Commencement 2013

The hope expressed at this year’s combined commencement for the School of Medicine and the Sackler School was for the graduates to carry forward enduring values and timeless satisfactions through changing times. Dean Harris Berman referred to the altered world of governmental regulation that medical graduates would soon be entering into before reminding them, “You chose to come into medicine to do good. Patients will confide in you and seek relief from you no matter how you are paid.” He noted that this changing professional landscape will require new physicians to “do more with less” and “think creatively” at every turn.

Degrees conferred by the School of Medicine included 167 MDs, ten MD/MBAs, nineteen MD/MPHs, and four MD/PhDs. These numbers include the inaugural 32-member class of Maine Track students, the first to graduate. In his student address, Ameer Shah, M13, president of the medical school class, said that for many students in the crowd, the day represented the culmination of a lifelong dream. He compared the team of faculty, staff, family, and friends that enabled the class’s collective achievement to the many people who collaborate in a giant hospital.

“For me, commencement is one of the most gratifying, thrilling days in the academic calendar,” said Naomi Rosenberg, dean of the Sackler School, “There’s nothing I enjoy more.” In her remarks she also cited constraints for the Sackler graduates such as reduced governmental spending on research, adding, “Don’t let this deter you. You are ready for whatever next step you choose, so think broadly and follow your passion.”

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Basic Sciences Department Reorganization

TUSM and its basic science faculty have been engaged for the past year in discussions about how best to position TUSM for research in the next century. In April, the Tufts University Board of Trustees approved an innovative framework that creates two new cross-cutting departments. These two departments will join the Department of Neuroscience and Department of Molecular Biology and Microbiology to create a four department structure. Faculty members currently in the Anatomy, Biochemistry, Molecular Physiology and Pharmacology, and Pathology Departments have redistributed themselves among these four departments.

Although names have not yet been finalized, one of the new departments will focus on the mechanisms of normal and dysregulated development and differentiation, particularly as they interface with cancer biology, as well as molecular therapeutics and structural approaches to molecular analyses. Philip Hinds, PhD, currently professor of radiation oncology, will be interim chair of the department. Dr. Hinds' research focuses on cell cycle regulation in cancer and development. As Interim Chair, Dr. Hinds will continue to serve as Deputy Director of the Tufts Cancer Center and Associate Director of the Molecular Oncology Research Institute.

The other new department will focus on understanding the interaction of multiple cellular and organ systems with particular emphasis on basic mechanisms of chronic disease in which inflammation plays a central role. Laura Liscum, PhD, currently professor of molecular physiology and pharmacology, will serve as interim chair of the department. A former director of the Cellular and Molecular Biology Graduate Program at the Sackler School, Dr. Liscum's research focuses on Niemann-Pick disease type C, with the goal of determining the mechanism by which lysosomal cholesterol storage leads to neurodegeneration and liver disease.

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On May 10th, the Physician Assistant Program held its inaugural White Coat Ceremony in Behrakis Auditorium. The event served to formally welcome the 30 students who comprise the Class of 2015, the first cohort of PA students at the medical school. In attendance were Tufts faculty, administration and staff, as well as the families and friends of the students.

The ceremony opened with remarks from PA Program Director Richard Murphy, followed by a keynote address from Tufts President Anthony Monaco and Dean Harris Berman. After receiving their coats, the students were led by Program Medical Director Jeanine Carlson in a recitation of the Hippocratic Oath, swearing to fulfill the role of a medical professional responsibly and ethically.

The Sackler School conferred twenty PhD degrees, sixteen MS degrees, and four MD/PhD degrees. Sana Mujahid, who received her doctorate in cell, molecular and developmental biology, gave the Sackler student address, recalling an encounter she’d had with a senior scientist. When Mujahid told the scientist that she was set to graduate in the spring, the older woman replied sagely, “It is just beginning.”

“What a time to embark on a career in health!,” Aviva Must, Dean of Public Health and Professional Programs opened the PHPD Commencement exercises by reminding graduates that they are poised to be part of the changes to the health system that will unfold over the next decade. She advised graduates to think “big” as they think about health- to think populations, epidemics, prevention, public policy, behavior change, and globally, “as health concerns know no borders.”

During his faculty address, William Dietz, MD, PhD, former director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity at the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention told students, “Prepare for the long haul. A life of service is a marathon, not a sprint. Those who serve are poorly rewarded financially, but are richly rewarded by the difference that they make in people’s lives.”

The alumni address was given by Char Kasprzak, MPH’09, and Elaine Siew, MPH’13 gave the PHPD class address. Graduates included 58 MPH, 89 MBS, eight MS-HCOM, three MBs/MPH, and two MS-PREP recipients, as well as nineteen joint MD/MPH and four joint DVM/MPH recipients.

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**Reunion 2013**

The weekend of April 26th–28th, TUSM welcomed back nearly 400 alumni and friends to campus to celebrate their 5th–65th reunions. Alumni participated in a variety of activities throughout the weekend; highlights included the distinguished alumni talks. The Class of 1963 discussed what comes next after a career in medicine, and the Class of 1973 reflected on the past 40 years in medicine. Reunion-eers also participated in student-lead campus tours and two cocktail receptions and class dinners.

Dean Harris Berman and the Tufts Medical Alumni Association (TMAA) awarded six alumni with Dean’s Awards for their achievements in medicine and the work in the community over the past 50 and 25 years. Awardees included: Philip Di Saia, MD, Joseph Ferrucci, MD, and David Rosenthal, MD, from the Class of 1963 and Paul D’Ambrosio, MD, Kevin Hinchey, MD, and Ashvin Patel, MD from the Class of 1988.

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**Congratulations Awardees**

- Bree Aldridge, PhD, assistant professor of molecular biology and microbiology was awarded a 2013-2014 Tufts Collaborates! seed grant. She will be collaborating with Irene Georgakoudi, associate professor of biomedical engineering to quantitatively describe the metabolic state of individual Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacilli and relate these states to environmental conditions and stress response.
- Laura Liscum, PhD, professor of molecular physiology and pharmacology, received the 2013 Innovation in Diversity Education Award (IDEAs) for her project entitled Pathway to PhD. IDEAs Awards recognize the importance of diversity education at TUSM.

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Basic Sciences Reorganization, continued

A Division of Medical Education (DivME) will be established within this department to support faculty whose primary responsibility is providing education for medical, MBS, and other medically-related programs at TUSM. The DivME will oversee the teaching of Anatomy, Tissue, and Organ Biology (histology) and Core Pathology and provide administrative oversight of the gross anatomy lab and the Anatomical Gifts Program. The division will provide a structure for mentoring and support of professional advancement for teaching faculty.

Any faculty member with a primary responsibility for medical education will be a member of the DivME. Members of the DivME may hold an appointment in any of the four basic science departments. Any current member of the teaching faculty not involved in teaching anatomy, histology or pathology is encouraged, but not required, to join the DivME.

Peter Brodeur, PhD, has been appointed director of the DivME. Currently associate professor of pathology, he is an active participant in graduate education through service on thesis committees, qualifying examination committees, and as a course director. He plans to appoint Jeff Marchant, PhD, as associate director.

The establishment of the two new departments and their interim-chair appointments as well as the Division of Medical Education and its director appointment will be effective July 1, 2013. The four department organization will be fueled by a number of faculty recruitments in addition to those already underway in Neuroscience and Microbiology.

The reorganization poises the medical school to enter a very exciting era of growth in research. The new model builds on our strengths, fosters fresh collaborations, and poises TUSM to better capitalize on funding opportunities, both through philanthropy and externally-sponsored grants. It will also better position our school to interact more broadly with research efforts at Tufts Medical Center and other affiliated hospitals.

News of Note

On May 1st TUSM inducted its inaugural members into the Honos Civicus Society in a joint ceremony with the School of Dental Medicine. Founded by Tisch College, the society recognizes graduating students who went above and beyond the required levels of community engagement during their time at TUSM. A list of the twenty-two medical student inductees is available on the Tisch College website.

TUSM received a $450,000 two-year grant from the Avon Foundation for Women to fund breast cancer research. This gift will support Dr. Ana Soto’s research on the interaction between environmental chemicals and breast cells in a unique, 3D model of human cells. TUSM received the first year’s funding amount of $225,000 on May 19th at the closing ceremony of 11th annual Avon Walk for Breast Cancer.

Jonathan Brower, M13, and Michael Kwak, M13 were awarded the Presidential Award for Citizenship and Public Service. Each year the Presidential Award recognizes undergraduate and graduate students from across Tufts University for outstanding achievement in community service and community leadership. In 2010, Brower and Kwak founded IDEAS in Medicine- a year-long tutoring and mentoring partnership between medical students and students from the Eugene Wright Science and Technology Academy, a middle school in Chelsea.

James Schwob, MD, PhD, professor and chair of anatomy, is among the ten new members to the NIH Council of Councils. Schwob will serve on the twenty-seven member council through October 31, 2015.