Rural Track Welcomes New Class of Medical Students

The School of Medicine’s Rural Track welcomed 16 new members from the Class of 2013 this fall. The new students were welcomed at a reception during the first week of classes, at which they shared stories of their lives before medical school and received advice from their predecessors on surviving the rigors of medical study.

Interests, careers and activities of the new class of 2013 cover a broad range. For instance, Hollie Vigil taught high school students in the Colorado Rural Scholars’ Program, which brings selected students to the Health Sciences Center campus to learn about a variety of health professions. Kellen Alstatt worked in an Emergency Department and Derrick Foge completed a distinguished career as a medic in the United States Army. Many students had international experiences prior to starting school: Tony Cappa traveled to Brazil with his wife; Heath Eggleston backpacked in the Arctic; Matthew Podlogar traveled to Nepal and the Himalayas. Michael Orser was studying for his PhD in financial planning when he changed career interests to medicine.

Most of the students in the Rural Track have had significant rural living and work experiences. Camille Allison and Jason Yost farmed while growing up. Greg Burfeind worked as a river guide and school bus driver. Eric Brown worked on a lobster boat. Tim Clement owned a small ski industry business. Morgan Lauer was “Miss Rodeo Logan County” and taught horseback riding to children with disabilities.

The other rural track classes shared a range of advice. Sarah Dodd, of the class of 2012, advised setting aside time to take care of relationships, and recommended bringing spouses to all events. Corey Dobson, of the class of 2012, said to climb Colorado Mountains. Asa Ware, who grew up in Wray, Colorado, said “get your hands dirty” and Tierney Sparks of the class of 2010 emphasized maintaining balance in life and doing enjoyable things outside of school. Ely Walker of the class of 2011 said: “talk to older students,” and Avery MacKenzie of the class of 2012 advised taking advantage of unique opportunities the program offers.

The students were welcomed by the Colorado AHEC System staff, Dr. Norma Wagoner, Associate Dean of Admissions, and Laurel Petralia of the Colorado Trust. The Rural Track is funded by grants from the Colorado Trust, the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., and the Office of the Dean of the School of Medicine.