

## Office of Student Support Newsletter

### Wrapping up the Spring Semester at GW!

As we wrap up the Spring 2021 semester, we want to remind everyone about all the academic support resources, mental health support, and upcoming events available on our [website](#).

**Newsletter Spotlight:** Make sure you don't miss our Interview with SMHS Dean Barbara Bass, which can be found within this newsletter!

### Upcoming Events:

#### Jumpstarting Your Academic Life for the Fall Semester

We would like to share with you key strategies and techniques that we have learned during the pandemic that will help you achieve academic and personal success going forward. Join us for this workshop to explore lessons learned and how you can apply them to your benefit during your time at GW SMHS. The workshop will be held on **Thursday May 6th at 5:30pm**.

If you are interested in attending, please [RSVP online](#). A link will be sent on May 5th.

### May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, SMHS OSS, the Office of Integrative Medicine, and the Department of Psychiatry are sponsoring a number of virtual weekly discussions (12pm-1pm EST). Details on the events are below and RSVP links will be circulated the week prior to each discussion.

- **May 4:** Healthy Lifestyles to support Mental Health with Leigh Frame, PhD
- **May 11:** Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Primer with Jacqueline Posada, MD
- **May 18:** How to Support Distressed Family and Friends with Lorenzo Norris, MD & Ali Walker, PA
- **May 25:** Building Resilience in the New World with James Griffith, MD

### Calling Applicants - SMHS Peer Tutoring

In January 2021, OSS introduced a new peer tutoring program available to all students in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Due to overwhelming student interest, we are expanding this program and seeking new tutors to join our team!

Peer tutors provide academic advice and support student learning through a holistic approach to supplemental instruction. OSS tutors support students through problem solving skill

development, study techniques, and sharing content knowledge through one-on-one appointments (virtual or in-person).

If you are interested in applying to become a peer tutor (a paid, hourly position), please contact Nick Atlas, Senior Academic Advisor, by emailing [SMHSstudents@gwu.edu](mailto:SMHSstudents@gwu.edu)! In this email, please provide your degree program, your year in the program and explain why you are interested in applying for this position. Upon receipt of your email, Nick will provide next steps in the application process.

\*For those who are medical students, paid peer tutor positions will not be available until July

### **Join the SMHS Student Advisory Board!**

OSS is expanding the SMHS Student Advisory Board (SAB)! The SAB acts as an advisory resource to OSS, and focuses on aspects of education including academic, mental health, and student life. We'd love to hear ideas and feedback from a wider group. Please consider joining to help OSS grow and blossom!

Members of the Student Advisory Board will be invited to serve variable year terms, based on their program and year of study. In general, certificate students will be eligible to serve for one year, undergraduate and graduate students will be eligible to serve up to two years, and doctoral students will be eligible to serve up to three years. Students will be assigned a term limit at the beginning of their membership period. Each member will be expected to participate in six (6) meetings annually. The Committee may opt to meet more frequently should the need arise.

If you are interested in joining the SAB, please contact Nick Atlas, Senior Academic Advisor, by emailing [SMHSstudents@gwu.edu](mailto:SMHSstudents@gwu.edu)! In your email, please let us know your degree program and why you are interested in joining the team.

### **An Interview with SMHS Dean Barbara Bass**

Barbara Lee Bass, MD, RESD '86, is a leader. She's built a surgery department from scratch, crafted residency programs and research teams, and mentored freshly graduated clinicians, fellows, and colleagues. Now, she's the first female vice president of health affairs and dean of the George Washington University (GW) School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and she's the first to hold that position while also serving as the CEO of The GW Medical Faculty Associates. Her knowledge — clinical, surgical, research, academic — is shaping the medical education of the next generation of care providers. Here, she reflects on her experiences and shares words of wisdom for today's students.

#### **Can you tell us about your experience as a resident at GW?**

**Bass:** I arrived in 1979, and I finished my training in 1986, with two years in the middle going to Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, where I did a research fellowship when I joined the Army. But I have incredible memories of my time at GW. I think there were two things I remember best.

One was the excellence of the surgeons who trained me. They were wonderful, compassionate, skilled surgeons, and they treated me like every other resident in the program. The reason I say that is because GW was one of the few programs in the nation at that time that actually had women in the program. It was a place that was more inclusive of others. I'm really grateful for that sense of belonging and the wonderful faculty who trained me to be a surgeon. The second was the incredible collegiality among my resident colleagues. In those days, we had 120–140-hour work weeks; we *lived* in the hospital, but we'd occasionally go home and crash. That life, for many years, was living together with my fellow residents, my faculty, and our patients.

**What were the biggest challenges you faced as both a medical student and a resident?**

**Bass:** I have such fond memories of medical school. It was, without a doubt, the happiest time of my life in terms of education. I think it really fit the way my brain works and my passions. During that period, actually, I attended medical school expecting to become a scientist, not a clinician. Then I discovered, "Oh, I like this patient stuff."

I think all of our students would recognize that our disciplines come with certain phenotypes, and I discovered I'm a surgeon. That was a great exploration and set of discoveries that I didn't really anticipate. It was a time of wonder.

One of the tools I've used throughout my life, which I think could be useful for others, is to live in the moment. I don't stress about what's happened in the past, and I also don't do a whole lot of planning in terms of setting goals. In my life, I've seen so many ways my goals have changed. Be open to the moment, and just do your best.

I think that's one thing that's different now; there's more global anxiety and concern about the future. I can understand in this crazy time how that would be, when you're isolated and don't have the connections.

**Was there anything you did to relieve milder periods of stress?**

**Bass:** I love to cook. I garden. I spend as much time outdoors as I possibly can. That said, I am not an exerciser — I've never run a day in my life, I don't know what a gym is — but I love being outside. And certainly back in those days, as a resident and in the period after my research fellowship, when I had a baby. When I came home from my residency, all I did was figure out how to have as much time as possible with my little baby boy when he was awake. That, and my husband, was the driving principle at that point.

**Do you have any helpful study tips to share?**

**Bass:** Medical education is full of experiential learning. In the pre-clinical years, it elevates the value of what you're learning. You realize that it's going to be applied to a person you're going to take care of.

In the clinical years, the most important thing is seeing a patient who has a disorder; that is your moment to learn all you can about that disorder. Yes, there's that patient. Yes, there's that daily interaction and the pre-dispositions you're going to make, but you really have to use that as your moment to do a deep dive into what the condition is. You need to really frame your cognitive memory and link it to that particular experiential clinical moment. That really helped me. What you eventually want to get as a health care provider is to be able to walk into a room, see a patient across the room, and say, "This one's really sick. This patient has a lot going on, whether it's their eyes, their mouth, their skin, their body position." You want to develop that global set of instincts that inform your wisdom as a physician.

**Making that connection between clinical moments and knowledge sounds like taking a picture in your mind.**

**Bass:** It is absolutely like taking a picture in my mind and linking it to the fundamental science — fundamental biology and micro and molecular biology — that led to that picture. It really helped me. I can't remember independent facts, but I can combine everything into a global package.

At GW, I think our Practice of Medicine (POM) course is structured in a similar way: real diseases linked to physiology and anatomy and reflected in our modern curriculum. It wasn't like that for my curriculum.

**Were there any resources you wish you'd had when you were a student?**

**Bass:** Being able to access online resources is a blessing, but it's also a curse; it doesn't necessarily put the pressure on you to build that internal set of knowledge points. It's like phone numbers. You don't have to remember them because you never have to dial them.

I think sometimes we rely so much on data now that we forget to first stop and ask a patient to tell their story. When you finish taking the history, you want to have a 95th percentile knowledge of what is wrong with that patient. They tell you everything. Your exam should be informed entirely on what that patient has told you. You have to link that story to what's in your brain, or else it doesn't go anywhere.

What we're looking for is that global fluency of pattern recognition. In a way, that's what medicine is: pattern recognition. Whether it's a disease or an operation, it's about building that familiar set of pieces that work.

**What new challenges do you foresee students facing as they pursue careers in medicine and health sciences?**

**Bass:** The landscape is changing tremendously, right? Technology is going to enable what we do, and the business of medicine is going to change. I think we're going to see more and more health care providers, as we have over the last 20 years. It used to be rare for a physician to go into an administrative business-related field or become a tech innovator. Now, up to 30% of students who graduate from some MD programs don't go into residency training and instead go into another pathway.

I hope we'll see much more in the terms of interprofessional care and teams. I think it's going to be really good for patients if we can get that right, and I think our environment is going to change to allow us to do that. I think the only thing that isn't going to change is we're still going to have sick people that need our help. We're still going to be health care providers on that frontline to take care of them. This is a great business to be in. It's a high-value, human service business, and I can't think of anything more rewarding than that.

**Inspirational Corner**

Congratulations to the graduates of the class of 2021! You have persevered through incredible hardship and will be entering healthcare during a time of great challenge and change. We appreciate you!

As you prepare to leave GW, remember to “**go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good.**” (Minor Myers, Jr.)

### Contact Us

Don't hesitate to contact us if you would like some tips on time management, study skills, or any other supplemental instruction! Mental health in need of some mending? We can direct you for some help there as well. Check out our website, [oss.smhs.gwu.edu](https://oss.smhs.gwu.edu), for more information.

You can also contact our team by emailing [SMHSstudents@gwu.edu](mailto:SMHSstudents@gwu.edu) or calling 202-994-2818.

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