The AOA/ACGME Merger:
The benefits of having the “Odd Couple”

By Fritz Stine, OMS-II

As many of you have seen in emails or in social media recently, the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates (AOA-HOD) convened in July of this year and voted in support of a merger between two Graduate Medical Education accreditation agencies, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). While the history of the events leading up to this decision and the actual logistics behind the merger are quite important, the primary question on all of our minds is always, “How will this affect our students?”

As of right now, 77% of ACGME accredited programs accept COMLEX scores as comparable to the USMLE. It is our hope that this merger will push us closer to 100%, thereby giving our students access to programs that were not previously “Dually accredited.” It is also important to note that this merger does not affect the residency Matching process and that separate matches, for DO’s & MD’s, will still occur on separate dates. We foresee a potential for a unified match in the future but are unaware as to when this will occur.

Most importantly, aside from greater accessibility and the potential for a unified match, this merger means that osteopathic medical students will have an unprecedented opportunity to further disseminate osteopathic principles, philosophy, and practice to the greater medical infrastructure. This also means that patient populations naïve to the benefits of osteopathic medicine will have access to osteopathic physicians and, in due course, to a more empowering medical philosophy.

While there most certainly may be challenges ahead, as all parties involved in the merger have entered into a 5 year trial period for this single accreditation system, we are now entering into an era of unprecedented growth and opportunity for the osteopathic medical profession. This “Odd couple,” of sorts, may be one of the greatest opportunities for growth that the profession has ever seen: now is the time to be truly proud of who we are and to share this heritage openly.

(See the Attached SOMA document for more on the AOA/ACGME merger)
A Tribute to Dr. Gearheart: Eight Life Lessons I learned from a “Great-Heart”

By Elvis Njere, OMS-II

Every once in a while, you meet a person whose approach to life has a profound impact on your life. Dr. Gearheart was one of these people for me. I hope to share some of the unspoken life lessons I gleaned from his brief but memorable life.

1. **Care about family:** The first and maybe the most important life lesson I learned from Dr. Gearheart was to really love your family. I recall the first day I sat in his office to talk about my progress in his physiology class. Our conversation soon shifted from Physiology to his family as he proudly displayed pictures of his wife and daughter. They were his pride and joy. On several trips we took to the Health Department, where we did our research, he would beam with joy each time he recounted his wife’s or daughter’s accomplishments. Each trip left me hoping that someday I would be as proud of my family as he was of his family. Dr. Gearheart taught me that family comes first and is most important in life.

2. **Believe the best in people:** Dr. Gearheart displayed a genuine care and faith in people. This is one of the qualities that endeared him to me. It was evident that he cared not only about my grades, but also about my school-to-life balance. He had a way of encouraging me to see the best in myself even in those moments when I failed to perform up to my abilities in some classes. His motivation and encouragement also helped me to rekindle my passion for research. I hope that someday I can live up to the faith that he had in my abilities. I trust that his legacy will live on through the research we did here in Pikeville.

3. **Look past race and other prejudices:** I had known and interacted with Dr. Gearheart for a couple of months before he divulged to me that his spouse was African American. He made no fan-fare about his ability to transcend racial prejudices. What impressed me the most was that he made an attempt to know me as a person regardless of my race, accent, or idiosyncrasies before divulging his wife’s race to me. Dr. Gearheart had an uncanny ability to appreciate each person’s individuality without the biases of culture, race, or socio-economic status (given that I am an African, black, broke medical student).

4. **Smile:** As I sit to write this, I can still picture the ever-present smile on Dr. Gearheart’s face. It was a genuine, heart-felt smile. His smile made you feel like he really cared. I remember that when I saw him after his health scare earlier in the year, he still had his reassuring smile. This taught me that if he could smile through life’s challenges, then I could do the same despite the rigors of medical school. I certainly don’t own the world’s troubles. He showed me that a smile is one of the free things that I can give to each person I meet.

5. **Work-hard:** Most of my colleagues would attest to Dr. Gearheart’s incredible work-ethic. He was one of the first professors we saw early each morning, even on those days when he had no lectures to teach. We would all agree that even though we felt overwhelmed by the amount of information packed into each Physiology or Nutrition power-point slide, we were grateful for the hard-work he put into each lecture. His work ethic served as a reminder for me to also work hard; especially on those days prior to our block exams when it felt like any additional information I would have to memorize would make my brain explode. I reasoned that if he could show up to review with us on the weekends—when he didn’t have to be there—then the least I could do was to keep learning.

6. **Live simply:** Dr. Gearheart’s simple approach to life was exemplified in how easy he was to talk to. He had no pretenses. He was a simple man. I am inspired by his down-to-earth nature. I have learned from him the art of living simply.

7. **Appreciate each moment in life:** Life is a gift! Each moment should be received with gratitude. Nothing is guaranteed. I learned this lesson the day Dr. Gearheart passed away. He had sent me a couple of emails right after our block exams regarding the research we had done over the summer. I had intended to stop by his office sometime on Monday afternoon after class. Unfortunately, I never got the opportunity to do so. Even in death, Dr. Gearheart is still teaching me life lessons: make the most of each moment. I now know the importance of doing things as soon I get prompted. The next moment in life is never guaranteed. Dr. Gearheart’s death has taught me to live life to the fullest.

8. **Say “Thank You” more:** The one thing I wish I had said a few more times to Dr. Gearheart is “Thank You!” Thank you for caring about people like me. Thank you for believing in me and the many other students who were touched by the way you lived, smiled, taught, and carried yourself. Thank you for the many encouraging words. Thank you for believing in each and every one of us.

Lastly, I know Dr. Walter Wayne Gearheart wasn’t a perfect man, but he was certainly a caring man, a simple man—a great man! I know I speak for many people when I say Dr. Gearheart left an indelible mark in our lives. He is dearly missed. My hope is that his memory will live on in those of us whose lives he touched through his encouraging words, smiles, and lectures.

*Dr. Gearheart, your legacy lives on!*
D.O Student of the Month: Philip Kyles

Q: What made you decide to pursue a career in Medicine?
A: My interest in Medicine started when I was young. My family pediatrician, Dr. Charles Ison helped to ignite this passion in me. He was my role model growing up and over the years his influence has encouraged me to pursue a career in medicine. My mom’s death also had a profound impact on life. This tragedy helped to bolster my decision to become a physician.

Q: What motivates you to do community service?
A: Honestly, I enjoy doing community service because it gets me out of the library! It’s also relaxing to help people and to be reminded, beyond popular belief, that you can make a difference in the world just by serving a few hours a week.

Q: How did you get involved with packing meals for Haiti?
A: The Meals for Haiti project is something that my church puts on every year, it’s basically a ton of people in a room packing meals as fast as they can and then we ship them off to help Haiti! Most of the service projects I participate in are through my church, but several others are just random things like helping my elderly neighbor do yard work every week or working at a soup kitchen when I go home - it doesn’t have to be organized to be community service.

Q: How are you able to balance the demands of Medical School and your commitment to Community Service?
A: Balancing medical school and community service is tough at times, but if you truly enjoy serving others it makes learning medicine more worthwhile. Ultimately, both studying medicine and volunteering are geared towards the same goal- improving the world and the people around you.

Q: As a 1st Year Medical student what are the biggest challenges you face in balancing medical school and community service?
A: The biggest challenge is not knowing if you are spending your time wisely. Once I get a hang on my coursework, I will get into a better routine; then, I can start seeing which study techniques work the best. This will enable me to efficiently manage my limited time.

Q: What advice would you give to the current medical students or other students regarding being involved with community service?
A: My best advice is that community service doesn’t have to be a chore. If you find the right service project and grab your buddies to go with you, all of a sudden it turns into a great way to relax and take time off from the books. Blow off some steam while helping others...

Upcoming Events in October

- **October 13th at 6:00 PM**: SGA Meeting
  Contact: Allie Whitley (alliewhitley@upike.edu)

- **October 17th at 9:00 AM**: Medical School Interviews
  Contact: Missy Holland (melissaholland@upike.edu)

- **October 17th at 11:00 AM**: Deans Forum
  Contact: Fritz Stine (frederickstine@Upike.edu)

- **October 18th at 8:00 AM**: Pre-SOMA Conference
  Contact: Heather Snyder (HeatherSnyder@upike.edu)

- **October 18th at 8:00 AM**: Pediatrics Symposium
  Contact: Ms. Mechella Varney (MechellaVarney@upike.edu)

- **October 21st**: Air Way Management & IV Skills
  Contact: Kristin Podboy (KristinPodboy@upike.edu)

- **October 25th at 9:00 AM**: Zombie Run
  Contact: Rachel Courtney (RachelCourtney@upike.edu)

- **November 1st at 4:00 PM**: Diwali 2014
  Contact: Dr. Ambika Krishnamurthy (AmbikaKrishnamurthy@upike.edu)
ACOPeds: March for Babies

PM&R: 3-On-3 Basketball Tournament