From the Desk of the Executive Council

With ideas that have been germinating since last year, Fall Semester 2010 is now blossoming and CCOM Student Government is doing well! To learn about our bounty of activities and projects, plus to hear what plans are growing, tune in to the next episode of the Short Coat podcast. If you can’t stand the suspense, read on!

Community Olympics kicked off at the All-Communities Picnic and Olympics Opening Ceremony in City Park hosted by the Community Mayors and Activities Committee of Student Government, August 27. There was an outstanding turnout, and a stunning demonstration of athleticism and sidesplitting humor from participants in tug-of-war, three legged races, egg and spoon race. The inertia of the Olympics Opening Ceremony continued with several Olympic Events: Bags Tournament, Friday, 10/8, right after class; Trivia Night on Monday, 10/18 at 6pm; and Mr. Iowa Medicine on Tuesday, 10/19, over lunch. We are also keeping traditions alive with Doc Dash, Penny Wars, and DVIP Bench Press, to only name a few. Watch for forthcoming details!

Tirelessly committed to making CCOM a better place to live and learn, Student Government has several developing projects. The Advocacy Committee is petitioning for improved parking, submitted a proposal requesting Newton Ramp offer free parking beginning at midnight instead of 3am, and is exploring the possibility of making “Night and Weekend” passes free to CCOM students. Diversity Committee, a new group whose aim is to foster collaboration between different student groups interested in celebrating diversity, is busy arranging speaker seminars. The Education Committee is working on a Patient-Based-Assessment (PBA) de-briefing sessions to enhance learning from these educational experiences. In addition, we are eagerly awaiting announcements from the Dean's Office about approaching curriculum changes. Finally, the Technology Committee has organized a smorgasbord of resources for the annual Technology Fair, which was held on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 11am-3pm. We had products from Microsoft, Dell, Apple, and chatted with representatives from ITS, learned about the panoply of resources available at Hardin Health Science Library, watched presentations of how the School of Pharmacology is integrating iPads into education, and explored the recently developed Iowa City Bus App.

If you’re interested in up-to-date info about organizations and activities, sign-up for OrgSync, an online community management system that centralizes campus involvement. Sign into OrgSync and complete your personal profile! Once you’ve signed in, view the list of organizations. Finally, tune in to the Short Coat broadcast to hear about CCOM news, events, and opinions (theshortcoat.com).

Best, Jane C. Viner

Executive Secretary

Executive Council: Student Body President, Harb Harb; Student Body President-Elect, Amy Domeyer; Jane Viner, Executive Secretary; Ahmed Akhter, Executive Treasurer; Megan Srinivas & Scott Pate, Activities Committee Co-chairs; Lajja Desai, Advocacy Committee Chair; Jones Nauseef, Education Committee Chair; Randy Grout, Technology Committee Chair; Eric Kaiser, ECGPS Representative; Jared Jackson, AAMC-OSR; Nicole Worden, Caduceus; Wanakee Carr, Bean Co-Mayor; Melissa Kroll, Bean Co-Mayor; Iryni Boelter, Boulware Mayor; Christopher Yopp & Heather Kruse, Flocks Co-Mayors; Jenna Wald & Allison Boardman, McCowen Co-Mayors

Above: Opening Ceremony Olympics, City Park
A tangled web of arrows—some splitting into two, others merging into one, and a rare few looping back on themselves—covered the backside of a draft grant proposal I had printed only a few hours ago. Leaning back in my chair, I tried to recollect how things had gotten so out of hand. It began with a single pathway: extracellular laminin binds to beta 4 integrin, the keratinocyte releases from the substratum, and the cell becomes motile. From past experiments in our lab, I gathered that certain extracellular signaling molecules can induce motility as well. However, a Swiss post-doctoral colleague found that certain squamous cell carcinomas (SCCs) are deficient in this motility. So, I drew a second pathway. But, I had to consider processed and unprocessed laminin. And the essential role of EGFR. But what about the tentative “cross talk” between TGFβ and EGFR?

I was generally confident with my newly crafted pathway, at least in normal cells most of the time and under certain conditions. In other words, I was not confident with my pathway at all. I glanced at my watch. Three thirty-five. Friday afternoon had dual purposes. First, I would attempt to organize the prior week’s experiments into a coherent story. This process typically involved hypothesis “pitching” with the aforementioned Swiss post-doc, committing the model to paper, and then cross checking the model with past literature and our own data. Second, I would plan the next week’s experiments to test my mechanism for SCC invasiveness.

This end-of-the-week ambition, as well as my broad interest in medical research, had several origins. The most meaningful motivators were also the most abstract: a desire to advance scientific knowledge and to alleviate disease. However I was also motivated by less idealistic influences. At MIT in the 1970s, my principal investigator was the first person to culture the human keratinocyte. I very much wanted to live up to his expectations. I also hoped to gain the confidence of our lab’s technician, post-doc, and even the high school and undergraduate students. Finally, I wanted to gain confidence in my own ability. Western blots and immunostaining required sustained vigilance and steady focus, so for the first few weeks I found myself double checking my lab notebook frequently.

Cell culturing was one of the most enjoyable parts of my lab work. I watched over cultures of several primary cells lines that I could call my own. I bore all the responsibility for subculturing them, feeding them, and monitoring their growth via microscope. I had to constantly be aware of which cell lines I had available for experiment and maintained my stock cells accordingly.

My student ID prohibited me from going into the lab on the weekends, so I had a convenient excuse to explore Boston. I capsized a Mercury at the Boston sailing club. I got lost on the T. On multiple occasions, I was referred to as an “I-o-wee-an.” I saw the Phineas Gage skull and railroad spike. I made friends with Ph.D. students who moonlighted as martini connoisseurs and World Cup revelers from Amsterdam. I ate clam chowder in Marblehead, cream pie in Cambridge, and peanuts at Fenway. I introduced my European colleagues to puppy chow. I read Thoreau at Walden Pond and saw 250 year old bonsai trees at the Arnold Arboretum. By Sunday evening I was ready to return my attention to research.

Above: Outside the Boston Community Sailing Club

Fridays were the domain of abstract ideas, hypotheses, balled paper, and counter-hypotheses. At the other end of the spectrum, Mondays were concerned with the setup and maintenance of experiments. In the morning I would refeed the stock control and cancer cells and plate a portion of these under different experimental conditions to be examined later in the week. A recent experiment involved plating normal keratinocytes and three different lines of squamous cell carcinoma cells in the presence or absence of TGFβ. Although fundamentally a straightforward experiment, the setup required careful diligence. The same number of cells had to be evenly plated onto each well, the TGFβ had to be distributed and diluted properly, and once plated, the cells had to be returned to the incubator undisturbed. On Wednesday, I would spend six hours staining the dish for motility tracks. If I inadvertently made a mistake anywhere in the experimental workup between Monday and Wednesday, I would not find out until the last moment on Wednesday evening. The experiments were uncompromising, but I believe this made me into a more mature researcher.

I maintained a cautious optimism. I was enthusiastic about my hypotheses but accepted the data for what they were.
Please give Tiger back his “garden tools” ...and other random thoughts

By: Solomon Yilma

Disclaimer: This article is my opinion (not even a serious opinion at that). It has absolutely no journalistic integrity at all. It is just my rant. So please don’t take it seriously then run to OSAC or me screaming your head off about how you are offended by what I wrote. We all have enough pressure in medical school and some of us have to face other challenges. So take a load off and have a sense of humor. Besides, this is America, and the "Right to Free Speech" gives everyone the right to make a "donkey" out of themselves by what comes out of their mouth if they choose to voice their opinion. Anyway, if you feel that I am making some of these things up, feel free to watch the History Channel or check facts on the web.

Please Give Tiger Back His "Garden Tools": After spending the last few months watching Tiger Woods lose several worldwide tournaments miserably (compared to his previous domination of golf), I am on the verge of throwing my arms up and screaming, "please give Tiger back his garden tools." By now, it is clear that the man is no role model for kids, a title that should have never been bestowed upon him in the first place since it is the parents' job to assume that role. So, I think that we should cut him the same slack we cut most athletes, rock stars, and actors/actresses. The man was responsible for making golf hip by bringing a younger audience and fan base to golf...and it was just a matter of time before the "groupies" followed. He has extraordinary talents in golf, and most extraordinary people have extraordinary problems. Look at John F. Kennedy, Michael Jordan, Ray Charles, Mick Jagger, Liz Taylor, Charlie Sheen, Bill Clinton...well, you get the picture. And don't pretend that this is a problem that started happening in this century. You can start from Biblical times, then look at the history of the Romans and even American history. Where ever there has been power and extraordinary talent, there has been infidelity. Most of the forefathers and framers of the Constitution loved the ladies...many ladies. It is even rumored that Ben Franklin moved to France because the French women were more willing to indulge in his more "progressive" sexual proclivities. Thomas Jefferson put his own spin on things when becoming the first major historical figure in American history to go interracial with his slave and soul mate Sally Hemings. Civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King loved lots of ladies (you would too if you dealt with police dogs, fire hoses and police batons on a regular basis). Albert Einstein...let us just say that Einstein was demonstrating his "theory of sexuality" to many willing groups whenever he travelled to make his popular speeches. Of course, we all know the story of Bill Clinton...although it was really funny that Newt Gingrich was also having an extramarital affair during those nights that he was the driving force behind the inquiry into the traces of genetic material deposited on Monica's dress and Clinton's dual-purpose use of cigars.

Getting back to Tiger, lately, it seems that he has become like Samson (in the Bible) after Delilah cut his hair. He just can't seem to get back to dominating the game like he used to. That is why I vote to let him have his "garden tools" once again...be it the classy ones, or the ones that can do things with parts of their anatomy that would make an ER doctor, a gynecologist and a proctologist all blush (so I've heard). Oh, Come On...we are all fans of this man for one reason and one reason only...he can whack that golf ball into the holes with skill that none of us possesses. Much like I would only care to scrutinize the patient-outcome stats of a surgeon who will be operating on me rather than worrying about how many times the surgeon may have been married, all I care to know about Tiger is his golfing abilities. The rest of it is between his wife and his concubines, and it is none of my business. That was why I did not care when Bill Clinton had his "Monica therapy" while he was president. Hey, he seemed to be running the country great, the economy was doing well, unemployment was down, there was a budget surplus...and if that is all it takes to have a president who can run the country well (Oops...I feel a Bush joke coming on), then there should be an army of sexually open-minded "surrogates" that should be trained to serve the sexual whims of our presidents (whether the president happens to be a man or a woman). Yes, I'm still hoping that Hillary Clinton or Condoleezza Rice will make history by becoming the first...
Before closing, I want to share a Tiger joke that I was told by a nameless faculty member. What is the difference between Santa Clause and Tiger Woods...Santa only has three "Garden Tools." And by the way, the school anthem for my undergrad college had the word that stands for Tiger's "garden tools" at a high point in the middle of the song. So during football games, graduation or any other formal functions that called for singing the school song, the disgruntled students enjoyed emphasizing and stretching out that part as loud and as long as we can to annoy the president and board of trustees.

Prelude to Women's Movement: I was watching the History Channel during my study break a few months ago when I learned an interesting piece of history. During the battle over the "New Frontier" (some may call this period by a different name) there were frequent skirmishes between the Native American Tribes who were defending their territory and the white/Caucasian settlers who were trying to live on that land. Sometimes these conflicts spiraled into raids by Native American tribal warriors who would raid the villages of the white/Caucasian settlers while the men were away and kidnap the women to take them back to their tribes to live with and marry them. Of course, weeks or months later, most of these raids often triggered counter-raids on the tribes by the male settlers to find the women who had been kidnapped and return them back to their villages. Of course, something interesting began to happen while the white male settlers set up camp at night during the long trip back to their villages. If and when the opportunity became available, some of the white women began quietly sneaking out from camp and heading back to the Native American tribe that had kidnapped them earlier. Of course, modern psychology might call this a case of Stockholm Syndrome (when a kidnap victim, over time, identifies with the kidnappers). But according to the female historian on the History Channel, the white women were sneaking out and heading back to the Native American tribes that had kidnapped them because the family and tribal structure of many of the Native American tribes viewed and treated women as equals. During that same time period, gender equality was a right that was not afforded to many women who lived in communities that followed traditional European values where women were not viewed as equals. So, these women were apparently retreating to a society that had very progressive views on the equality of women and their right as individuals in that society.

Of Paralysis, Wheelchairs, and Lap dance: A few years ago, there was a small controversy involving the brilliant Theoretical Physicist, Stephen Hawking, after some rumors surfaced about his going to a strip club. Upon hearing this big "much ado about nothing" controversy, my reaction was "so what!!!". The man suffers from a rare form of ALS with a gradual protracted course that has slowly robbed him of his independence and dignity over the years. He is now permanently wheelchair bound, yet he keeps going, managing to achieve more in his current state than most of us "able-bodied" individuals will ever achieve in two lifetimes. So, if he wants to take a break for a few hours and support the local economy by heading to the nearest strip club for some inspiration, I think he has earned that right. What happens between two consenting adults within the confines of the law is really none of our business. I’m only surprised that no one thought to have a pole installed in his house and have the local talent pay him visits on a fixed weekly schedule.

Testing Accommodation for USMLE is Often Lip Service to the ADA by the NBME: Once again, this is just my opinion based on my frustrating experience with the NBME. If you are one of those unfortunate students who will be applying for testing accommodations for USMLE step 1 or Step 2, please save yourself some time and painful waiting by hiring an educational disability attorney. I give this advice with many qualifiers. Therefore, the person who will be best suited to give you proper advice is Dr. Christine Cork at the College of Medicine Counseling Center. With that said, unless you have a long list of documentation spanning several years (over a decade) that shows clear and irrefutable evidence that you should get testing accommodation, or you have one of those clear-cut disabilities like blindness, then you are better off hiring an attorney. My experience with the NBME over the past 2 years has led me to feel that I would have saved significant time if I had hired an attorney from
Like every applicant who goes through the process, I read the NBME’s description for the process and assumed that it would be straightforward. Unfortunately, during the first round of application for testing accommodations for USMLE, a majority of applications get denied. This is a fair process in the eyes of most people without disabilities since there are many individuals who may try to game the system. If, on the other hand, you happen to be one of those persons who has a bonafide justification that is supported by concrete medical evidence, you might get caught in the initial wave of denials. Unfortunately, a huge majority of medical students give up after the first denial and never file an appeal. This system has worked so well for the NBME that it has made the process nearly impossible for the rest of us. In hindsight, I would advise everyone that has received their first denial to retain an educational disability attorney and cough-up the $500 or so to have your case reviewed to see if you have a good case or if the NBME is in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). On the other hand, if you have unlimited means and you can afford to spend the money, I would actually encourage you to consult an attorney even when you are filing your first request for testing accommodations for USMLE. It is my belief that the NBME has multiple advantages over the student because the NBME has unlimited time (compared to deadlines that students have to meet for clinical clerkships and residency matching as well as graduation), students are unaware of the law (since we are not attorneys), the NBME holds all the cards (there is no transparency about the experts they claim to use or the review process), and the NBME simply does not play fair (it is in their interest to find every excuse to deny your application unless you can prove that they will be in violation of the ADA guidelines). In other words, having an attorney fighting on your behalf will somehow even the playing field and save you the pain of being jerked around for months on end waiting for their decision and having them approve inadequate accommodations for you.

Hopefully, the attorney will convince them to do the right thing under the law and save you both time, money, and the chance of getting dismissed from medical school under the 3 strikes and you’re out rule for passing the USMLE. Despite the opinion of two neuropsychologists, two neurologists, one psychiatrist and the entire Accommodations Committee at the College of Medicine, my battle with the NBME continues as they continue to cite (according to my attorney) a part of the ADA that has been overturned during the 2008 amendment of the ADA. The challenge posed by the NBME for students with disabilities has been so significant that Brown University School of Medicine in Rhode Island decided to drop the USMLE Step 2 requirement prior to awarding the M.D. degree, and only requires that their students past Step 1 prior to graduation (yes, I actually confirmed this with their Associate Dean for Medical Education, Dr. Phillip A. Gruppuso).
Financial Pyramid for Physicians

Financial Independence

Leaving a Legacy
- Estate Planning - Charitable Giving

Retirement
- Age 59 1/2 and Older
- 401K - 403b - SEP IRA - Roth IRA

Early Exit Strategy
- 20 Years or Less (Pre-age 59 1/2)

Medium Term Strategies
- Mutual Fund Portfolio
- Savings: 10-20% of Income is Ideal - Home Ownership

Risk Management
- Life - Health - Home/Auto
- Umbrella Liability - Disability - Malpractice

Emergency Reserve
- 3-6 Months of Fixed Expenses

Debt Management

Working/Accumulation

Asset Protection

For more information or a complimentary, no obligation consultation contact us today.

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