In December 2017, third-year medical students Graham Husband and Mary Moses Hitt approached the Admissions Office with a well-thought-out and detailed outline for a new ambassador program.

The ambassador program had been a way for the Office of Medical Education to formalize some of its programs and to expand opportunities for medical students to become involved in admissions.

For example, when colleges and universities inquire about our medical students participating in panels or discussing what medical school is like, the office now has a group of eager, trained students who can talk about their experiences.

In the past, students who the office staff had gotten to know during the admissions process were asked if they wanted to help. With the ambassadors program, the office now has a formalized way for students who are interested in participating to get involved.

One of the main responsibilities of ambassadors is to give tours of the School of Medicine to perspective undergraduates. This summer, the admissions office offered five tour dates, and more than 80 undergraduate students participated.

During the tour, these students met medical students, asked questions and signed up for individual pre-counseling. The office will continue to offer these tours throughout the fall and spring semesters.

The ambassadors also will greet and tour students during interview days, help with recruiting events for high school students and assist with accepted students.

Ambassadors have participation requirements and have to pass a written test on required reading. All ambassadors must read “Promises Kept” by Janis Quinn, which covers the founding of the medical school and its early years.

Even 70 years later, many of the same goals for the medical school and community are still in place. By reading the book, it gives ambassadors some context for current issues.

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**Curriculum Corner: M3 neuroscience curriculum promotes team-based learning**

By Amanda Witt

The Class of 2020 started its first clinical rotations this summer. The class members have impressed their attendings and residents with fresh enthusiasm and interest.

The students are also the first medical school class at UMMC to participate in a team-based learning approach to the neurosciences. This approach started in their M1 year.

During Medical Neurobiology and Behavioral Science I class, the students were asked to learn and use clinical reasoning skills to work through two cases per week that applied to the didactic knowledge. This expanded in the M2 year in the Medical Neurobiology and Behavioral Science II class, with case-based learning that continued to build on clinical reasoning skills and physical examination. Clinical and academic faculty and residents work with the students to analyze the details of the case to form a differential diagnosis and initial work up.

The concept of “one right answer” that students learn from preparatory, college and preclinical education does not serve well in the “real” clinical world. There are no multiple choice tests on the wards. Medical professionals best serve their patients by listening carefully, examining thoroughly and creating a plan for diagnosis and treatment.

This plan stems from the caregivers’ medical knowledge, but also from their ability to learn from their patients. The students were asked to reflect on this knowledge and their growth of understanding during their first two years of medical school.

Now, their journey continues. The students will have the opportunity to demonstrate clinical reasoning in a clinical setting.

It is perhaps too early in the year to accomplish a change in clinical reasoning, but thus far, the students have self-reported confidence in their ability to conduct a neurologic examination by the end of their rotation in greater percentages than ever before.

In return for their educational efforts, neuroscience professionals greet these students with enthusiasm to build on their foundational knowledge with clinical experience with our diverse and complex patient population. We in the neurosciences continue to encourage their growth and process of self-assessment as we continue to strive to improve student education and patient care in the delicate balance that is academic medicine. Thank you, students, for this privilege.
The gradual expansion of the medical school has resulted in many more people walking the halls of UMMC, and will eventually represent the addition of many more physicians to Mississippi’s communities in the future.

But with growth comes the loss of community and connection that exists in smaller programs. This has social implications, but can also impact how students interface and access campus resources, including mentors from upper-level students and faculty.

To address this issue, Dr. Jerry Clark, dean of students, began a “House” program four years ago. During the previous year, he had asked student leaders to consider the possibilities. These planning teams leaned heavily on colleagues who already were running successful programs at Vanderbilt and the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Early on, the Medical Center’s program focused on the M1 class. As a social and an academic support, eight houses served as an early introduction to UMMC.

Each House has a cohort of M2 “Prefects” and a clinical faculty mentor. Prefects plan and lead the house events and are first points of contact for the M1 students who need the support that only an M2 can bring.

Clinical faculty help connect early students to the clinical years, provide opportunities for shadowing and serve as a great source for an extra level of low-key faculty mentorship, best served over a cup of coffee.

With the evolution of the program during the last several years, Houses have hosted back-to-school parties, lounges with food for members on busy test days, taco Tuesdays at local restaurant Babalu, special nights at Mississippi Braves games and local trampoline parks, and holiday events at faculty member’s houses.

All of these activities have a goal of giving new students a more robust sense of community in their own classes while increasing vertical connections with senior students and faculty.

In fact, the M1/M2 buddy system has been included in the House program, with “Buddy Families” in each house going from M1 all the way up to M4. The preclinical advising program also has been included in the program, with specific preclinical advisors assigned to each House.

All Houses are represented by specific colors, and entering students receive identical T-shirts, water bottles, and other items in their respective house colors. For those who notice students wearing vibrant School of Medicine T-shirt, chances are, that’s their House color.

New student orientation includes a Field Day where the Houses compete against one another. Houses have created unique pins for students to wear on their white coats.

Because each House has been named after a former UMMC educational/clinical giant, students also engage in learning about the person for whom their house has been named, enhancing the students’ understanding of UMMC’s long institutional history.

Overall, the House program has been a successful way for students to navigate a growing medical school and an extremely valuable support system for students of all levels. It has been a great way to get some of the clinical faculty involved in mentorship earlier in the students’ careers.

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