Our medical students, first through fourth years, respond to your questions:

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- From what I have heard it is known that UF produces great residents and a high proportion of our graduates become chief residents at their respective programs. Our board scores have risen steadily the last 3-4 years in line with the major curriculum change that occurred during that time, but most importantly UF teaches you how to become a competent and knowledgeable physician that can work well with others and think critically to solve problems. UF COM is recognized as a top medical institution in the southeastern United States and a top 7 and rising public institution in the U.S. UF's brand is well established and well allow you to be competitive in whatever specialty you pursue and there are many research and networking opportunities here if you choose to seek them out. Additionally, Shands multiple hospitals, the VA, and UF Health Jacksonville all provide unique opportunities to rotate through and gain experiences in different sort of clinical settings which will prepare you well for residency.

- We get a ton of clinical exposure! This is something that I underestimated when I was applying to schools, but now that I’m a student, I have really started to see how much clinic time solidifies concepts that we’re learning in the classroom. I’m not great at memorizing discrete facts, so seeing the whole clinical picture of a patient (via patient presentations, LAC practice, inpatient interviews, and Equal Access Clinic and preceptorships) really helps me to remember concepts long-term. UF also does a great of introducing topics that are re-addressed in future classes to help you solidify that learning long-term and in the context of multiple classes. With respect to step 1 now being pass/fail, UF’s discovery pathways are a huge way to get involved in areas that you’re passionate about. These are optional tracks that you can take and are a great way to get exposure to things you’re interested in.

- UF has by far the most amount of funded research opportunities in FL. It's very easy to find a research project of any topic you're interested in. I believe this ultimately is the main factor to make applicants competitive for residency positions aside from step1/grades.

- Many opportunities to network with subspecialties and (completely optional) research opportunities.

- UFCOM is a great institution at preparing you for a successful residency match. There are several parts of your residency match application beyond just Step 1. First, there is a great wealth of research opportunities available and UF is consistently one of the most well funded public research institutions in the entire nation. You will have absolutely no issue being involved in as many projects as you wish/can balance. Faculty are very eager to work with students and will give you as much or as little oversight as you wish. Next, there are several office staff dedicated just to medical students and you have plenty of opportunities to meet with them to discuss issues and future plans; everyone here works to provide you with the best future career. Also, other than PM&R there are residency programs in every core residency program available. This is vital because
having a home program will greatly increase networking opportunities, letters of recommendation, and can be a safety net for you in the match. Almost every UF student is greatly respected by residency programs here and you will be sure to land high up on their match lists which will ensure you will match into your desired specialty. Within the southeast and the greater US, UF is an institution that is very well recognized and respected. This goes a long way to help you get noticed on residency applications. Programs respect the training you receive here and we are supposedly known for making very competent residents at other institutions.

- **UFCOM faculty are outstanding teachers and through CLG and through organically meeting lecturers/clinicians I’ve found incredible mentors who have given me great advice and support as I applied and interviewed for residency. UF COM also makes it easy to be actively involved in a wide variety of extracurriculars including every type of research, community outreach, mission trips, volunteering with EAC and other local community resources, and leadership roles within your class or interest groups. The best conversations I had during interviews were about the patients I’ve met here, the faculty I’ve been inspired by, and the activities that have molded into a more well-rounded person and future physician.**

- **We get a lot of exposure to many different things. EAC is awesome. Also, physicians here are very willing to let us shadow and mentor us.**

- **UF COM does an incredible job of structuring our curriculum in a way that prepares us well for Step 1 and for clinical rotations/residency. Beginning 1st semester, we get clinical experience through Standardized Patient encounters, physical exam practice sessions, inpatient encounters with actual patients in Shands, and Preceptorship 1A (at the end of 1st semester). Everything fits so well together and contributes to our readiness to test our basic science knowledge on Step 1 and seamlessly transition to clinical rotations after Step 1. After just 1.5 semesters, I already feel comfortable going into the hospital or clinic (for preceptorship or EAC) and seeing patients. UF COM also has such a great reputation for preparing well-rounded students who are more than competent on exams and with patients. Although Step 1 being P/F will be a big change for the residency process, UF COM will make sure your application stands out in other ways.**

- **UF COM has plenty of extracurricular opportunities including White Coat Company, Equal Access Clinic, MSRP, so many interest organizations, chances to connect with faculty, etc.**

- **UF COM students have access to every medical/surgical specialist that they could imagine. The research opportunities are endless.**

- **Something that’s great about UF is that we have residency programs in most specialties (with the only exception being PM&R, last I heard), and we have two programs in some specialties (because we have a hospital in Gainesville and another in Jacksonville). That means that you have the opportunity to explore many different career paths through required/elective rotations, and you have opportunities to meet, get to know and work with program directors, which can be helpful for residency! Also, just in general, UF is focused on training skilled, humanistic physicians, rather than simply teaching to the board exams. I think that combination of knowledge, skills and ability to
empathize/relate to other people makes us competitive applicants and interviewees, and therefore competitive for matching into the residency we want! I have no idea how UF will change things based on Step 1 becoming P/F, that might be a good question to ask faculty/administrators.

- UFCOM puts a large emphasis on clinical skills--technique, application to physiology, and practice--throughout the curriculum, so students comfortably perform very well on Step 2.
- UFCOM places high emphasis on clinical training throughout preclinical years and does their best to ensure that students are becoming great doctors and not just great test takers. I believe UF’s investments in these areas of early clinical exposure throughout the first 2 years will put you in a great position to shine on your 3rd year clerkship and away rotations. Additionally, our students tend to knock the ball out of the park on Step 2, so I definitely feel like our curriculum will prepare you well for the most important parts of your residency application.

Given that some of our clerkship(s) are on the Jacksonville campus, will housing be provided and how does this work/what is it like? What fun things are there to do in Jax?

- Housing is provided for free when in Jacksonville. They are "suite-style" dorms which means you have your room (mostly triples with singles prioritized for PA and 4th year students) connected to a bathroom that is also shared by another room. This means up to 4-5 students sharing a bathroom. The furniture is provided (bed, twin XL mattress, desk, chair, lamp, mini-fridge to share with roommate) as are sheets and towels. There is a small gym in the dorm, a kitchen with fridge/freezer/oven/microwave, as well as a nice study area that has a printing area. When in Jacksonville you get around $30 per week on a card to spend at the hospital cafeteria. I enjoyed being a 5 minute walk away from inpatient clinical duties when I rotated in Jacksonville. There are fun restaurants to try and a beach nearby!
- There is a dormitory that is adjacent to UF Health Jacksonville. I personally really liked staying there, and you can literally get from your bed to morning rounds in 5 minutes. There is also a gym on the first floor of the dormitory, and a great cafeteria at the hospital. When you aren't working, people will often go to the beach or find places to eat (Jacksonville is huge and there are a ton of great restaurants).
- TONS of fun stuff to do in Jax! Beaches, restaurants, ice cream (I'm obsessed with Whit's!!!) farmers markets, great running trails, rooftop bars, museums, sporting events (Jags gams, FL-GA football game), TPC Sawgrass, etc. It's always a blast to explore Jax when there for rotations!
- Housing is provided! The housing is comprised of student dorms that are behind the hospital, only a minute or two walking distance. The dorms were recently renovated/upgraded during the Christmas break. Depending on your individual third and fourth year schedule you might spend anywhere from 6 weeks to 3 months in Jacksonville over the two years. I grew up in Jacksonville and I love it, there are tons of
things to do! If you want to stay close-ish to the hospital 5 Points and Riverside are about 10 minutes away. There are coffee shops, vintage stores, and plenty of restaurants - including the very popular Hawkers. If you want to drive a little more there is San Marco (15 minutes away, cute walking areas, also restaurants and coffee shops), and then the beaches (about 30 minutes away). Jacksonville always has a ton of stuff going on and they also have a monthly arts market around Riverside.

- There is a dormitory quite literally next door to the hospital where we are provided free housing during all rotations in Jacksonville. We also received a dining card to eat at the cafeteria (or to stock up on late night snacks or splurge on fancy lattes), and a parking pass to park for free in a lot directly behind the hospital. The dorm has kitchen facilities, multiple fridges/freezers/cabinets to store groceries, a small gym on the ground floor, and a dedicated study lounge with computers and free printing. Being away from home is balanced out by the convenience of having everything you need right next to the hospital - and the impromptu Jeopardy competitions with your classmates in the dorm lounge. It’s a pretty easy drive to go home each weekend if you choose to, but Jacksonville has a lot to explore too! Riverside and San Marco have some great restaurants and coffeeshops - there’s truly no better way to cap off an overnight shift on OB or EM than by hitting up Good Dough for some fresh doughnuts.

- There are dorms. Jacksonville is awesome actually. There's iFly, heaps of escape rooms, other social stuff, 1-day amazon prime, World Market, Ikea, outlet malls.

- Housing will be provided in Jacksonville in dorms next to the hospital.

- I got to do my first semester preceptorship (1A) in Jacksonville for 2 weeks. Just like for 3rd & 4th year clerkships, housing is provided. It is located directly behind the hospital which is crazy convenient. Although dorm life isn’t ideal and we thought we escaped it after undergrad, it really isn’t that bad. The dorms have a communal kitchen with refrigerators, an oven, stove, and microwave. You also have a mini fridge provided in your room. Bathrooms are shared by either 2 people or 4 people depending on the room. Also, you are given a card with a weekly meal stipend on it that can be used at the hospital for about 1 meal a day (maybe 2). Jacksonville is a really fun city. There is so much to do there, so it’s a nice change of scenery. It’s a big city that also has beaches. It has great bars, restaurants, coffee shops, shopping, and places to relax (parks, beaches, riverfront areas, etc.).

- When you have clinicals in Jax, you have the option to live in UF dorm housing on the UF Health campus. In December of our first year, we have a 2-week primary care preceptorship. I did mine in Jax and stayed at the UF dorm housing while I was there. It was really convenient. Most of the rooms are for 2 people and are suite-style with a bathroom shared between 2 rooms. There are also single rooms for those with longer rotations. The dorm is located right above the security department for the UF Health campus there, so I always felt really safe. There is also parking, a small gym, and they will give you a meal card that you can use to reduce meal costs! I liked staying in Jacksonville and got to get outdoors in a few of the parks which was nice. There is also a lot of shopping and a group of us there for our preceptorship went to play laser tag which was lots of fun!
- The dorms are great, and fun to live with your friends. Riverside is a fun area less than 10 minutes from the hospital.
- Housing is provided in dormitories in Jacksonville free of cost. The housing is less than 5 minutes walking from the hospital. It is a transition for many students because many are not used to living in dorms after a few years of medical school, however I found it to be similar in quality to my undergraduate dorms. In fact it can be fun to live in the same place as some of your closest friends. Jacksonville has a number of really nice areas to spend time, including Riverside, San Marco, Jax Beach, and Five Points, with good restaurants to explore in all of them.

What does a typical day and week for a UF medical school look like during the preclinical years? (I would truly appreciate it if someone would provide a sample schedule!) How would you describe your ability to balance school with personal well-being/ what is utilized at UFCOM to help with this?

- There’s no such thing as a typical day which is why I love med school! A typical week (with lunch 12p-1p every day): Monday has lectures most of the day (9a-4p), Tuesday morning will either be LAC or CLG. I have LAC on Tuesdays so that means I’ll be in the pretend clinic rooms either practicing talking to standardized patients/classmates or practicing physical exam skills on standardized patients/classmates for about an hour. Tuesday afternoon is lecture. Wednesday morning I have CLG (collaborative learning group, one of the best parts of UFCOM). The same group of 8 people meets once a week for 3 hours with their faculty leader (always a physician) to catch up and discuss relevant material. Typical CLG topics include ethics discussions, radiology presentations, and how to write a note. Wednesday afternoon is lecture. Thursday morning is anatomy lab (for the first semester). It’s only 45 minutes during first semester (which is prostecutions only, dissections don’t start until 2nd semester). Thursday afternoon is lecture (1st semester) or discovery track (an optional interest-based course of study, 2nd semester). I'm not in a discovery track so I use Thursday afternoons to catch up on studying or to work on my MSRP (summer research project, also optional). Friday is lecture most of the day or exams.
- This is hard to answer. I know I kept asking people the same question and no one could really give me a great answer for it. I think the best way to think about it is being occupied from 9-5 every day (12-1 free for lunch every day) with lectures, small group meetings, labs, physical exam practice sessions, etc. Some days we may only have 1 lecture and a small group meeting, some days we may have anatomy lab and 3 lectures, some days we may have 7 lectures. UFCOM does a great job of trying to balance our schedule to make sure we aren’t burning the candle at both ends (I think that’s the saying). If you would like to see screenshot examples of our weekly schedules, I would encourage you to reach out to any of the digital representatives whose contact information will be provided to you.
It all depends on if you are a class goer or if you stream lectures. As for me, I go to class so this is what my Monday schedule "typically" looks like:

Start my day with exercise
9-12- Class
12-1- Lunch break
1-4 or 5- Class
5-7- Dinner break/time with my boyfriend
7-10- Outline and study lectures from the day

The variations to this are as follows: On Tuesdays, in the morning instead of class I have LAC, which is going to practice physical exam skills with my classmates for an hour. On Wednesdays from 9-12 in the morning instead of class I have my CLG (Collaborative Learning Group), which is our group of 8 classmates plus our leader (some type of physician) doing a wide range of things like mental health check-in, radiology cases, ethics cases, etc. Thursdays and Fridays can be a little different, too, as anatomy lab can take up a morning or afternoon in place of class.

Your balance with personal well-being is all up to you- you can do as much or as little as you want to keep your sanity. I exercise at least 4 out of the 7 days in a week, do lots of cooking on the weekends, go to church every Sunday, and hang out with my boyfriend a lot. UFCOM highly encourages lots of activities that help you maintain your mental well-being! There's also a ton of social events put on by your 2 elected social chairs: parties, potluck dinners, etc. We had a Galentine's Day (Valentine's Day) celebration with all of the girls in our class where we snacked, socialized, and made candles. There's also MedProm in May, which is prom for the whole 1st year class!

I am a class-goer so 9-5 includes going to class/clg/lac/meetings with a 12-1 lunch break. 5-6 is a break. Then, 6-10:30ish is for reviewing material from that day.

For me, I usually wake up at around 7am. My goal is to always get to HMEB or another study area of my choice by 8am. Once I reach, it usually takes me around 30 minutes to settle in and plan out my day until lunch time. From there my morning will consist of at least 1 hour of anki, followed by streaming lectures until the morning's lectures are completed. I will have lunch at around 12-1pm (as fit in our schedule) before I go back streaming lectures from the afternoon. Usually I find streaming goes faster than when I'm in attendance, and I only speed up the lectures to a reasonable level since I try to make my flashcards at the SAME TIME. This has drastically changed how much time I spend making cards and allows any extra time I have in the evenings for review.

To be honest, I'm still trying to figure out a balance, but something I've recently started is taking a walk or run outside in the afternoons. I also use this really great app to facilitate breaks in between studying and lectures.

The typical day definitely depends on you and what you prefer! For me: 6:15-7:15am workout, get to campus by 8 to do some flashcards before lecture. Lecture usually starts at 9 and ends at 12. Lunch 12-1, either with friends or taking walks. After lunch is usually more lectures or if not, I'll start reviewing morning lectures. Then get home and finish
up my review and previewing tomorrow's lectures. Dinner around 7 and I rarely study after dinner. Working out definitely helped keep my sanity during school. Also keeping up with friendships from before med school is important, albeit difficult.

- For the first semester of your first year, Mondays and Fridays are generally lectures (anywhere between 6 and 8 lectures on these days, though sometimes we'll have Learning Assessment Center--aka LAC--recordings where we practice with standardized patients). On Tuesday or Wednesday morning from 9am-12pm you'll meet with your small group called a CLG, and then on the day you don't meet with your CLG, you'll be in the LAC for about an hour practicing your physical exam skills. Thursday mornings are for anatomy (about 1.5 hours unless you're teaching, which you'll do at least once with your team over the semester). Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons are for lectures (3-4 of them).

Second semester of first year is pretty much the same, except Thursday afternoons are for Discovery Tracks and Friday afternoons are for anatomy lab.

- I think UF allows a lot of flexibility in our curriculum. I like having some required things most days of the week to get me onto campus and to see my friends, but also having a lot of lectures recorded online so I can watch at home when I need more flexibility for balancing life stuff, like appointments, exercise, or days when I just want to do my work in my PJs :)

Generally speaking, my schedule looks like this. Depending on what's required on any given day/how I'm feeling, I will either attend lectures live or from home. If I watch from home, my day is shifted forward an hour or two due to lecture posting delay (i.e., 1p lecture posted at 2p, etc). After school each day, I take some time to relax (cook, eat dinner, watch some TV, exercise -- usually not all in one day, except for eating dinner :p), and then I generally study from 7p-10/11p. I'm usually in bed by 11:30p latest, and up at 7a/7:30a unless I have a reason to be up earlier.

M - Lectures 9a-12p, Lunch 12p-1p, Lectures 1p-4/5p
T - CLG 9a-12p, Lunch 12p-1p, Lectures 1p-4/5p
W - LAC and/or studying 9a-12p, Lunch 12p-1p, Lectures 1p-4/5p
R - 9a-12p lectures (or anatomy, in first semester), then, since we have Thursday afternoons free in second semester, I am studying, exercising, relaxing, etc until bedtime (depending on how close we are to exams, what else I have to do).
F - 9a-12p lectures, 12p-1p lunch, 1p-5p would be anatomy in second semester, but due to COVID-19, is usually lectures or studying. Every Friday evening, I either do something fun with friends or I have a date night with my boyfriend.

Saturday and Sunday - I spend most of the day Saturday and Sunday on a combination of catching up on studying, doing housework/running errands and relaxing. Farther from exams, it's some studying, more relaxing. Closer to exams, it's mostly studying with some errands/relaxing. One thing I always do every Sunday (except in the time of
COVID) is grocery shop. For some reason I find this relaxing and enjoyable, so I always make time to go to Publix.

- The preclinical curriculum allows for a lot of flexibility in your schedule! Lectures and review sessions are recorded for students to watch at any time, if they choose, except for required patient presentations and group-based learning sessions. In a typical week, we may have 3 morning lectures and 3-4 afternoon lectures on Monday and Friday; Collaborative Learning Groups and clinical skills practice/assessment on Tuesday/Wednesday mornings, followed by afternoon lectures; and Thursday morning lectures followed by free time Thursday afternoon for research. I find it is very doable to balance personal well-being with school; I still have time to exercise, cook, hang out with friends, attend sporting events, etc.

One thing I would like to hear more about is how Gainesville is for LGBT folks. I am from out of state and don't know much about living in "the south" as a gay person. It would be great to learn more about that.

- This is a great question! Gainesville, itself, is a pretty liberal city. The immediate area is largely made up of the UF population which is very gay friendly and has active LGBTQ organizations. UF COM has an organization called the Health Queer Alliance that functions as an interest group and we provide talks and volunteering opportunities to help bridge the gap between the LGBT population and healthcare. There is also a sizable LGBT population within the med school as well as the university at large. Keep in mind, Gainesville is a small city and not really a "gay city" in that the population is mostly students and there aren't many specifically gay businesses. There is the UC, which is the only LGBT club in town and it is pretty popular on the weekends among both the LGBT and straight community. One fun highlight is that the City of Gainesville recently changed several of the sidewalks downtown to be rainbow themed in support of LGBT rights along with banning gay conversion therapy for minors. There is an annual pride event and parade, albeit on the smaller side. UF COM/HQA always participates with a booth advertising our Equal Access STI testing as well as our gender affirming care services such as hormone therapy. Overall, most, if not all, spaces in Gainesville that are frequented by students are extremely LGBT friendly and some are frequented by the community even if not specifically designated as a "queer space". Personally, I've been living in Gainesville for over 7 years now and I have never experienced an issue. Feel free to reach out to me or anyone to talk more about this. We love having a dynamic LGBT community in the med school! Additionally, once you submit your survey on your Big/Little match, you can designate that you would like a queer person to be your Big and that should help facilitate some of those conversations.

- Excellent question. I am an LGBT out of state student so I'll take a stab. During my 4 years here, Gainesville has been a pretty good place to live and be out. While it is a smaller town relative to other cities, it is an incredibly progressive place with a very high ratio of young and educated individuals. I have never felt unsafe here and can be open in public with my partner. The large undergrad campus also supplies a lot of LGBT
centered events and community. The annual pride parade and festival is well attended by the local community in October every year. The faculty at UFCOM are also very accepting of LGBT people and the curriculum is designed to educate us about LGBT health. We also have a dedicated LGBT health night at the EAC clinic which is a great way for LGBT students to get involved in community health initiatives. The downsides from my perspective is that it is a smaller city and so there are some limitations to our dedicated LGBT spaces that larger cities may overflow with. Also if you were to travel outside of the Gainesville area you will be more likely to encounter intolerance, but that has never been an issue for me.

- UFCOM itself is definitely a great place for LGBTQ folks. HealthQueer Alliance is our interest group which works to promote LGBTQ health education for our classmates and community, and at our student-run Equal Access Clinic we have a monthly LGBTQ night where we provide gender-affirming therapy, monitor patients on PrEP, and provide general medical care with students and staff trained in LGBTQ healthcare. As a community, Gainesville is very LGBTQ-friendly, and is sort of a progressive oasis amidst the more southern-esque areas of rural north Florida. I've always felt safe dating or being out with my partner here. Gainesville Pride is held each year in October, and our local Pride Community Center has a great list of LGBTQ organizations and local resources such as LGBTQ-friendly churches. [http://gainesvillepride.org/lgbtq-resource-guide/](http://gainesvillepride.org/lgbtq-resource-guide/)

- Very very LGBT friendly. Our current 4th year president is a member of the LGBT community. We run a LGBT clinic night and recently took orders for LGBT pins.

- As a gay man, I was very interested to see what UFCOM would be like. Although I didn't go to UF, I went to another big SEC school where I found my place so I was hoping UFCOM would be the same. Well, UFCOM surpassed expectations by a lot. UFCOM is so LGBT friendly as whole. Faculty members, administration, and fellow students are all extremely supportive. It really is a non-issue here. Being in medical school, we are all (hopefully) very compassionate and empathetic people, and I think UFCOM does an exceptional job of picking students who are just that. In my 1.5 semesters, I don't think I've encountered a single time where I felt discriminated against or that I was not accepted for who I am. You will be given contact information for UFCOM digital representatives. A lot of those digital representatives mention involvement in the Health Queer Alliance (HQA), so I encourage you to reach out to us if you have more specific questions.

- I'm not a member of the LGBTQ community, but I'm a huge supporter, so here are my thoughts. I would say there's a larger LGBTQ population here than you would expect, and I've never heard of anyone encountering any racism or discrimination here. Since we are in a college town, it is more liberal than the surrounding areas. We have a Health Queer Alliance at the College of Medicine that's pretty active as well. I can't speak from experience, but at least in Gainesville, I don't think you'd encounter any problems living as a gay individual here!

- This is a great question! I'd say Gainesville is definitely an 'island' in North Florida when it comes to supporting LGBT rights. Gainesville is super supportive and has many events supporting LGBT. UFCOM has a Health Queer alliance interest group and we have the
med student-run equal access clinic which has a specific night for LGBT specific needs. We all receive training for specific health needs of the LGBT community. Many of us wear HQA pins on our badges/white coats to show our support and make sure all patients are comfortable. While I understand living in the South as a gay person may cause apprehension, I think you'll find you will absolutely fit in and find your people in Gainesville.

Can you tell us about life outside of med school at UF and living in a college town? Please comment also on weekends and breaks, fun things to do in Gainesville.

- I think Gainesville is different than many other "college towns" for graduate students, because there is almost every graduate program imaginable and they are ALL centrally located on the same campus - law, pharmacy, medicine, physical therapy, dentistry, etc... As a result, I think there is a very active social scene outside of school that likely has things to do related to what you're interested in (ranging from going out to bars/clubs/restaurants/breweries to a plethora of outdoor activities, trails, and activities for young children).
- There's quite a bit to do here in Gainesville, from exploring local coffeeshops, bars, and restaurants downtown, running or cycling on the Hawthorne trail, or going to any number of exciting sporting events from the popular football and basketball to the criminally underrated volleyball, soccer, and gymnastics. We have a ton of great outdoor activities in the area, including multiple state parks with walking and biking trails like Devil's Millhopper State Park, Loblolly Woods Nature Park, Sweetwater Wetlands Park, Payne's Prairie State Park. About 40 minutes away in High Springs, there are a plethora of gorgeous natural springs for kayaking, paddle-boarding, tubing, snorkeling, and even scuba diving in some areas. Lake Wauberg about 10 minutes from campus is owned by the university and offers free admission for students and has a rock-climbing wall and free rentals of kayaks, paddleboards, and small sailboats. Bars downtown and outdoor venues such as Depot Park and OneLove cafe have live music just about every week, and we've got a solid food truck scene popping up as well.
- I really enjoy the restaurant scene in Gainesville - nice happy hour deals, delicious food options (The Top is my favorite!), and fun breweries. I also appreciate the outdoor activities that Gainesville has, including numerous running trails/Depot park and free access to kayaking/canoeing at the nearby Lake Wauberg.
- We meet up with friends and study. I love the breakfast places, I go to dance class when I have time and also a tabletop gaming shop.
- I came from a small school in Michigan and I've never lived in a college town before but I love it. There is plenty to do here. Your classmates and people in classes above you will be good resources for finding things to do. There are tons of restaurant options for any taste and any budget. I love being outdoors and there's ample opportunity for that. Also UF COM has tons of cool people (you've been accepted - that means you're one of them!) and hanging out with classmates is a great way to spend time.
There's no shortage of good food here- a wide variety and always somewhere new to try. We also have a ton of outdoor activities. Payne's Prairie is 15 minutes down the road and there are beautiful hiking trails there with different wildlife, including bison and wild horses! There are a few other really school state parks here and lots of public parks like Depot Park where people like to picnic and hang out. Many people are also heavily involved in intramurals if you like to play sports and a handful of our musically-gifted classmates play music/sing together pretty frequently. Lastly, UF has tons of sporting events you can attend. Football games are the most popular, but the only sport you have to pay for tickets. Every other sporting event on campus is free with your UF ID.

Lots of food places to have brunch or dinner with friends on the weekends! Fun things include trivia and game nights.

Life outside med school is what you make of it. For me, I'm more introverted, and while a few people prefer going out and grabbing drinks at the local bars, I'd rather do activities with my closer group of friends. This may include Friday movie nights, game nights, or personal time for myself where I like to read, draw or catch up on Netflix (I'm a strong binger and know if I try to watch Netflix in the week I will definitely end up watching a whole season of something instead of studying). I think the really cool thing with living in a college town is there is always some event planned whether it be UF related or something in the downtown area. Not to mention Gainesville is expanding, and I think being in a place where new shops or restaurants are added is always motivation to try somewhere new.

Hawthorne Trail is a 15 mile paved biking/running trail out through Paynes Prairie Nature reserve. There are many springs/state parks right outside of Gainesville. You can get to the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico in under 2 hours.

There's a lake called Lake Wauburg that has free kayaking, paddle boarding, paddle boating, rock climbing, biking, hiking, etc, and all you need is your student ID! It's a nice nature escape. There are also some great restaurants downtown, trivia, some nice bars, and lots of sporting events!

I've lived in Gainesville for almost 8 years (did undergrad, a masters, and now med school here), and one thing I can say about this place is that it's always changing and evolving, which I love. There's plenty of fun stuff to do here and things are always cropping up. We of course have nightlife (not my typical scene, but it's pretty robust!) and LOTS of great local places to eat. We also have a lot of outdoor activities available (kayaking on Lake Wauberg, nature trails, tubing at Ginnie springs/Ichnetucknee, a botanical garden, or even just walking on campus can be fun!). We have museums, an escape room, a theatre off campus + shows that come to venues on campus, and sports. There is a lot to do here, and even in 8 years of living here I have not done it all.

UF sports keep campus exciting all year long and ensure there's always something to do! We also have nature reserves, a lake, and springs close by for convenient and really cool outdoor excursions.

Gainesville has a great food scene and represents the best parts of living in a college town! There are always Gators athletics events to attend, plays and concerts at the Phillips Center, and great local breweries. If none of those things really appeal to you,
we have some amazing state parks with underwater rivers, springs you can float on like a lazy river, and plenty of hiking trails no more than 30 minutes from campus. Not to mention we are 2 hours away from the theme parks of Orlando or the beaches of St. Augustine!

How do out-of-state students adapt/adjust? Tips for transitioning?

- I'm an out of stater and have absolutely loved life as a Floridian! It's very hot and rains a LOT (but just for short amounts of time) in the summer months, but that is SO WORTH IT for the weather the rest of the year. It's been pretty easy to fill out the necessary forms to become a Florida resident and you will want to get started on this ASAP so that you can get in state tuition starting second year - it's a huge perk! As far as accessibility in traveling home - you can use the Gainesville regional airport (will likely require a connecting flight to get home unless you live in Atlanta, Charlottesvile, or Dallas) or drive to the larger airports for direct flights from Jacksonville, Tampa, or my favorite for affordable flight options - Orlando!

- I had a fairly smooth adjustment moving from out of state. I was ready for a change of pace and to explore something new. It's been a good adventure for me and I have certainly grown from it. It’s great to move directly into a very social and eager med school class that will make forming a new social group an absolute breeze. The biggest tips I will give is that you look up the UF COM page for out of state students that tells you about what paperwork you can do to potentially become an instate student, which would require you to switch over car title, insurance, etc to make it happen within the first month of you moving here. It was an easy process for me once I had that all completed.

- You make new friends and once you're in med school, med school is life. I am pretty sure I came from the state furthest away and I’m ok. I miss the food but there are plenty of places to eat in Gainesville!

- I moved from Michigan never having lived further south than Chicago. I came with an open mind and I love it. My biggest tip - throw yourself into any social opportunity. Most people don't know anyone else in the class either. The best way to feel comfortable is to get to know the awesome people here. Also know that it's ok and totally normal to feel homesick. I moved here in the middle of the summer so I could adjust to Gainesville before school started. That was nice too.

- The transition was pretty smooth for me! Getting my FL license so that I can be a resident here was really straightforward. I also feel like Gainesville is a great size for making out-of-staters feel at home quickly. Because it's a college town, it has a fun vibe while also being small enough that it's not overwhelming to adjust to. My suggestions are to explore Gainesville with other first years that you'll meet! Those who know this area will be able to show you the hidden spots and those who are new to the area like you can explore the popular spots. There is a lot of hiking and nature watching in this area as well, if that's something you like. It's really nice to be able to get out on the weekends for a quick hike year-round.
I was an out-of-state student when I came here for undergrad, which is a slightly different experience but I think the thing that made the difference for me was putting myself out there to make friends/connections with people. This is true in med school whether you are from outside FL or not, but go to events during orientation week, go to class get togethers, get to know people! It can be anxiety-inducing and scary to put yourself out there but you need people to help you get through this adventure of med school, so take the opportunities you have to do that. Also, ask people who are from around here, upperclassmen, etc for suggestions on things you need here (like places to eat, best place to get a haircut, etc).

What is the level of collaboration vs. competition between students throughout the four years?

- Since we are Pass/Fail I think that is huge. It seems that more schools are trending in that direction and now that Step 1 will be P/F for you all too I believe that will help even more. Enjoy your time in medical school and focus on learning from each other and working together. That is truly the culture we have here at UF COM. My classmates share all their resources with each other on our dropbox and I am truly grateful for it because although I'm not the type of person to make a bunch of anki cards or outlines, I do occasionally use them and some of these resources probably took 20+ hours to make. If our school was not P/F I don't think that people would be sharing as much. There is a healthy competition though naturally, because UF does attract high caliber students but being surrounded by other driven individuals will motivate you and bring out the best in you.
- Essentially zero competition and FULL collaboration during first 2 years! #PassFailRocks!! Third year is the first time you get real letter grades and I noticed a slight increase (from zero) in competitiveness, as I would imagine happens at every school. However, our class quickly adapted to this and shifted back towards full collaboration. We, as GatorDocs, have each others' backs from start to finish!
- From getting to know medical students from other schools throughout the years, I think that UFCOM has among the most collegial atmospheres that exist, and I feel that this is purposefully created by the administration to foster the best learning environment possible. Of course, there will always be individual students who feel the need to "out-do" other students, but I rarely encountered this type of behavior in a malicious way from any of my classmates.
- As an MS4, I've felt that the atmosphere at UF has been completely collaborative. I think the best evidence of this is our class dropbox, where we share study resources within our class and between classes. From the first exam, I've benefited from students in the class above me sharing their outlines, flowcharts, and anki decks - and our classes have continued the tradition. We're also pretty open about when we're struggling and offering help when others are. For example, classmates who were anatomy superstars freely offered to spend time in the cadaver lab helping a group of us who weren't as confident to identify structures and learn tips and tricks for the areas we struggled with.
In the clinical years, we shared shelf exam study resources and history taking templates for different specialties. My classmates have seriously been some of my greatest supporters through this entire journey.

- Very collaborative the first two years and a lot of sharing of resources. It’s pass/fail.
- Having just finished 2nd year and gearing up for Step 1, I can testify that the level of competition between students is practically non-existent. Gunners will be gunners, in that they will study above and beyond for themselves and for their career goals but it very rarely ever comes up in conversation or in the classroom. The first 2 years are P/F and we all truly embrace it. All of our resources are freely shared on our class Dropbox, with outlines, Anki decks, q banks, etc are all uploaded without reservation. I really really love that about UF because I never have to worry about discussing grades. Leaving exams, no one talks about grades. At most, they'll ask for a thumbs up/thumbs down if you passed or failed, but ultimately it’s all in the spirit of community and support. This is one of the biggest reasons I chose UF and I am so happy with the culture that exists here.

- I believe the pass/fail curriculum sets us up as collaborators and teammates as opposed to competitors. I never experienced any sort of "gunner" material. We have study groups and note-sharing. My classmates were always willing and eager to help teach me something I didn't understand, and vice versa. During the clinical years you become very close with your rotation group. My group always had each other's backs and were always reminding us if something was due, or if there was a change in the schedule - basically we were looking out for each other!

- I have only ever seen collaboration at UFCOM. We share resources in our class Dropbox. People make outlines or flash card decks and share them. We group study often. Pass/fail makes it so there's absolutely no downside to helping out your classmates.

- Honestly it's crazy collaborative. I don't think I've experience any competition thus far. Of course there are people who are already intensely studying for Step, but there are also people who will not start studying until our dedicated Step study period. Everyone gets along very well and there is no competition. Students share study guides, outlines, flash cards, etc. before every test to help each other out.

- Our first year class competitiveness is absolute minimal! We help each other out so much with resources like sharing our outlines, flashcard decks, and other resources that help us study. We are truly like a family and we want everyone to pass every exam. This is probably the least amount of competition you're going to get in a medical school setting. With that said, we still push ourselves to be our best and try our best every day.

- So much more collaboration over competition which I love. Everyone is willing to help each other out with teaching/learning/wellness/etc.

- I think UFCOM incorporates a lot of sessions for collaboration. For example, we recently were assigned to create our own STEP 1 questions with or Collaborative Learning Group (CLG). The CLG is a small group you're assigned to for the duration of your four years. You become very close with this group of people, and having these moments of collaboration reminds you of how medicine should be on a day-to-day basis: a profession of collaboration and teamwork. As a med student there is always competition. For me I see it among certain groups of students, but for the most part I
would say the classes are very open into sharing study methods, resources, and other student made material.

- Being an MS1 I can say our class is very collaborative, more so than I thought we would be! Many people share resources they've found are useful. It's super easy to find a study group. It's definitely not the competitive atmosphere that undergraduate life can sometimes have. Ultimately you'll all realize you're all in this together and that being better/scoring higher means absolutely nothing in pre-clinical years. Scoring a 95 is the same as scoring a 75. There's no difference. This really helps to foster a collaborative environment.

- All collaboration. There are endless online resources for your benefit.

- I'm a first year and I haven't felt any competition between my classmates at all so far. Since the first two years are pass/fail and unranked, everyone is super open to sharing resources and helping out other classmates.

- As a current first year student, I can say that my class is extremely collaborative (emphasis on extremely). I have not encountered anyone in my class who was not willing to help others, whether it be sharing information about good supplemental resources for class, personal notes, clarifications they received from a professor during office hours, extracurricular opportunities, and countless other things. Essentially the entire class uses Slack to communicate, whether it be for class or to let everyone know they plan to do something fun and are invited. I already expected UF to be collaborative after my interview and second look, but once I arrived in the fall my classmates still exceeded my expectations.

What sorts of resources does UF have available for Step Exam preparation and support?

- I am glad I was able to meet with our learning specialist, Mr. Gorske, for reassurance prior to Step 1 studying. He helped me finalize my studying plans and gave me good resources that matched my strengths. He was also very helpful for specific questions I had about my personal testing situation, so is an excellent resource for individual help.

- Most of our curriculum overlaps. Our UFCOM dropbox includes almost every resource you need.

- Our classes at UF are very aligned to what's tested on for Step1. We have practice step 1 questions for every block. Ultimately, I understand the concern for scoring well on Step 1, but you should all be asking the question "what medical school is going to make me a good doctor". That's the reason you go to medical school. Kaplan, Amboss, UWORLD, and any other company can prepare you for a standardized test, but only an amazing medical school like UF can make you a good physician.
What support does UF have relating to mental health, wellness and burnout for medical students? What is mandatory vs voluntary?

- I personally really appreciated having my CLG (collaborative learning group AKA small group that follows you all 4 years) leader - a UFCOM faculty member - to talk to throughout the last couple years. The time for CLG each week was nice for me, and I looked forward to these weekly check-ins. Each group is different and it depends on the dynamics of your group.

- UF has every mental health resource you could imagine, plus some. We even have our own counselor, Dr. Dede, whose office is in HMEB. You can make an appointment to talk with her whenever. UFCOM also has a learning specialist, Mr. Gorske who you can make an appointment with to help guide your studies. The administration also does a wonderful job of making sure students know their doors are open as well. Some even share stories of their personal struggles with us and let us know we can talk to them about anything.

- Dr. Dede and Mr. Gorske are amazing and always there for help even if you just want to talk!

- We have an on-site psychologist and your CLG leader checks on you weekly.

- Dr. Dede is awesome

- We have a Counseling and Wellness center that is UF-wide that can be utilized by any student. There's also a counsellor on staff at UFCOM specifically for COM students, Dr. Dede, who does a good job of not only making herself available to us, but also of letting us know about resources in the community, events coming up that we can take advantage of, etc. We also have a group called COMmunity, which brings students from all 4 years together to talk about various struggles we have in med school. Finally, we have CLG, which serves as a group for us to do weekly wellness check ins. I'd say that there's really nothing "mandatory" in the sense of wellness other than CLG (but CLG functions for many other things anyway), but we are reminded often to do things that make us happy and to take care of ourselves. Faculty are kind, supportive and open to hearing students' concerns, which I think makes a huge difference too.

How accessible and open are faculty to shadowing opportunities in the clinic or hospital?

- Faculty are SUPER receptive to med students getting involved. On a formal level, starting in first year you will have inpatient encounters with your CLG group and organized preceptorships where you will start seeing patients and practicing your skills in taking a history and doing a physical. Informally, most of your lecturers are practicing docs, and you can just chat with them after class to grab their email and find out what day they're in clinic or in the OR. You can also just look up physicians in the specialty you're interested in and shoot them an email to see what days they're seeing patients. It really is that easy! (True Story - one of the oncologists I shadowed once in October of
first year saw me near the end of MS4 and remembered me - our faculty are the absolute best.)

- They are very open to medical students. This is the GREATEST thing I can say about being at a teaching hospital, especially one so closely tied with the school. You always have physicians excited with volunteering their time to help mentor a medical student whether it be during shadowing or volunteering hours. I've found the best faculty are so passionate for their professions they are willing to go the extra mile to help you out if you show interest. They are very patient and understanding, and you should have no problem with being able to contact someone of interest.

- Quite accessible. I shadowed half a dozen times or so in the ER my first year simply emailing one of the physicians and then showing up thereafter. It was very chill and they were open to teaching and including me as part of the team. Several of my classmates also seemed to shadow regularly. If you email a doctor and ask to shadow they pretty much always say yes.

- I would say very! I have never had difficulty networking.

- They are completely open. As a medical student you have the privilege of being priority for shadowing experiences. Often lecturers will offer their contact for students wanting shadow opportunities. Otherwise students can contact any faculty member's office about shadow opportunities and everyone will be able to find something in their specialty of interest. The attending will often tell you a time and place to meet them at their clinic/OR and you can shadow as much or little as your schedule allows.

- 100% available. If you want to shadow anyone in the clinic or hospital you only need to email them a bit about yourself (that you're a medical student, interested in their specialty, would love to come shadow them for a day, etc), and faculty are always willing to have you join them! In addition, a huge plus is that the emergency department is always available to you as shadowing opportunities - and nothing needs to be formally organized. Just show up in scrubs, talk to the team about who you are and that you'd love to shadow, and they will pair you with an attending or resident!

- Crazy accessible. You can email any faculty member, whether they gave a lecture or not, and they will be happy to let them shadow you. I have emailed 6 different physicians, including pediatric surgeons, trauma surgeons, and critical care attendings, and all 6 have responded with something along the lines of "Of course. I would be more than happy to have you. Email me or text me know when you want to come." I had heard about these opportunities to shadow when I was applying, and it was one of the big draws for me to UFCOM. It has not disappointed, not even close.

- EXTREMELY!!! Once you are a medical student, all of the barriers to getting shadowing experiences are essentially gone.

- There are tons of opportunities. Just email them or their coordinators and they will set you up.

- Super open and great to have the hospital and clinics right next door. You can contact physicians and faculty at any time to easily shadow.

- Faculty are VERY open to med students shadowing. Several people in my class do this occasionally, to get a better idea of what field they want to go into and establish connections.
Endless opportunity. You can shadow/work in any specialty under the sun at UFCOM.

Research: How common/sustainable is it for a medical student to engage in basic/translational research during the school year? Have prior students done both clinical and basic research (not necessarily all at the same time or during the school year). Can anyone comment on the 10 week MSRP experience?

In my opinion, one of the best things about having our med school located right beside a teaching hospital is the easy access to the huge body of people that are completing research. I am in my first year (MS1) and have found it to be really easy to get connected to people that are doing research. Finding MSRP mentors was really convenient as there is a website that lists mentors with ongoing projects that would like to work with students. Additionally, there is a ton of research ongoing that is not listed and I have heard from several students who set up projects by simply reaching out to people in the specialty they were interested in. I connected to my mentor by responding to an email asking about interest in applying for a specialty-specific summer research grant and am working on long-term projects in that lab (retrospective reviews). However, I am also interested in innovation and development. Through the Business and Innovation track and the research resources, I connected to another mentor who is doing some wet lab research and instrument design. With that said, everyone that I have spoken with has been really flexible and has been able to work around my class schedule and commitments.

Most students do an MSRP between MS1 and MS2. You can also do research during the year if you're proactive about reaching out to faculty. It's certainly possible especially during MS1. MS2 I was more focused on Step 1 but now that it will be P/F, you will have ample time. For the MSRP there is an NIH Grant for 20-25 students that are selected based on their projects being related to a topic of chosen interest and this allows you to get more hands on training on how to become not only a physician but also a physician-researcher. You go to class every Tuesday for a couple hours during the summer and the faculty help you with your projects as well.

I did basic research during my 10 week MSRP experience and loved that. Although some people have done it successfully, I personally don't think it would be very easy to continue doing basic science during the school year. I have however completed 2 case reports (with subsequent poster presentations) as well as an IRB approved research project during the school year. These are easiest to complete during third and fourth years.

I did the 10-week MSRP, and actually did quite a bit of basic science "benchy" research during that time, and helped out a bit on various clinical research projects for the same PI as well. During the school year I continued helping with some of the database/chart review work and helped train an undergrad who was continuing my basic science project. I also worked on case reports with residents and fellows during 3rd and 4th
I don't think bench research during the school year would be very feasible, but clinical research is.

- You can do as little research or as much research as you would like. Most people do the MSRP experience. You get a stipend and you get to spend your summer doing some cool research, many of which can be done remotely if you so desire. I personally did a chart review and a lit review for a joint project between Dermatology and Allergy and I got my lit review published at the beginning of 2nd year. Some people do basic science research, some people do nothing at all. If you prioritize research, there is an incredible amount of opportunities. Perks of being one of the largest public research institutions and there's research on just about any subject you can think of and PIs love having med students.

- I participated in the MSRP and have continued research beyond that up into MS4. I am currently submitting my manuscript to graduate with honors in research. I think it's very difficult to engage in research during the MS1 and MS2 school years - since there are so many other responsibilities, and with STEP 1 looming over everyone's' head. However, I found that research during MS3 and MS4 was much more manageable as there were blocks were I had more free time. It is also possible to be involved in multiple projects. For example, I did my MSRP in OBGYN research but then chose EM as a specialty and created a project during MS3 in my chosen field. MS3 and MS4 also gives opportunities for case reports!

- I can only speak for chart reviews and case reviews, but yes, it is realistically possible. Bench research might be more challenging during certain peak times of second and third year.

- MSRP was a great experience. I was able to connect with a physician in my desired specialty, work remotely over the summer while back home and continue on my MSRP as well as additional projects that he and his colleagues had for the remainder of my time in medical school i.e. MSRP was a great way to get my foot in the door and it created handfuls of other research opportunities. It is definitely doable to continue research during your other studies. You should still remember that your grades are your priority, but you can make time in between to continue research activities. There are TONS of projects to get on!

- Very obtainable! Faculty are open and happy to have med students volunteer with research.

- During the school year - I would say it's not common. I worked on the weekends for 6 weeks (I'm MS1) and it was very straining. 10/10 would not recommend. It takes away from any free time you have to just relax and be human.

What are some of the most active student organizations at UF COM and how much time do students have to be involved?

- Equal Access Clinic is a big one. I was an officer for one of the clinics this past year and it's the most rewarding extracurricular I have ever done. I did it every week for about 4-5 hours. It's certainly a time commitment and challenging at times but you can make it
work. You'll probably hear a lot about EAC but essentially it’s a completely student run clinic for the underserved here in Gainesville. Not sure exactly when it started but it has been expanding greatly ever since with multiple specialties; medical, ophthalmology, dentistry, mental health, physical therapy, and others being offered.

- Equal Access Clinic Network is probably the most active organization and students in these leadership positions spend TONS of time running clinics. It is a great example of excellent time management, and students have really enjoyed it. I would say most people feel like there is time to be very dedicated to at least 1-2 organizations. Some are comfortable with more!

- There are options for everyone. I have also had some of my classmates start their own organizations to fill a need. The activity of different organizations, like interest groups, is heavily dependent on the officers running it. Students often find no trouble finding time to run these events, the hardest part can simply be the motivation. EAC, the student run free clinic is certainly our most robust and active opportunity for students. There are countless officer positions and member opportunities to help out with the community. Our international mission trips are another, very active student run initiative that always have great success.

- You have as much time as you want quite simply. Most classes are recorded and put online. You are free to put in as much time into "other" activities as you would like. Some of us are involved in half a dozen organizations from the class exec board to interest groups to community service etc. Typically, the class exec board is one of the most active organizations as they put on social events like CLG Olympics, Med Prom, Intramural Sports and a variety of other social, sports, and community services activities. There are dozens of interest groups that meet once or twice a semester for a lunch meeting, guest speaker and free food. The Admissions Welcoming Committee is very active as well, organizing tours, information sessions etc to talk about the UF COM experience and to reach out to potential applicants/interviewees (you probably met a lot of us on interview day!). There are many many other things to get involved with and it has been a really great opportunity for me to find other things to do in my time besides study. A pass/fail curriculum means you can prioritize doing other things.

- Surgical Subspecialty Interest Group - best interest group ever!

- Equal Access Clinic Network is probably the largest. It also happens to be the largest student-run free clinic in the country. It currently consists of 4 clinic sites providing primary care, as well numerous specialty nights (Ophthalmology night, LGBT night, Women's Health night, etc.). Each semester you have to volunteer at EAC for two nights (about 3 hours/night). It is a great experience because it lets you practice seeing patients, presenting to attending physicians, and developing a plan of care! If you have additional questions, feel free to contact one of the digital representatives who has listed EAC or EAC officer on their activities! I would be happy to talk more in-depth about it. I cannot say enough amazing things about EAC.

- Our surgery interest group is very active. They plan a lot of cool simulations/suturing/scoping classes for us to attend during lunch hour.
Can you describe the opportunities for community involvement offered by UF Medicine?

- We have 2 elected Community Service chairs that set up numerous community service events including "teach-backs" at local high schools where a few of us go in for a class period and talk about health professions and life as a med student. We had a Martin Luther King Day of Service in which a bunch of us picked up litter around Gainesville. There's a UFCOM garden where you can volunteer to water the plants or harvest food. There are other events like volunteering in the children's hospital to make crafts and helping out with Habitat for Humanity. Last but not least, we have Equal Access Clinic, which is UF's free clinic to the community. It operates Monday through Thursday night and you have the opportunity to volunteer there pretty frequently and practice all of the physical exam skills and history taking you've been learning in class. It's pretty awesome!
- Lots of community service opportunities including Equal Access Clinic, White Coat Company, Ronald McDonald, MLK day, etc.
- I'm part of White Coat Company, which is a UFCOM club that puts on mini Disney shows for the kids at the children's hospital and for Friends and Family Weekend. It's such a blast!! About 80-100 people from all years are involved and it's a great way to meet new people and further get to know your classmates. You also get community service for it!

What is your favorite part about being a member of the UF COM community?

- Might sound cliche but it's really a family that spans across multiple classes. We are all there for one another. Lots of opportunities to be involved in whatever way you choose whether that be volunteering, intramural sports, research, etc.
- I love my classmates. I've watched my share of lectures online (and it's an amazing resource), but I always ended up making my way back to HMEB to learn with and study with and just be around so many genuinely wonderful human beings. Our giant class group-text is a daily source of joy and/or commiseration and/or memes. My friends at UFCOM have become like family in so many ways, from cooking each other dinner, to borrowing each other's cars when ours are in the shop, to going on cross-country road trips over winter break.
- I am glad that there is such a positive atmosphere - from faculty to fellow students!
- The community! I am very comfortable with just about every single person in my class and can strike up a conversation on just about anything. We're here to support each other. Med school can get very draining no matter where you go, but having a community that has your back makes all the difference.
- The people. Classmates are great and supportive.
The people! I love my classmates. I don't think I realized how much I appreciate and cherish them until we had to be isolated. Everyone is so supportive. I share my burdens with others and others share theirs with me. We really are stronger together.

I just love the community we build with so many friendships and support no matter what.

The collaboration and support! I knew when I was applying that this was one of my top priorities and I have been so pleased with the community here. There are so many wellness resources including a dedicated UFCOM counselor as well as a learning specialist who will meet with students to talk about study strategies or planning.

My classmates! Seriously, the people who come here are amazing.

My classmates - everyone is great.

Nothing compares to the tight-knit family established among students and faculty. We support each other academically, emotionally, socially, and in every aspect of our well-being. (And I'm not saying this lightly. TRULY, I have never been part of a more uplifting group of people.) Also, the pride of the Gator nation is inspirational and makes me feel part of something bigger.

I enjoy going to campus and seeing my classmates, which make me smile and laugh numerous times throughout the day, which is important when you're all working so hard!

Is there a formal mentorship/advisory system in place? Are medical students assigned a mentor/advisor? If not, are faculty receptive to advisory requests?

In your first week of med school, you will be assigned a Collaborative Learning Group (CLG) of 8ish classmates and a faculty mentor who stays with you and your group for all four years. For many folks, their CLG leader is their go-to mentor and advisor for first and second year. You'll meet with them at least once a semester in first and second year to review your academic progress, but also just to chat about how you're doing in life. By fourth year, students have to have an advisor in their chosen specialty to help them go over their residency application and rank lists. There is a designated contact for each specialty that you can go to, but many students have already built relationships with faculty organically through research, clerkships, or electives. For research, each year there is a list provided of available mentors and projects/topics, or you can contact faculty on your own to see if they have a project you could collaborate on or if they could sponsor a project idea that you came up with.

My CLG (collaborative learning group AKA small group) leader is someone I would consider to be a mentor. I also was expected to find an advisor in my specialty, and the people in the department were VERY receptive to advisory requests!

The CLG (collaborative learning group) acts as the formal mentorship/advisory system. During MS1 and MS2 this group meets weekly, and you quickly build rapport with your faculty advisor. This advisor is available to you throughout your four years. Mine ended up writing me one of my letters of recommendation for residency applications, even
though we are not in the same specialties! For seeking out a mentor outside of CLG this is completely possible (as is having more than one mentor!). As I established my specialty choice I sought out a mentor within that department. We were meeting frequently as we were also doing a research project together, and I asked if I could reach out to her about residency applications and questions. She was 100% receptive and has been instrumental during the application process in giving me advice, helpful comments, and even talking with me on the phone about my interview decisions.

- In technical terms, no, but your CLG leader is supposed to serve that purpose. My CLG leader is incredible and is available by text or call any time of day to me. She has helped me secure a preceptorship position, helped me find a doctor in Gainesville when I was sick, and made connections for some of my classmates to shadow certain kinds of doctors she knows. You really get to know your CLG leader and he/she is always available to write you letters of recommendation, etc.
- Big/Little! MS2s can choose to have an MS1 to mentor throughout the years. Faculty are also very open to helping and responding to students through email or office hours.
- Everyone will be a part of a small group called Collaborative Learning Groups (CLGs), which consists of a few students and a faculty mentor. This is a great way to establish a mentor relationship since you'll meet with them pretty often over the course of your time here. I have also had a great experience with reaching out to people directly if they work on a project or subject that interests me. There are a ton of opportunities to get involved and I have found that physicians that take on med students really want to mentor them, which may be different than data crunching research positions that some of us may have held in the past.
- Yes, we have small group meeting with the same UF physician and about 6-7 other students in our class all four years. This is our built-in mentorship. Personally, I also have my research mentor who is an EM physician. I reached out and established that relationship. I also found a mentor in the field of medicine I'm most interested in pursuing. Faculty are very receptive to medical students reaching out and asking for mentorship, much more so that if you're not a medical student.
- CLG leaders do a wonderful job of mentoring.
- Yes, through CLG. I think faculty are also pretty receptive to getting to know and help students.
- Yes! We are grouped into a "Collaborative Learning Group" with a physician/faculty mentor and 6-7 other students in our class. We meet weekly for general check-ins as well as small group learning activities to supplement coursework. The CLG leader accompanies us on patient visits, gives one-on-one assistance with clinical skills, and regular feedback. It is an excellent support system for medical school all-around.

What did UF students like the most and like the least about their clerkship years?

- I think it's difficult for anyone doing clerkship years to constantly be graded on your performance in widely varying clerkships - one example I think about is my first day of
my OBGYN clerkship where I didn’t know the answers to the questions I was being asked in the OR. It can be easy to be overwhelmed by all the things you don’t know - but that’s the purpose of clerkship years! I think back to the end of my OBGYN rotation, realizing just how much I had learned. I think my clerkship years so far have given me an excellent variety of medicine.

- I would say the best parts about the clinical years involve applying the preclinical knowledge into practical skills. The highlights of my time at medical school largely come from these experiences. You are trusted to do many different procedures and other opportunities for the first time. I remember doing laceration repairs, closing surgical cases, delivering babies, intubating, placing IV lines, interviewing patients, sitting in on group therapy sessions on addiction medicine, making home visits, so on and so forth. UF really prepares you for these moments and I am graduating with those skills in my toolbelt. The negative side of all this is that the clinical years are physically, mentally, and emotionally tiring. Your time is less flexible and you spend more time in the hospital. Between exciting moments there can be a lot of time sitting waiting for the next delivery, patient arrival, or surgical case, and you can feel like your time is wasted. You also are exposed to pain, death, and psychiatric emergencies that can be difficult to witness but are a vital part of your career. For some students the clinical years are mostly exciting and rejuvenating, but for others the 3rd year of medical school can be the absolute most difficult. It all depends on your perspective, but I believe that to be a uniform experience across all medical schools.

- Best: finally getting to work with patients and faculty 1 on 1
- Worst: subjective grading

- The clerkship years for me were what I had been waiting for all through the clinical years. Extremely challenging in new ways, the clerkship years for me were an opportunity to actually begin learning the art of medicine in depth. I loved working with patients, and getting to form relationships with some during my rotations are the most memorable part of medical school for me. There are people and moments I will never forget. At the same time, some of the most challenging parts of medical school occur during these years. I felt that I constantly had to be “on” and perform at the highest level possible. At times I felt I had to choose between spending time with patients and doing what was best for my grade. At times I felt I had little to no control over my schedule and how I could spend my time. Overall, the experience was one of incredible growth.

What is cost of living like in Gainesville? On average, how much do students spend and where can I find the best living place for me?

- I'd say between $500-800 is the norm. People do like Wildflower though which is around $900 and it is in walking distance. On the other end, Williamsburg is also pretty popular and is around $400-500 and within walking distance. I lived 2 miles away my first 2 years and I am very excited to be moving closer to the hospital for my rotations. I would say try and be biking or walking distance if you can. It's good exercise too!
Very affordable! I live about a 10-15 minute walk from the hospital and pay ~$720/month for rent in a very nice apartment complex.

The low cost of living is a huge perk for Gainesville. Most people live with at least one roommate or significant other, and I’d say rent ranges from $400-$900 for that setup. You could potentially pay $1k+ if you want a really nice place or a single, but I think that is atypical for most students. Some of the common apartment complexes that students live at close to the hospital are Wildflower, Williamsburg Village and the Bartram (nicer and a bit more expensive) - and it would be worth looking at other places in that general area as well. Many students also live in houses that are rented/bought, and those can be found all over Gainesville. Another thing to be aware of when hunting for places is that some apartments/areas can be predominantly filled by undergrads vs. grad students, with the grad student areas typically being quieter and nicer.

I think the cost of living is very reasonable. I spend less than $750 on rent including utilities (I prioritized proximity to campus and amenities, so this will widely vary depending on what you prioritize!) and have been able to find fun things to do around Gainesville for cheap/reasonable prices on the weekend.

Gainesville is probably a little below the national average on cost of living, but not the absolute cheapest. There is a huge range of rent prices that is related to how luxury it is or location. You can have a roommate or two, live within walking distance, and pay about 500-600 per person for non-luxury, or 700-900 for more luxury. Houses are a good cheap option that are a 10-15 minute drive and you can get away with like 300-500 per person. Single bedrooms will run you 700-800 on the low end up to 1600-1800 for the nicest places. Groceries, gas, alcohol, etc are all probably about the national average. To find the best living place, they should send out survey results at some place to show where students live. Complexes to look at would be wildflower, the Bartram, Williamsburg Village, Summit House, Mount Vernon, Campus Walk, and anything in the general area of the hospital.

Top places to live for our class are: Wildflower, Oakbrook Walk, Summit House, Williamsburg Village, Mt Vernon, Campus Edge. Prices can range quite a bit and it depends on if you want roommates and how many. The closer you are to campus, generally the more expensive, wildflower being the most expensive of them all. Average prices range between $500 - $1000, depending on location and roommates. Otherwise, cost of living is very reasonable. Restaurants are very reasonably priced, bars can be dangerously cheap (if you venture into undergrad territory), Ubers are <10$ pretty much anywhere you want go. Gainesville is a great place to be a poor med student.

Cost of living is more expensive than where I went for undergrad but less expensive than major cities. There are TONS of apartments in Gainesville so I would recommend doing research. Definitely look at the housing survey provided from the class of 2023 but don't feel like you have to live in a place where a lot of other students live. I picked a place that's close to campus (right on the bus route) but so much cheaper than other places.

You can spend anywhere from $400/month to probably $1500/month. It all depends on proximity to campus, amenities, # of roommates, etc. I would encourage you to check out the housing survey posted on the Class of 2024 Facebook page, where a lot of current students talked about where we live and how much we pay.
Gainesville is CHEAP!!!! If you want to live close to campus it is a little pricier. If you want to live a little further away and commute to campus by bus/car/bike then you can get a nice place for less than $700/month. The only other things we end up paying for are food, gas, and other various living expenses, but overall Gainesville is extremely affordable.

Gainesville is a college town. It is inherently less than big cities, but definitely not the least expensive place to live in the country---it all depends on where you are coming from. However, once you are here, your spending can vary greatly---depends on how much of a "luxury" apartment complex you want, how close you want to be to the hospital, if you want to live with roommates etc. I know classmates that pay under 650 per month for rent and other that pay over 1700. Utilities are fairly inexpensive--about 30-70/month. Then factor other things like paying for parking on campus (I live close to campus and just walk) ~160/year. Food and entertainment can vary.

$500-$1000
Range from walking to parking on campus with a decal based on preference.

It varies somewhat depending on where you’re located and whether you want to be within walking distance to the hospital. For perspective, I currently pay $720 including utilities and am about to move to a new place where I’ll pay $200 more, just with nicer quality and amenities. Both of those are an easy walk to the med school/hospital. There is a housing survey that I think will be sent out with the second look resources. I found that really useful last year when deciding on a place.

It’s very reasonable. Gainesville is constantly building new apt buildings which helps keep costs down. I pay about 750/month with a roommate, but I know many people who pay less.

Very Cheap. I live right behind the hospital in a nice 3/2. We each pay <$500/month.

I live a little farther from campus (about a 15 minute drive) but my apartment is big bigger and has really nice amenities for the cost compared to living closer to campus. If you were willing to live further away and didn’t worry about amenities or if you lived in a rented room in a house, you could live pretty cheaply ($300-400/month).

What are the highlights of the UF Curriculum and what makes it unique for students?

Couple unique features of the curriculum in my opinion include the abundance of patient presentations embedded throughout the blocks. It is kind of obvious but having a patient centered curriculum really teaches you how to think from the perspective of the patient and understand how their illnesses affect them and how your interactions make a difference in their experience of their illness and healthcare challenges. You will become a better physician from it. Also, the 3 preceptorships where you get a week or two scheduled to rotate with a physician in a specialty of your choosing was a great experience.

Early and often patient exposure!
- I really appreciated our longitudinal curriculum that builds on itself, specifically the integration of anatomy throughout our systems blocks. There is also a high emphasis on humanism in medicine with many reflections, thoughtful discussions, and critical thinking beyond multiple choice questions.
- Medical schools across the US will have very similar goals and requirements for curriculum, so I'll just highlight the most unique parts of ours. First, our anatomy is taught during the first semester using already dissected bodies so you can focus on learning the structure and function of the whole body without worrying about hours in the lab trying to dissect one thing. Then starting in the spring of first year you dissect cadavers 1-2 times a week with your group and it all lines up with the organ system blocks so you can really solidify that knowledge. I would say we have one of the top few anatomy curriculum in the entire nation. We also have a very special curriculum tailored to addiction medicine as a subset of psychiatry. You have a one week intensive block on the subject in second year, followed by two weeks on your psychiatry rotation where you spend time in a detox unit as well as a rehab facility learning how to manage addiction as a disease. I think it's very special and incredibly well received by students. We are one of the only schools in the nation to do this. Alongside this I believe we have small things worked into our education like frequent patient presentations, LGBT health education, and alternative health lectures that I think really round out the curriculum nicely.
- One of the biggest highlights is that our anatomy is longitudinal in nature. Meaning that you do integrated anatomy within systems for all 2 years of the preclinical coursework. You start first semester with prosected cadavers so that you can gain general understanding of human anatomy without accidentally transecting half of the important vessels you're looking for and then move on to your individual cadavers after that. It may seem excessive in the moment, but when Step rolls around or you're in an OR, you definitely remember those structures, way more than if you did the traditional 12 week anatomy crash courses that many other schools have.
- The balance of clinical exposure at a huge academic medical center (Shands) and academic learning is great. I love how the curriculum is structured and organized. The people (fellow students, as well as faculty and staff) are all incredible.
- The way in which UF teaches anatomy was a hugely attractive feature when I was looking at medical schools. They teach anatomy over the course of the entire pre-clinical years rather than jamming it in the first few months of medical schools. For many people, its great to get it done early in medical school, but truth be told, you will have absolutely have no context to put all of the anatomy in. You are introduced to the highlights during your first 9 months but then dive into the traditional amount of detail during all of your systems blocks. The repetition and "putting the information where it fits into the curriculum" will allow you to better remember it for board exams, on your surgery clerkship, or during your career.
- Pass/Fail enhances collaboration and opportunity for extracurriculars
- Patient-centered and great faculty!
- P/F, but also the patient presentations. I think it's been really valuable and grounding to be able to hear directly from people dealing with the diseases we learn about in class.
It's sometimes emotional, sometimes not, but is always moving in one way or another and helps remind us why we spend so many hours learning these complex things.

- Some highlights are include the early clinical exposure such as a two-week preceptorship in a primary care setting after your first semester, having anatomy over two years which aligns well with topics we are learning in class (ex. dissecting the thoracic cavity while in the respiratory course), and unlimited opportunities to practice clinical skills with peers in the learning and assessment center (this has several rooms that look like doctors' offices and has equipment such as otoscopes and ophthalmoscopes). And, of course, being pass/fail.

For students who decided to do a dual degree (MD/MPH), when did they decide to do it and how easy was it to enroll in the program?

- I decided to do the MD/MPH program during my third year of medical school. It was something that I had thought about before, but wasn't sure if I wanted to spend the extra time and money doing it. I think it's great how flexible the process is! I didn't have to make a decision until the end of my third year (in June), which gave me time to decide if the MPH would align with my specialty and career goals. It was very easy to enroll. I just submitted an application through the MPH program and asked for letters of recommendation from College of Medicine faculty.