

“When the untapped potential of a student meets the liberating art of a teacher, a miracle unfolds.”

—Mary Hatwood Futrell

AIMEE OBIDZINSKI/UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH



Dear Pitt Med Reader,

The traditional approach to medical education is designed so that young students will develop the scientific knowledge and clinical skills necessary to become excellent physicians or physician-scientists. However, to truly prepare the next generation of Healers, Activists, Innovators and Leaders at Pitt Med (HAIL to Pitt), we must go beyond. We agree with the American education icon Mary Hatwood Futrell: Liberating a medical student's or research apprentice's full potential leads to extraordinary outcomes. Our new curriculum at Pitt Med is being built around this principle, such that our students not only excel in foundational knowledge of medicine but also reason beyond rote learning to become adept problem solvers, innovators and team leaders.

The new curriculum, which will launch this fall for the entering class (stay tuned for more coverage), is designed to support the development of these characteristics; yet I should also mention that students with these capacities tend to be attracted to our school already. Here are some illustrative examples:

The medical students featured in our cover story, including Nicole Alindogan, Kathleen O'Connor and the many others who are working with student leaders from across the health sciences, have learned a team-based practice of medicine rather than a traditional physician-centric approach. These young people are showing us that students seem to be uniquely suited to the very patient-centered work of street medicine, and they are bringing that valuable perspective back to the clinic.

Also described in another article in this magazine, Jonathan Alder, an assistant professor of medicine, would not have gone down the research path that led to an explanation of what's happening in the telomeres of melanoma patients if it hadn't been for the insistence of Pattra Chun-on, a student in his lab. (See “The long game,” page 13.)

In another example, Physician Scientist Training Program students Ashti Shah and Anya Singh-Varma also talked their advisers into letting them pursue a project. As one of their professors put it, they ended up creating “a truly novel way of looking at molecular behavior in the liver over time.” Ashti and Anya also demonstrated that teamwork is a natural approach to problem-solving.

I'm very proud of our students and can't wait to see where they take us next.

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