

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

INCOMING MEDICAL STUDENTS RECEIVE WHITE COATS, PREP TO MEET ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

For more information contact Jack Mazurak at (601) 984-1970 or jmazurak@umc.edu.

JACKSON, Miss. – The evening Madison resident Morgan Miller received her white coat, a tradition upon entering medical school, she said the rigorous schedule ahead gave her the jitters but she knew she would ultimately succeed.

Miller was among 135 members of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine class of 2015 who received their short white coats during a ceremony Aug. 11. The short coat symbolizes that its owner is a physician-in-training.

Miller's determination to succeed is nothing new. She's got a history of it.

A car wreck at age 8 broke one of her collar bones but set her on a path to medical school. As an ambulance took her from the accident, an 18-wheeler struck it. A helicopter ultimately took Miller to a hospital.

Though the injury left her with range-of-motion issues in one arm, she didn't let it slow her down.

Her hard work and preparation paid off as she became accomplished both academically and as an athlete playing basketball at Madison Central High School. She graduated this spring from Mississippi State University with a bachelor's in biology.

"I will be the first person in my entire family to pursue a career in medicine. We don't have any nurses, doctors or physical therapists so that's kind of special to me," she said.

At the ceremony, Dr. LouAnn Woodward, UMMC associate vice chancellor for health affairs and School of Medicine vice dean, told the new class the coats are symbols of trust.

"It's important to recognize the broader implications of what the white coat means," she said. "Patients may not know your name or may be too sick to ask, but they will know what it means. People in the community will recognize what it means."

Keynote speaker Dr. Marc Nivet, chief diversity officer at the Association of American Medical Colleges, seemed to reflect Miller's own story in his remarks to the incoming students.

"All of you are very lucky to be here," he said. "Luck is when preparation meets opportunity. You've jumped hurdles and have been prepared for this opportunity. Remember, you are smart enough, you are gifted enough and you are talented enough to be physicians."

Established in Jackson in 1955, the four-year School of Medicine focuses on educating doctors to serve Mississippi and eliminating the state's health disparities. For more information on the school, visit <http://som.umc.edu/index.html>.

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