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**Peer Support Advocate**  
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I majored in Environmental Systems and International Studies from UC San Diego in 2009, including a year abroad in France. I then spent six years as a graduate student in Agroecology and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI. Leaving behind an incredible community of friends, very different intellectual pursuits, and a highly active lifestyle with more free time, to begin medical school in a new state was tough. I had a hard time adjusting and failed the second FMM sequence, which ultimately forced me to make the decision that I wanted to stick with it. I passed the remediation exam. Small victories. After that I decided I needed to fill up my first year with plenty of extracurricular activities to keep me active and social, which helped me find my place but also left me with less personal time. Second year presented with its own set of challenges, as clinical rotations can make it feel as though there isn’t really time for anything else. Being constantly evaluated and feeling the need to “perform” feels very unnatural to me, as does any pretense of competition with peers/friends, so I have had to learn to balance playing the game with being true to myself. It’s important to resist that feeling and stay active with at least 1-2 regular activities, but this is easier said than done. Not having as much time for your passions (for me it’s traveling, practicing foreign languages, playing drums, snowboarding, cooking and fermenting) takes constant adjustment. It does help that I finally have a fairly clear vision of what I want to do - specifically in medical professionals, I took a year leave of absence after my first semester of med school, and started the Peer Support Advocacy Program as part of my own recovery to mental health and wellbeing. Reach out to me if you are interested in chatting about being a medical student who struggles with anxiety and depression, who is married, lives outside of Ann Arbor, has dogs, is passionate about medical student mental health, or just need someone to listen to you.

I'm a 3rd year med student from Ann Arbor. I graduated from Earlham College with a degree in Biochemistry in 2015. I struggle with anxiety and depression, and have a drive to change the culture around mental health, specifically in medical professionals. I took a year leave of absence after my first semester of med school, and started the Peer Support Advocacy Program as part of my own recovery to mental health and wellbeing. Reach out to me if you are interested in chatting about being a medical student who struggles with anxiety and depression, who is married, lives outside of Ann Arbor, has dogs, is passionate about medical student mental health, or just need someone to listen to you.

Collins, Claire  
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M3

I'm a non-traditional (first generation college student, rural/low socio-economic status background, liberal arts grad, with a 10-year span between undergrad and med school) student which certainly colors my perspective. In many ways, I'm more certain that this is the journey I'm meant to be on given that I've had so many rich experiences previously. However, conviction and a calling doesn't make the process naturally easier. I've sadly thought all-too-often that UMMS selected me just so they'd have someone to round out the bottom third of their class. I struggle significantly with the testing aspect of our training which is frustrating since it seems unrelated to my studying and effort. This is made even more of a gut-punch by the weight this component is given in our overall assessments. I enjoyed patient interactions immensely and took pride in my natural rapport during clinical rotations. I love the continual learning process and the opportunity to apply knowledge in tangible ways. Nonetheless, I know full well that medical school is a series of events that make you feel inadequate, guilty, and shameful. In the past several years, I've attempted to live a life with more vulnerability and openness though, and relish the opportunity to talk with other students about their difficulties.

Hi everyone! My name is Kenzie, and I'm an M1 originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. I graduated from Lafayette College in 2018 with degrees in neuroscience and in French and a minor in bioengineering. I did research studying the effects of chair yoga and mindfulness on the mental health of a geriatric population and have published a 30-day photography mindfulness workbook. After I graduated, I took one gap year and spent it teaching English to middle and high school students in Lille, France. I'm very interested in holistic mental health and focusing on wellness! Catch me at the gym or going on long runs to train for a race, babbling about essential oils and meditation, or watching a French film! I wanted to become a peer mentor to serve as a resource for other students who are struggling in any way possible as I was just diagnosed with anxiety and depression during this first year of medical school and want you all to know that you are not alone! Please reach out!

My name is Dom DiGiovine and I am an M3. I was born and raised in Ann Arbor, MI and I graduated from the University of Michigan in 2017. I did not take any gap years, so if you have any questions about being a traditional student I can definitely try to help with that! My first year of medical school has been both challenging and rewarding. I really struggled adapting to the course load and definitely feel the pressure to perform at the same level as my incredibly impressive classmates. I also know how challenging it can be to deal with mental health concerns while going through medical school, so if you want I would be happy to talk about my experiences or just listen to you talk about yours. I love playing basketball, board games, and watching Netflix in my (limited) free time. I signed up to be a Peer Advocate because I have gotten invaluable encouragement and empathy from so many people and I want to be a similar resource for others. I want to help med students realize that their feelings are 100% normal and they are definitely not alone on this difficult journey.

Hey y'all! My name is Duyhoang Dinh, and I'm an M3 from Rockville, MD. Having gone straight through to medical school from my undergraduate studies, I experienced great difficulty with adjusting to the intense work schedule that is demanded by the academic curriculum. I burned out halfway through the year, which climaxed in a car accident - fortunately, I came out unscathed and with a newfound support system in some of my peers whom I now consider family. Since then, I learned how to better cope with my stress by making time for traveling, playing intramural sports, and attending music concerts/festivals. Medical school is tough and it's okay to not be okay. Reach out when you're feeling down or you have doubts; we will be here to listen with an open mind and an open heart.

I'm a third year medical student from Miami, FL. I did my undergrad at Florida International University, and I am a first generation college student. Before medical school I earned a MPH here at U of M, and I have a strong research interest in childhood obesity and other issues of childhood with modifiable risk factors. I also love reading, listening to podcasts, and playing with my dog.

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Hi, I'm Kristin Geczi, and I am an M1 from St. Louis, MO. I attended Washington University in St. Louis for my undergrad, majored in anthropology, and graduated in 3.5 years. I took 1.5 years off before starting medical school during which I worked at a summer camp for children with cerebral palsy and helped teach freshman chemistry laboratory at Wash U. Outside of school, I like painting, baking, and crocheting. I really enjoy being outside and exercising for wellness. Feel free to reach out if you want to talk about impostor syndrome, school-life balance (or lack thereof), transitions, finding time for interests outside of medical school, or just want someone to talk to. Medical school is hard and it can be so easy to get stuck in your own head and think you are alone in all of this. I believe you're not and would be delighted to provide an open mind and listening ear for anyone.

Hi everyone, I'm currently a first year here! I was originally born in the Philippines, but moved to New Jersey when I was in grade school. I came out to the midwest to attend undergrad here at University of Michigan, and stayed for medical school. Outside of school, I love hanging out with my 2 year-old corgi King, as well as working as a mentor for minority premed undergrads here at U of M, through the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives. I believe that there needs to be a culture shift in medicine and medical training regarding how we view burnout and expectations surrounding self-care, and sacrifice for one's work. Serving as a peer advocate allows me to contributing to that culture shift. I love interfacing with any and all of my classmates, but I especially can connect with peers identifying as: underrepresented in medicine, first generation, immigrant, out of state.

I'm an M3 from Washington, DC. I graduated undergrad from Yale University in 2010 with a BS in Biomedical Engineering. I worked in health policy at the US Dept of Health & Human Services before returning to Yale for my MPH with a focus on Social & Behavioral Sciences. I have interests in health disparities and medical education. I love music and dancing so you can usually find me in Biorhythms.

Hi all! I'm an M1 from the Boston area excited to offer my help as a resource. I peer counseled with a student support service during my undergrad, and am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue a similar mission here at UMMS. I can't stress enough how normal it is to reach out for help, and would love to integrate into your support systems. Any forms of contact and communication work for me - I adore them all, and want to make sure you're at your most comfortable when undertaking such an important step in addressing your mental health and needs. Take the leap, overcome the stigma - reach out!

Hi, I'm Mark-Antony Gaston-Hawkins, Lauren  
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M3  
I'm an M3 from Washington, DC. I graduated undergrad from Yale University in 2010 with a BS in Biomedical Engineering. I worked in health policy at the US Dept of Health & Human Services before returning to Yale for my MPH with a focus on Social & Behavioral Sciences. I have interests in health disparities and medical education. I love music and dancing so you can usually find me in Biorhythms.

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Hi everyone! I'm an M3 student from Farmington Hills, MI. I graduated from University of Michigan in 2017 with a degree in Industrial and Operations Engineering. It took me 5 years of undergrad (after figuring out late that I wanted to pursue medicine) and came straight through to medical school. The first year of medical school was challenging and lonely. I often felt completely isolated from my peers and impostor syndrome plagued me nearly daily (it still does!). I found renewed purpose with patient interaction in the core clerkship year but this was accompanied by a new, and often scarier version of impostor syndrome. I found myself getting cynical and burnt out by the end of the clinical trunk and I found it extremely stressful to go from the high stakes environment of core clerkships right into STEP1 study period. After struggling through that period and relying heavily on my mentors during this time, I was inspired to become a peer advocate. You are more than your scores and evaluations. Please reach out if ever you need that reminder. I also am a firm believer in fresh air so if ever you would like to vent some frustrations while we walk through the Arb, I'm happy to lend my ear!
Hi, my name is Casey Patnode, I'm an M3. The biggest lesson I've learned and try to help others with is the importance of resilience. My journey up to this point has involved many failures; I actually did not get into UMMS on my first application and had to reapply. Once I got here, I failed one of my first quizzes. It's really easy to get down after these types of failures but the biggest favor you can do for yourself is to forgive yourself, learn your lessons and move on as a better and more motivated person. I would be thrilled to talk to anyone about strategies in developing resilience, especially meditation, as I have a daily meditation practice. I would love to share meditation resources and strategies. Also, I rap and am in PHILOMAX so if you want mentorship in rap form, I'm your guy!

Hi! My name is Nicole, and I'm an M1. I grew up just outside of Boston and went to Bowdoin College for undergrad. I've really loved the supportive community that I've found at UMich Med, and hope to give back in a similar way. I know the transition to medical school can be tough, so I'm here for you if you ever want someone to talk to about it. Additionally, before medical school, I volunteered at a suicide hotline, and have learned how to talk people through times of emotional crisis. Please reach out if you ever need support - I'm here for you!

Hi! My name is Erika Steensma, and I am an M4. I am planning on pursuing a career in pediatric neurology- but when I'm not in the hospital or library, I love running, reading, and baking delicious desserts for my friends! I wanted to become a peer mentor because I know all too personally how difficult medical school can be. During my M2 clinical year, I really struggled with depression and anxiety. I ended up isolating myself from my friends, and convinced myself that I was the only one struggling. After finally gathering the courage and strength to reach out for help, I found a wide network of support, and realized that I wasn't at all alone. Thanks to therapy, medication, and the love and support of my friends and family, I am doing so much better now- but wish that I had reached out earlier for help. If you are struggling in any way, know that you are not alone, and know that myself (and so so many other people!) are here for you.

Hi, I'm Nick! I'm so excited to be starting my M4 year and hopefully figuring out what I want to do with the rest of my life. I grew up in Virginia, did my undergraduate degree at U of M, and have been so happy to stay here for medical school. When not studying, I spend my time in the med school a cappella group, student council, the smoker, and eating way too much Indian and Mexican food. Feel free to reach out about career indecision, test anxiety, imposter syndrome, LGBTQ issues, doing long distance in med school, or trading info about great places to run in Ann Arbor.

I'm an M1 from Chicago but have been working in San Francisco Bay Area for several years prior to medical school. I graduated from a small liberal arts college with a major in Gender and Women's Studies. I dabbled in teaching before pivoting into community mental health, working in various FQCHs in Oakland. My transitioning medical school was difficult, partially due to feeling isolated and figuring out the "best" way to study. This was compounded by my struggle to balance coursework with family illness. I felt immense guilt for not being able to commit 100% to medical school and was ashamed of my downward academic performance. I decided to take a Leave of Absence to slow down, process everything, and lean on others for support. As I continue to reconnect with my interests and prioritize my own wellness, I have gained a renewed appreciation for the value of peer support during difficult times. I want to pay it forward and serve as a resource for anyone struggling with transitions, school-life balance, and feeling like you don't belong. For anyone curious about the LOA process, I am happy to share my experience with taking time off. As a final note, I love being outside and hanging out with my cat (Cashew), so reach out anytime if you want to join us on our walks/park adventures!

As of 2/18/2020