

From the Dean



On March 20, the students in the KU School of Medicine–Salina Class of 2015 learned where they had matched for their residency training.

Jill Corpstein Linville and Daniel Linville will be heading to Indiana University Health Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie, Ind., for residencies in family medicine. Erik Dill will be entering a pathology residency at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Rany Gilpatrick is headed to Oklahoma University in Oklahoma City for a pediatrics residency. Kayla Johnson, Claire Hinrichsen and Sara Ritterling all matched from KU School of Medicine–Wichita, in pediatrics, OB-GYN, and internal medicine, respectively. Finally, Tyson Wisinger matched with the Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency Program in Salina.

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Scope, the University of Kansas School of Medicine–Salina newsletter, is published three times a year. To subscribe to the print edition, call (785) 822-0411 or email mgordon2@kumc.edu. To subscribe to the electronic version, visit <http://www.kumc.edu/school-of-medicine/salina/newsletter.html>.



Salina's Class of 2018: Back row, L to R: Erik Bowell, Lisa Ayala, Sean Webb, Abby Serpan, Levi Kindel. Front row: Catie Paliwoda, Kayci Huslig, Cora Ruhl, Teresa Nunez.

Class of 2018 recalls first-year experience

The first year of medical school is fast-paced and often an overwhelming experience. Free time can become a distant memory. As the year winds down, the Class of 2018 shared some of its wisdom from the year on the Salina campus. At the top of the list: a solid work ethic and preparation.

“Content-wise, I was prepared for much of the basic science material,” said Cora Ruhl. “More than that, though, undergrad taught me how to work hard and manage my time well.”

Sean Webb agreed, and added that certain courses were more beneficial than others.

“Undergrad prepared me very well because it taught me a work ethic that would help me succeed in medical school,” said Webb. “It also gave me a boost for the heavy biochemistry.”

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Bowell takes non-traditional route to medical school

When you think of a typical medical student, rarely do you think of a 44-year-old father of five (ages 19 months to 18 years), diving into a life-changing career that takes years to complete.

Erik Bowell, first-year student at the University of Kansas School of Medicine–Salina campus, has held a few positions that most would qualify as lifelong professions: law enforcement and finance and retail management. Unsure of his path out of Abilene High School, Bowell took the traditional route, only to realize three semesters in that college was not for him.

“After a while, I realized I wasn’t eager to go back anytime soon, so I found a career that didn’t require a degree,” he said.

Eventually landing in law enforcement and working his way through the ranks, seven years later, Bowell felt stuck and ended up in the financial world. However, a life-changing event would set his life on a completely different path.

In 2008, Bowell married, Melissa, who was a medical assistant with Salina Family Healthcare at the time, and became close with many of the residents and physicians. In November 2009, the Bowells were blessed with little Zane, but just two short months later, he died from AIDS. Devastated at the loss and stressed about his current job in the financial world, he took a position in retail management.



Erik Bowell takes vitals on Don Weiser during one of his first labs as a medical student.

“I worked there during my healing process, and during that time I started to feel the pull to do something bigger,” he said.

After the loss of Zane, the Bowells received tremendous support from the medical community and their friends in the healthcare field. Eventually, Bowell started hearing suggestions nudging him toward becoming a physician.

“Since medicine had been on my radar early in life, I decided to see what it would take. I was somewhat concerned about going back to school at this point in my life, but there is nothing like a personal tragedy to shake a person up and get rid of fears of the unknown.”

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Message from the Dean

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I could not be more proud of these students. They have been extraordinary ambassadors for the Salina campus and will make excellent physicians.

As the result of recent generous gifts from two Kansas-based foundations, we plan to build a state-of-the-art simulation lab in Salina, which will allow students to practice necessary skills without putting patients at risk.

In 2017, KU School of Medicine plans to implement a new curriculum being designed for all three campuses—a curriculum that actively engages the students in the learning process and is competency based.

Although we have an incredibly talented and dedicated faculty and staff, we want continue to develop their skills as quality medical educators through an ongoing program of faculty development.

Finally, it is my fervent hope that in the not too distant future we will be able to raise funds to design and construct a new medical education building in Salina—a home that will serve the Salina campus for many years to come.

“I thought it was crazy enough that it just might work,” he said.

After several months of soul-searching, consulting with trusted friends and family and lots of prayer, Howell knew it was the right thing to do.

A major factor in Howell’s decision was completing his undergraduate degree and being able to attend medical school in Salina. Howell wasn’t willing to uproot his family and leave family in the area, and believes that he never would have attempted medical school had it not been for the Salina campus.

Coming from a small high school in rural Kansas, Howell appreciated having a close-knit academic community, choosing Kansas Wesleyan University to finish his bachelor’s degree before heading to the Salina campus to fulfill his dreams of becoming a doctor. The small classes and available faculty were a major selling point for Howell.

“Our campus really offers a wonderful and unique opportunity to become a great physician. The small size makes for a very interactive learning experience and everyone has a chance to contribute significantly,” he said.

“When I consider all of the education I have received, I have always felt that my best learning occurred in small classes and groups.”

Small classes aside, Howell enjoys building relationships with his classmates and faculty and credits it with

making medical school a little bit easier.

“We know everyone in our class, and the classes ahead of us, as well as their families. We know all of our faculty and their doors are always open – literally – and we feel comfortable walking in and asking for advice anytime. It truly makes this crazy experience of medical school much more enjoyable for me.”

Howell knew going in that with a family, time management would be essential to his success, and he tries to balance it out with early morning studying so he can finish early to spend time with everyone. The days leading up to exams are much more difficult, as his study time increases significantly, but scheduling time with family will always be a priority.

“I know that I am not home as much as I (or they) would like, but they are wonderful and understanding. They make it possible for me to be here,” he said.

After medical school and residency, Howell hopes to practice in Salina as a family physician, giving back to the community that helped his family so much during their time of loss. Here, he is surrounded by family and good friends, and a home that he loves.

The decision to return to school has not been easy – time away from family and long hours of studying – but Howell knows it will eventually pay off.

“It has been one of the hardest tasks I have ever taken on, but I’ve never felt more at peace with where I am in life. A person knows when they are in the right place.”



Students recall first year medical school experience

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With the enormous workload, time management is critical, and students find out quickly that study time leaves time for little else.

“I study about 10-12 hours daily at school so that I don’t get side-tracked,” said Catie Paliwoda. “I try to make lists of things I need to get done outside of school so that I don’t distract myself thinking about it.”

Students agree that taking time off during the week keeps a balance between life and academic success.

“Taking Sundays off is a nice break every week and really does help me feel that I have enough time away from studying,” said Ruhl.

Like Ruhl and the rest of the class, Levi Kindel tries to find time for leisure activities between studying and lecture.

“I go to the gym, play with my dog, play disc golf, or hang out with friends and family,” Kindel said.

Overall, the experience can be daunting, but worth it for the end result.

“I feel like I wish...I had more time away from my studies, but I understand that comes with the territory of being a physician and being responsible for patients,” Kindel said.

The Spotlight

SPOTLIGHT: CLASS OF 2015



The Class of 2015 gets one of their final pictures taken together - on the helipad of Salina Regional Health Center. Pictured L to R: Sara Ritterling, Claire Hinrichsen, Tyson Wisinger, Rany Gilpatrick, Jill Corpstein Linville, Daniel Linville, Erik Dill and Kayla Johnson.