How medical students can build leadership skills on campus

MAY 8, 2023

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Medical students have a voice. Honing it can start on your medical school campus.

That’s what Aneri Shah, a second-year medical student at the Midwestern University Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine has discovered. Shah is the president of the school’s AMA chapter and the outreach coordinator for the AMA Medical Student Outreach Program. The two roles have allowed her to see how the physician landscape shifts beyond the clinical realm.

“Being a student leader on this level definitely has opened my eyes,” she said. “These two roles go hand in hand, and are the most substantial leadership positions I have held.”

Shah offered some insight on how her work with the AMA has helped her grow as a leader and how it will affect her career path going forward. Here are some key takeaways.

Working with multiple parties

In her role as Midwestern’s AMA medical student outreach leader, Shah has helped to bring key events to campus and grow the medical school’s relationship with organized medicine. That included a marquee speaking event with Ilse R. Levin, DO, MPH & TM, who spoke about the keys to navigating a career in medicine as an osteopathic physician.

“Hearing Dr. Levin speak as to what her career has been like was really inspiring, even as an M2,” Shah said. “We lose perspective—when we’re so bogged down in academia—about why we’re doing this. We lose sight of that bigger picture because we’re so busy learning foundational knowledge for our classes. Learning about Dr. Levin’s experience reminded us of all of the things we can accomplish in the future.

To coordinate the event, Shah worked with AMA staffers and faculty members and other staff on Midwestern’s campus. The logistics that went into that effort were significant.
“As medical student outreach coordinator, this is different than a role as a leader in undergrad,” she said. “In college, being part of an executive board meant you are mostly communicating with your university’s administration. So, they kind of knew all the rules and all of the difficulties that you could potentially have.

By comparison, in her role as outreach leader, Shah has “learned how to coordinate efforts with the AMA while addressing the needs of students at CCOM. AMA’s team helped us immensely with gathering resources and planning the event.”

The AMA Succeeding in Medical School series offers tips and other guidance on a wide range of critical topics, including preparing for USMLE exams, navigating clinical rotations, publishing scientific research, and maintaining optimal health and wellness.

**Shaping medicine**

As the president of Midwestern’s AMA chapter, Shah is working to amplify the student voice.

“I knew that students could possibly try to affect change, but until I joined the AMA, I didn’t realize the extent to how far our voices could reach,” she said. “One thing that really pulled me in was that medical students actually put together the resolution for people not being allowed to smoke in airplanes. That turned into a pretty significant piece of legislation.

“Being at Midwestern, we are DOs, and there is access to many resources to help our careers, and the AMA is one of them. It’s really important to stay updated on medicine and stay connected on a national level.”