of Medicine and the Dis-O Guide. The Dis-O Guide is written by our students for you and provides a very up-to-date look at our school — its people, its spaces, and its strengths. In our medical school, there are traditions, but much of what we do is consistently evolving, such as the implementation of the Gateway Curriculum. This year's guide also provides information on how our students 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. Since 1987, the Dis-O Guide has been produced to show you an inside look into what WashU School of Medicine, 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.



Valerie S. Ratts, MD

The WashU 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 students who will align with the mission and vision is key. Next, we must provide the knowledge, experience, 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. I love this quote from an anonymous source for inspiration to keep the right attitude: “Look for something positive in every day, even if some days you have to look a little harder.”

Remember, 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. There are so many people at WashU who wish to mentor, support, and develop you as an outstanding physician.

Valerie S. Ratts, MD

Associate Dean for Admissions and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Meet the Editors

Madeleine Busby

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Advice Section Editor

Hello, everyone, and welcome to WashU! My name is Madeleine and I graduated from Oregon State University in 2020 with a degree in Biology. I've spent most of my life on the West Coast, and I had never been to St. Louis before I moved here. I was nervous about moving so far from home, but the Dis-O Guide was comforting and helped me adjust to my new life. In fact, it was such a great resource that I jumped at the opportunity to be an editor when it was my class's turn to write the guide! When I'm not on campus, you can find me hanging out with friends in Forest Park, watching Netflix with my cat, Bubba, or playing pickleball at Tower Grove Park!



Tiffany Chen

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Perspectives Section Editor

Hello! My name is Tiffany, and I am originally from Michigan. I went to the University of Michigan where I studied Spanish and Neuroscience. My favorite things to do outside of med school are climbing, playing tennis, crocheting, movie/dinner nights with friends, and long walks in Forest Park! Welcome to WashU and don't be a stranger if you see me here next year!



Isabella Gomes

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Clubs and Extracurriculars Section Editor

Welcome to WashU and the magnificent city of St. Louis! My name is Isabella G. and I'm the first-year Class President for my cohort, as well as one of the editors-in-chief of the Dis-O Guide. Being at WashU has enriched my life in countless ways, but none more so than introducing me to a passionate, thoughtful group of peers. While a paper booklet certainly can't communicate the amount of joy and support you'll experience in this program, we hope this guide — which features many of our classmates' thoughts and perspectives — illustrates how much we've enjoyed our time here. We hope you'll have a chance to love it too!



Tim Huang

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Gateway Experience Section Editor

Hey, congrats on whatever part of the application process you are on! My name is Tim, and I majored in Biology and History at Boston College. At WashU, I've gotten really lucky to be involved in student government, research, and the Dis-O Guide, which is what you are reading right now! I remember falling in love with WashU as an applicant through reading all the authentic pieces in the Dis-O Guide, and I hope you will too.



Fiona Pat

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Life in St. Louis Section Editor

Welcome to WashU! We're excited to see that you're checking out the Dis-O Guide and hope we'll eventually meet you as a fellow med student. I'm Fiona from Toronto, Canada, although home has been Macau, Baltimore, New York, and now St. Louis. I studied Neuroscience and History at Hopkins before completing a Master's in Bioethics at Harvard. WashU's emphasis on community engagement and health equity was what first drew me to the school, but the deciding factor was really the amazing people I met here during the application process. When I'm not (literally) flipping Anki cards with friends, you can find me at the local climbing gym or squirrel-watching in Forest Park.



Haewon Shin

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Why WashU Section Editor, Website Editor

Welcome to St. Louis! My name is Haewon and I'm originally from Columbus, Ohio. I graduated in 2021 with degrees in Computer Science and Biology right here at WashU, and I'm part of the Medical Scientist Training Program at WashU. Outside of school and research, my hobbies include making bad Bob Ross paintings, running the Forest Park trails, and pursuing the best ramen in St. Louis (not sure if I've found it yet). The past Dis-O Guide was incredibly helpful to me in making my medical school decision, and I hope this one will serve you well too.



Wendy Tan

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Life in St. Louis Section Editor

Hey guys! I'm Wendy from Philadelphia (actually a bit outside of Philly but if you know where Malvern, Pennsylvania is, I would be really shocked). I graduated from Swarthmore College and took two gap years afterwards to do research and apply to med school. It was at this time that I stumbled upon the Dis-O Guide, thereby changing my life forever ... and now I'm here at WashU, experiencing the actual things that my upperclassmen wrote about in their Dis-O Guide! My hobbies include sleeping, eating, and going to Target.





Why WashU

This year, 123 medical students chose Washington University School of Medicine. Here, see some of the reasons we chose WashU Med.

SECTION EDITOR: HAEWON SHIN

From Haewon S., M1

When choosing where to go for the next phase of my training, I considered whether I wanted to stay in St. Louis for (at least) four more years. The pros of leaving would be the opportunity to network with different professors and faculty members and getting acquainted with a new city. The pros of staying, however, meant that I could expand the connections I'd made at WashU, enjoy a Midwest cost of living, and find things in St. Louis previously inaccessible to me as car-less college student.

One of the benefits of having gone to undergrad at WashU was that I knew for a fact that the professors are truly supportive of aspiring physicians and scientists. Generous with their advice, honest about their experiences, most of these extraordinarily accomplished faculty are committed to creating a generation of scholars better even than themselves. Research and shadowing opportunities abounded as an undergrad; I didn't imagine that would change when I started medical school.

Right after graduation, as I watched many of my friends leave St. Louis for jobs or programs all over the country, I felt a strange sense of feeling like they were moving on while I was stagnating here alone. But then my new classmates started trickling in, and they were from all over the country as well. I may have been used to seeing Hope Plaza and studying at the Becker Medical Library, but doing these activities with fresh faces makes me feel like I'm still learning and growing and experiencing new things — with all the benefits of knowing my way around town.

From Nicolette P., M1

When I was looking at medical schools during my application process, my goal was to find a school that truly valued its medical students and encouraged them to explore their own passions and interests over the course of their medical school journey. I also wanted to live in a city that had interesting things to do but that wasn't too big and overwhelming. After looking carefully at several different schools, I felt that WashU School of Medicine was the school that was able to fully meet those goals.

The first thing I noticed when I interviewed at WashU was how welcoming my faculty interviewers and the rest of the administration were. It felt like I was valued both as an applicant, and later as an admitted student. From my interactions with WashU students in the admission process, it was obvious that they were a tight-knit class who had been able to connect with each other and the WashU faculty even during a virtual start to their school year due to COVID. They were so supportive and welcoming that I immediately could see myself as one of their peers.

In hindsight, I did not put enough emphasis on the curriculum of each med school in my decision-making process. However, after the first few months of experiencing the new Gateway Curriculum here at WashU I know that it is a huge reason why I love WashU so much. The curriculum is designed to support each

of our individual journeys to becoming physicians through a fully integrated pre-clinical phase, early clinical experience, and extra time after our rotations to explore specialties and our interests before applying to residency. Everyone is very invested in making the new curriculum a success, and so far, it has been an amazing experience.

Although I knew quite early on that I would feel at home in the WashU community, I was a bit more apprehensive about moving halfway across the country to St. Louis. However, I have been very pleasantly surprised by this city! There are tons of things to do (many activities are free), the cost of living is low, and the Central West End (where the med campus is located) is a really nice neighborhood located right next to the amazing Forest Park. I have been very pleased with my transition to Saint Louis, and I know it is yet another reason why I love WashU so much. Choosing a medical school is a difficult decision, but I think the most important thing is to find a school where you feel valued and where you feel that you will thrive and grow into the best physician you can be. I definitely found that place here at WashU, and I hope you will find it here as well (or wherever you end up)!

From Rosie R., M1

Before coming to St. Louis, I had spent my whole life in the northeast — I grew up in New York, and then did my undergrad and gap years in Boston. Because of the pandemic, I was never able to visit the campus to scope out a “vibe,” which was a big way I chose my undergrad institution — I visited and it felt right. Before I committed, there were a few things that drew me to WashU. The first was the world-class research being done here in many different fields. This was important because I’m still not sure how I will specialize as a scientist or physician, so I needed to know that I could find excellent resources and mentorship in many fields. Another thing that drew me to WashU School of Medicine was the caring and supportive administration, especially the administration of the Medical Scientist Training Program. When making my decision, I had some questions about WashU and starting medical school in general, especially with family obligations in New York. The administrators I spoke with were so understanding, flexible, and supportive that I instantly knew I would be well cared for and guided throughout my time here, both as a student and a whole person outside of medicine and science. Once I realized that, I knew WashU was the place for me.

From Gianna S., M1

I first stepped onto the Washington University Medical School campus to participate in a summer research program in high school. After spending a summer doing research here I was confident in two things: I wanted to be a doctor and I wanted to come back for medical school. WashU faculty are incredible. Not only are there so many doctors here who are conducting cutting-edge research and running multicenter trials, but these same doctors are often eager to mentor and

teach students. As someone who wants to practice academic medicine, I knew WashU was the place for me because of the research caliber and the mentorship to match.

Besides research, I was drawn to WashU because of the new Gateway Curriculum, particularly the early clinical exposures during immersions. The pre-clinical part of medical school is generally very science heavy. During this part where you are learning from lectures and studying for tests, it can be easy to lose sight of the human side of medicine. For me, I really wanted to attend medical school at an institution that emphasized patient centered medicine. WashU does this through various avenues, including our health equity and justice thread and professional development thread, and through immersions. While I have not been in immersions yet, I have seen and heard from the class above mine about how they are really grounding and put into perspective that medicine is more than science. I am really looking forward to my immersions and this aspect of the curriculum really drew me to WashU.

Finally, the financial aid at WashU is really comprehensive. Many students receive some sort of merit scholarship including full tuition scholarships. Tuition and financial aid is also stabilized for your time at WashU, so you know how much medical school will cost over four years upfront. This has helped me plan ahead financially and has given me a lot of peace of mind so I can focus just on getting through medical school without worrying so much about my finances.



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: TIM HUANG AND DYLAN MITTAUER

Curriculum Related

Class Resource Development Group (CRDG)

The Class Resource Development Group (CRDG) is a group of students who compile notes, Anki decks, and other resources from our classmates into one centralized location so that present and future students can utilize them while studying. We've been updating previous years' content to match the new Gateway Curriculum, as well as assembling a spreadsheet of USMLE Step exam resources corresponding to the sequence of lectures at WashU School of Medicine.

Fiona P., M1

Clinical Immersions: Procedural

Out of all the immersions, I was the most nervous for the procedural immersion, but it turned out to be a pleasant and engaging learning experience! I was on colorectal surgery, and I appreciated being able to see how the surgical team worked together in different settings ranging from the operating room to the floor to clinic. There were also plenty of opportunities to scrub in to assist with procedures, which is a great way to solidify my understanding of anatomy. Even if we hadn't covered the content yet, there were residents, fellows, and other team members who were happy to teach and answer questions.

My biggest pieces of advice are to be as helpful as possible, take learning opportunities as they come, and not take things personally. Communication can sometimes be direct in a procedural setting, but it's also really interesting to see how tactful and respectful communication can facilitate a seamless flow in the operating room. Beyond seeing fascinating procedures, the most enjoyable part of the immersion was interacting with all the team members, learning about patients, witnessing how form enables function, and understanding how procedures can address pathologic states.

Maggie B., M2

Clinical Mentoring

The clinical mentoring program here pairs two M1 students with an M4, who serves as their clinical mentor. Together, we interview patients, take histories, and may perform a quick physical in a low-stress, non-evaluated environment. Everyone has a different schedule, but most teams begin about a month or so into medical school. For many students, clinical mentoring is the earliest opportunity for M1s to integrate and directly apply what they have learned in a clinical setting. My M4 mentor has been so instrumental in building my confidence by guiding me through taking histories from patients and expanding my clinical knowledge. I consistently leave our sessions feeling more informed and very supported by his mentorship. Clinical mentoring is also a great way to get

to know one of your classmates early on and build that relationship throughout Phase 1, which has been so enjoyable for my partner and me! It is definitely one of my favorite elements of our curriculum!

Shelbie F., M1

Clinical Skills

The Gateway Curriculum approaches clinical skills in an integrated, trauma-informed, and patient-centered manner. These sessions are woven continually through each module, allowing us to develop relevant clinical reasoning skills while simultaneously learning about each organ system. There are also plenty of opportunities to practice interacting with patients in a low-stakes environment through standardized patient simulations. Students can even book patient suites in the simulation center to practice physical exam skills together on their own time and can meet one-on-one with their coach to discuss their progress. Dr. Mullin and Dr. Yau — the Clinical Skills thread co-leads — are also available and willing to work with students one-on-one.

Alberto S., M1

Coaching

From the special bond that I've formed with my faculty coach and group members to the honest discussions we've had on current events and medical school struggles, the coaching experience has been one of my favorite parts of the new Gateway Curriculum! In our one-on-one coaching meetings — where we touch base and reflect on our medical school experience — I have found my coach to be completely supportive, genuine, and helpful. Our group sessions have also been a consistently safe and fun space where I can freely share my thoughts and hear the honest perspectives of my classmates. Overall, the coaching system provides a unique and extremely valuable opportunity for personal growth and mentorship in medical school.

Adam K., M1

Coaching

Coaching is where a small group of med students meet with a faculty coach to talk through many topics, including professional identity formation. The groups are small enough that coaches have time dedicated to our specific needs rather than being spread thin among the entire class. The structure also lets us discuss topics in greater depth than we can in a class setting. Our coaches also meet with us individually to provide personalized advice on how to improve our performance in academics and clinical skills. It is great to have someone regularly checking in with us throughout all four years of medical school.

Matthew B., M1

Community Engagement

It is easy to get involved in the WashU School of Medicine community almost immediately. Many of our student groups have teams dedicated to community engagement, so there is a plethora of volunteering opportunities. For example, I was able to participate in a service project with the sustainability group removing invasive bush honeysuckle from a park. I had never done something like that before and found it fun and cathartic. I would definitely do it again. I was also able to go into one of the all-girl schools in St. Louis and teach eighth grade students how to take basic vital signs. These experiences were very rewarding, and I had no trouble getting involved early on in medical school. Although community engagement is a requirement as part of the Health Equity and Justice curriculum, the requirement is low stakes and only requires four experiences throughout all of Phase I. Community engagement is what you make of it; you can do as much or as little as you want, but if you want to help with a project or start one of your own, there is definitely someone at WashU School of Medicine who can help.

Kourtney B., M1

Competency-Based Framework

You're going to hear the term "competency" a lot at WashU School of Medicine, so we thought it would be helpful to break it down a bit from a student's perspective. As in undergrad, we have regular exams (though we call them assessments), typically every three weeks or so. Each assessment question belongs to a content category, such as "basic science," "histology," or "ethics." At the end of Phase 1 — the preclinical portion of the curriculum — each student's cumulative point total in each category is tallied to ensure that they have achieved the set competency threshold before progressing to clerkships.

It's sort of like having a bucket corresponding to each area of knowledge, which you fill slowly throughout Phase 1 through various assessments. As long as you have enough water in each of the buckets at the end of Phase 1, you can proceed to Phase 2, where there will be more buckets to fill! The competency-based framework is like a pass/fail system but stretched over a longer time and across multiple knowledge areas.

Now, you may be wondering, "What if I don't have enough water in my buckets? Then what happens?!" Don't worry; the faculty pays close attention to how each student is doing and will provide plenty of advance notice and extra support if a student begins to fall behind in a competency. As it was explained to me by an upperclassman, "The worst that can happen is that you get some extra help until you are on track again."

Tim H., M1

Health, Equity, and Justice

The Health, Equity, and Justice (HEJ) thread is undoubtedly one of the most unique and meaningful components of the Gateway Curriculum here at WashU. It highlights the social and structural determinants of health from both a theoretical perspective and through the lived experiences of patients, providers, and community workers facing those barriers in St. Louis. As a longitudinal element, HEJ content builds continually throughout the curriculum and integrates meaningfully with other subject areas. Even when there isn't a concrete solution to complex issues, HEJ provides frameworks for us to think critically about those problems, so we can improve outcomes and avoid perpetuating harm in vulnerable populations. I feel immensely privileged to be a student of the HEJ curriculum and am confident that I will be a better doctor because of this foundational exposure.

Shelbie F., M1

Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP)

The MD/PhD curriculum offers a class, called MSTP Thread, which meets once a week during the preclinical years of medical school. Thread is a one-hour class that alternates between a lecture by a WashU School of Medicine professor and a journal club, where a group of students presents a paper chosen by the lecturing faculty member. The most exciting part is that the topics and papers we discuss relate to the medical school block we are currently studying! I feel like we get to put on the critical thinking hat of a physician-scientist while absorbing all the new material.

As a result of the Gateway Curriculum beginning in September, which is later than most schools, the MSTP timeline is adjusted so that we now participate in a research rotation prior to starting our first year. This was honestly an amazing four-to-eight-week period (longer for students who decided to do multiple rotations) where we settled into St. Louis, explored the city with our cohort, and began working in a lab. The MSTP group truly bonded during this time, and I feel like I can speak for all of us when I say that I feel supported no matter what happens in the next seven to eight years.

In May of our first year, we will get a chance to do our second lab rotation. Finally, after completing Phase 1 (midway through M2), we can choose to take the Step 1 exam, do a third lab rotation, and/or do one or two clinical clerkships before joining a lab to start our PhD. Although there is a lot of flexibility based on what we think will work best for us, the MSTP and MD faculty also provide recommendations to help guide our decisions. After completing and defending our PhD, we will return to complete the clinical phases (Phase 2 and 3) of our med school curriculum.

Lyra M., M1

Phase 1 Integration

WashU School of Medicine's entering class of 2021 is just the second class ever to experience the newly revamped Gateway Curriculum. Our first 16 months are spent in Phase 1 (the pre-clinical phase), which is divided into seven modules covering each organ system, three clinical immersions, and a one-month Explore course. Woven throughout each module are longitudinal "threads," which feature recurring topics like epidemiology; clinical skills; professional development; health, equity, and justice (HEJ); and bioethics. Students are also given the opportunity to rotate through three one-month-long clinical immersions in inpatient, outpatient, and procedural settings, where we can contribute to a real health-care team while previewing the later clinical phases of our curriculum. Finally, our Explore course provides an unscheduled block to explore (no pun intended) a project of our choosing in either global health, research, education, or health-care innovation.

Jana 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., M2

American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)

Becoming involved in the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) was definitely one of the best decisions I made after coming to WashU School of Medicine. AMWA puts on a ton of events to help develop the next generation of strong female leadership in medicine. So far, there have been several lunch talks that touch on topics such as salary negotiation, work-life balance, and how to draft a successful CV. I'm also really looking forward to the spring, when AMWA puts on a workshop for

female faculty to come in and sit down with students to give personalized feedback on their own CVs. Additionally, AMWA puts on small group breakfasts with some awesome female physicians, which really give students an opportunity to get to know faculty and potentially even find a mentor. Hearing from these female powerhouses in medicine has been deeply inspiring and has provided me with some amazing career advice, as early as the moment I set foot in the medical school. Besides connecting students with female faculty, AMWA is also involved in the community through teaching workshops at Almost Home, a transitional housing facility for teen moms, and through introducing medicine to middle school students at the Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls. AMWA is an amazing organization and I would 100% recommend getting involved in any capacity.

Alyssa R., M1

Art to Heart

Clara and I were excited to discover that WashU School of Medicine has Art to Heart, a visual arts-based student group founded just the year before us. The goal of Art to Heart is to create a welcoming space for members of the WashU community to pursue visual arts projects and use art as a tool to connect with community partners. Most of all, we hope to encourage students to seek fun and creative outlets of expression and stress relief. Past events have included a Bob Ross paint night, jewelry-making with a local artist, and a collaborative art piece with the COVID-attestation stickers WashU used to hand out.

Stephanie Z., M1

Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA)

WashU School of Medicine'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. We provide opportunities to receive individualized mentorship from a paired Asian Pacific American physician mentor and to learn medical vocabulary in Mandarin from our Medical Chinese classes. APAMSA also regularly hosts health screenings through its Chinese Clinic, as well as various health fairs, hosted in partnership with Saint Louis University School of Medicine's APAMSA chapter, during which students get to practice taking a history and physical exam. The student group also hosts fun social events and cultural festivals open to all, such as Diwali and Lunar New Year. If you're interested in helping the underserved Asian Pacific American community and hope to find a welcoming and supportive group of people who support that passion, APAMSA is definitely the place for you!

Wendy D., M1

Association of Women Surgeons (AWS)

The Association of Women Surgeons (AWS) at WashU School of Medicine is an incredible organization that focuses on bringing together female students with an interest in surgery, along with female surgical residents and faculty. Through presentations, panel discussions, and mixers, the group gives students the chance to learn from the unique experiences and opinions of residents and faculty, all while promoting enthusiasm for the field among female students. Some exciting programming in the past has been inter-class AWS families; panels focused on specialties like ENT, ob/gyn, neurosurgery, and more; “A Day in the Life” features on social media; and surgical skills workshops, like suturing.

Isabella G., M1

CHOICES for Youth in Detention

Choosing Healthy Options In our Community, Environment, and Schools (CHOICES) for Youth in Detention is a student group dedicated to educating young people at the St. Louis Juvenile Detention Center on important topics in physical and mental health. With weekly opportunities to help teach, medical students get a unique perspective on barriers to health literacy and education, and get to help improve the well-being of youth in St. Louis. So far, my experience with CHOICES for Youth in Detention has been very powerful, and I have learned a lot about the importance of educating incarcerated kids and teens. Not only do I feel that I am helping to improve the overall future health and well-being of these young individuals, I also feel that I am giving them the opportunity to engage with and ask questions of someone they can trust.

Maida D., M1

Christian Medical Association (CMA)

Christian Medical Association (CMA) is a non-denominational, student-led organization at WashU School of Medicine dedicated to helping students grow in their faith walk. Other students may want to join simply to hear select topics from guest speakers. We are made up of students from the the PT, OT, PhD, MD, and MSTP programs at WashU Med, as well as PharmD students from the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy. Our hope is to build community, foster relationships, and provide opportunities for mentorship and service. We meet on a weekly basis and provide opportunities to attend national conferences.

Kevin N., M3

Class Show

They say that laughter is the best medicine, and we take that seriously here at WashU School of Medicine. The 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' 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., M2

ClimbRx

ClimbRx is WashU's graduate climbing club. It offers a discounted membership for students who go to a local climbing gym, Climb So iLL, with two locations 10 and 30 minutes away from the Central West End. Students often go together in groups, and the climbing community is very welcoming and supportive of climbers at all levels. Climbing itself is an excellent full-body workout that also tickles one's brain without involving textbooks or Anki cards, so it's pretty popular among medical students.

Fiona P., 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, WashU School of Medicine Dance Club 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 Dance Club, I was excited to know that I will still have access to my "get away from stress" card. Even with the pandemic, this 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., M2

Dis-Orientation (Dis-O) Guide

(You're reading it right now.) Back when I was an applicant, the Dis-Orientation (Dis-O) Guide was one of the main attractions that drew me to WashU School of Medicine. A collection of articles, photos, and videos that represent the community of the school and city, the Dis-Orientation Guide is a collaborative effort across all classes and faculty, put together by the current M1 class. Personally, I still turn to last year's Dis-O Guide whenever I need recommendations on where to eat or new places to explore. As an editor-in-chief this year, I've loved working with the other editors to brainstorm how to best display our identity as a class, from sharing our unique perspectives to divulging the best places to take a date. ;) The Dis-O Guide is an extremely gratifying tradition that we hope to pass on to next year's class!

Wendy T., M1

Health Economics and Policy Interest Group (HEPIG)

The Health Economics & Policy Interest Group (HEPIG) collaborates closely with Students for a National Health Program (SNaHP). The aim of HEPIG/SNaHP is to teach about the changing landscape of health-care economics and public policy in relation to issues that we will all face as physicians someday. These issues can have a huge impact in enabling or preventing patients from accessing and affording care. Previous events have included lunch talks, book clubs/giveaways, and panel discussions with more events on the way!

Tim H., M1

Interest Groups

Are you coming into medical school with no idea what specialty you want to pursue? Or have you known you're an ortho bro from the start? Either way, there are interest groups (IGs) to support you in pursuing any and all interests you may have across the many fields of medicine. IGs are a great first stop for learning about different specialties, and WashU School of Medicine currently has 22 (and counting) IGs representing a vast majority of those specialties. These groups put on all kinds of different programming, from residency panels to learn about specialty culture to procedure nights where you can try your hand at some of the skills you would learn in that field and more. They provide many low-pressure ways to learn more about different careers in medicine and to gauge your own passions. They are also a great way to start building connections with faculty, which can lead to a variety of opportunities in mentorship or research. We encourage you to try some IGs on for size when you start in the fall and start to learn more about where your interests really lie! Who knows? You might just find out you want a totally different path than you thought you would, or that you're just where you have always wanted to be.

Rachel K., M1

Jewish Medical Student Association (JMSA)

When I was first accepted to WashU School of Medicine, I wasn't sure what kind of Jewish community was present in St. Louis. I have been delighted to find that WashU and St. Louis actually have a vibrant and diverse 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. At WashU School of Medicine specifically, the Jewish Medical Student Association has held multiple events including a shabbat dinner with faculty and

residents, a Yom Kippur break-fast meal, and a Zoom challah bake. We also have a JMSA group chat that we've used to coordinate hangouts and check in with each other over the holidays. The opportunities are definitely here for the taking, and how much you choose to engage is completely up to you! WashU is a great place to be Jewish and to dive into this aspect of your identity.

Jacob S., M2

Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)

The goal of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), both nationally and at WashU School of Medicine, is to empower and support medical students working to promote the health of the Latin community. Folks from all backgrounds are welcome and encouraged to join; for many of us, LMSA membership helped foster an early support system during our first year. Our social events, such as dance nights and Charlas, help strengthen our sense of community, and our engagement and service events for the Latin community in St. Louis allow us to return that sentiment to the area as well. LMSA also coordinates Medical Spanish, a popular elective course that allows medical students to learn Spanish in a clinical setting and eventually become certified as interpreters. We look forward to seeing some of you join us this year!

Priscilla C., M1

LouHealth

LouHealth is an organization that was created as a policy and public health advocacy response to COVID-19. Our model is to partner with local organizations that work in three main areas: health access and equity, criminal justice reform, and intimate partner violence survivor advocacy. I've really enjoyed working with this organization over Phase I and have gotten the opportunity develop tangible skills related to advocacy work. In particular, I was able to support LouHealth's work on the Missouri Medicaid Expansion campaign as well as phone-bank and calls to local policymakers, and I wrote an op-ed with some classmates. This organization is a great way to learn more about how we can advocate to create structural-level change in our communities. Additionally, LouHealth is a cohort of students across graduate programs (MD, PT, OT, PharmD, etc.) and across different schools (WashU School of Medicine, Saint Louis University, University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy), so it was a great way to connect with peers outside of the MD program and collaborate with others who are passionate in these areas. Feel free to visit our website (louhealthstl.org) or social media platforms (@louhealthstl) to see some of our current work.

MaeMae H., M2

Medical Student Government (MSG):

At-Large Member

Being an at-large member is a great way to get experience with Medical Student Government (MSG) without being overwhelmed. You attend meetings with your fellow M1 MSG representatives and get to take part in important discussions that frame your class' learning experience. You can either be COMSE (more academic-feedback focused, where you attend large meetings with administrations) or Equity and Anti-Racism (focused on ensuring representation among other equity-related items that may present themselves). Either way, the position offers a unique opportunity to get involved in MSG and enhance your time at WashU School of Medicine.

Mackenzie C., M

Medical Student Government (MSG):

Community Engagement Rep

As the community engagement representative (CER) of Medical Student Government (MSG), I help connect WashU School of Medicine students with the other WashU graduate programs and the larger St. Louis community. I have the unique opportunity to attend meetings with medical school administrators as well as with interprofessional teams of students and faculty from multiple WashU graduate programs. I also work closely with our Health Equity and Justice course directors to assess student involvement in the St. Louis community. This includes sharing service-learning activities and evaluating student group community involvement to help students engage in high quality, community-centered activities. As CER, I have most enjoyed the emphasis on bursting the “medical school bubble.” I am reminded every day that we are not learning medicine in a vacuum, and that there is a wealth of knowledge to be found in the community surrounding us.

Savannah S., M1

Medical Student Government (MSG): IT Liaison

The IT liaison role in Medical Student Government (MSG) is pretty cool. My responsibilities include communicating between the class and the administration about issues with the education tech. There are even opportunities to help improve the software and fix some bugs. I attend a few meetings as well, including with the education technology office and Medical Student Government.

Sam B., M1

Medical Student Government (MSG): Medical Education Rep

The Gateway Curriculum will be turning three soon, and like most three-year-olds, it needs a bit of work to reach its full potential. As the medical education representative (MER) of Medical Student Government (MSG), you'll work very closely with faculty and administration in matters big and small with the ultimate goal of improving the curriculum, both for your class and for future classes. It can be a lot of work at times, but I've found it immensely satisfying to play such an active role in making Gateway better for all of us. And thankfully, you don't have to do it alone; the MER also works with student liaisons who help out with different components of the curriculum. For anyone interested in medical education or seeking an active role in MSG, I would definitely recommend keeping this position in mind; it's a unique opportunity at an especially exciting time and place!

Tim H., M1

Medical Student Government (MSG): Organization of Student Representatives

I ran to be the Organization of Student Representatives (OSR) rep in Medical Student Government (MSG) to make sure that my classmates have everything they need to harmonize our professional, social, and personal lives while adjusting to the rigors of medical school. As an OSR rep, I engage with the student body, my fellow MSG members, and the WashU School of Medicine administration to find ways to best address students' concerns and feedback. The OSR position, just as any MSG position, is what you make it to be. To give a sense of projects there are to work on, here are examples of some initiatives that I have been heavily involved in so far.

- 1) Fueled directly by students' feedback, I — along with my fellow MSG members — advocated for having only optional or remote sessions on days before exams which was met by the WashU School of Medicine administration with compassion and understanding, and the change was implemented in the new curriculum.
- 2) In an interdisciplinary project with the Program in Physical Therapy, co-led by the class president and me, we organized free, one-on-one physical therapy evaluations for medical students performed by senior physical therapy students. Being in MSG is a very serious commitment and a part-time job in and of itself. However, having the opportunity to help shape the program and make medical school a little easier for students is a privilege, and in my experience, well worth the time and effort.

Kirill M., M1

Medical Student Government (MSG): Social Chair

At WashU School of Medicine, Medical Student Government (MSG) social chairs provide unique study breaks, social events, and fun excursions for students. The possibilities are virtually endless, and the events can range from a gingerbread-house-building study break to a trip to Six Flags. Our goal is to provide students with outlets to have fun and take a break from medical school. We provide events that everyone can participate in, which further promotes class unity. Overall, we're four students that want to make the most fun out of medical school for our classmates!

Joe R., M1

Pediatric Life Savers (PLS)

Pediatric Lifesavers is a student-run group that partners with the St. Louis Children's Hospital to teach infant CPR to caregivers with babies in the NICU. Everyone in PLS takes a class to get infant CPR certified, so it's a great way to get a head start on basic life support (BLS) training. We hold the classes for caregivers at the SLCH twice a week and teach the participants life-saving skills that give them peace of mind for when they get to bring their baby home. It is a wonderful way for Phase 1 students to start sharing their medical knowledge and give back to the community!

Jenna B., M2

Perinatal Project

The Perinatal Project is a program where interested first-year medical students are matched with pregnant women in the Antenatal Care Unit. The goal of the program is to foster relationships through which medical students can learn more about the experience of pregnancy, and expectant mothers can build longitudinal relationships with students, gaining an advocate throughout their pregnancy and delivery. We also host regular lunch talks for students to learn more about a variety of topics related to prenatal and women's health. The Perinatal Project is a great opportunity for students who are interested in obstetrics/gynecology or women's health as well as students interested in getting experience building relationships with patients and becoming a patient advocate.

Nicolette P., M1

Research Opportunities

Getting involved in research with faculty, fellows, residents, other students, etc., has been one of my favorite ways to build community at WashU School of Medicine. Your research journey starts with Dean Chung, who heads up student research, and she is so kind and gives you lots of resources about past and current research projects and faculty requesting help. Opportunities to get involved also come to your inbox pretty frequently. Faculty are generally approachable, and if no one is doing a project you're interested in, some are open to letting you initiate a project. In any

case, faculty are pretty accessible, and if they aren't doing something you want to do, odds are they can point you in the direction of someone who is.

Dominic M., M1

Sling Health

Sling Health is a medical startup incubator. Basically, it brings together engineering, business, and medical students in project teams. The goal is to finish the year with a viable startup. You can participate as a team member, or even as a team leader if you have your own idea.

Sam B., M1

Student National Medical Association (SNMA)

Student National Medical Association (SNMA) is a great space for students, especially Black students and other students of color, to find social support, service opportunities and mentorship within the greater WashU School of Medicine community. Dean Ross, Dean Stevenson, and other faculty from the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are amazing allies and provide a safe, validating space for voicing concerns and feedback. Some activities from this semester included participating on a medical panel on the Danforth Campus, having dinner at Dean Ross' house, and hiking with Saint Louis University Med's branch of SNMA. My favorite part about SNMA was the welcoming environment that I felt at the first meeting I attended. I was instantly embraced by my peers and was able to find upperclassmen who were invested in helping me adapt and grow in my WashU School of Medicine experience.

Mackenzie C., M1

Sustainability

Washington University in St. Louis as an institution provides a lot of support for students interested in sustainability and the environment. The Danforth Campus houses a large institute on climate change where past students have been able to take classes and partner up with premier researchers on projects around health and the environment. They host monthly graduate meetings to talk about sustainability across disciplines.

Our club works closely with the Office of Sustainability on the Medical Campus to push the hospital and administration to include more of the eco-medical model in our school curriculum and urge them to take responsibility for the waste produced in the health-care industry. This past year our group has formed partnerships with the local non-profit Great Rivers Greenway to host volunteer events, collaborated with New Earth Composting to provide discounted at-home composting for students, and convinced our administration to join the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education. There is a lot of work to be done here and in health care in general to do better for each other and the planet. Come join us in making things better!

Caellagh C., M2

WildMed

Wilderness Medicine Interest Group (WMIG or WildMed) is a student group for students who love medicine and love the outdoors! As a part of the group, students can rent camping gear, take part in group hikes and outings, and get connected to other students who love all things outdoors. In years past, we have also sent students to MedWar to build wilderness medicine skills with a little competitive action. MedWar takes place at different sites across the nation and is a wilderness medicine race with wilderness medicine challenges/scenarios scattered throughout. We haven't been able to send teams for the last two years due to Ms. Rona but have fingers crossed WashU School of Medicine will be sending students to compete soon!

Christina S., M2

WUSM-GO (Gaming Club)

WUSM-GO is WashU School of Medicine's gaming club, dedicated to organizing fun on-campus gaming events. At WUSM-GO's events, all years of WashU School of Medicine students and even faculty come to play, making it a great place to meet others and hang out. People play all sorts of games; in fact, favorites in the past have been video games like Smash and Mario Kart, as well as board games like Chess and Trivial Pursuit. I've also seen plenty of people bring new games to teach others. Whether you're a gaming expert or just looking to hang out for a fun study break, I would definitely recommend WUSM-GO.

Hayley Q., M1

Yoga Club

Yoga Club is a great way to destress! Every week, there is a free yoga class offered to students. The teachers rotate every couple of weeks, so you can try out a variety of yoga styles. When the weather is nice, the classes are outside in a park on campus. Yoga Club has been a fun and easy way to add physical activity to my week and hang out with my classmates!

Clara H., M1

Study Styles

On Going to Class

Although most of our lectures are on Zoom with attendance being optional, I still prefer to attend them live. They typically start at 8 or 9 a.m. and run until noon. Most of the class watches the lecture later, often at 1.5 – 2x speed, which is nice and can “save time.” In my opinion, however, I lose time when I watch lectures later because what else am I going to do at 8 a.m.? Study? Absolutely not. That's

why I like to spend my mornings watching lectures, which frees the evenings to study and relax. It also helps me to wake up at a reasonable time in the morning and stay productive throughout the day. I won't speak for the whole class, but whenever I skip lectures, I have a tougher time watching them in the evenings because I prefer to shut down around 8 p.m. and start watching Netflix. I'm sure many others have great success watching lectures later, but everyone should try going to class at least a few times.

Connor V., M1

On Skipping Class

Classes usually start at 8 a.m., which doesn't really work well with my night owl schedule. Fortunately, most classes are recorded and do not have mandatory attendance, which means I can sleep in in the morning and watch the lectures later on my schedule. Aside from this, there are other benefits to not going to class and watching the lectures later: You can increase the playback speed (meaning less time watching the lecture and more time doing other fun things), you can rewind a particularly gnarly slide if you have trouble understanding, and you can even rewatch the entire lecture if you are still confused. I really appreciate the flexibility offered by skipping class and using recorded lectures.

Theo M., M1

Study Location: Carrels (On Campus)

If you are an enthusiastic on-campus studier like me, you will love the carrels at WashU School of Medicine! I prefer to separate my living and study spaces, and the carrels are the perfect study environment away from home. There are spaces for every need — individual workstations, small conference rooms, larger classrooms (with standing desks!), and multiple common spaces with abundant natural light and stunning views of campus. Many of these areas contain whiteboards and projectors/screens to accommodate all learning styles and facilitate collaboration. One of the highlights of my school week includes watching Zoom lectures with friends (masked and socially distanced) in the larger classrooms. It's amazing that we have access to spaces that enable us to safely simulate an in-person lecture during weeks when we have few in-person sessions scheduled.

The carrels address wellness needs too; on the third and fourth floors, there are student lounges with a nap pod, massage chair, cozy couches, and a kitchenette equipped with a Keurig, refrigerator, and microwave. Occasionally, there will be leftover food from events or homemade treats from classmates, which are lovely pick-me-ups. Whether you are looking for a quiet, individual study grind or a venue to study with friends, the carrels have it all. I would absolutely recommend exploring them as you acclimate to medical school!

Jessica G., M1

Study Location: Home

Studying from home has been a great way for me to make sure I'm taking care of myself while learning. It's made taking short mental breaks easier as I can head to a different room for a change of scenery for a few minutes before getting started again. You also have drinks and snacks easily accessible at home, which makes studying so much more fun/bearable. I'd recommend having a couple of different study spots in your place, just because staying at the same desk or on the same couch can get old both mentally and physically. Overall, I'd say home studying can be maximum comfort!

Dominic M., M1

Study Location: Library

As someone who has done a large chunk of their study grind in Becker Library, I would say it can accommodate however intense you want/need to study. If you want a hardcore study session where nobody bothers you, then the underground level offers a perfect environment for you. The first floor has large tables that are perfect for group studying, especially if you want to remain focused while still being able to ask each other questions (albeit quietly). The very tall glass ceiling makes the first floor feel spacious and lets in a lot of natural light during the day. There are also conference rooms on the upper floors which you can reserve all for yourself.

Theo M., M1

Study Location: Other

I've gotten pretty into studying in coffee shops, and luckily there are some good options around campus. There's a cafe on the ground level of the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC) that has really good coffee and food. It's a great spot to hang out or work. There is also a Starbucks nearby, and while we all like to pretend we don't like it, we admit they have good coffee. There's also a local coffee shop called Kaldi's, with one location in the Mid Campus Center building and another just 8–10 minutes from campus, that has next-level pastries.

Stockton T., M1

Study Location: Other

Do you feel sick of Zoom classes and late-night study sessions at home? Going to campus can be super motivating and fun, but exam week is around the corner, and the vibes on campus are just not immaculate. This is when I tend to escape the med school bubble and go to cute local coffee shops and libraries. My go-to coffee shops are Northwest Coffee and Rise. (If you could see these places, you would never leave!) I also took a suggestion from one of our Health Equity and Justice leads (thanks, Audrey!) and checked out GORGEOUS Central Library in downtown St. Louis! Think Dark Academia YouTube playlist except it has come to life, and you get to study there — for free.

Lyra M., M1

Study Method: Anki

I never used Anki before coming here. When I decided to give it a try, the support and resources from my classmates made all the difference. Now I love it and think it is a very helpful study tool. There are decks made from our lectures that the year above us passed down, which have been super helpful, and we have been building on these cards to pass down to the next year of students. Also, the material lines up well for using the AnKing deck and third-party resources if that is something you are interested in doing. (I've been doing this and have really liked it!) And if Anki isn't your thing, don't sweat it and try to force yourself to study in a way that isn't good for you; there's more than one way to peel a banana!

Stockton T., M1

Study Method: Traditional

Anki may be the study method of choice for many med students, but I have never been one to study with flashcards. Instead, I watch most of our lectures as they occur and take notes on the provided slide decks. Then, I watch videos from outside resources, such as Pathoma, that are relevant to class content. Later, I revisit the lecture slides and take notes by hand. Finally, I (ideally) review my notes and the learning objectives from each class session to make sure I have covered the relevant content for the exam.

What I find key to my study method is repetition. Each pass through the material helps me retain a bit more. This probably won't be your exact method, but my recommendation would be to develop your pattern that contains enough repetitions of the material.

Matthew B., M1

Only at WashU

Applying for Residency

Residency was nowhere on my radar when applying to medical school; I just wanted to get in first! So don't worry about it just yet. Take a moment to celebrate all your hard work to get to this point, and you can rest assured that as long as you continue to show up, this school will have your back when it comes to matching for residency. WashU School of Medicine has a long history of students matching into their top programs, which often happen to be among the most competitive across the country. I had heard these stats as an M1, but it wasn't until I went to my first Match Day ceremony that I understood what this meant. I was unexpectedly overcome with nerves, goosebumps, and happy tears when watching the M4s open their envelopes to reveal their fate.

We are incredibly lucky to have the experienced support of Dean Diemer and Angie MacBryde from the Career Counseling Office. Dean Diemer has been helping

students find their medical specialty and successfully match into their dream programs for more than 20 years. Angie is most helpful for providing a combination of encouragement along with relevant data, resources, and reminders on timelines. In addition, you will find mentors across the institution who are eager to help you in your decision-making process and foster your development into the type of doctor you want to be.

No one in my family is a doctor, so I did not know what to expect in medical school and beyond. Even after third year, I was struggling to narrow down on one specialty. I also had doubts about how competitive my application for residency would be. However, once I reached out, I got the support I needed to make the stressful residency application process fruitful and well-informed. I am so excited to see the results on Match Day for myself and all my classmates!

Tamara S. O., M4

Big Sibs/Little Sibs

At WashU School of Medicine, each incoming M1 student is paired with an M2 Big Sib to serve as a guide for transitioning into med school, living in St. Louis, and anything else that's on your mind! Although the level of involvement is different for every pair, I loved the opportunity to catch up every once in a while, whether it's grabbing coffee, exploring restaurants in The Grove, or going through existential crises in the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC). The Big Sibs/Little Sibs program also enables the classes to support each other during important moments in the med school journey. For example, our "bigs" surprised us with small presents (and snack fuel) before our first exam. In return, my classmates organized a chance to write cards to our bigs before they began their clerkships. I'm so grateful for not only my big being an amazing mentor and friend but also for the broader Big Sibs/Little Sibs community.

Stephanie Z., M1

Societies

On the first day of orientation, students are sorted into one of three societies: Erlanger-Graham, Lowry-Moore, and Cori. Each society has a faculty advisor and student leaders who work together to plan and host social events throughout the year. These events are a great opportunity to interact with peers and faculty while doing something fun (on the school's dime, too). Participating in society events also allows you to earn "society points," and the society with the most points at the end of the year wins the coveted Society Cup. Some events we have hosted this year include an outing to a St. Louis Blues hockey game, brunch at the Boathouse in Forest Park, Halloween pumpkin carving, and a trip to the Missouri Botanical Garden. I can't emphasize enough how much I have enjoyed being a part of a society. The societies bring people together and help foster the sense of community and camaraderie that is central to a WashU School of Medicine education.

Sarah S., M1



Where it all began



Piles of invasive bush honeysuckle removed by student volunteers on the side of the St. Vincent Greenway Path



Zoom classes are more fun when you're together in a room and can embarrass your friends on camera



Housing

Moving can be scary. Here we have valuable information that can help make your transition a little bit easier.

SECTION EDITOR: SIENNA SEWELL

General

Buying (& Renovating) a House

Coming from the West Coast, the housing prices in St. Louis were insane. My fiancé and I knew we could not pass on the opportunity to acquire some prime real estate in lovely St. Louis. We took a trip to house-hunt in June, two months before class started, and found a house we loved. It needed some work, but honestly that has been one of my favorite things to do since starting school. It's nice to have non-medical-school stuff to do. Coming home and pouring some concrete or painting an entire house is, in a way, therapeutic.

If you do choose to purchase a house, one thing to consider is getting a good real-estate agent. We interviewed a few before settling on someone we liked. He ended up having incredible perspectives on St. Louis and different neighborhoods that we could have never understood without living here.

Owning a home is something I have really enjoyed. It is a lot of work while also in medical school, but so worth it. I love playing music or watching Netflix as loud as I want because no one lives on the other side of my bedroom wall. If you are thinking about buying a home, you should absolutely explore it further and take a look at home prices on Zillow. I'm in the MD program, so we will likely only be here for four years, but we still thought the investment was worth it. We live outside of St. Louis in Ballwin, which is about a 20-to-25-minute drive. Traffic in St. Louis is almost non-existent compared to other major cities, even during rush hours, which is a huge plus. While my fiancé and I do not have roommates, you can always get a roommate or two if you worry about being able to afford the mortgage and bills. A lot of homes within St. Louis City are old and massive with four to six bedrooms, which makes them perfect for housing a few roommates to help with the bills.

Connor V., M1

Buying a Condo

After living in Boston during college and moving to St. Louis from New Jersey, the housing prices and affordability of real estate in St. Louis were a pleasant surprise. I had some idea of buying my own place when I picked the WashU Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) based on my conversations with upperclassmen at WashU. When I first started school, I lived in a sublet for a few months while I figured out whether I was able to afford buying my own place, whether the monthly costs (including HOA, property taxes, loans, etc.) were comparable to renting alone or with a roommate, and which neighborhoods had the proximity to school and residential neighborhood feeling I was looking for. During my third month in St. Louis, after asking St. Louisans and other students who had bought their own place, I found an experienced realtor who knew how to navigate a turbulent housing market (at the time) with low inventory

and high demand. After looking at townhouses and condos from Chesterfield (a 1-hour drive west) to South County, and losing many bids, I bought a condo in the Forest Park-DeBaliviere neighborhood, about 1.5 miles away from campus. It had everything I needed at the time and the timing aligned perfectly with the end of my sublet. During the last few weeks of my sublet lease, I spent a few weeks painting and re-doing some interiors to make the condo feel more like home before I moved in. I have really enjoyed working on interiors and furnishing and customizing it to whatever I want or need! It has its perks but is also a lot of responsibility. Having a great property manager and condo association has helped a lot!

Zahra D., M1

Finding a Roommate

I found my roommate, a fellow M1 at WashU, through a Google sheet that students filled out with a brief personal bio, expectations regarding living arrangements, and contact information so that classmates could reach out to each other. One of those classmates (who then became my roommate) also came up with an algorithm that matched people with similar living preferences. I started looking at housing options in June, signed a lease in late July, and moved in mid-August several weeks before orientation.

Fiona P., M1

Finding Affordable Housing

Many people choose to live in the big apartment buildings that have doormen and parking. However, if you are okay living in a smaller building with around two to six apartments, you can pay quite literally half as much in rent for a much bigger space. The best way to find these good deals is to actually walk down the street in CWE and look for “for rent” signs and call the phone numbers; you won’t often see these apartments listed online. I live on Laclede in the CWE just an eight-minute walk from the medical school and pay the same price for an entire three-bedroom apartment as many of my classmates pay for a studio. It just takes a little bit more work to find these apartments, but there are lots of them! I highly recommend doing this if you can.

Lisa G., M1

Living Alone

Before coming to WashU School of Medicine, I had never truly lived alone. I had roommates throughout college, and I lived at home during my gap year. My college roommate is my best friend to this day, so I was nervous about starting a new school and making friends without a roommate to make the process easier. However, I loved the idea of having my own space to come back to at the end of the day and having a place where I didn’t have to be “on” all the time. Medical school is both a wonderful and hectic phase of life, and I’ve found that having control over my living space keeps me relaxed and grounded. I’ve been able to set my

ideal sleeping schedule, work out with music whenever I want, sing in the shower without disturbing anyone, and burn scented candles for 12 hours straight! Plus, I own an extremely noisy blender, and it's nice to make smoothies without waking a roommate.

With regards to making friends and building community while living alone, there are 10 other classmates in my building and many others in the Central West End within a 5-to-10-minute walk. If anything, living alone made me more motivated to go out and meet people! I didn't need to worry either. About half of our class lives alone, and there has been no difference in their ability to make friends or adjust to a new school and city. WashU students are social and inclusive, and we do a wonderful job of fostering a close-knit community. When you pick your living situation, pick what works best with your lifestyle and personality. You'll make wonderful friends no matter what :)

Sienna S., M1

Living Far Away

I live in Ballwin, which is about a 22-minute drive from campus without traffic. If you are looking at getting a house or living somewhere further away from campus, it is a great option. There are a ton of nice suburbs that are a 5-to-20-minute drive from campus. Most people live within 5-to-20 minutes walking distance, and sometimes I feel a little FOMO being one of the few people living so far away. However, there are benefits to living farther away. First, traffic isn't really a thing here. I drive on a major highway to and from WashU, and if I leave at 8 a.m. or go home at 5 p.m., it adds at most seven minutes onto the commute. It is also nice to be able to separate my school life and home life because I am so far away. There's space out here, so I have a big backyard and go to a massive dog park on the weekends. While WashU isn't downtown, it's still a lot more urban than the suburbs. If city life isn't for you, I would consider looking at places a little further out.

Connor V., M1

Living with a Medical Student

Going into the roommate search process, I wanted to live with fellow medical students as a way to make some close friends in my class and find camaraderie in the medical school experience even at home. We managed to find a rare three-bedroom apartment in the Central West End, and it's been a great experience! On a practical level, I have absolutely benefited from the in-house reminders for required classes and assignment deadlines. On a more personal level, I have really enjoyed our morning walks together to class and our shared enthusiasm to host events for our friends/classmates (craft night before school started, horror movie watch party, murder mystery party, etc.). I was primarily influenced by the experiences of my limited STL network in choosing to room with medical students versus a non-medical student and my awareness of the emotional benefit that comes from having roommates (in choosing not to live

alone). Living with two of my fellow classmates really helped my initial transition to STL and in building a support network for med school.

Stephanie Z., 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 WashU School of Medicine environment, though this is also likely due to social distancing as much as anything else. 10/10, would do again!

Andy B., M1

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., M2

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 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 ways 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 very 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 Z., M2

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 to 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., M2

DeBaliviere

I chose to live on Pershing Avenue in the DeBaliviere neighborhood because I was able to lease a fairly roomy one-bedroom apartment for the same price as a smaller studio in the CWE. My building has an in-unit washer/dryer, a reserved parking lot, and is just a block from Forest Park. The Metro station is also just a five-minute walk, so the total travel time to campus is usually less than 15 minutes. If you're hoping to live by yourself, want a little more space, or just want a quieter neighborhood, I would consider DeBaliviere Place.

Dylan M., 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 the radar a little bit, but you should look into it. I love it here and plan on staying for all four years.

Zachary R., M

The Grove

The Grove is a neighborhood directly south of I-64 and the Central West End. It's about a 10-to-20-minute walk to the medical campus and close to both Forest Park and Tower Grove Park. Personally, I love the Grove because it's the perfect mix of commercial and residential. There are plenty of stores, bars, and restaurants along Manchester Avenue, but the rest of the area is mainly townhouses and greenery.

Jana L., M1

University City

U City is a wonderful city not far from the Delmar Loop, Forest Park, and WashU Danforth Campus. It has a family-friendly, quiet neighborhood feel with lots of quaint brick homes, while still being relatively close to St. Louis city and its attractions. The drive to the Medical Campus is about 12 to 15 minutes. Traffic can sometimes increase the commute time up to ~20 minutes. I like to ride my bike as much as possible and most of the six miles from my house to WashU School of Medicine runs along the WashU Danforth Campus and through Forest Park. When the weather is nice, it is a wonderful way to start and end the school day. The Delmar Loop has some neat restaurants to check out from the classic Blueberry Hill to Salt + Smoke, Mission Taco Joint, and Nudo House. You'll also find bookshops, vinyl shops, boba shops, and more. My favorite slice of pizza so far isn't Imo's Pizza (sorry St. Louis) but rather U City's La Pizza! It's a small takeout joint with two workers, three ovens, one TV, and pizza goes fast so call in your order well ahead of time. If you're looking for more affordable housing or a little more space than what you can find in the CWE, then check out U City!

James B., M1

Apartment Complexes

Aventura

Address: 4431 Chouteau Ave.

Price range: one-bedroom for \$1350+, two-bedroom for \$1,700+, 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 class: ~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., M2

Del Coronado

Address: 4949 W. Pine Blvd.

Price range: Studio for \$1,025, one-bedroom for \$1,005/1,080/\$1,280, two-bedroom for \$1,325/\$1,400/1,700 (unrenovated/renovated floors/fully renovated pricing), utilities usually around \$20-\$80/person.

Pet policy: Pets allowed for a 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, small gym, package pick-up, bike room, conference and lounge areas, coffee machine in lobby.

Commute to campus: ~10-to-15-minute walk.

About: Del Coronado (DelCo) has spacious one- and two-bedroom apartments in a variety of different floor plans and renovation levels. DelCo tends to be one of the most popular buildings for medical students, so it is always easy to get together with friends in the building! It's a short walk to campus, Forest Park, Whole Foods, and anywhere else you might want to go in the Central West End. Sometimes the management can be a little slow to respond, but I haven't heard of anyone having major issues. Overall, I am happy with my decision to live in DelCo and would recommend it!

Andy K., M1

Emden

Address: 4942 W. Pine Blvd.

Price: 1,400 sq. ft. two-bedroom/two-bath for ~\$1,400.

Amenities: In-unit washer/dryer. Gas stoves. Skylights and master jacuzzi bath if on top (third) floor. Front and back door (leads to fire escape and parking area). Located two-minute walk away from Forest Park, and two minutes away from Euclid Avenue. (Whole Foods, Shake Shack, Kaldi's etc.). Water included, but not gas, electric, or WIFI.

Pets: Pet friendly, \$250 pet deposit.

Parking: Gated, outdoor parking for \$100 a month. First spot is free with the unit.

Commute to class: ~10-minute walk.

About: Instead of moving to popular student housing choices like DelCo or the Core, I ended up choosing a two-bed/two-bath apartment in Emden. First, the place was spacious for the price, with 1,400 square feet for \$1,400 a month. This was huge for me as someone who used to share a two-bedroom/two-bath in LA for triple that price. The building also comes with tons of natural light, exposed brick, in-unit laundry, and has been the perfect place to host, whether it be a small dinner of six or a birthday bash of 20+. Emden is also pet-friendly (great for cats!). The location is great, as Emden is super close to campus, Forest Park, and other popular student apartment buildings! However, the building is somewhat old, bare-bones, and lacks many amenities that other buildings like DelCo and Montclair have. I think the choice is up to the individual, but I've been fairly content with mine.

Mimi G., M1

Metropolitan Flats

Address: 4535 Forest Park Ave.

Price Range: \$1,525-\$1,625 for a one-bedroom/one-bathroom, \$1,995-\$2,495 for a two-bedroom/two-bathroom, electricity and WiFi around \$50/month.

Amenities: In-unit laundry, central AC/heating, gym, dog park, 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. Limited to two pets per unit. \$100 pet fee for second pet.

Commute to Class: five-to-eight-minute walk.

About: We live in a two-bedroom/two-bathroom apartment (1,170 square feet), and we have absolutely loved it here so far! This apartment complex is on the upper end in terms of rent but the tradeoff for location, the large space, and the amenities have made it worth it. We are very close to school (probably the closest you can get, except for the Core apartments) and to Forest Park (one block away) and all that CWE has to offer. The management and maintenance have been nothing but kind and attentive.

Metro Flats is in the Central West End right across from the hospital and is about a five-to-eight-minute walk from the medical campus. The building and apartments were renovated recently and there are one-bedroom/one-bathroom and two-bedroom/two-bathroom layouts available. The appliances are updated, and there is in-unit laundry! The large windows offer plentiful natural light which makes studying or Zooming from home a rather lovely environment. The building has a small fitness center for residents, a courtyard, a small mart with food and things, and a dog park! Underground, secure 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 and convenient place near campus in CWE and are able to buy in this price range, we recommend Metro Flats!

JingJing Z., M1 and Sarah S., M1

Montclair Apartments

Price: \$2,655/month for a three-bedroom, two months free if signing 12-month lease.

Pet policy: \$300 one-time pet fee, breed limitations on dogs.

Amenities: Communal laundry room in the basement (fee for laundry), mail/package room, coffee machine.

Parking: Outdoor lot and indoor garage, about \$80/month, limited space available.

Commute to campus: 10-minute walk to campus.

About: I chose Montclair because it's one of few apartments with three-bedroom options in the Central West End.

Pros: Our living area is spacious and great for hosting small gatherings. We have hardwood floors throughout the entire apartment, a nice kitchen with modern appliances, and an amazing view of Forest Park. (We're on the 11th floor!) The front-desk employees are very friendly. The real estate provider, Mac Properties, hosts a lot of apartment-wide events with free food and drinks. There is also a rooftop that's great for outdoor events.

Cons: This might be specific to our apartment but there have been a lot of small maintenance problems due to the building being old, such as broken window shades, chipped doors, peeling walls, dirty air conditioners, etc. Maintenance is fairly responsive to requests but can't always fix the problem. Our bathrooms are very small. Also, the laundry room can get quite busy since it's shared by the entire 16-floor building. The outdoor parking lot is fine, but the indoor garage has tight spaces.

Wendy T., M1

Parc Frontenac

Address: 40 N. Kingshighway Blvd.

Price range: Studio for ~\$1,000, one-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 class: ~10-minute walk.

About: I live in a two-bedroom/two-bathroom apartment in Parc Frontenac. The Parc has great amenities, including a newly renovated gym, a study room, free coffee, and a rooftop with great views of the city. My roommate and I have a very large common area that is great for hosting dinners, movie nights, or other festivities. The Parc's proximity to campus and to Central West End stores, like Whole Foods and Straub's, makes it a great location for those without cars to be able to access everything they need within walking distance.

Sofia C., M1

Park 44

Address: 4444 West Pine Blvd.

Price Range: Studio price is currently not publicly listed on their website; my one-bedroom loft is \$1,165.

Pet Policy: Pets under 25 lbs. are allowed, maximum of one pet. There are breed restrictions for dogs, however. \$300 initial deposit with \$150 refundable at end of lease. \$20 per month charge from that point.

Utilities: You don't pay for AC or heat, which is amazing! Electric is through Ameren; I pay about \$25 a month. Water/sewer bill is likewise about \$20 per month. Internet is only through Spectrum, which is \$45 per month.

Parking: There is both a garage and surface parking; however there are not many surface spots. Garage is \$85 per month; surface spots are \$55 per month.

Amenities: Standard appliances including fridge, microwave, stove, oven, dishwasher. Communal washer/dryers on the second and fourth floors, \$1.99 per cycle. Balconies on some units; additionally, some units on the first floor open to the communal courtyard which includes patio furniture, cornhole, and a grill. Secured package room. There is also a communal business center on the third floor with a printer.

Commute to campus: ~20-minute walk, ~three-minute drive.

Commentary: I really enjoy my apartment in Park 44! I live in one of the loft units, and I enjoy the open design and how large the bedroom is as a result. Of course, this is not for everyone as it means the bedroom is open to the rest of the living space in the apartment, albeit on the upper floor. I live alone and the apartment has been a great size: not too big but I also do not feel cramped. The 20-minute walk to campus is a little bit longer than some of the more popular apartment buildings, but I have enjoyed the daily walk, and I always have the option to drive over to campus if it's pouring outside. You're still in the CWE and close to the most popular apartment buildings among medical students, so it is easy to have friends over or head over to their places. That being said, there are not a lot of medical students who live in Park 44 itself — and although I have not had any problems at all connecting with my classmates, those who would want to live somewhere with more medical students might not find that here. Management is excellent, and I have had zero problems with the apartment itself. I haven't had to submit a maintenance request my entire time here. If I did need to, I have heard from other residents that they are very responsive. Overall, I enjoy my apartment very much and would recommend it!

Dante N., M1

The Core

Address: 718 & 818 S. Euclid Ave.

Price range: \$750 – \$1,700, with a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-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, barbecue/picnic areas, and secure package receiving.

Parking: \$79-\$85 fee depending on lot.

Commute to class: two-to-three-minute walk.

About: The Core is a very convenient place to live while transitioning to a new city! The apartments come fully furnished with an in-unit washer, dryer, and Smart TV. There are many great common spaces for socializing, including a 24-hour gym, game room, rooftop, and library. Rent is reasonably priced and includes utilities, cable, and internet. It only takes me five minutes to walk to class in the morning, and when I need a study break, Forest Park is only two minutes away! I've met so many of my medical school friends at the Core, and I highly recommend these studio apartments for anyone who (like myself) enjoys having their own space yet wants to keep their classmates close by.

Abby H., M1

The Parkway

Address: 4961 Laclede Ave.

Price range: Studio for ~\$850, one-bedroom for ~\$975-1,050, utilities included.

Amenities: Carpeted floors, communal laundry in basement, entry system, optional valet trash service.

Pets: Cats only, \$25/mo. per cat, up to two cats.

Parking: Surface parking for \$50 per month.

Commute to class: ~12-minute walk.

About: The Parkway is super affordable and close to campus, with easy access to parking. The valet trash service is awesome, and management is great overall. The sole downside is that this is an older building without some of the amenities of the more modern buildings nearby.

Srinand P., M1

The Residences at Forest Park

Address: 4910 W. Pine Blvd.

Price Range: Studio for \$1,335, one-bedroom/one-bathroom for \$1,540, two-bedroom/two-bathroom for \$1,930, 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 the unit.

Pets: Pet-friendly with a dog park.

Parking: Gated uncovered lot parking for \$60/month.

Commute to Class: 10-to-15-minute walk from classes, 5-to-10-minute walk to the hospital.

About: The Residences at Forest Park is a gorgeous, historic building, smack-dab in the middle of the Central West End and a mere 10-to-15-minute walk from our classes in the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center. It's literally feet from Whole Foods, Shake Shack (a burger joint), Kaldi's (a coffee shop with Wi-Fi and seating), and several other residential buildings like Del Coronado, Parc Frontenac, and the Orion. At the Residences, you'll get to enjoy in-unit washer and dryers, hardwood floors, gated parking, free coffee in the lobby, a fitness center, a bike storage area, and two courtyards (a dog park and a "human" park), all while being supported by attentive management staff and (relatively responsive) maintenance. Additionally, the building is extremely quiet — especially if you live in one of the "arms." (The complex is shaped like an M.) Overall, this has been my favorite, most spacious apartment that I've lived in over the past nine years, though definitely in the pricier range (and the appliances are rather old). However, if it's within your budget, I can't speak highly enough of this pet-friendly and medical student-friendly building!

Isabella G., M1



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 EDITORS: TIFFANY CHEN, MAIDA DUNCAN, MIMI GIANG AND ASEYYAH ISLAM

Identities

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 School of Medicine 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

Like many other students of color coming from hometowns with rich cultural diversity, I too had my doubts about moving to the Midwest away from familiar cuisines, languages, and architecture. I recall expressing these concerns during my WashU School of Medicine interview, to which my interviewer explained how St. Louis actually has a significant refugee population, especially a Vietnamese one. To be completely honest, besides my M2 big sibling, I have not met other Southeast Asian students here, and I am the only one in my class. Though I now find myself in the minority here, I do not feel alone. I am blessed with a large and diverse class with many of my new friends coming from all kinds of different backgrounds. This has allowed for ample opportunity to broaden my perspective, gain insight, and connect to others. Though not strictly Vietnamese, there is a large Asian community here! I've been able to join the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA), which brings together the student Asian community here, and we've been able to celebrate the Mid Autumn Festival (with mooncakes!), Diwali, and coming up next: Lunar New Year! Additionally, there are so many classmates here that share similar interests with me. We have had anime watch parties, streamed the recent BTS concert at Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC), and more. And what's surprised me is that I've met plenty of people who also love Vietnamese food, so we end up exploring nearby restaurants like Little Saigon Cafe, Mai Lee, and Pho Grand. Sure, there is so much I miss from home that I will not be able to replicate here in STL, but I've also gained an open-minded, supportive community with which to share my perspective, identity, hobbies, and experiences.

Mimi G., 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., M2

On Being Hispanic/Latin@

As someone from an immigrant family, I was admittedly a bit concerned that I would not feel as comfortable in St. Louis as I did in the melting-pot East Coast cities I was used to. I was used to being able to get my cultural kitchen staples at most supermarkets and eating at Latin restaurants of all nationalities, and I feared losing those conveniences. However, I was very happy to be proven wrong very quickly upon arriving at St. Louis.

Despite the city's demographics, there are several international marts and Latin restaurants in the area. Imagine my joy when I realized that there was even an authentic restaurant from my tiny Central American country only 10 minutes from the Central West End! (Shoutout to Fritanga STL, it's one of the best restaurants in the city in my opinion.)

The Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (ODEI), Student National Medical Association (SNMA), and Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) do a great job of making minority students feel comfortable and connected at WashU School of Medicine specifically, creating a rich support system. There are also so many opportunities to get involved with the Latin community in the area, including both clinical and non-clinical service work and our very own MedSpan curriculum.

Thankfully, all of these things allowed me to settle in very quickly, and the city is already starting to feel like my new home.

Priscilla C., M1

On Being LGBTQ+

As someone who had never ventured into the Midwest, I was, in all honesty, a bit worried about what it would be like to be LGBTQ+ in St. Louis. But to my most pleasant delight, WashU and St. Louis have felt incredibly warm and welcoming. Our class has a beautifully strong and diverse LGBTQ+ presence that fosters a sense of 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 work and advocacy, 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 different specialties who serve the transgender or gender diverse population, just to name a few of the opportunities. On top of this, 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.

Alberto S., M1

On Being South Asian

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 Saint Louis University 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., M2

On 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 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, the student group Science and Healthcare Abilities Coalition (SHAC) supports chronically ill/disabled medical students and allies and works to improve health care for disabled people. Becoming doctors (unfortunately) does not make us immune to chronic conditions or disabilities, but I can confidently say that WashU School of Medicine is able to handle any and every situation that might come your way!

Anonymous

Relationships

On Being in a Long-Distance Relationship

On the WashU School of Medicine side of things (personally) it's pretty easy to be in a long-distance relationship. We have a lot of virtual time so it can be really easy to make visits. And we have so many non-required attendance events, it's easy to spend time studying together. I think independent of WashU you should really do some deep reflection on what you prioritize in a relationship to see if long distance works well with it. Personally, I think they can be deeply meaningful, but it's up to the people in the relationship to address what you and your partner need. Let me know if you wanna chat about these things because once you get to medical school, having a strong social safety net is critical, and your relationship can be a component of that. Not to mention this can be a difficult thing to talk about!

Srinand P., M1

On Being Married

WashU School of Medicine is a great place for the married/partnered med student! There is a group (WUMS Plus One) specifically geared towards students with partners, and friend groups also form naturally among the partnered students. St. Louis also has some of the best housing prices in the country, and many people choose to buy condos or houses during med school. My husband has been a wonderful source of support as I've begun my medical education. He has enjoyed getting to know my classmates and some of their partners, and also picking up some medical tidbits along the way. It's really important to have open lines of communication with your partner so they know what to expect over the next four (or more!) years. When comparing medical schools, we went over the curriculum calendars in detail and

decided which one best suited our lifestyle and his career aspirations. The Gateway Curriculum has a great balance of “school time” and “unscheduled time” that allow for time together each day, and also family vacations during breaks.

Emily K., 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., M2

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

You're living with a med student?? What, like it's hard?

YES, it is!!! But anything is doable if you're willing to work for it (and if you're not then maybe this isn't the place for you). Here are some practical tips that have helped our marriage THRIVE.

1) Practice open communication. In almost five years of marriage, we've endured THREE California bar exams (I still suffer from PTSD), one naval deployment, a pandemic baby, two career changes, and a cross country move. What did we learn? We're nicer after meals, we work better as a team, and never go to bed angry. Nothing came as a surprise (except for maybe the pandemic) and through it all we tried to remember our positive language and open communication skills.

2) Set realistic expectations and hold each other accountable, but be compassionate if things don't work out. Look, your med student is going to have a lot of long days (and maybe nights) trying to learn a new language. You are a priority, but if you don't feel like one then refer to tip #1. Both parties should set expectations prior to the first day of school and discuss the reality of those expectations. For us, we have dedicated family time from the time we pick up our daughter from daycare (or roughly 5:30 p.m.) to the time she goes to bed around 8. Studying may resume afterwards and continues until your med student's brain can handle no more. Use that time to catch up on your favorite dramas or catch up with your friends. Remember, you need to maintain your own identity! Obviously, there are exceptions for the occasional social event or upcoming tests. Hold each other accountable by writing,

signing, and posting your expectations in a visible area. As with any contract, be sure to review and renegotiate yearly (this is unofficial legal advice).

3) Tell your med student you are proud of their accomplishments. The next four years will test your med student's physical, mental, and emotional capacity, so try to keep his spirits up and recognize his efforts! As a first-year law student, a stranger once told me, "Law, that's tough, but at least it's not med school!" So, give your med student frequent hugs because he will need it. While we are on the topic, MED STUDENTS: DON'T FORGET TO THANK YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER!! We like praise too!

4) Always make time for date night. Good meals with great company increases your quality of life. Try your best to set a weekly date night free of social media and other distractions (for us, that means recruiting a babysitter for our daughter). Take turns planning said event taking your SO's interests into consideration. For example, one of our date nights involved a WashU lecture about the status of the Texas abortion laws. Not everyone's cup of tea, but it blended our world's — medical and legal — into one thought provoking date night!

5) Know and remember the end goal. Med school is four years, but it goes by quickly. What's happening after med school? Where do you BOTH want to live during residency? Are you BOTH willing to compromise and accommodate each others' goals? Don't know the answers to these questions? Well, refer to tip #1.

A wise lawyer once said, "Exercise give you endorphins. Endorphins make you happy. Happy people just don't shoot their husbands, they just don't." (Elle Woods, Harvard Law School). My med student and I have made it this far (and still like each other) because we BOTH practice the tips above. You CAN have a life (and a family) with a med student, it will just involve a lot of talking and listening to each other's needs.

Congratulations for making it into med school as I'm sure your support and encouragement helped your med student get into school, and CHEERS to the next four years!

Resa B., 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. and Evan L., M2s

On Dating Someone Not in Med School

I know a lot of medical folks like to be able to vent to their partners and relate to them about the difficult field we're going into. When all you can ever think about is Anki cards and weekly formative assessments though, it's wonderful to have someone who can pull you out of that headspace instead. At the end of the day, we're more than just medical students, and sometimes it takes those partners who know us better than anyone to bring that other side of us back out.

Being long distance as well, my partner and I try to make every minute count. Even idle aspects of our days become a running conversation — and while some would call that distracting, I think it brings my day quite a bit of balance. That being said, it's important to also intentionally carve out time for your partner, especially when our schedules as medical students are so busy. For us, that takes the form of weekly (virtual) date nights where we can jointly stream a TV show or play a game together over a voice call.

Given the inflexibility of our course schedules normally, the situation will often require a bit of patience on your partner's end as you figure out how you can make something work. Communication is key in this position, and it's important to establish these expectations early on. In a long-distance situation like mine, that also means that the burden of travel to see each other may disproportionately fall on your partner, coming to visit you. In that case, it's important to step away from your notes, take a break, and treat those visits as the high-value opportunities they are.

Priscilla C., M1

On Having a Family

I won't sugarcoat it: Being a parent in med school is challenging, but it also has unique rewards. No matter what is happening at school, I know I can come home every day to the support and love of my family. I really treasure the fact that my daughters will grow up in the med school environment surrounded by my smart and inspiring classmates, many of whom babysit regularly.

Parenthood does not have to be a barrier to a successful and rich med school experience. The administration (especially Student Affairs) has been very proactive in helping me meet my family's needs. When I needed help finding a daycare, or accessing the Lactation Program, or taking time away from class to get my

kids to the doctor, they always helped me find a solution. The Financial Aid office helped me access enough loan money to pay for daycare/school.

Finally, there is a small but thriving community of parents at WashU School of Medicine. I've connected with other classmates who are parents, as well as faculty members who have kids. It is a great place to find your village.

Emily K., M1

On Having a Family

WashU is a great place to be for med school with many opportunities to get involved in research, the community, extracurriculars, shadowing, and more, but these can be overwhelming whether you have a family or not. Being a medical student and having a family is a balancing act. I know this is not an Earth-shattering surprise, but it must be stated upfront. Open communication and flexibility have been key in keeping my marriage healthy. Early on, I sat down with my wife and made a list of priorities, potential extracurricular involvements, and what I wanted to accomplish while in medical school. Together, we whittled it down to something we thought would be doable while keeping family a priority. We plan to re-visit and tweak this list at different stages in school. Not every day is the same, and occasionally a class will be missed for a trip to the pediatrician, but I treat school like a job as much as possible. Regardless of when classes begin, I get to campus early and try to knock off by 5. We eat dinner as a family, play with our dogs, and I always give my daughter a bath (that's our dedicated daddy-daughter time right now). After my daughter is down, I resume schoolwork/studying if need be but usually can squeeze in some Netflix with my wife. St. Louis is a great place to have a family. Make sure you take the time to explore it and enjoy it while you're here!

James B., M1

School

On Taking a Gap Year

Congrats! You have successfully entered the real adult world and now it's time to transition back to school mode. At first, I was definitely a little apprehensive about how my mind would transition back into going to school and full-time studying. However, I am really thankful that I took a couple of gap years because it gave me the break that I needed to feel refreshed and ready to get back to school (and learn how to meal prep). What I have discovered is that studying is a little like muscle memory, so you just have to trust yourself and give yourself time that it will all come back. The beginning of med school is an adjustment for anyone, no matter if you are going straight through or have taken many gap years, so just be patient with yourself as you discover a new way of learning and studying. Each class is so diverse, you really won't be alone no matter what your path! My advice would be

to take advantage of the time left in your gap year(s), don't study, cross things off your bucket list, cultivate the hobbies that will keep you sane during med school, and lastly — and maybe most importantly — learn how to use an instant pot.

Tiffany C., M1

On Taking Many Gap Years

If you took a gap year, or several, you are not alone at WashU school of Medicine. After undergrad, I was a surface warfare officer in the Navy for 10 years, so when I decided to shift careers to medicine, it took a while to squeeze in prereqs, the MCAT, and clinical experiences while balancing work and family life. Of course, I was nervous to begin WashU not having been a full-time student in over a decade, and I was worried about “catching up” with classmates that came straight from college. However, WashU's Gateway Curriculum very intentionally eases the entering class into medical school regardless of when you completed undergrad. The first module helps to dust off any academic cobwebs and allows students to plant their feet firmly in St. Louis before truly plunging into medical school.

In my short time here, I have begun to see traits and skills developed during my gap years be very helpful as a medical student, so try not to be too worried but rather thankful for your longer path to WashU. On the other hand, whether straight from undergrad or from a more circuitous route, everyone is adjusting to the life, pace, and expectations of medical school. It takes a bit of mental recalibration but try not to feel different because you have some gap years under your belt. Instead, remember you are all connected because everyone, regardless of path to med school, is an M1, and you are all adjusting together.

James B., 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 School of Medicine 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 here is also very friendly and inclusive, which positively impacted my mental health, especially during the pandemic. Overall, the resources and activities provided, combined with the welcoming nature of the student body, make WashU a great place for medical education and preserving student wellness.

Nick F., M1

On Coming Straight from Undergrad

Looking back, I'm glad I decided to come straight from undergrad. I spent the summer before coming to WashU School of Medicine just relaxing and spending time with friends and family, which helped me recharge before starting medical school. Even though I did need to develop some new study habits once school started, it was easy for me to jump back into classes because I didn't have too long of a break. Coming in, I was nervous that I would be one of the few people who didn't take any gap years, but I've found that there are a good number of people in my class who also decided to come straight through. Not to mention, once you are here, no one really pays attention to whether you have taken a gap year or not. In addition, WashU School of Medicine has several dual-degree programs and opportunities to do a funded research year, so if you are like me and maybe think you might want a bit more time to explore, there are definitely plenty of options!

Alyssa R., M1

On Being a Hopeful MD Physician-Scientist

I had the privilege of doing several years of research post-bacc before starting medical school, during which years my mentors were mostly "MD-only" (note the scare quotes) physician-scientists spending >80% of their time on research and the rest in the clinic. WashU School of Medicine is well-known for its MD/PhD (MSTP) program — and rightly so! —but I think it's safe to say that every student benefits from having such a robust MSTP program and research culture (particularly with the Gateway Curriculum, which includes substantial time for research). In my own case, I currently have no desire to pursue a PhD, but could see myself having a career in academic medicine; running a lab, teaching, etc. Whatever your previous experiences, interests, or career ambitions regarding research may be, the keys to success seem to be having good role models, opportunities, colleagues, and support; all of these I've found in abundance at WashU School of Medicine. (N.B. Our beloved MSTP director, Dr. Wayne Yokoyama, is himself an "MD-only" physician-scientist, and will speak frankly to you about the challenges involved in this path.)

Justin S., M1

Where We've Been

On Being a Veteran

One month before moving to St. Louis, I reached out to WashU's Office of Military & Veteran Services. Through e-mail and Zoom, Nancy and her team ensured my family got settled into St. Louis and that we had everything we needed. She also got me connected with some veteran community service opportunities and has been a good

one-stop-shop for veteran/military resources. If you have GI Bill questions or are attending the School of Medicine on military scholarship, Bridget O’Neal and her team in the Office of Student Financial Planning are very helpful and responsive. I also highly recommend going to the Veterans Day Banquet put on by the Office of Military & Veteran Services. It was a lot of fun, thoughtfully put together, and a great way to meet other veterans and the military-connected community in all WashU schools.

James B., M1

On Being an International Student from Europe

As an international student, you oftentimes have additional hoops to jump through, whether they’re financial, administrative, cultural, etc., and it was definitely a worry of mine when I first got into medical school. The Office of International Students and Scholars was incredibly helpful when I needed to set up my finances for medical school, and they responded super quickly. There’s also quite a few international students in my class, and we have been pretty good at helping each other out as well.

Theodore M., M1

On Being an International Student from Mexico

Having been born and raised in Mexico, I was worried that I was going to feel too far from home when I decided to go to medical school in St. Louis. Even beyond the cultural shock that comes from living in a different country, I wasn’t sure if I was going to be able to find like-minded people and fit right in. But WashU School of Medicine is really good at putting together a very diverse class. With students coming from many different backgrounds, it was easy for me to find my people. And even outside of my class, I found a community across the medical school. Very early on I decided to attend the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) meetings as well as the charlas. The latter are meetings where students, residents and faculty come together to speak and practice their Spanish. Going to charlas allowed me to find other Spanish speakers, both domestic and international. That’s where I found a group of other international students and residents also from Mexico. With that group, I have now come together to celebrate Día de Muertos and Mexico’s Independence day. Believe me when I say that — even though it may not be obvious at first — it is certain that you can find your familia here away from home.

Gabriel T.V., M1

On Being from a Small Town

Originally, I was a little scared to move to St. Louis. My hometown has a population of around 4,000 people, and the population of St. Louis far exceeds that. I first moved to St. Louis for college at WashU and loved it so much that I really wanted to stay in the city for medical school. There are so many cool restaurants, bakeries, shops, and parks to visit, and there are many suburbs to explore if you want to step away from the busyness of the city for a bit. Living here is so much fun!

Mackenzie C., M1

On Being from STL

I have really enjoyed coming back to St. Louis for school. I was born in St. Louis, and I did not leave until I went to college. Honestly, I had always pictured myself moving somewhere new to attend medical school. However, moving back to my hometown has really eased my transition to medical school. Having family close by has been really helpful when it comes to moving and dealing with the stresses of medical school. Starting medical school is a big change by itself. Moving back to a city that I know has made it so I only have to deal with the transition of starting medical school, instead of dealing with both moving to a new city and starting medical school.

Gianna S., M1

On Being from the East Coast

Growing up on Long Island and going to college in Rhode Island about three hours away, I never pictured myself leaving the Northeast, let alone moving to another time zone. You can probably imagine the panic I had after I clicked “accept” to go to a medical school that was not a short trip on the Amtrak away. To be quite honest, I knew almost nothing about St. Louis when I decided to come here, and I was definitely nervous during my 16-hour drive about how far I was moving from home. However, after making my initial journey, St. Louis quickly started to feel like a home away from home. It’s totally true that people in the Midwest are extremely nice and there are tons of great food options to explore. Not to mention, the people in your medical class will come from everywhere! There will be lots of classmates who come from St. Louis who can provide great recommendations for places to check out and people from close to where you are from who you can talk to if you’re feeling a little homesick. There are also plenty of fast and easy flights back to the East Coast, especially on Southwest, for when you want to visit home on breaks or long weekends. Overall, I love getting to live in and learn about a new part of the country. I think it’s been a great learning experience and I can’t wait to explore even more.

Alyssa R., M1

On Being from the Midwest

Hi, my name is Henok and I’ve lived in the Midwest (specifically St. Louis) for 19 years now. Over a period of almost two decades, I’ve come to appreciate some of the finer things the Midwest has to offer. For example, the seasons here are wonderful. There’s nothing quite like taking a stroll through Forest Park when the leaves are changing to their autumn colors. Being from the Midwest also makes traveling back home a lot easier. Don’t worry if you’re not a Midwest native — taking road trips to Chicago, Kansas City, and numerous other Midwest locations is an activity that can be enjoyed by anyone. Above all, the aspect I appreciate most about the Midwest is the people! The culture, values, and diversity of this region is on full display in the numerous community gatherings that occur year-round.

Henok G., M1

On Being From the Mountain West

I grew up in Idaho, so I was fortunate to be able to grow up spending a lot of time mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, skiing, fishing, rafting — you name it. Because of this I love being outdoors and admittedly was a little nervous about moving to St. Louis. However, I have been pleasantly surprised by the opportunities for outdoor recreation here. There are several state parks that are about 30 minutes away that have great trails that I go to often to mountain bike, hike, and trail run. Additionally, the Ozarks are about a 1.5 hour-drive away and they offer a ton of trails for thru-hiking or backpacking. (And there's a student club from which you can rent outdoor gear). There are some rivers for fishing and some of the ponds in St. Louis are stocked as well. To top it off, there's even a ski resort that's about a 35-minute drive from campus; it's not big but it's got snow and chairlifts and that's good enough for me. Overall, I have found it pretty easy to adapt to living in the Midwest and have enjoyed getting to discover new trails and parks! If you're into biking or hiking or fishing or skiing and want to know more, please feel free to hit me up!

Stockton T., M1

On Being from the South

I spent my entire childhood in a small-ish town in Texas and attended college in Oklahoma. I like to say I kept moving north in search of the perfect region, and I think I have found it here in St. Louis! Being from the South, I am very used to hot weather and wide-open spaces. However, I also have friends and family who live in the Upper Midwest and Northeast, so I know what freezing cold winters and super busy cities feel like. I think St. Louis is the perfect balance: it's warm in the summer, but it has real seasons, and the leaves actually change color in the fall. It's a drivable city, but there is still enough infrastructure to support accessible public transit like the MetroLink (and we get free passes as students). Central West End has lots to do nearby, but I can still live close enough to campus to walk to school (and so many of my classmates live in the same area, so I see friends all the time on my walk)! I think I would have been overwhelmed if I had moved from the South to a giant city like NYC, LA, or Chicago. Fortunately, St. Louis was the perfect "step up" for me!

Robert C., M1

On Being from the West Coast

Truthfully, I was pretty sad to leave Oregon for Missouri. I would tell people where I was moving for school and they would say, "What the heck is in Missouri?!" Not many people in Oregon have heard of Washington University, but pretty much everywhere other than the west coast, WashU is a really big deal. Also, if you've never been, St. Louis is a really fun place! It's not some small-town country stop. Also, housing prices are crazy low out here compared to the West Coast!

I do miss the beauty of Portland and being so close to the coast and to mountains. St. Louis might not have the same beauty as the PNW (nowhere does,

really), but there are still plenty of opportunities to get outdoors and see some beautiful stuff. There's good coffee, food, and beer here, just like the PNW, and people are really friendly. Also, the culture within WashU itself is really incredible, diverse, and supportive. While it might be an adjustment at first, I would not worry too much about the transition to St. Louis.

Connor V., M1

On Being from the West Coast

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 I 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., M2

On Coming from a Big City

I grew up in Hong Kong and lived in New York City right before coming to med school. While being in St. Louis has definitely brought changes compared with living in the big city, there are also some aspects that are similar. I'm used to walking/subwaying everywhere, and luckily the Central West End is pretty walkable with restaurants, stores, and apartments all within about a mile or two from each other. And throughout St. Louis as a whole, there are so many great places to eat food from different cuisines. The public transport situation in St. Louis is more LA than NYC, so there are many places that you need a car to reach. However, the train and buses are free for students and despite not having too many stops, it can take you to downtown, the Delmar Loop, Clayton, and even the airport. Finally, there are some perks I've found to living in a smaller city! Crowds and traffic are much, much less frequent/intense, which can make getting around so much more stress-free. The cost of living has been a very welcome change, with studio apartments available near campus at half the rents that I'm used to. And Forest Park is a wonderful oasis of trees, grass, and nature right next to the Central West End that you won't find in any other city. Overall, I do miss the density and variety of the big city from time to time, but there is so much to like and explore in St. Louis, and I'm appreciating it more every week.

Matt O., M1

On Coming from a Large/State School

Coming from the University of South Carolina to WashU School of Medicine was pretty intimidating for me. I had met so many impressive applicants on the interview trail and worried that coming from a big state school and not the Ivy League would either put me at disadvantage academically or mean that other students would look down on me for coming from a less prestigious school. Luckily that was not the case! The faculty are great about making sure that everyone is on the same page when starting new material, and no one really cares about where you went to undergrad; we did all get into the same school after all.

Jana L., M1

On Coming from WashU Undergrad

When I was considering WashU School of Medicine, I will admit, I wasn't sure if I was ready to spend another four years in St. Louis. I was worried that it would be too similar to the Danforth Campus and that I wouldn't be able to grow past the “WashU Bubble.” But living in the Central West End (CWE) is an entirely new experience! There's so much to do and the CWE gives a taste of the “city life” without the hustle-and-bustle of a real “city-city.” There's also always the opportunity to hop

over to the Danforth Campus for a while, if you're ever in need of some extra green space or a break from "city life." Staying in St. Louis (and being close to the Danforth Campus) also has its perks! It's a chance to experience a new environment and try new things, while still being in a somewhat familiar space. You'll find that, just like in undergrad, there's a fantastic support system here amongst fellow WashU grads both in your class and the classes above, in addition to all the amazing people you will meet during your time here! While there isn't a BD here on the Medical Campus, if you close your eyes and imagine hard enough — the chicken tenders and fries just might taste as good as a half n' half. Welcome to the other side of Forest Park! And the beginning of your journey to becoming a WashU-Lifer. :)

Nathan K., M1

Our Furry Friends

On Having a Cat

I grew up with a variety of pets and spent a lot of time volunteering at local pet shelters in high school and during my gap years. When I decided to commit to WashU School of Medicine and do the cross-country trip from New Jersey to St. Louis, I also had in mind that it was time to get a pet of my own. As much as I love dogs, I knew I wasn't ready to commit to the dedication it takes to care for a dog in my first year of med school. When I finally settled in in St. Louis, I decided to adopt a cat from a St. Louis shelter instead. I spent a lot of time browsing through cute cat profiles and interviewing foster parents before I decided on adopting a sweet, chatty, 5-year-old tortie named Cinnamon. She has been with me since Day 1 of medical school, and honestly I couldn't ask for a better study partner! I love playing and relaxing with her after a long day of lectures or research too. It is also easy to find pet sitters if I'm out of town, etc. especially within the med school class and the WashU community since a lot of people have pets. My cat has been a beam of joy in my life, especially throughout a lot of virtual school and activities during the pandemic.

Zahra D., M1

On Having a Dog

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 WashU School of Medicine community; Percy and I are both happy to be part of it!

Karlee D., M2

On Having an Exotic Pet

Having a rabbit in medical school is fantastic (as is every other aspect of owning a rabbit). Bad day? Rabbit. Great day? Rabbit. Any day? Rabbit. Many do not know that rabbits can be litter box trained, love having space to free-roam, and can be very affectionate. I have two bun babies running around my apartment: Ohana and Gobi. If you ever need some bunny therapy, feel free to reach out to me or your nearest medical student bun parent. We are always happy to show off our perfect pets.

Savannah S., M1

Sports and the Outdoors

On Biking

I've always loved biking, both mountain and road, and I've been super happy to have found that a number of my classmates share the same passion! In the fall we would ride together once or twice a week. Having Forest Park right by campus is incredible for biking because the bike paths and roads in the park are very smooth and there are hardly any cars to worry about. There are also some nice rides along the roads in St. Louis that go out into the suburbs. A group of us first-year students even rode in an event called "Pedal the Cause," which was to raise money for cancer research and took us on a beautiful route through some of the hills and parks to the west of the city. Honestly, I have ridden my road bike more, longer, and more consistently than at any point in my undergrad or gap year. There's also a school-wide biking group called the Krebs Cyclers (very clever I know) who I often ride with, and we have some pretty cool looking kits as well. If you're just getting into biking, Forest Park is amazing because of the dedicated bike paths that form a ~6.5 mile loop around the outside that is great for bikers of any level to enjoy!

Stockton T., M1

On Hiking/Exploring Nature

There are many opportunities to hike and explore nature in St. Louis and the surrounding area. You can see waterfalls on the Mina Sauk Falls Trail, explore caves at Onondaga Cave State Park, see and climb on large granite boulders at Elephant Rocks State Park, or hike and swim at Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, all within less than a 2-hour drive from the medical school. If you don't want to drive, Forest Park is right next to the medical school and there are many paths both paved,

and unpaved throughout the park that are great for walking, hiking, jogging, and biking. One of the most popular locations for hiking is Castlewood State Park, which is about a 30-minute drive from the medical school and includes multiple scenic trails along the Meramec River. Our class organized multiple day trips to Castlewood this fall, including one to relax in the afternoon after an assessment, which I would highly recommend. Other popular locations for hiking include the Rockwoods Reservation (40-minute drive), the Lewis and Clark Trails (30-minute drive), and Pere Marquette State Park (1-hour drive).

Alexis M., M1

On Playing Ultimate Frisbee

Everywhere I have lived, from Seattle to Chicago to Quito, Ecuador, Ultimate Frisbee has been a great way to stay active and meet new people — and St. Louis is no exception! The St. Louis Ultimate Association (SLUA) runs leagues and organizes pickup year round, and there are several club teams to choose from! There are also several youth teams if you are interested in outreach and coaching. I played in the fall womxn's league and everyone was really welcoming. Playing in a fall league also helped me get to know people outside of medical school, which I really appreciated. Whether you're new to the sport or you've been playing for a few years, Ultimate Frisbee is a great way to stay active and get outside of the WashU bubble.

Gianna S., 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., M2

On Starting a New Hobby (Pickleball)

Pickleball is, at the time of writing, the fastest-growing sport in America [citation needed]. It's so cutting-edge that the text editor I'm using to draft this paragraph gives the word "pickleball" the old red underline. I first heard about pickleball from my younger sister, and started playing in earnest this past September, the very same month in which I started medical school here at WashU. Like a powerful drug, I was hooked from the very first go. The nonpareil combination of a low barrier-to-entry with infinite horizons of growth makes it the perfect activity to share with friends of all ages and abilities, and we have several courts conveniently located near campus. Take my word for it: there is no contradiction between being in medical school and discovering a new, non-medical hobby, passion, *raison d'être*, etc. Yours may just be pickleball.

Justin S., M1

On Weightlifting

When I got to WashU School of Medicine, I was committed to maintaining my physical health even with the academic stress associated with medical training. Immediately, I saw familiar faces of other medical/graduate students (Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, PhD, etc.) and through these interactions, I have made some great friends who have kept me motivated. Through this motivation, I have become the strongest I have ever been and the healthiest I have ever been. This has helped not only my physical health, but my mental health as well in that it's a great escape from studying.

So, find yourself a workout buddy and get in the gym! My lifting buddy and I text every day to coordinate a time that works after classes to hit the gym and break up the day. It's really a fantastic way to get out of the monotony of studying, improve your health, and make friends!

John W., M1

Whether you're a weekend warrior, a gym junkie, or are just thinking about getting started, WashU offers great resources for all things fitness. The Core gym is conveniently located on the Medical Campus and has all the free weights and machines you will ever need for a lift or a cardio workout. With our flexible class schedule, it's easy to hit the gym before, after, or during classes depending on your preference. The Core is also a great place to run into classmates and other members of the WashU School of Medicine community. The Rec Center on the Danforth Campus offers a much larger selection of weights and cardio machines, as well as indoor and outdoor tracks, group fitness classes and a lap pool. For beginners, the BearFit program at the Rec Center provides access to professional trainers who will help you build a personalized fitness plan, while local CrossFit gyms and the WashU powerlifting club provide great options for those looking to take their gains to the next level.

Mitchell G., 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 Phrasiratanaram 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., M3

On Being Catholic

The St. Louis and WashU Catholic communities have so much to offer! There are many different churches all over the city to try out, and they are all a little bit different. It's always fun to try out new ones! I have also never really had a problem with finding a mass time that works with my schedule, because each church offers different times. WashU also has the Catholic Student Center (CSC) near the Danforth Campus, which has a plethora of opportunities for engaging with other graduate students and the community. They also offer two masses, 11 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., and serve free dinner after the 4:30 p.m. mass. The CSC also has daily mass once a week on the Medical Campus, once at the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy campus (right next door to the Medical Campus), and at three different times and days at the CSC. They also offer lunch talks from various community speakers on the Medical Campus during our lunch hour and provide more free food.

Mackenzie C., M1

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., M3

On Being Jain

Since Jainism is a pretty small religion that most people haven't even heard of, I've gotten pretty used to having very minimal community almost anywhere I go. However, in St. Louis, there is a small derasar located inside the Hindu temple on Weidman Road. The derasar is also the location of the Jain Center of St. Louis. Though COVID has caused some disruptions, typically, they celebrate major Jain holidays like Mahavir Jayanti, Diwali, etc. The Hindu temple also has poojas and other celebrations for Hindu festivals. Since it's hard to have a Jain community within my class or even the school in general, the derasar and these events are a great place to meet people and connect. The hardest part about being Jain in St. Louis for me has been paryushana. It's almost impossible to find food that meets every dietary restriction unless you cook it yourself, and I find fasting to be really hard when I'm in school. For me, this means that I just shift when I practice paryushana a week or two around so it coincides with a break when I'm visiting home. There I can observe the whole week with my family around me rather than by myself in school. Overall, although there are definitely challenges, St. Louis isn't a difficult city to be Jain in. It has a great variety of vegan/vegetarian food options, a small derasar, and a community if you look for it.

As a side note, there is also an ISKCON temple in St. Louis which hosts weekly Sunday Feasts with vegetarian meals, Kirtan, and other activities. They also host weekly yoga classes and Bhagavad Gita classes. There are many serious devotees that attend these programs, so it might be easier to find a religious or even an ethnic community here, even if it's not strictly Jain.

Sanji B., M1

On Being Jewish

When I initially committed to WashU School of Medicine, 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., M2

On Being Lutheran

Since this was my first time moving away from Minnesota, where I grew up in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I didn't know what exactly I would find for the religious community here in St. Louis and at WashU. I have been delighted to find that more of my classmates are religious than I would have expected, and I have gotten to have many insightful conversations with classmates where we have learned about each other's traditions. I have also made time to find a new church home here, where I make the effort to attend on a weekly basis. This has been a much-needed reset from school each week, and the support from a community outside of school is invaluable.

One of the people who helped me find this new church home was the Rev. Callista Isabelle, who serves as WashU's Director for Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Life. She talked to me about various congregations in the area and helped me think through what I might want in a new church. She is happy to talk to anyone who is seeking a religious, spiritual, or ethical community in St. Louis or who just wants to talk with someone about spiritual topics. She can be reached at callista.isabelle@wustl.edu.

Matthew B., M1

On Being Muslim

Growing up in the Atlanta suburbs, I've had a spectrum of experiences as a Muslim & hijabi, but was still just a little bit worried that St. Louis, being in the Midwest, would be a harder place to find community and resources as a Muslim. After moving here

though, I've been pleasantly surprised. The few mosques I've been to so far (including the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis, which is a 25-minute drive out, and Masjid Bilal on Saint Louis University's campus just a couple miles from the Medical Campus) serve a large and incredibly diverse community. You'll find more than enough opportunities to get involved if you're looking for it! The Muslim community is also very involved in serving the general St. Louis community with various charities and free clinics that are supported by the mosques. Also, if you eat halal, it's fairly easy to find food and groceries suitable to your needs in St. Louis, and there are great restaurants to try too! On campus, you will easily find space to pray in the Danforth Chapel, and there's also a chapel in the hospital where Jummah prayers are held. Also, WashU School of Medicine now has a brand-new, official Medical Muslim Student Association (MMSA) thanks to our amazing classmates, Ranya G. and Ahmed H., and we all look forward to welcoming you!

Aseeyah I., M1

On Being Protestant

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 School of Medicine 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., M3

The Arts

On Cooking/Baking

As a pandemic-era baker and chef, I (Stephanie) was excited to continue this wonderful and tasty journey during med school, but was hesitant how much time I would have amidst all the Anki-ing and 3x speed lecture watching. I (Annabelle) actually got into cooking / baking once we got to med school, when we had our own kitchens and I realized how much I enjoy feeding people (and it can sometimes be done during the 3x speed lecture watching ...)

We've actually found cooking/baking to be such a relaxing study break and an opportunity to bond with friends! Despite some mishaps (using the wrong paddle attachment on the stand mixer ... and trying to bake something at the wrong temperature), Annabelle and I have tried out so many fun recipes (black

sesame cinnamon rolls and mulled wine, anyone?) and recruited some very willing taste-testers.

It's been so much fun experimenting (despite Stephanie's desire to follow exact measurements) with new foods to feed our friends, and we have so many future projects lined up. We've been dreaming about bread, and planning out a multi-course Lunar New Year meal for weeks (roast duck ... maybe?). Cooking/baking with friends here has been one of my favorite parts of being here so far and I'm excited for more to come!

Annabelle Y., M1 and Stephanie Z., M1

On Dancing

There are many opportunities to dance while living in St. Louis and during medical school! Whether you are a beginner or experienced dancer, all of these opportunities are open to people of all skill levels. I would highly recommend you join the WUSM Dance email distribution list so you can have first dibs to sign up for space-limited dance workshops. Generally, the workshops occur on a monthly basis and have covered a wide variety of genres, including Bollywood dance, salsa, contemporary modern, Afrobeats TikTok dances, and more. These workshops offer a free, low-stress, and fun environment to learn new dance styles among your fellow WashU Med peers. I also recently joined the ensemble for the Med School Musical (we're doing Footloose this year), and I have really enjoyed learning our dance choreography — all levels of dance experience are welcome. A non-WashU space that I have really enjoyed is the Consuming Kinetics Dance Company (CKDC) dance studio. They offer a variety of styles including ballet, contemporary, hip hop, and more, are open to all skill levels, and you can join with a one-time drop-in fee or you can purchase a multi-class pass. Another Central West End spot I've explored with classmates is Club Viva, which offers complimentary intro lessons to salsa and bachata on Thursday nights.

JingJing Z., M1

On Painting/Drawing/Blogging/Photography

If you're a fellow creative human, make sure to continue investing time in your art while you're a medical student! Finding the right balance of time management can be tricky, but setting aside time to create has been very rewarding for me. Photography and blogging is a big part of my life, and by setting aside time each week (although admittedly not exam weeks) to prioritize my art has allowed me to have an identity outside of medical school and keep me thinking beyond medicine. If you like creating with others, there's Art to Heart (an art and crafts club that puts on an art show), Doctored (a photography group), Narrative Medicine (for creative writing), and Hippocrene (an annual literary and visual arts magazine).

Mackenzie C., M1

On Playing an Instrument

I have been a musician for my whole life, and continuing to play in ensembles was something I was hoping to be able to continue upon coming to medical school. I was incredibly excited when I found out that medical students are more than welcome in any of the ensembles over on the Danforth Campus — both the Wind Ensemble and the Orchestra, as well as the smaller ensembles. Myself and another first-year medical student are both in the Wind Ensemble, and it is a great time every week to destress and make music with others! Rehearsals for Wind Ensemble are on Thursdays from 7–9:30 p.m., so it is a lower time commitment and easy to fit into our schedules. Additionally, those that want to participate in the Medical School Musical can join the pit orchestra! Logistically, the auditions for the Danforth ensembles usually occur the week before the Medical School Orientation, so just make sure you factor that into your arrival date or reach out to the ensemble manager to work something out!

Dante N., M1



Friends on a farm



Ohana the bunny being a squish



Seeing what goes higher, our heart rate or those balloons



Group run in Forest Park



First day of 17th grade!



Life in St. Louis

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: AMDIEL CLEMENT, LYRA MORINA, FIONA PAT AND WENDY TAN

Food

Allergy-Friendly Eateries

I am allergic to milk, eggs, peanuts, walnuts, and pecans, so as always when moving to a new city, I was anxious to see how the restaurants in the area dealt with food allergies. A good number of places I have been to have allergen menus, and those that do not are more than willing to make accommodations from my experience! I have had no problems finding things I can safely eat at all of the most popular places near the med school, including **Jeni's Ice Cream** (they have vegan flavors!!), **Salt + Smoke**, **Mission Taco**, and **Kingside Diner**. Additionally, when you sign up for talks that provide free lunch at the med school there is an area to indicate any dietary restrictions, and most talks that I have attended have been able to accommodate my allergies!

Dante N., M1

Desserts

Dessert is arguably my favorite course in any meal. I started looking at dessert options in St. Louis before I committed to WashU. (Not saying that this had any influence on my decision.) Popular options include:

Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams — Scoop shop about a 10-minute walk from campus, just up Euclid.

The Baked Bear — Ice cream sandwiches/cookies in the Delmar Loop.

Clementine's Naughty and Nice — Non-alcoholic and alcoholic ice cream with two locations, each a 12-minute drive away.

Ted Drewes — Takeout frozen custard with a dizzying array of options, 15 minutes by car from Central West End.

Insomnia Cookies — A late-night staple on any school campus.

Donut Drive In — Excellent takeout donut spot, 15 minutes by car from Central West End.

John's Donuts — Opens up at 4 a.m. and is located in downtown St. Louis.

Fiona P., M1

Eating Vegetarian

As a vegetarian moving to St. Louis, I had some concerns about finding food that I liked for those nights that I just didn't want to cook, but I was blown away by both the quantity of vegetarian options and the quality of the food. I have a hard time

choosing favorites, but these are some of the places I or other vegetarian friends have loved:

Terror Tacos, Tower Grove — A relatively new restaurant that serves a variety of incredible tacos with totally different flavor profiles. It's also totally vegan so order anything you want!

Basil India, Tower Grove — Hands down my favorite Indian food in St. Louis. Has delicious vegan and vegetarian options for reasonable prices.

Gokul, The Loop — Totally vegetarian Indian restaurant that also has a wide variety of vegan food and hosts vegan buffets frequently.

Meskerem Ethiopian Restaurant, Tower Grove — Ethiopian is a super vegetarian-friendly cuisine, and Meskerem's food is simply delicious. My personal favorites are the vegetarian combo and the shiro wat with injera.

Akar, Clayton — Great Asian fusion food with several tasty vegetarian options.

Treehouse, Tower Grove — A little expensive but all food is prepared vegan, so many options available.

Vicia, Central West End — Definitely on the expensive side, but the dining experience is incredible, and the food is exquisite.

Lulu's Local Eatery, Tower Grove — Café with amazing food that is 100% plant-based with a focus on sustainability.

Clementine's Naughty and Nice Ice Cream — One of my favorite ice cream places in St. Louis that serves several different vegan flavors.

SweetArt, Shaw — Locally-owned restaurant serving traditional, vegan, and gluten friendly baked goods as well as vegan and vegetarian lunch and breakfast.

Sanji B., M1

Food Delivery Apps

Like most cities, St. Louis has quite a few app-based delivery services supporting local businesses! This can be especially helpful during pandemic era and exam weeks, when you might not have the time or bandwidth to cook at home! Some popular options that are available on both iOS and Android include (alphabetically listed): **DoorDash**, **Grubhub**, **Postmates**, and **UberEats**. Personally, I periodically switch between the \$10 monthly subscription to Grubhub and the \$9.99 subscription to UberEats. Both include great discounts (Grubhub+ has a free \$10 monthly perk for pickups and UberOne offers discounts for both UberEats and Uber rides).

Isabella G., M1

Places for a Birthday Dinner

It's your birthday (hooray)! If you're hoping to celebrate with family and friends, here's a list of some great places to check out! (Some may require reservations, so I'd definitely check that before committing!)

\$ — Mission Taco, Lona's Lil Eats, Medina Grill, Mayo Ketchup, Lulu's Local Eatery

\$\$ — Sauce on the Side, Sugarfire Smoke House, Olio, Polite Society, Broadway Oyster Bar, Grace Meat + Three, The Fountain on Locust, Pappy's Smokehouse, Salt + Smoke, Mai Lee, Chiang Mai, Wasabi, Balkan Treat Box, Corner 17

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ — Brasserie by Niche, Yellowbelly, Juniper, Sidney Street Cafe, Nixta, Akar, Vicia, Bulrush, iNDO

*P.S. The dollar sign indicators are based on Google's scale, so I always check the online menus for pricing!

Isabella G., M1

Places to Brunch

It's possible that brunch is the ultimate St. Louis pastime. Look no further than the **Kingside Diner** conveniently located in Central West End for a slew of delicious options (and chess boards on the tables for entertainment), or if you're closer to downtown, the cult favorites **Egg** and **Rooster**. Willing to drive a little further out into the county? My personal favorite is the Mud Slinger at **Mud House** in Tower Grove South, which is a chili-like topping on potatoes and toast with amazing raspberry jam. With any of these options, definitely reserve ahead if possible or be ready to stand in line, especially on weekends.

Haewon S., M1

Places to Take a Date

Dating can be tough, but one thing that makes it 10 times easier is having some lovely, new places to explore and create memories. To that end, St. Louis definitely knows how to deliver!

If you're wanting to share a foodie adventure with your special someone, I'd highly recommend trying a donut tour (**Strange Donuts**, **World's Fair Donuts**, **Pharoah's Donuts**, **Vincent Van Doughnut**), going brewery-hopping (tours at **Anheuser Busch**, **Schlafly's**) or checking out one of the city's nearby, casual, mid-range joints (**Mission Taco** for Mexican fusion, **Salt + Smoke** for barbecue, **Jeni's/Clementine's Creamery/Ted Drewe's** for ice cream, **Kingside Diner** for brunch, **Taha'a Twisted Tiki/Planter's House** for cocktails in a courtyard, **The Fountain** on Locust for an ice cream martini!)

If you're looking for a quiet, free activity, I'd highly suggest exploring Forest Park (a nice walk, a bike ride, perhaps paddle-boating in the pond!), checking out the Saint Louis Zoo (it's free and there are penguins!), dropping by the Saint Louis Science Center (tons of dinosaur/space exhibits!) or browsing the amazing

installations at the Kemper Art Museum on the Danforth Campus! If you're feeling sporty, you can score some cheap tickets to see the St. Louis Cardinals, go roller or ice skating at the Steinberg Rink depending on the season, or hike through Castlewood State Park or the Cahokia Mounds!

Finally, if you're feeling real romantic, my favorite is definitely the Missouri Botanical Garden! In the summer, they host the Japanese Festival, and near the winter holidays, Garden Glow! All the hand-holding vibes you could hope for — it's divine!

Isabella G., M1

Places to Take Your Parents

Your parents are visiting, and you want to show off the St. Louis food scene and take advantage of eating expensive food when you don't have to pay for it. Head to **Olive and Oak** to enjoy oysters on the half-shell, ribeye steak, or freshly prepared fish. Or introduce your parents to a St. Louis classic, toasted ravioli at **Anthonino's Taverna**, voted "Best Toasted Ravioli" seven years in a row. If you're looking for a quick lunch option between activities, grab an Asian inspired gourmet sandwich that will be sure to satisfy at **Zenwich**.

Sofia C., M1

Rooftop Dining/Bars

There are some fantastic rooftop dining and bar options in St. Louis to share a beautiful evening with family or friends. The **Cinder House Sky Bar and Terrace** (located in the Four Seasons Hotel) has the most amazing view of the Gateway Arch — highly recommend for a special occasion. **Three Sixty**, situated near the St. Louis Cardinals ballpark, is a very popular place to hang out before or after a Cardinals game. **Angad Rainbow Terrace**, located downtown, is also a cool, artsy spot for some nice views of the city.

Kelsey G., M1

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

Ok, so I just need to pitch this place. **Balkan Treat Box** is truly one of the best restaurants of its class I've ever been to. I have lived on the West and East coasts, in big cities too, and Balkan Treat Box stands above so many trendy moderately priced places I've been to. It is a place that feels like a labor of love. Where the food is excellent, and the story behind the restaurant and its community is inspiring. (I have literally watched like a PBS documentary on this place, I love it that much.) The bread is insanely good, and the meat and vegetarian options are so flavorful it is truly unique. In the MSTP seminar and thread, we've had it catered a couple times and at the middle/end of a long day it hits so good it's transcendent. Even if you don't choose WashU, when you come to St. Louis, try this unique spot. The music slaps too.

Srinand P., M1

When You're Craving: Barbecue

Pappy's Smokehouse was voted by the Food Network as home of “The Best Ribs in America,” and it definitely lives up to that reputation. (I once took a vegetarian friend there for lunch and he decided to start eating meat again after trying their ribs.) Other great barbecue spots are **Salt + Smoke** (there's a location in the Central West End!) and **SugarFire Smoke House!**

Shelbie F., M1

When You're Craving: Chinese

The highest concentration of Chinese food you'll find near Central West End is along Olive Boulevard. If you're looking for family style, **Cate Zone** and **Tai Ke** have some great Northeast Chinese and Taiwanese options respectively. For those who crave a little more spice, **ChiliSpot** on Olive and **Perfect Taste** on the Delmar Loop offer Sichuan (Szechuan) fare. Finally, **Corner 17** on the Loop has both American-Chinese options as well as a few traditional classics — and solid boba as a bonus.

Haewon S., M1

When You're Craving: French

Brasserie by Niche in the Central West End is SO GOOD. Great spot to bring parents or visitors for a nice dinner. Make sure you get the French onion soup. **Polite Society Restaurant and Bar** on Park Avenue is more “New American” but has a French twist, great ambiance, and is super yummy! Also loved the French onion soup here lol.

Shelbie F., M1

When You're Craving: K-BBQ

As a bona fide Korean, the first thing I did when I came to St. Louis was hunt around for some K-BBQ places. I came up with two: **Wudon** and **Seoul Garden**. The latter has two locations which I think are comparable, and both have AYCE. Depending on where you hail from, you might be variably impressed by these two places, but I found them to scratch the itch at the very least. I recommend getting brisket and pork belly at Seoul Garden, and definitely try the egg soufflé that they offer as a side.

Haewon S., M1

When You're Craving: Pasta

Two very important and amazing spots: **Katie's Pizza & Pasta** and **Pastaria**. The Lemon Strozzapreti from Katie's is mouthwatering, and the Chitarra al Pomodoro from Pastaria is life-changing. **Louie** is also great for fresh handmade pasta and if you're looking for a fancier meal. For more casual Italian eats, anywhere in The Hill neighborhood is perfect!

Shelbie F., M1

When You're Craving: Pho

Saigon Cafe on Euclid Avenue in the Central West End is so good and such an easy lunch or dinner spot near campus. Very reliable pho options. **Pho Grand** on S. Grand Boulevard is also delicious and is near tons of other great restaurants!

Shelbie F., M1

When You're Craving: Pizza

St. Louis is renowned (and maybe not in a good way) for **IMO's Pizza** — a local chain pizzeria that uses a combination of cheeses called *provel* which I can only describe as unique. Some people are IMO's die-hards, others think it tastes like hot garbage. You won't know which camp you fall into until you try it.

But regardless of any pizza shame St. Louis may have, I'm here to tell you that you CAN live in St. Louis and still get good pizza. Here is a list of other places worth trying ... and, worst case scenario, there's always Domino's.

Jet's — Get the BBQ chicken. You'll thank me later.

Pi Pizzeria — Legend has it Barack Obama used to have Pi shipped to the White House.

Racanelli's — Classic New York-style pizza; you can even get it by the slice.

Dewey's — Their non-traditional toppings are "bananas good."

Pointer's — My personal favorite, home of the pointersaurus: a gargantuan pie that will feed allllll of your friends.

Peel — A classier joint in Clayton and some of the tastiest I've had in St. Louis.

Union Loafers — A bread bakery in Tower Grove with yummy artisan pizza; don't pass up on a side of "fresh cheese and burnt toast"!

Kate W., M1

When You're Craving: Puerto Rican Food

I came to St. Louis with zero expectations about finding good Puerto Rican food. However, I was pleasantly surprised with a restaurant off of Lafayette Square called **Mayo Ketchup**. Right next to a beautiful and historic park, Mayo Ketchup has everything from pollo guisado to pernil with arroz con gandules, and of course, everything comes with a bottle of mayo ketchup. You can even get a sampler if you and some friends want to try their selection of tostones, empanadas, queso frito, and sorullitos (my personal fave). This has quickly become one of my favorite spots in St. Louis, because after thoroughly stuffing my face, I always love taking a stroll in the serene Lafayette Park afterwards.

Brian T., M1

When You're Craving: Ramen

The Delmar Loop offers a few ramen shops, including **Blue Ocean**, **Nudo House** (which has several vegetarian options), and **Nami Ramen**. But the best ramen I've had in St. Louis was from **Ramen Tei**, which is located in Ballwin, MO (about half an hour away from campus). I highly recommend getting their pork buns and their standard tonkotsu ramen.

Haewon S., M1

When You're Craving: Sushi/Poke

While the Midwest might not be known for its fantastic seafood, there are still plenty of choices for sushi and poke here in St. Louis! Central West End a bunch of spots — **Kampai Sushi** right under Del Coronado, **Sushi Koi** and **PokeDoke** on Euclid, and **Drunken Fish** right down the street are all great places to grab a few rolls or a quick poke bowl. And if you're craving all-you-can-eat (and you're up for the challenge of consuming your own body weight in sushi) you can check out **Sushi Ai** in Clayton or downtown St. Louis!

Nathan K., M1

When You're Craving: Tacos

St. Louis has a surprisingly diverse set of taquerías and taco shops sprawled across the city. So far, my personal favorites have been **Taquería El Bronco** on Cherokee Street and **El Toluco Taquería** out in Manchester (20 minutes from Central West End). Although El Toluco is a bit of a drive, their tacos and tortas are, in my opinion, the best in the city. If you're looking for a creative spin on traditional tacos or simply want to bond over some margaritas, you should also check out **Seoul Taco**, **Mission Taco**, or **Burro Loco**. And of course, if you're craving the ultimate late night junk food, Taco Bell and the mighty crunch wrap supreme are always within reach. Despite this list, there are still so many places that I haven't tried like **Taqueria Hectorito**, **Tacos la Jefa STL**, or anywhere on Cherokee Street. If you're a taco lover, you won't be disappointed.

Brian T., M1

When You're Craving: Thai

Thai Country Café is a cult favorite of both WashU and Saint Louis University students, with enormous portion sizes and fairly affordable fare — I highly recommend the red and green curries, pad see yew, and tom yum soup. **Thai 202** is more local in the Central West End. For something more ~fancy~, try **Fork and Stix**, which is also on the Delmar Loop along with Thai Country.

Haewon S., M1

Drinks

Cocktail and Wine Bars

Looking for an expertly mixed cocktail? Look no further — St. Louis's bar, lounge and restaurant scene has got all your boozy needs covered! For cocktails in a vibey atmosphere, I highly recommend **Narwhal's Crafted**, **Planter's House** (delightful seasonal drinks in a courtyard!), **Juniper**, **Taha'a Twister Tiki** (sweet, tropical drinks and cornhole!), **Yellowbelly** (nearby in CWE), **The Fountain on Locust** (ice cream martinis to die for!), **Three Sixty** (a perfect rooftop view), **Thaxton Speakeasy**, **Taste by Niche** (nearby in CWE), and **The Famous Bar** (great Bourbon-based options)! Cheers!

Isabella G., M1

Coffee Shops in STL

Kaldi's — Kaldi's is a local coffee chain found in both St. Louis City and County. It is probably one of the most convenient places to grab a cup of coffee because there are two locations on the Medical Campus, one right in the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center and one in the Mid Campus Center, as well as one on N. Euclid Avenue. The one on Euclid is a decent study spot, although it can get quite loud when it's busy. It has pretty good coffee and lots of great options for breakfast and lunch, although it can be a little expensive.

Rise Coffee — Rise Coffee is a cute coffee shop located in The Grove. It has a good amount of seating inside as well as a nice outdoor patio that you can sit on when it's warm. They serve locally roasted coffee, pastries, and have some options for breakfast and lunch. It's a great place to go on a first date or bring friends to catch up. If you want to use it as a study spot, I recommend going early, especially on the weekends. It can get pretty crowded and might be difficult to find a table.

Northwest Coffee Roasters — Northwest is a local roaster that serves a pretty good cup of coffee. It's about a 10-minute walk from the heart of CWE. Northwest has a wide variety of coffee and espresso drinks as well as a limited selection of food. Currently, there is no indoor seating, but they have a large patio with a portion of it enclosed so you could still enjoy the shop's vibes in the winter months. I've found it to be a great place to study or just talk with friends. It definitely gets busy on the weekends though, so you might have to wait a little if you want to try and snag a table.

Catalyst Coffee Bar — This tiny café located in downtown St. Louis is also a small art gallery that sells pieces made by local artists. They are primarily known for their espresso drinks, although they do serve some teas. They don't have food or a ton of seating, so I would not recommend it for lunch or studying, but it is worth checking it out if you happen to be in the area and need a little caffeine pick-me-up.

Maypop Coffee and Garden Shop — This small coffee shop is in Webster Groves, about a 15-minute drive from CWE. It has both outdoor and indoor seating and is attached to a reasonably priced plant nursery. This café is definitely worth visiting to wander around the nursery with your drink and, if you have a green thumb, pick up a plant for your new apartment.

Park Avenue Coffee — Park Avenue Coffee has a few locations in St. Louis, one in the Hill and two downtown. They are all about a 10-15 minute drive from CWE. They have tons of different coffee and espresso drinks made with their locally roasted beans. They are also famous for their gooey butter cake, and I believe they make up to 20 different flavors, including red velvet, triple chocolate, and white chocolate raspberry. I would recommend driving down and grabbing a slice to have with your cup of joe. There isn't a ton of seating at the locations I've been to, so it might not be the best study spot.

Starbucks — If you're looking to get your classic Starbucks drink or pick up a PSL in the fall season, you're in luck. There are two locations close to campus, one in CWE and one on the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy campus. I'm sure you already know what Starbucks is, so I think I'll just leave it at that.

Alyssa R., M1

Dive Bars

In order of proximity to the Central West End (CWE):

Pagan Wine Bar – Super cool bar hidden away in the CWE, with really fun décor, funky jazz music, and wine at reasonable prices. Worth noting that it is pretty small so it might be hard to find a table/enough chairs if you have more than 1-2 people with you, but I guess that contributes to the dive bar feel. Pagan really feels like an underground bar you'd stumble into late at night in New York or any major European city; would highly recommend.

Brennan's – Brennan's is possibly a little too fancy for true dive bar classification, but honestly, the people-watching makes it worth it (still waiting for them to install the ping pong table from the old location though). They have cool specialty cocktails and some reasonably priced beers, as well as a limited-but-really-good appetizer menu. They have tons of seating indoors (tables, couches, the bar) and you'll probably get to witness multiple first dates and puzzle over whether people (who are definitely attendings) are on really awkward dates or having sort-of-awkward business meetings.

West End Grill and Pub – Now this is a dive dive bar near the Basilica, for when you want to get a little farther away from Barnes. They have a handful of beers on tap, and the other drinks are also super cheap. There's outdoor seating and seats at the bar, but I think those are usually taken up by a bunch of regulars who seem to hang out and do the crossword there. The bar is connected to the Gaslight

Theater and located right next to Blue Strawberry, which has stand-up/plays/live performances most nights that seem to draw decent crowds.

Venice Cafe – This is one of my favorite places in St. Louis, although it's in Soulard, which is a bit further from the CWE. The entire bar and outdoor area is decorated with super funky art and mosaics, and there's live music playing inside almost every night. It's cash-only and they have a pretty good selection of beers and cocktails at standard STL prices (\$6 for a beer, ~\$10 for a cocktail). Worth it for the ambiance and the funky artist types you'll see, and the owners/workers are super nice and were pretty early to implement vaccine card requirements, which is cool.

Victoria M., M1

Karaoke Bars

Located just a 10-minute Uber ride away from campus, the **W Karaoke Lounge** has a wide song selection and an elaborate interior aesthetic. You can hang out in the common area or reserve rooms for up to 10 or 15 people. In addition to the bar, the W also served food (before COVID) — currently, you can bring in your own food for an additional fee.

Naazanene V., M1

Pub Trivia

Lucky for everyone, there are some smart cookies at WashU who can carry a trivia team. Nearly every Thursday, a group of students go to the **BBQ Saloon** right off campus to compete against locals, PT students, OT students, and bar regulars for candy, shots, and being immortalized on a Facebook post. It's a blast to learn what your friends know and wonder how on earth they actually knew that answer. Three of the more popular spots are **BBQ Saloon** on Thursdays for convenience and candy, **Mike Duffy's** on Wednesdays for a college crowd and a fun MC, and **Narwhal's Crafted** on Tuesdays for the best drinks. Each bar hosts trivia on a different day, so grab a group and find out how smart your classmates are!

Jon I., M1

Fitness

Basketball

I have always loved basketball, and if you want to go to a medical school where playing basketball is incredibly easy, look no further. We have a really nice basketball court in the basement of one of our buildings! We have a big group chat (>100 people) and people show up to play almost every day. We are able to run 5v5 pretty much every day I go. There are also a few nice outdoor courts around. Once intramural sports return to the Danforth Campus, medical students will be

able to join undergrad basketball intramurals again. The only drawback to loving basketball in Missouri is that the nearest pro team is Chicago or Memphis.

Connor V., M1

Boxing

From boxing novice to future world champ (what are you doing in med school?), St. Louis has many gyms and tournaments to practice your wares. Boxing for fitness is a fun, high-paced way to work up a sweat, and there are numerous group classes offered at the WashU Danforth Campus gym, The Boxing Gym, and Title Boxing. For people looking to step in the ring and spar, Finney's MMA and Eppley's Boxing offer coaching and opportunities to practice with other amateur fighters. If you are looking to branch out into other disciplines, River City Warriors and St. Louis MMA have fighters trained in Muay Thai and Jiu Jitsu.

Lyra M., M1

Dancing

As a die-hard fan of Latin dancing, I was pleasantly surprised by the many offerings in St. Louis! Just a 15-20-minute walk away from the main residential area in Central West End (CWE) is Club Viva, which hosts 1-hour introductory lessons and social dancing for salsa/bachata on Thursdays and Saturdays. For other styles of dance, both Consuming Kinetics Dance Company and Central Studio (about 10 minutes from the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center, or FLTC) offer adult classes in a variety of genres (ballet, contemporary/jazz, tap, and more), and you can either attend on a drop-in basis or buy a class pack. Besides these options, the student organization WUSM Dance regularly hosts free events, open to medical students, both onsite and off. The dance communities here are very welcoming, so you'll never be bored!

Isabella G., M1

Golf

Playing golf in Forest Park is a wonderful way to spend an afternoon in St. Louis! Personally, I've spent a lot of time at the Highlands, a 9-hole golf course located about half-mile from the Medical Campus. My classmates and I love to hit the driving range after class. A bucket of balls only costs \$4-7, and the greens fees range from \$15-22 (depending on the day of the week). But don't be fooled by the low prices: the Highlands is perhaps one of the most nicely-maintained public courses I have ever played! The tee box of hole #7 has an especially beautiful view of Barnes Jewish Hospital and St. Louis Children's Hospital that you don't want to miss.

Abby H., M1

Hiking

I think if you aren't coming from the Midwest (I wasn't), your first instinct will be to assume that there's no hiking and everything in St. Louis and the vicinity is flat

and full of cornfields or whatever. Thankfully, there are tons of great ways to get into nature around St. Louis.

Castlewood State Park is the most popular option and is a ~20-30-minute drive from the Central West End (CWE). There are eight popular hiking trails of different lengths/difficulty levels, with beautiful views of the Meramec River. You're also right next to Lone Elk State Park, where you can see elk (!) and bison (!!!) up close, and which has two hiking trails, one with moderate difficulty/incline and the other for more relaxed hiking.

If you're willing to make a bit of a further drive, Hawn State Park (~1 hour outside of St. Louis) has fantastic hiking trails, with the most popular Whispering Pines Loop giving you 12 miles of with decent elevation gains, beautiful views, rivers and streams, and some pretty sick rocks. If you want to see the most beautiful fall foliage in the Midwest, you can also head to Pere Marquette State Park in Illinois (~1 hour drive from the CWE). Also, we can rent cheap camping/hiking/backpacking gear from WildMed, which is super convenient if you're looking to make a weekend backpacking or camping trip, but don't want to commit to buying a tent, backpack, or stove.

Overall, I've been really impressed by all of the hiking I've gotten to do in and around St. Louis, and if you're worried in any way because you're super crunchy or coming from somewhere known for hiking, you'll be able to find trails and parks here that you'll love.

Victoria M., M1

Racquetball

I was introduced to racquetball by one of my classmates in the beginning of the school year and it has been an awesome way to get some exercise or to take a break from studying. The closest courts are in Hudlin Park (right across the street from The Core apartments), but there are some more a little further away in Forest Park. Both are free but be warned that the courts are not fully closed, meaning that they have an opening in the top quarter of the back wall. The good news is that the ball rarely escapes through that small opening, so you'll be able to enjoy playing for long periods of time before having to run after an escaped ball.

Bola G., M1

Running

St. Louis is an incredible place for runners. First of all, there is Forest Park just steps away from the Medical Campus, which is actually 1.5x the size of Central Park in New York City and has hundreds of different trails for runners, walkers, and bikers. If you prefer running in the city, you can go through the Central West End towards downtown, run around the undergraduate campus, or through the Tower Grove/Shaw neighborhoods, among many other places. Finally, if you like to compete, there are road races throughout St. Louis multiple times each month, and multiple competitive racing teams you can join. We even have a running club for our medical school class and routinely meet up for group runs!

Lisa G., M1

Soccer

Playing sports, especially soccer, is something that a decent number of our classmates participate in. We often organize within our class if the weather is nice and we can get around 10-15 people with varying skill levels. It's super low stakes, just kicking the ball around and having fun. Additionally, there is a med-school-wide (all classes) soccer GroupMe that organizes similar kick-arounds. There's also a team to play in a more competitive intramural league, where we compete on the undergrad campus against other undergrad and graduate teams at WashU. This year we actually won first place! It is really easy to get involved and continue to play this amazing sport, no matter your experience or passion level!

Ahmed H., M1

Sumers Recreation Center (Danforth Campus)

I cannot sing the praises of the Sumers Recreation Center on the Danforth Campus enough, although I've actually tried to keep quiet about it because, in my opinion, being one of the few med students who uses it is the best part. The Sumers Recreation Center is about a ten minute drive from the Central West End or a 7-minute walk from the University City-Big Bend MetroLink station (three stops away from the CWE station on the blue line). It's right next to the ~historic~ WUSTL football field/former Olympic stadium, and you can park next to the football field (not directly next to the gym — I would make sure there isn't a Red/Yellow parking sign next to wherever you're parking) without a WashU parking pass.

The Rec Center itself is fantastic — there's a weight training area with six squat racks, five deadlift platforms, tons of benches and free weights and brand new machines, as well as multiple rooms for yoga/stretching. The basketball courts have been converted into a cardio room, with all of the cardio equipment spread out along the basketball court and on the upper-floor track for social distancing. This is super convenient in terms of COVID precautions, but it does mean no basketball/volleyball/badminton on those courts (but maybe this will change by the time you guys get here!). The Sumers Rec Center also has a pool for swimming laps, and you can reserve a lane two days in advance.

The gym tends to get decently crowded around the standard hours (~4-7 p.m.) but it's so spacious and has so much equipment that I haven't seen that as a huge problem. Also, the odds of ever running into another med student there are extremely low — I'm sure you'll love everyone in your class, but sometimes you want to work out somewhere where you won't have to think about Anki, or your last exam, or if someone you sort of know and see around and say "hi" to but aren't close with will see you looking really sweaty. If you want the peak Danforth gym experience, I'd recommend going when they open at 6 a.m., so the entire massive gym is just you and like five super-jacked grad students all doing your thing and you get to see the sunrise through the skylights, all while knowing you don't have to worry about getting a parking ticket (the parking monitors start checking parking passes around 7:30 or 8 a.m. every day, as a heads up).

Victoria M., M1

Swimming

One of the best ways that I've found to take care of myself during med school is by swimming laps once or twice a week. I was a competitive swimmer throughout my childhood, and as an undergrad I played on my college's club water polo team. Being in the water is a big part of my life and it's been great to continue that at WashU using the Danforth Campus pool. Medical students have free membership to the undergrad gym and pool facilities, and there are slots for lap swimming every day. Due to the pandemic, you have to reserve in advance, but I almost always get a time slot when I want it. We even have a group of a few people who carpool the short 10-minute drive to the Danforth Campus on weeknights and swim together — it's great to see friends outside of class during busy weeks. I have a great time with friends, and I am always left feeling relaxed and tired after my set — which makes for a great night's sleep and helps me stay balanced.

Rosie R., M1

Tennis

There is a big community at WashU School of Medicine that plays tennis, ranging from your classmates to faculty members! There are so many accessible courts in the area, starting from the free public courts at Hudlin Park, which is right across the street from school and the hospital. There are a few nicer courts in the area that you will have to pay a fee for, such as those in Forest Park and Tower Grove. We have a running group chat between the M1s/M2s and Dr. Yau (one of our amazing clinical skills professors), and people are always down to play whenever the weather is nice out! There have even been 60-70-degree days in the winter where we have been able to play! One of my favorite events is the tennis tournament during the Society Cup, where you will get to see the skills of your classmates and the amazing faculty, and have some friendly competition.

Tiffany C., M1

The Core Gym

The on-campus gym located at the Core Apartment Residences is perfectly located one block from the Becker Medical Library and the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center so that you can work out before, between, or after classes. Students have access between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m., making it great for both early risers or night owls. The gym itself is very large, with every sort of cardio machine you could want, from treadmills, to ellipticals, to stationary bikes, to rowing machines, and more. For strength workouts, there are many weight machines, cable machines, and free weights to choose from. The gym also has a separate, smaller room with a TV that you can use to stream exercise videos on and more floor space for abdominal exercises or stretching.

Sofia C., M1

Yoga

My favorite way to start off the day or take a break after class is a Hot Yoga or Power Yoga class at the studio YogaSix. It started off with me and one of my classmates (and now best friends) challenging ourselves to do the 6 a.m. classes for five days in a row during our first week of school. Every time we drove past the grandiose WashU Medical Campus at sunrise, it felt magical.

I now tend to go in the early afternoon because it allows me to take a break from the class-heavy mornings and study-heavy evenings and just re-center myself. We have a group chat with yogis in our class and we often share class-package deals there and plan to car-pool together. When I moved to St. Louis, I tried out a few yoga studios including Blue Sky Yoga and Shanti Yoga but there are still so many I want to explore: Yoga in DeMun, Urban Breath Yoga, CorePower Yoga, Yoga St Louis, Pure Hot Yoga St. Louis. The WashU Yoga Club also offers free classes once a week either in person or on Zoom depending on the weather and/or COVID-19 cases at the time.

Lyra M., M1

St. Louis Attractions

City Museum

City Museum is truly a playground for kids and adults alike. Slide down a 10-story spiral slide, explore an indoor cave system built from old St. Louis relics (including a massive concrete whale), climb an outdoor jungle gym to an airplane that has been suspended over the street below by a masterful feat of welding ... you really have to see it to believe it!

Kate W., M1

Forest Park

If you think the WashU experience stops at being one of the best medical schools, think again — we have one of the largest urban parks as our backyard! Literally one block from most student apartments (including mine!), Forest Park has everything you need and more to keep calm and have fun, whether it's running and biking trails that provide me a scenic tour while exercising or large open fields for sports like football, soccer, and ultimate frisbee with friends! On top of that, you'll find a host of impressive and FREE cultural institutions within this forest of a park, my favorites being the Saint Louis Zoo, Saint Louis Science Center and McDonnell Planetarium, and The Muny — America's largest outdoor musical theater!

Adam K., M1

Gateway Arch

The Gateway Arch is one of St. Louis' most recognizable symbols. Though I think it's important to reflect on the effects (both positive and negative) of westward expansion, which the monument celebrates, the Arch is a really cool place to visit. There are several activities, including a tram to the top, a riverboat cruise, and a movie showing about the making of the Arch and all its challenges, which I found particularly fascinating. It's a must-see monument in St. Louis and a great place to take family/friends that are visiting.

Sanji B., M1

Missouri Botanical Garden

The Missouri Botanical Garden is easily one of my favorite places to visit — so much so that I got a membership to the gardens that paid for itself in my first three months. Open year-round, this expansive garden is relaxing and scenic. It is absolutely a beautiful place to go and destress by yourself, or hang out with friends, or even go on a date. They host a different event almost every month of the year, which brings the community in and showcases some amazing art and culture. If there is one place you have to go while in St. Louis, it is definitely the Botanical Garden. Regular admission price for adults is \$14, with varying discounts, and levels of memberships.

Amdiel C., M1

Missouri History Museum

If you've just moved to St. Louis, I highly recommend adding the Missouri History Museum to the top of your list! Interesting factoid: It actually opened to the public in 1913 on the site of the entrance to the 1904 World's Fair! With rotating history exhibits throughout the year, the museum covers events and time periods like the city's baseball history, its innovations in aviation, life on the Mississippi River, the 1904 World's Fair, the Civil Rights movement, and more! It also often showcases special, time-limited exhibits, like St. Louis Sound and the women's suffrage movement, so definitely check out their events calendar to stay updated!

Isabella G., M1

Saint Louis Art Museum, Forest Park

St. Louis has so many fun options if you enjoy art museums (or even museums in general) and, even better, all the art museums here offer ~free~ admission. The Saint Louis Art Museum in Forest Park has a really cool permanent collection, including paintings of local leaders by Kehinde Wiley (who did Obama's official portrait!) and several works by Max Beckmann (for those interested in 20th century German expressionism). There's also a rotating exhibit that changes every few months, so I'm really looking forward to "Painting on Stone: Science and the Sacred" in February.

The Pulitzer Arts Foundation is a much smaller, but really charming art museum — it hosts one show in the entire museum at a time, focusing on a specific

artist or theme. My friends and I had a great time exploring the art by Hannah Wilke, whose work touches on everything from female sexuality to personal battles with cancer, and the upcoming exhibit focusing on interactive art promises to be really interesting.

Finally, there's also WashU's own Kemper Art Museum, located on the Danforth Campus. The museum houses some really interesting portraiture, in mediums ranging from paintings to cut red paper (my personal favorite) and photography. We had the chance to explore some of the collection and consider how different pieces there speak to us as future medical professionals and as people confronting disease, and I'm excited to go back to see more.

As a bonus: the collection of mosaics in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis is breathtaking and is the world's largest collection outside of Russia!

Annabelle Y., M1

Saint Louis Science Center

I mean, I love the Saint Louis Science Center so much that I spent my birthday there! Not only is it free walk-in general admission and just a hop-skip-and-jump from campus in Forest Park, but it has over 700+ interactive exhibits and live star shows, covering everything from atoms and oceans to dinosaurs and dark matter! If you get a chance, I would highly recommend the McDonnell Planetarium, connected via the Skybridge — it's an extra fee, but it is absolutely breathtaking! Fun fact: it's the largest artificial sky in the Western Hemisphere! (Also, if you enjoy beer, the St. Louis Science Center also hosts the BeerFest, featuring over 40 breweries, 120 beers and access throughout the museum, usually in October!)

Isabella G., M1

Saint Louis Zoo

The Saint Louis Zoo is my absolute favorite place in the city, and it's absolutely free! It's a great place for hanging with friends, power walking on your own, or even scenic studying (noise dampening headphones recommended). My top three animal sightings are a cheetah climbing a tree, a baby kangaroo still in the pouch, and an orangutan doing somersaults.

Savannah S., M1

St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station

The St. Louis Aquarium is one of the city's newest attractions and is part of the overhaul of Union Station downtown (which also features several restaurants, a nifty hotel, a ferris wheel, and a ropes course). It's not the largest aquarium, but since it's brand new, it's very well appointed! The aquarium is also home to Lord Stanley: a bright blue lobster who was caught as seafood in Massachusetts, but was gifted to St. Louis when the Blues beat the Bruins in the NHL Stanley Cup Finals in 2019! \$25 for adult tickets, or varying membership packages!

Kate W., M1

St. Louis Blues Hockey

The Blues are fun! Watching guys with knife shoes chase after vulcanized rubber is already a fun time, but the fan traditions in the Enterprise Center make it a blast! Start by ending the national Anthem with “the home of the BLUES,” get way into the power-play dance, and sing Country Roads with nearly 20,000 people to end the night. Whether you’re already a hockey fan or about to become a Blues fan, Student Rush tickets will get you into the Enterprise Center for as low as \$25. Play Gloria!

Jon I., M1

St. Louis Cardinals Baseball

Your 11-time World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals are only a 15-minute MetroLink ride away and a classic way to spend a St. Louis evening. They’ve had a winning record 14 years in a row and don’t look like they’re slowing down any time soon. It’s almost impossible to go anywhere in St. Louis without seeing someone wearing Cardinals gear — the people here really love their baseball. So, grab your favorite ballpark snack and head down to a packed Busch Stadium to watch the Cardinals march back into the postseason!

Jon I., M1

Steinberg Skating Rink

Steinberg Skating Rink is conveniently located in Forest Park, right across the street from the Medical Campus! It’s a sizable ice rink with skate rentals, snacks, and refreshments available. Lights are strung up across the rink and they have fire pits going, so I especially love skating there at night! They are in the process of making the rink a year-round amenity as well, and are looking into things like roller-blading for the warmer months! Tickets are \$10 for entry and you can rent skates for \$5.

Kate W., M1

The Muny

The Muny is a beautiful amphitheater located in Forest Park. Their productions are phenomenal, and there are few better ways to spend a summer evening in St. Louis than watching one of their shows. While the paid seats give you a great experience, the venue also has 1,500 free seats in the back that make it really easy to head over any time to see a random show with friends! It was a great bonding experience for many of our classmates to see shows together at the beginning of our first year.

Priscilla C., M1

Tower Grove Farmers’ Market

The Tower Grove Farmers’ Market is about a 10-minute drive from the Medical Campus and is held Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings in April-October. There are always plenty of vendors with fresh produce, plants, prepared foods, drinks, and

craft items to buy. There are even yoga sessions on Saturday mornings. It is a great way to get outside, buy fresh food, and support local farmers and businesses!

Alexis M., M1

Travel

Biking

Hey y'all ... Seasoned biker here, literally and figuratively. (I bike all four seasons.) Commuter biking through Central West End is super easy and safe. I live about a mile from classes (and almost all students in our class live even closer), and I use a bike for all my transportation needs. Using a bike for your preclinical years is particularly easy since all classes are in a single, small section of campus, which also happens to be across the street from Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

There are many places to lock your bikes, several of which are gated bike storage areas that you can access with your student ID. These areas also have bike tools and a bike pump for those of you that have no tools (speaking from experience). Biking can be cold in January and February, but a warm hat, gloves, and face mask (no shortage of these in these historic times) make it easily doable.

From my experience biking in Central West End, most car drivers are very considerate, giving bicycles the right of way (even when it wasn't my right sometimes, thinking back). People also won't look down on you too harshly if you bike on sidewalks (where it is NEVER your right of way). For those passionate enough to call biking a passion, you'll have no shortage of scenic circuits through Forest Park, just a block from class.

All the cool kids wear their helmets here!

Joshua P., M1

Life with a Car

Although it's possible to get around without a motor vehicle in St. Louis, it is so convenient and helpful to have one, especially for clerkships in Phase 2 when you may have to travel to more distant locations. But even as an M1, I appreciate that having a car allows me to just go out, shop, or run errands whenever, wherever. Plus, you can be one of those friends who offers rides! The only downside to being a car person is finding parking, but even that's not bad at all in St. Louis compared to other major cities.

Aseeyah I., M1

Life Without a Car

I was a bit concerned coming to St. Louis that I would need a car to get places, but so far, I have found that is not the case. The school provides a free Metro pass for the great Metro public transit system here. I have taken it to get to places that

aren't walkable such as the airport, downtown, and friends' houses in surrounding neighborhoods. I also have amazing friends who are willing to give me a ride wherever I need to go. I can't guarantee that you will never need a car during your time at WashU, but it is definitely doable in Phase 1!

Nicolette P., M1

Parking on Campus

There are several options for parking on campus without breaking the bank. If you plan to park on campus regularly, you can pay for a monthly parking pass in the Clayton Garage or the Duncan Garage, which costs about \$80-\$90 per month. Otherwise, if you only need to park on campus occasionally, you can purchase a parking debit card at the Clayton Garage. When you use this debit card to pay for parking, you get a discounted rate of \$5 per day (instead of \$15+). Finally, all students with a car should sign up for the free after-hours parking in the Clayton Garage. After 2 p.m. on weekdays, and all day on the weekends, parking is free for students who sign up for after-hours parking. The form for after-hours parking, as well as other details, can be found at <https://facilities.med.wustl.edu> under the parking tab.

Gianna S., M1

Shopping

Grocery Stores

I live in the Central West End and have a lot of great grocery store options nearby. I do my weekly grocery shopping at **ALDI**, a quick four-minute drive from my apartment. They are super cheap and have all the basics; just don't forget to bring a quarter for a cart and your own bags. If you are on a budget, this is the place to go! **Schnucks** is just as close and has way more options. If you are more of a chef than I am and enjoy a wider selection of food, this could be your store. If you are looking for something walkable from school, **Whole Foods** and **Straub's** are pricier but very convenient. I will go to either of these if I need something quick or for a fun occasion to treat myself.

Ethan D., M1

Haircuts

As a woman with previously untreated, straight black hair (now living my blonde pixie-cut dreams!), I cannot say enough good things about the incredible stylists at **Philip Johnson Salon** in the Central West End. Not only are they nearby, but they also do an amazing job with haircuts, color treatments, and special-occasion styling. Unfortunately, you often have to reserve weeks in advance, and they are on the pricier side (so I'd definitely recommend checking out their specials on

their website)! In terms of other suggestions, my classmates highly recommend **Paul's Salon Asian Hair** on Olive Boulevard (an affordable option for haircuts with good reviews!).

Isabella G., M1

International Groceries

I was actually surprised at how good the international grocery stores are around the area, even though most of them are accessible by car only. **United Provisions** is very close to the Danforth Campus and is a good place to get both produce and other types of food, especially if you're interested in Asian foods. **Olive Supermarket** is the larger grocery store for Asian foods, so definitely check it out. You can even make a small trip out of it, and get soup dumplings from right across the street, as well as boba from **Cube Tea Studio** (the best boba place around in my opinion).

Theodore M., M1

Outdoors

Eckert's Farm

As soon as the leaves start to turn red and orange, it's time to visit Eckert's Farm. Located about 30 minutes from St Louis, this is a lovely farm where you can go apple picking. This is a great day-trip idea to go with friends, pick and eat their different varieties of apples, and take photos in their pumpkin patch. You can actually go all year-round, and you can pick a variety of fruits and vegetables depending on the season. And once you are done walking in their orchards, you can visit their country store where you can find, among other things, a delicious collection of baked goods. Their pies and apple cider donuts are a must.

Gabriel T., M1

Rivers and Lakes

In the heat of St. Louis summers, why not cool off and chill out on a relaxing float trip down one of the Mississippi's tributaries? Float trips are a classic Missouri mainstay, and that includes renting out rafts, inner tubes, or canoes to float gently down the river for a few hours, blast your music, and imbibe on your beverage of choice. There are several raft-rental agencies within about 1.5 hrs of STL. It's a great class-bonding activity!

For a more local experience, two-person paddleboats can be rented to paddle your way around the interconnected lakes and fountains of Forest Park!

Philip F., M1

Life (in COVID)

Life in COVID

The universe really said, “Hmm moving to a new city while trying to make friends and starting MED SCHOOL doesn’t sound stressful enough, why don’t we just throw in a little global pandemic too...”

Coming into medical school, I literally thought I was going to make no friends because a) I’m exceptionally introverted, and b) my introversion has been amplified by COVID about 100x. If you identify with this, I’m here to tell you that you have nothing to worry about — I’ve found people who match my own comfort level with both COVID and socializing, including roommates who will play skribbl.io with me over Zoom while we’re all in our own rooms with our doors closed.

Luckily for our class, the low case rates and vaccination/masking requirements made many things possible at the start of the school year, such as: in-person classes, larger outdoor gatherings, indoor dining, clubbing, gym-ing, museum-ing, etc. Businesses in the area have adapted well and established solid COVID-safety guidelines (for example, clubs have been requiring proof of vaccination, many small businesses have curbside pick-up, and most places require masks).

St. Louis also offers so many fun outdoor activities that even a recluse like me has, on occasion, been tempted to leave the house. My favorite memories with my classmates include floating down a river in two huge rafts, picking apples in the autumn, and playing capture-the-flag during a class field day. Everyone here is incredibly supportive and understanding, which makes pandemic life all the more manageable.

By now, you’ve all experienced how ever-changing the situation is — as I’m writing this, we’re getting hit hard with the omicron wave, and policies are in flux. I feel like admin has been responsive about the situation, promptly moving our in-person classes to online and constantly communicating with us via email.

There are a million other things I could say about Life in COVID, but I’ll just end on this note: You will definitely find your people and your passions here, even in these trying times.

Wendy T., M1



7/7 for finishing, but 4/7 on not getting lost



Sweet treat with my big sib!



The view from the back of the Muny — surprisingly nice for free seats!



Annual (free, of course) Forest Park concert — St. Louis Symphony Orchestra



Health and Resources

SECTION EDITOR: MAIDA DUNCAN

Health and Resources

Mental Health

Investing in your mental health in medical school can be difficult and is always a work in progress. I found that the most important resource was being able to see a therapist through my WashU School of Medicine benefit plan. If your provider is within the student benefit plan, you can see a therapist with only a \$10 copay, with no limit on visits. My best piece of advice would be to use this resource early during your transition period before the stress of medical school begins to ramp up. Taking advantage of these resources can only benefit you and I've found it incredibly helpful in navigating new friendships, living, alone, and dealing with the more emotionally draining aspects of medical education.

Mackenzie C., M1

Peer Advocates

Peer advocates are fellow students that are here to 1) be friendly and empathetic listening ears and 2) help students navigate resources like mistreatment reporting systems, mental health help, academic support, and more. Along with providing individual support, we are also here to keep note of trends to bring to the attention of admin to improve the student experience. We are always here to listen! You can request help from any of us or reach out to specific advocates — we span all medical school years and have a diverse range of experiences. All of us are dedicated to supporting you and helping you take care of yourself throughout the challenges of medical school.

Shireen R., M2

Student Health at WashU

WashU's health benefit plan is covered by the student health fee, and you can use it as a secondary benefit if you already have primary insurance. Student Health covers all necessary immunizations. With WashU's benefit plan, I was able to get an MRI for free after a knee injury, and I will be receiving free physical therapy, which is really nice! You can make appointments over the phone and be seen within a couple of days. I've heard that walk-ins are fairly easy as well.

Wendy T., M1

WUMS Well

WUMS Well is the hub for student wellness at WashU School of Medicine! You can find modules on better sleep, stretching and posture, and even financial literacy. Not to mention that the WUMS Well Instagram page highlights student events that are happening and upper-level students that are eager to pass along advice. Student and faculty representatives are always on the lookout for fun activities around St. Louis and additional resources for students regarding all domains of wellness.

Elijah F., M2



Advice

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

SECTION EDITOR: MADELEINE BUSBY

From Amisha P., M4

Welcome to WashU School of Medicine and congratulations! Take a moment to reflect on everything you've done to get here. Medical school can be a transformative time — I was in your shoes not too long ago, nervous but excited about what was to come. I moved far away from home, and, naturally, the start of medical school was challenging. I soon found a close community of friends and mentors who supported me through this journey and helped me figure out what excites me about medicine! Here are a few thoughts about how to navigate this time:



Amisha P., M4

Continue to do the things that make you happy — whether that is going for runs in Forest Park, binge-watching the latest Netflix show, or trying out new restaurants (there are so many gems here)! Medical school is all about finding the right balance for you, and it is so important to take care of yourself. Take those mental breaks from studying, so you can recharge. Don't feel guilty about doing so.

Take advantage of all the opportunities here — WashU School of Medicine has so much to offer. The clinicians and researchers here are extremely passionate about their field and love mentoring students. This is the time to explore and make those connections. And don't be afraid of cold emailing! Although terrifying, many of my most meaningful experiences and mentors have come from randomly reaching out to a faculty member I thought was doing interesting work.

Find the study habits that work for you. It may take some trial and error during your first couple of months to understand how you learn best. Don't be afraid to try out new techniques! What works for someone else may not work for you, so try not to compare yourself to others.

Reach out to your peers, who are navigating this exceptional and challenging journey alongside you. Reach out to faculty, to Dean Moscoso, to mentors, to loved ones, to friends, to anyone. You're not alone, and there is a huge community of people rooting for you and celebrating your successes.

Most importantly, keep your friends and family close. Go on those road trips, travel back home for that reunion, or get on the plane for your friend's wedding. Your life doesn't have to be (and shouldn't be) on hold because of medical school. Have fun, enjoy this time, explore your passions, and challenge yourself. You deserve to be here.

From Colleen Wallace, MD

*Associate Professor of Pediatrics,
Thread Leader for Professional Identity
Formation, Co-Director of Phase 1 Module 1*



Colleen Wallace, MD

Being a physician is an incredible and humbling experience. You will be invited into the most intimate moments of life with people you may have never met, but whom you will never forget, and who will certainly never forget you. You will become an integral part of their life stories, forever entwined in their most life-changing moments. It's quite a privilege, and it comes with responsibility that can seem overwhelming at times. With that in mind, my two biggest pieces of advice as you embark on this journey are to invest in relationships and to take care of yourself.

Relationships are essential to the practice of medicine. The relationships you develop with patients, peers, faculty, and other colleagues will impact the care you are able to provide. These relationships — along with those in your personal life — will also help keep you balanced and bring meaning to your work. In every interaction, pause to think about what biases you may have and how you can mitigate their impact, what barriers to care may exist and how you can help overcome them, and above all — remember the person inside each patient, caretaker, and colleague. When we're tired or stressed, it's easy to forget that they all have their own stories, but one of the most important things we can do as a physician is to ensure that people feel heard and cared for. Remember the wise words of St. Louisan Maya Angelou: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

In addition to investing in relationships, take care of yourself in other ways — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. There's a reason they tell you on airplanes to put your own oxygen mask on before helping others; if you aren't taking care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of anyone else. So be yourself and make time for what matters to you, whatever that may be. Give yourself grace when things are hard, and ask for help when you need it. There are so many people at WashU School of Medicine who truly care about you as a person and want to support you however we can. Remember what motivated you to attend medical school, and keep your eye on your long-term goals. As you experience different specialties and career paths, reflect on what brings you joy, what energizes you, what it is that makes you excited to get out of bed in the morning — because a career becomes a calling if it's your heart's work. Finally, remember that nobody knows everything; being a physician means committing to lifelong learning. So never stop learning — about science, medicine, cutting edge technologies... about life, death, joy, grief, hope ... about what it means to be human and to share the human experience with others.

I look forward to accompanying you on this exhilarating journey.

From Erik N., M4

Welcome to St. Louis and WashU School of Medicine! You have many opportunities ahead and I am so glad you chose to study here. I want to start off by inviting you to remember how blessed you are to be here. Not only are you in medical school, but you are at a phenomenal institution with incredibly caring people in an amazing city. Start and end each day with gratitude for all that surrounds you. I have absolutely loved my time here and I know you will too.

My dad constantly emphasizes two life mottos that I want to pass on to you:

1) “Enjoy the Journey”: Medical school is definitely a journey. You will quickly realize how much there is to learn and will feel stressed at times. However, you are not asked to be perfect on the first day ... or even the last. As you give effort and enjoy the small moments, you will be able to look back on your progress with fulfillment. And don’t forget part of that fulfillment includes Ted Drewes frozen custard, St. Louis BBQ, Cardinals games, and visits to the zoo. These four years go by way too fast not to enjoy them!

2) “See the Possibilities”: At WashU, the possibilities and resources are endless. I have experienced this myself. You can choose any field and get involved with any project or activity you can possibly imagine. Try new things, make some mistakes, branch out, get out of your comfort zone, and who knows where you’ll end up. You’ve got this.

Congrats on being here! You’ve made the right choice. Now go make the most of it, have fun, and become the best doctor you can be.



Erik N., M4

From Erika Crouch, MD, PhD

*Professor of Pathology and Immunology,
Thread Leader for Pathology,
Co-Director of Phase 1 Module 2*

Welcome class!

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to connect with you. I hope you are as excited about getting started as we are to begin another year.

Other contributors on this page have shared many valuable insights and lessons learned. I agree with it all, but want to share a few things that shaped my own path and academic priorities. I was an MSTP student and have always been excited by science, and particularly biology. For me, medical school was transformative. I had the opportunity to take deep and often independent dives into human biology, the mechanisms of disease, and investigation. I loved it and it was these experiences that ultimately lead me to pathology and



Erika Crouch, MD, PhD

independent research, eventually to laboratory management, and increasingly to medical education.

Regardless of your current goals, it is important to find and follow your passions, and when special opportunities present themselves to explore new ones and evolve. Nearly every physician will confide that medical school provided the best opportunities to do that exploration. It is an unfortunate reality that you will probably never find a better time. Demands of work and life will inevitably pull you in many directions. The broader the foundation you build today and the more learning skills you master, the easier it will be to succeed in your career, whether as a physician, scientist, educator, and/or advocate.

As faculty, we spend more time than we can sometimes imagine trying to create a curriculum that will prepare you for your future careers in medicine. Although it is important to achieve the stated educational objectives, it is just the beginning. There is just too much out there and so many new and important things to learn. Plan to take full advantage of the unique opportunities that Gateway will bring to you.

If you would like some assistance, just seek us out. We are always here for you. Happy learning, happy exploring...

From Ian S. Hagemann, MD, PhD

Assistant Dean for Admissions

Welcome to Washington University! I am one of a handful of current administrators who graduated from medical school at WashU. When my wife, Andrea, and I were medical students, we used to laugh at the faculty who would stand up and describe themselves as “WUMS 21” (this means a 21st-year WashU medical student). Now, we are those people.

Some things were different twenty years ago.

First-year lectures were given in Moore Auditorium, and second-year lectures in Erlanger. There were a LOT of lectures, usually three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, unless we had lab or small groups. Erlanger didn’t have enough seats, so some of us would sit in the aisles. There was no video recording, but we would make an audiotape, which someone would have to remember to flip halfway through the hour. Then someone in the class would type out the text, and we would get a printout in our mailbox. We paid for the privilege of joining the student transcript service.

Some things were not different at all. The gross anatomy lab has been frozen in time for decades. Forget about any “dungeon” stereotypes. The lab is on the top floor of one of our historic buildings and still has windows on three sides that we used to open up on nice days. If your eyes get blurry from too much dissection, you can look up at the cabinets of oddities that people have collected over the years. Then you can look back down and keep rolling up little bits of fascia to reveal those nerves you couldn’t find before.



Ian S. Hagemann, MD, PhD

The Legacy Curriculum actually appealed to me as an applicant, but the Gateway Curriculum is better. We've become much more thoughtful about what students need to know and when they need to know it. We've added more explicit teaching on social science topics, drawn on a wider variety of pedagogies, and activated the talents of our master educators. I can't possibly summarize everything that has changed, but I hope that some things about the WashU experience will stay the same. Our students are very active and creative. If you're here, it's because our faculty has recognized that you have amazing gifts that will let you contribute to the future of medicine. We want you to take up that charge and explore what your unique contribution will be. I also hope you will see that academic rigor is a virtue. Don't be afraid to go to the primary literature. Use evidence to guide your practice, evaluate evidence with a critical eye, and learn to contribute to the body of evidence, too. Sometimes, doing a bit more than is required — reading an extra article, or staying a bit late to help with one more operation — will be very rewarding.

WashU School of Medicine is a family. We are very collaborative, and we try to help each other improve. I hope you will see yourself as belonging to this family. Someday, you, too, will be able to reminisce about how things have changed and how they have stayed the same.

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 WashU: 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.



Jonathan Mullin, MD

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.

From Koong-Nah Chung, PhD

Associate Dean, Medical Student Research

You will spend the next four plus years at WashU School of Medicine 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.)



Koong-Nah Chung, PhD

From Lisa M. Moscoso, MD, PhD

Associate Dean, Student Affairs

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



Lisa M. Moscoso, MD, PhD

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 Tamara S. O., M4

Congratulations and welcome! You made it! It took a lot of time and hard work to get here, so take a moment to reflect on that, celebrate, and thank those who helped you along the way. Getting into medical school is the toughest gate; the hard work never ends, but now that you are here, it gets better and more rewarding. At WashU School of Medicine, you'll be challenged but well-supported every step of the way. Here's my two cents on things to hold onto on this journey:



Tamara S. O., M4

- While you may have answered this question ad-nauseam on your interview trail, jot down the real reason of “why you want to become a doctor.” Who and what inspires you? Think of the qualities and values you want to uphold as a doctor. Tuck those away for a rainy day. Once you start your clinical experiences, add to this list the stories of meaningful patient interactions you have that remind you why it's all worth it.
- Remember: 1) it's a marathon not a sprint, and 2) trust your training. Everyone says med school is like drinking out of a fire-hydrant. But you don't have to do it all at once. Trust the process; repetition in medicine is key. Medicine has its own language, and you will have a lot of firsts (aka make a lot of mistakes, at first). Give yourself lots of grace and patience. You will eventually learn the jargon and start to recognize the patterns, and then the motions will start to get easier. It is very natural to think you will never learn it all, but just take it one day at a time.

Many generations of WashU medical students have come before you, with similar fears and anxieties; and like them, you too will one day walk away in a green graduation gown.

- Because it is a marathon, you must find ways to re-fill your tank. Feeling burnt out is likely to happen at some point, so you need to 1) be in tune with yourself enough to notice how you are feeling, 2) find ways to fill your cup, and 3) prioritize caring for your wellness (don't wait to do this; practice proactive prevention). Yes, you will have a lot to study, but don't feel guilty for taking time to do things that re-energize you; find out what these things are and plan to do them (e.g., getting enough sleep, exercising, calling home, painting, hanging out with friends).
- "It's all about relationships." My soccer coach would say this often, which sounded cheesy at the time, but it truly is the friendships, mentorships, and positive patient interactions that will get you through the long and physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding days. Connection helps prevent burnout and makes for a more fulfilling, enjoyable time, so invest in building relationships from the start and continue building them throughout.
- Pay attention to the "how." There's a lot of things you will learn in medical school; arguably, the most important are not in a textbook. Sometimes it's not what you do, but how you do it that can make all the difference to a patient. Empathy, kindness, and presence ... these are not taught, but you will see them modeled; practice incorporating them into your own style.
- Finally, try to enjoy the process (instead of just chasing after the end or a specific test result), re-read #1 when you need to, and take time to reflect and write down (or talk about) events and interactions that stir up something inside you. It will help you make meaning of this special journey, and it will be helpful for your next application season — to residency this time.

From Thomas V. H., M4

Be yourself, and nobody else — if I could guarantee that only one thing was truly learned by all medical students, this would be it.

In the summer of 2020, right before starting my clerkships, I began the awkward but exhilarating process of social transition to my true gender. I was entering a new phase of my education in the midst of a pandemic, and I realized I could not go on hiding who I was from myself and from the world. Looking back, I can see that a lot of what kept me performing a gender that was not mine and trying to be anything but myself was the pressures of the medical field. These are pressures a lot of us feel, to conform to one historical and imaginary



Thomas V. H., M4

idea of a “doctor” for fear of hurting our careers. In a school with so many driven people, it can sometimes feel impossible to be different and to shake our perceptions of “what a doctor should be.”

But those perceptions are wrong! The fact that you are here at this school right now proves that YOU are what a doctor should be. For us to truly serve our patients, we need doctors whose hopes, dreams, identities, and drives are just as diverse as our patients’. This place is big enough for all these driven people to be one big community together, all striving for our big goals but without anyone getting pushed aside. The beauty of med school is that you have the time, space, and resources to figure out what it is that makes you unique, what issues or topics excite you the most, and what kinds of patients pull on your heart in ways unique to you.

Take this unique time and space to figure out what drives you, not only in medicine, but especially in your life. You can and should have a life outside of med school! It will likely take conscious effort to protect these things; medicine will always take everything you give it, so be sure not to give it everything! There will always be another patient, another procedure, another opportunity to learn; but there will not always be another time to take care of yourself and those you care about.

It’s hard to believe that I was in your shoes only four years ago! I remember lots of nerves, anxiety, and anticipation, but even more support. Lean into your classmates, learn what drives and excites them, and show them what drives and excites you. Together, you can not only survive, but truly thrive in med school.

Be yourself, and nobody else!

From Timothy T. Yau, MD

Course Director, Clinical Skills

Welcome to WashU School of Medicine! 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!



Timothy T. Yau, MD

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!

From Will R. Ross, MD, MPH

Associate Dean for Diversity

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



Will R. Ross, MD, MPH

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.

