

# NSU's Pre-Health Day

Saturday, February 13, 2016

Carl DeSantis Building

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Brought to you by the  
Halmos College of Natural Sciences  
and Oceanography in collaboration  
with Career Development



## Pre-Health Day Program Schedule

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Mock Interviews Huizenga Sales Institute
8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Graduate School Programs Tabling and Information Huizenga Sales Institute
9:05 – 9:25 a.m.	Keynote Speaker Richard E. Dodge, Dean of College of Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography Huizenga Sales Institute
9:30 – 11:40 a.m.	Breakout Sessions DeSantis Class Rooms

Bracket Number and Color	9:30–9:50 a.m.	9:55–10:15 a.m.	10:20–10:40 a.m.	10:50–11:10 a.m.	11:20–11:40 a.m.
<b>1—Yellow</b>	Doctor <b>Marta Van Straten,</b> D.O. Huizenga Sales Institute	Dentist <b>Katherine Lorenzo,</b> D.M.D. Huizenga Sales Institute	Pharmacist <b>Alexis Jurick,</b> PharmD, CPh Huizenga Sales Institute	OT <b>Kaitlin Dudziec,</b> MOT Huizenga Sales Institute	Research Coordinator and Medical Intern <b>David Cevallos</b> Huizenga Sales Institute
<b>2—Blue</b>	Doctor <b>Zaki Dorajat,</b> D.O. Room 2060	Assistant Dean of Research and Innovation, Program Director MS in Nutrition, Professor of Osteopathic Medicine <b>Cecilia Rokusek,</b> Ed.D., M.Sc., RDN Room 2060	Dentist <b>Claudia Harrisehasen,</b> D.M.D. Room 2060	Pharmacist <b>Nick Carris,</b> Pharm D, BCPS Room 2060	Scribe <b>Monica Perez,</b> Room 2060
<b>3—Green</b>	Pharmacist <b>Daven Sawh,</b> PharmD Room 2056	Optometrist <b>Mari Holderby,</b> O.D. Room 2056	Cessation Coach/ Public Health University of Miami Medical School <b>Carlos Almirola,</b> M.P.H., C.T.T.S. Room 2056	Doctor <b>Luke Williams,</b> M.D. Room 2056	Public Health <b>Crystal Romero,</b> M.P.H. Room 2056
<b>4—Orange</b>	Pharmacist <b>Daven Sawhl,</b> Pharm. D. Room 2056	Audiologist <b>Ashley Lawrence,</b> Au.D Room 2057	Doctor: Regenerative Sports Medicine Specialist <b>Alberto Panero,</b> D.O. Room 2057	Anesthesiologist <b>Daveda Majara,</b> D.O. Room 2057	Dentist <b>Yani Cox,</b> D.M.D. Room 2057
<b>5—Red</b>	Doctor <b>Marta Van Straten,</b> D.O. Huizenga Sales Institute	Post Doctoral Fellow and Molecular Researcher <b>Ivan Jozic,</b> Ph.D. Room 2067	Optometrist <b>Michael Baacigalupi,</b> O.D., MS, FAAO Room 2067	Nutritionist <b>Viktoriya Yudovina,</b> MPH Room 2067	Pharmacist and Medical Reviewer <b>Jennifer Gershman,</b> Pharm. D. Room 2067

11:45 a.m.–12:20 p.m.	Lunch & Roundtable Discussions Huizenga Sales Institute
12:20 – 1:20 p.m.	Healthcare Related Panel Panelist: Genetic Researcher, Genetic Counselor, Peace Corps, and Bio Medical Informatics Professionals Huizenga Sales Institute
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	HPD Student Panel Panelist: Current Dental, Medical, Pharmacy, PT and Optometry Students Huizenga Sales Institute
2:20 – 3:00 p.m.	HPD Admissions Presentation Presented by Marisela Jimenez, HPD Admissions Counselor Huizenga Sales Institute

## Professional Breakout Sessions

9:30–9:50 a.m

### BREAKOUT SESSION 1

#### Journey To Becoming a Surgeon

Presenter: Jill (Collins) Gorsuch  
D.O., M.P.H., 2009, Nova Southeastern University  
Bariatric Fellow, General Surgeon, Gilbert, Arizona  
[jillgorsuch@gmail.com](mailto:jillgorsuch@gmail.com)

I began my path to become General and Bariatric Surgeon at the University of Florida earning my B.S. in Microbiology and Cell Science. I then spent a year at the University of Miami, Diabetes Research Institute studying islet cell transplantation. In 2005, I began medical school at NSU, College of Osteopathic Medicine where I earned both my D.O. and M.P.H. I then completed my general surgery residency at Michigan State's Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills, Michigan. While in residency I decided I wanted to advance my general surgery skills and pursue a career in Bariatric surgery. I am currently completing my fellowship in Bariatric and Advanced Minimally Invasive Surgery at Banner Gateway in Gilbert, Arizona..

This has been a very long road, but I love what I do. NSU was such an integral part of my education and training. I appreciate the many lessons I learned and the connections I have made along the way. Becoming a physician, especially a surgeon is not an easy path, and is definitely time consuming.

Here is some advice to make the most of your education and life. I have found that education and work is all about finding the right fit. You have to find what graduate/medical school and especially residency is right for you. You must be self-motivated to study and perform you best. When it comes to residency, finding the correct "fit" is most important. You will spend more time with your co-residents and attendings than your family members through this time in your life. You must like the education you will receive in your residency, but more importantly, you must like or learn to like the people you work with. This is a life skill that is invaluable. Work should not become a chore. You should wake up every day and enjoy what you do. Find a career in medicine that fits your personality, lifestyle and long-term goals. The rest will fall into place.

### BREAKOUT SESSION 1

#### Taking the Nontraditional Route to Medical School from Nurse to Physician. Are you sure you want to embark on this journey?

Presenter: Zaki Darajat  
Bachelor of Science in Nursing, 2003 Florida International University  
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, 2010 West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine  
Internal Medicine Residency, 2013 Pacific Hospital of Long Beach  
Associate Chief Hospitalist, Sound Physicians Glendale Adventist Medical Center  
[zdarojat@gmail.com](mailto:zdarojat@gmail.com)

Changing careers takes a lot of guts regardless of what career you had initially and the decision to embark on the journey of becoming a physician is a long one. I will discuss some factors that one should consider before making this leap. Medical school was not easy but it is definitely a rewarding career and I wouldn't be happy doing anything else. However, I have colleagues who do not share the same sentiment. I hope to shed some light into the pros and cons of medicine and help you make an informed decision.

### BREAKOUT SESSION 1

#### My Path to Pharmacy School

Presenter: Daven Sawh  
Farquhar College Graduate of 2007  
2011 NSU College of Pharmacy Doctor of Pharmacy Graduate  
Mail Order Pharmacist at Procare Pharmacy Care  
[dsawh@procarerx.com](mailto:dsawh@procarerx.com)

I came from Trinidad, and when I started I had no idea of how to approach the process. I depended on the advisors and people on the same path to guide me. This was not the best approach. I should have done my own research and mapped out my own path. But I was determined to become a pharmacist and I completed my prerequisites as required for the COP at that time....or so I thought. I was not a competitive candidate and my first application left me devastated. However I learned what I needed to do. I worked on my GPA (3.3 is a minimum) and I got active in organizations. Pre-Pharmacy was one organization I got active with, and with each activity I participated in, I added it to my CV.

I applied again. I had my application ready on time and with a better GPA and my extra-curricular activities, I felt confident. I followed up with my applications with the multiple schools and once again, I was unsuccessful. I thought, maybe this is not for me, but thought to try one last time. This time I continued with my previous plan, but I tried my hand at networking. This was key. I went to the admission offices, I got familiar with the staff, I did the little stuff, I stopped by professors' offices to say hello, and discuss my game plan, went out on lunches and dinners, I used my boss at the HPD library to recommend me to my interviewers, and finally, I succeeded. I got into NSU COP (I accepted) and several other colleges and graduated.

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## BREAKOUT SESSION 1

### The Big Picture of a Career Behind the Microscope: Life Lessons from a Thirty-Something Woman in Medicine

Presenter: Marta M. Van Straten

Farquhar College Graduate of 2005

D.O., 2010; Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine-Bradenton

Fellow Physician, Cytopathology

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, Texas

[marta.vanstraten@phhs.org](mailto:marta.vanstraten@phhs.org)

I consider myself fortunate to pursue a career whose steps were laid out before me. The umbrella of medicine is broad, however, and many major life events occur between the time a young person starts college and a career truly materializes. Looking back on the past fifteen years since graduating high school, I've learned more about people and the world around me than any single topic taught in a classroom.

From one detour after finishing my undergraduate degree, to another after graduating medical school, my path to becoming a pathologist was not the direct one I envisioned. Since graduating from NSU, I am at the cusp of my career in pathology, am married, and have started a family. I'm in the middle of my first fellowship in cytology, and anticipating the start of my second fellowship in breast pathology across the country at Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. I'm due with my second child any day, and supporting a husband whose career is just as demanding. I'm still learning, but know that the period of time spent in college is developmentally as important as early childhood. That time is truly a crossroads and the few years spent pursuing an undergraduate degree should be a time of exploration, not procrastination. Join me as I elaborate on truths like "30 is not the new 20", "you can have it all, just not all at once", and "nothing in the world takes the place of persistence". I look forward to meeting you!

9:55– 10:15 a.m.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### The Journey to Becoming a Dentist: Advice to My Undergraduate Self

Presenter: Katherine Lorenzo-Machado, DMD

Florida International University Honors College Graduate 2011

Nova Southeastern University College of Dental Medicine Graduate 2015

Practicing General Dentist in Palm Beach County, FL

[klorenzomachado@gmail.com](mailto:klorenzomachado@gmail.com)

Growing up with a few family members who were dentists, I was always exposed to the profession. When I started undergraduate school at FIU, I knew that was what I wanted to be, and focused most of my time on getting there. Juggling undergraduate school, working at different dental offices, and studying for my DAT while maintaining my social life with family and friends was tough, but I was able to achieve that and get my undergraduate degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry in 3 years. I went straight from undergraduate school to dental school, which made some courses much tougher compared to those who obtained their masters. Dental school came with many difficult challenges, but those amazing moments that reminded me why I pursued this career in the first place always prevailed. My experience on

my mission trips to Jamaica are ones that I will always cherish. Having graduated from dental school about 8 months ago, I will speak about my transition from student dentist to practicing general dentist and what that entails in the real world. Dentistry is a field that is constantly advancing and challenging you, and requires not only mental but also technical expertise, but you can make a difference everyday by giving patients a healthy, stable mouth and restoring confidence in their smile.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### My Career Journey

Presenter: Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.Sc., RDN

Assistant Dean of Research and Innovation Professor, Public Health, Family Medicine and Disaster & Emergency Preparedness

[rokusek@nova.edu](mailto:rokusek@nova.edu)

Dr. Rokusek currently serves as Assistant Dean for Research and Innovation, Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Prior to joining Nova, Dr. Rokusek served as Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of South Dakota, School of Medicine. She served as Professor and Dean of Education at Winona State University in Winona, Minnesota and Dean of Health Professions at Governors State University in Illinois and at Florida Gulf University in Ft. Myers, FL serving as the first dean to bring all of the 5 health professions program in the newly established university to full professional accreditation by the respective accrediting organizations.

Dr. Rokusek has secured over 80 million dollars in external funding during her career. She has authored over 65 publications, book chapters, and manuscripts in the area of nutrition, interprofessional education and practice, and disaster and emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations. Dr. Rokusek served as the national president of the American Association of Allied Health School Deans and President of the Nutrition Division for American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. In 1995 Dr. Rokusek was recognized by the Chicago Sun Times as one of the "Ten Most Influential Women in Illinois." Dr. Rokusek is the founder and architect of the newly established M.S. in Nutrition degree at NSU. She is fluent in both the Czech and Slovak languages and currently serves as Honorary Consul for the Slovak Republic in Florida and is a member of the Miami Consular Corps.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### The Path to Optometry

Mari Holderby, OD

Farquhar College Graduate of 2010

Doctor of Optometry, 2014, Nova Southeastern University

Certified Optometrist, Community Health Center

[mariholderby@gmail.com](mailto:mariholderby@gmail.com)

The path to optometry, although at times challenging, is extremely rewarding. I personally had my eyes set on becoming an optometrist since I was 16 years old, when I attended a Dual Enrollment program called College Academy at Broward College. I had graduated high school with an Associate of Arts degree, and therefore by the time I attended Farquhar, I knew what my long-term goals were.

I was lucky enough to be accepted into the Dual Admission program for optometry, in which I had a guaranteed seat in NSU's optometry school once I completed my three years at Farquhar. It is a disciplined program that helps guide you to fulfilling all of the requirements needed to enter into any optometry school. I had two years of college under my belt, and had learned that schools like students to be well-rounded,



either with other majors/minors, or extracurricular activities. Due to this, I received my Bachelors in Biology as well as minors in Psychology and Literature.

By 2010 I was accepted into NSU's Optometry school. The first semester was very tough, although the material first year is pretty much repeating the general science classes I had taken during undergraduate year. However, Farquhar is a sprint and Optometry school is a marathon. This is when I realized that I needed to change the ways that I studied in order to do better, and by the time second semester rolled around I had changed a lot of things about myself. My main tips on transitioning from undergraduate programs to graduate programs are:

- 1) Change your studying skills if you need to
- 2) Make lots of friends
- 3) Balance your life
- 4) Say yes to as many opportunities as you can

Once I graduated in 2014 I felt like I could accomplish anything. I love what I do, and I have no regrets about choosing the path that I did. I am working at the Community Health Center now, treating an underserved population of patients who come in from all different walks of life. I feel like I am making a difference, and that is what I've always wanted to accomplish.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### From Undergrad to Audiologist, The Road Less Traveled

Presenter: Ashley Lawrence

*Farquhar College Graduate of 2006*

*Doctor of Audiology, 2010, Nova Southeastern University*

*Clinical Audiologist, West Palm Beach VA Medical Center*

*richie.ashley@gmail.com*

College is a challenging yet rewarding time in life and if you stay motivated and keep your eyes on your long-term goals, you will be successful regardless of your career choice. I learned about who I was as a person throughout my college years, and I can offer some guidance on both the good choices and mistakes I made on my path to becoming a medical professional.

I began undergrad at NSU in 2002, long before the days of the University Center and when the NSU mascot was still a Knight. I majored in Biology and graduated in 2006 with my Bachelor's in Science. I was very involved during my undergrad days, including sorority life, student government, and being a student employee for Residential Life and Housing. I believe that extracurricular activities and the life skills you develop during your time in undergrad are just as essential as your textbook education.

In my 3rd year at NSU, I came to a point where I was undecided on my future profession. I researched many professions and was offered frequent advice from friends, family and professors. In the end, I decided on a profession that I could enjoy every single day and that would make my life rewarding.

I truly love my job as an Audiologist. I diagnose and treat hearing loss and other hearing-related disabilities. I work for the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center and I get to positively impact the lives of our veterans and their families on a daily basis. Audiology is a relatively small field, but is one of the largest growing medical professions out there. I will be happy to share some highlights of my profession during my presentation, as well as the road that led me there

## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### From Undergrad to Ph. D., My Lessons

Presenter: Ivan Jozic, Ph.D.

*Farquhar College Graduate, Class of 2006*

*Adjunct Professor, 2013, Nova Southeastern University*

*Post-Doctoral Fellow, 2013, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*

*jozic@nova.edu*

Although the road to becoming a scientist is often riddled with many hurdles, the rewards of self-discovery and potential to revolutionize the world, are priceless. It is said that a PhD is pursued by those who are driven to do something original and those who have the passion to discover the unknown; but also those that have dedication, persistence and resilience.

My journey began at the intersection of College Ave and SW 30th St back in 2004. As with many other Biology majors, I was unsure where my career path should lead to, but I knew it had to center around science. The turning point came in 2005, when I was challenged by an outstanding professor and mentor in Dr. Emily Schmitt to present a poster at the NSU Undergraduate Research Symposium. It served to awaken my appetite and passion for acquiring knowledge. Today I am a post-doctoral fellow in the Dermatology department of University of Miami Miller School of Medicine trying to understand the molecular mechanisms underlying wound healing and I am also an adjunct professor in the Halmos College of Natural Sciences. But on my road to acquiring a PhD, I've learned that a PhD is one of the toughest things to accomplish in the world (in educational terms); it is intellectually challenging, emotionally taxing and physically tiring. So then why do it? During my presentation, I will share some highlights of my profession as well as give you some answers to this question.

10:20–10:40 a.m.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 3

### Becoming A Pharmacist: Advice to my Undergraduate Self

Presenter: Alexis Jurick

*Farquhar College Graduate of 2007*

*PharmD, CPh, 2011; Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy*

*Ambulatory Pharmacist, Lee Memorial Health System*

*At Gulf Coast Medical Center, Fort Myers, FL*

*alexisj40@gmail.com*

Embarking upon a path to becoming a pharmacist is arduous but very fulfilling. The profession requires hard work, life-long learning, and the understanding that the work is about the patient first, not the business. There are several directions an individual can pursue as a pharmacist making the career choice extremely rewarding. Currently, I am an Ambulatory Outpatient Retail Pharmacist at Gulf Coast Medical Center. My journey began at a local community college and continued at Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences where I pursued a degree in biology. This degree provided me with an advantage as I attended NSU College of Pharmacy. Within my presentation, I will discuss helpful tips or advice I wish my younger self would have known along with an interesting story or two. I will also share what I look for in a colleague. The journey to become a pharmacist is a roller-coaster, but the end is worthwhile. If this is the career path you desire, I wish you the best and look forward to working with you in one aspect of pharmacy or another.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 3

### From Undergrad to Pediatric Dentist

Presenter: Claudia X. Harriehausen

*Farquhar College Graduate of 2006*

*Doctor of Dental Surgery, 2010, Howard University, Washington DC*

*Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency 2011, Washington DC*

*Pediatric Dentistry Residency 2016, Houston, TX*

*charriehausen@gmail.com*

I have always known that my desire to become a dentist came during my childhood. Therefore, during my undergraduate years at NSU I reinforced that desire by participating in many activities related to dentistry, such as volunteering for non-profit organizations as dental assistant, and providing oral hygiene education for underserved communities. By working with patients at that time, I learned many interpersonal aspects of dentistry that are not covered in textbooks, which enhanced my commitment and dedication to this type of work. I could not envision a more rewarding and compassionate career to spend my life by promoting the wellness of others. More than I have ever dreamed of, dentistry has provided a platform for personal growth and professional achievement. I will be happy to share some of the highlights of my profession during my presentation and the path that has led me to this point.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 3

### Road Less Taveled: My Journey to Becoming a Certified Tobacco Cessation Specialist

Presenter: Carlos Almirola, MPH, CTTS

*FIU Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences, 2008*

*FIU Master of Public Health, 2011*

*University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*

*Department of Family Medicine and Community Health Affairs*

I didn't arrive in Public Health through conventional means. My father is a physician and I grew up thinking medicine was in my future. Towards the end of my undergrad I started to learn about other careers and eventually came across Public Health. I saw the importance of helping avoid problematic health issues in our community through early intervention. My Public Health training when combined with my background in Biology opened new doors I never knew existed.

Grad School gave me the opportunity to have involvement with different community health initiatives in Baptist Congregational Health, UM Docs Program, and as well as Miami-Dade Area Health Education Center. Through these experiences a disturbing trend was becoming apparent. A lack of meaningful intervention.

People were in many cases completely unaware of services available to them in order to take better care of themselves. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Car Accidents, Gun Violence, infections, illicit drug use, and STDs combined do not reach the number of deaths caused by tobacco use. I saw a problem and wanted to do something about it. I began training with the Florida Certification Board and became a Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist.

The amount of people I have been able to help quit smoking easily has changed hundreds if not thousands of lives. Families who don't have to see a loved one suffer or a patient who thought they could never give up addiction now see a new outlook on

life. I am proud to be a part of Tobacco Free Florida. When deciding what your career should be you should feel two things. If you are happy doing it and if you feel you are making a positive difference in the world.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 3

### The Knight Who Saved the Shark

Presenter: Alberto J. Panero, D.O.

*Farquhar College Graduate of (2004)*

*D.O., 2009; Nova Southeastern University*

*Regenerative Sports Medicine Specialist, University of California, Davis*

*ajpanero@gmail.com*

Reaching one's goals is never an individual effort. I enrolled at NSU in the year 2000, joining the Men's soccer team and pursuing a career in sports medicine. High school was easy, managing being a student athlete did not pose many challenges. I could study for an exam the night before and do quite well on it. After getting a 68% on my first biology test in college, I quickly realized this method would no longer work. Developing a new study strategy and keeping up with the demands of being a full time athlete and social life was not easy. I struggled with it so much that I made up my mind that I would change my major from Biology to Business. As I sat in Dr. Robert Pomeroy's office (chemistry professor) explaining my decision, he gave me a firm look and said: "I am not going to let you quit." I was shocked. For the next 4-6 months I went to his office 2-3 times per week to go over chemistry problems. He challenged me to think of a test as a soccer game. With time, not only chemistry but all my grades went up. Now that I have accomplished my goal of becoming a sports medicine physician, I realize Dr. Pomeroy's real chemistry lesson was how to develop the work ethic face challenges head on and not let them impede your career dreams.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 3

### Optometrist and Educator

Presenter: Michael Bacigalupi, OD, MS, FAAO

*bacigalu@nova.edu*

Dr. Michael Bacigalupi grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His father was a letter carrier for the US Postal Service and his mother was an office manager for a local optometrist. He decided at a young age that he wanted to become an optometrist and has never regretted this decision. He is proud of his career and hopes to inspire others to consider the profession of optometry.

Dr. Bacigalupi earned an Associate of Arts degree in Chemistry from Schreiner University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Optometry from the University of Houston. In 1993, he graduated magna cum laude from the University of Houston College of Optometry with a Doctor of Optometry degree. He earned a Masters in Business Management with emphasis on Leadership at the H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship at Nova Southeastern University.

Prior to joining the faculty of Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Bacigalupi was in private optometric practice for 12 years. He is licensed as an Optometric Glaucoma Specialist in Texas. His private practice focused primarily on ocular disease and glaucoma care. He served on the Board of Directors of the Texas Optometric Association (TOA) and was honored as the Texas Young Optometrist of the Year in 2003. Dr. Bacigalupi is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and is a clinical examiner for the National Board of Examiners in Optometry. He has been honored by Lions Club International with the International Service Award for his many eye care mission trips into Central America.

Dr. Bacigalupi was appointed Assistant Dean for Student Affairs of the College of Optometry in 2008. He is a lecturer for the 4th practice management course entitled "Current Topics in Practice Management" and lab instructor for "Optometric Theory and Methods." Dr. Bacigalupi is a frequent author and lecturer in the areas of practice management, student affairs, and admissions

**10:50–11:10 a.m.**

## **BREAKOUT SESSION 4**

### **From a B.A. in Speech Language Pathology to Becoming an Occupational Therapist; Change is Good!**

Presenter: Kaitlin Dudzic

University of Iowa Graduate 2010

Master of Occupational Therapy, 2013, Nova Southeastern University

Pediatric Occupational Therapist, Baudhuin Preschool

*kaitlinebrooks@gmail.com*

Everyone thinks college is a time for you to pick a career and decide what you are going to do with the rest of your life. This is true in a way, but it is also a time for you to find yourself and decide who you want to be as a person in the future. Day 1 of my undergrad career consisted of my switching majors from elementary education to speech-language pathology.

Going through some of the pre-requisite psychology classes, I also decided I wanted to be a psychology major, so I added that in my second year of undergrad. In addition, I added on a certification in Deaf Studies. I didn't know what I wanted to be, so I was just going to do everything. During my last year of undergrad, I applied to 7 different graduate schools in order to be a speech-language pathologist. When graduation day came in 2010, I was not accepted to any of the graduate schools, despite my good grades and great GRE score. This turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me.

I never really felt 100% committed to speech pathology, so not being accepted to grad school was a blessing in disguise. I found Occupational Therapy while observing a speech pathologist and decided that is what I was meant to do. I loved all of my graduate classes and I truly enjoy going to work every day and helping those get back to their everyday activities (i.e. occupations). I am excited and happy to share my experiences and my journey to becoming an Occupational Therapist during this presentation.

## **BREAKOUT SESSION 4**

### **Freshman at Farquhar to Pharmacy Professor: The Reality of the Journey and Tips for Success**

Presenter: Nicholas Carris, PharmD, BCPS

*Farquhar College Graduate of (2008)*

*PharmD, University of Florida, 2012*

*Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacotherapeutics and Clinical Research*

*Department of Family Medicine*

*Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy, University of South Florida*

*Tampa, Florida*

*carris@health.usf.edu*

The path to becoming a healthcare provider is a commitment to lifelong learning, constant hard work, and a career that is not about you. Every class you take, everything you learn, every experience you engage in is preparing you to be a competent and compassionate healthcare provider, so that one day you

can walk into the room of a desperate patient and help them. The pay is average at best, especially considering the years of training. People will be angry at you when you are doing your best to help them. People will be angry when you do not want to work for free, and you can expect to burn out if you are doing it for the money. However, if truly want this for whatever your one or many reasons are; it is worth it every day.

For those of you who want to pursue this I will be happy to call you a colleague one day. Tips for success:

Know what experiences you cannot get back

- You can work and make money later
- You only get one chance to make a good grade in Gen Chem 1

Be focused but flexible

- If interested in pharmacy – pursue it!
- Take all prerequisites to qualify for medical, dental, PA, etc. programs as well

Exercise reduces stress

- The less time you have for it, the more you need it

Be social and stay in touch with your classmates

- They'll be doctors one day too

## **BREAKOUT SESSION 4**

### **Journey to Internal Medicine**

Presenter: Luke C. Williams, MD

Valdosta State University, 2002-2006

St. Matthews University School of Medicine, 2008-2011

Mercer University Internal Medicine, 2012-2015

Board Certified Internal Medicine, 2015

*ekul\_5@yahoo.com*

My name is Dr. Williams, or as most people call me Dr. Luke. Currently, I work in South Georgia as an ED physician. The road to wear I'm currently sitting and to where I started has been long, trying but mostly fun!

I started my undergraduate at Valdosta State University; to say the least I was completely lost. My hometown has about 5000 people in the entire county so being at a bigger city seemed overwhelming. I had no friends really and my social life was subpar. I started out as a premed major but quickly realized that these college professors were in the businesses of "weeding" out students. My first bio class I made a C! Devastated but not out, I realized that if my dreams were to become reality it was going to take more dedication, time, and discipline. The first tool I can give you in regards to discipline is found in the book *The Road Less Traveled*. There is a chapter in the book that talks about "Delaying Gratification" or as in movie I watched a few years ago when the father told his son, "we do what we have to so we can do what we want to". Just think about this for a while. Are you willing to say no to going out in order to study, miss family functions and events, and basically willing to accumulate more debt that most people make in their lifetime of working? I was.

After undergraduate, I applied to many "state" medical schools. My GPA was really good but MCAT was not so good. I did all of the Kaplan courses but just could not get my MCAT score up. I got wait listed but decided I did not want to take off an entire year. I applied to St. Matthews School of Medicine. This school is located in Grand Cayman! (small island located southwest of Cuba). My medical school changed my life. I had the opportunity to meet all types of people. We all came here with one goal and that was to become a medical doctor. While studying was strenuous and classes were grueling, I had the best time of my life.

After graduating medical school, I applied to internal medicine residency. Being from Georgia, I wanted to stay close to home.

I was accepted into Mercer IM, located in Macon, GA. I spent the next 3 years of my life in the hospital. Hours were strenuous in the hospital but as I grew in my residency, I realized there is no short cut to medicine. There is always something to learn; whether this pertains directly to the patient and their diagnosis and treatment plans to breaking difficult news to family members. Each step along the way was a building block to where I am now.

My goal for us, is for you to ask as many questions as possible and we can learn from each other. I look forward to speaking to you soon.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 4

### Advice to My Undegraduate Self About Pursuing a Carrer in Medicine

Presenter: Daveda Maharaj, D.O.

*Farquhar College Graduate of 2005*

*Doctorate of Osteopathic Medicine, 2010 NSU College of Osteopathic Medicine*

*General Anesthesiologist, Per Diem (as needed) in Broward with anesthesia groups Anesco and Sheridan*

*davedamaharaj@gmail.com*

The journey I've traveled, literally and figuratively, to become an anesthesiologist has been both challenging and rewarding. When I was a student at Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, I hit the ground running with ambition and goals to achieve. A minor detour teaching high school in between undergrad and med school was a huge learning experience, and I still fulfilled my career goals of becoming a physician. I'm not sure I ever imagined that this is what the "real world" would be like for a practicing anesthesiologist, but I've come to learn some of the best and worst ways to manage my personal life and career. Medicine is a career filled with fantastic rewards and the ability to impact the lives of many people in a big way, but it is important not to lose sight of life's little gifts in the process. These are some bits of advice, lessons I've learned, and things I wish my undergraduate self knew before beginning the journey to a career in medicine.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 4

### How a Biology Major Lead Me into Public Health and Working For a Non-Profit Organization

Presenter: Viktoriya Yudovina

*Farquhar College Graduate of (2008)*

*Master in Public Health (M.P.H.), 2013; Nova Southeastern University*

*Food and Nutrition Program Manager; Florida Introduces Physical Activity and Nutrition to Youth (FLIPANY), FL*

*vyudovina@flipany.org*

In the beginning, I wanted to be a physician, a scholar of everything medicine. And while my greatest passion is still medical science and research, my path has taken me in a slightly different direction. Currently, I manage the Afterschool Meal Program and Summer Food Service Program for FLIPANY, a non-profit organization, whose "mission is to empower youth and their families through physical activity and nutrition education programs while raising awareness and creating policies for a healthier community". Working in an arena of health and wellness, I am able to touch base on both my undergraduate days of biology in the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, and incorporate community outreach in underserved areas. I attended The College of Osteopathic Medicine to obtain a Master in Public Health degree, often sitting side by side with

medical students taking a dual graduation track.

In this presentation, I will discuss some important steps of my journey. There will be unexpected turns, lessons learned, and a new sense of flexibility, discovery and positive outlook on what comes next.

**11:20– 11:40 a.m.**

## BREAKOUT SESSION 5

### The Path I Took from the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences to the Field of Medicine

Presenter: David Cevallos

*Farquhar College Graduate of (2008)*

*Doctor of Medicine, 2012; American University of the Caribbean*

*Medical Intern, Manati Medical Center*

*dacr1086@gmail.com*

The path to Medicine is a long journey with many twist and turns. It is a route that would test you physically, mentally, and socially, but knowing how to balance your life will help you reach your goals.

I was a former student of Nova Southeastern University already knowing what I needed to do to reach my goals. I was studying in the field of Biology to prepare myself to apply to Medical School. In addition, I attended various organizations like the Pre-Medical Society, while also volunteering at an Emergency Department. I then took the MCAT and applied to various hospitals, both MD and DO, in the United States and outside the United States. I was then accepted to American University of the Caribbean where my journey continued.

In that time in American University of the Caribbean, I spent my first 2 years at St. Maarten of the Netherland Antilles. I continued being active in various organizations. I then took the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE), which enabled me to continue to my 3rd Year rotations at England and to my 4th year rotations in the United States. During my 4th year rotation I completed my USMLE 2 CK & CS and graduated. I then did several externship rotations and passed the USMLE 3.

I continued my path as a research coordinator at the Miami VA Healthcare System for one year. I was then accepted and I'm currently working as a medical intern at Manati Medical Center. I will be applying to residency programs to be able to complete the last step to specialize and earn my state licensure to practice medicine.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 5

### Being a Medical Scribe from the Perspective of an Undergraduate Student

Presenter: Monica Perez

*Barry University Class of 2016*

*monica.perez@iamscribe.com*

Getting into graduate school can be a very tough and exciting experience all at the same time. Part of this long and challenging process is gaining a great education and also the valuable clinical hours that will help to become a more competitive applicant. I am currently an undergraduate student with a major in biology at Barry University planning on going to PA school. I was given the opportunity to become a Medical Scribe with PhysAssist Scribes about 2 years ago and this is what has helped me become more confident about my journey to graduate school. This break out session will highlight some of my experiences as a Medical Scribe and how it has influenced my journey as an undergraduate student.



Pursuing a biology degree can lead to a wide variety of jobs in the medical field. You can become a PA, a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a veterinarian, a professor, etc. My goal has always been to help and treat people, but I was unsure of which route I wanted to take. Becoming a Medical Scribe exposed me to the different occupations in the medical field and it has helped me make my decision. I am now sure that I want to be a PA and know this is the best decision for me as I feel genuinely excited about it.

Apart from being a Medical Scribe in the hospital, I am also a Scribe Ambassador. This means that I visit universities in South Florida and speak to different students about the great opportunities that we have to offer. This position has also helped me become a more confident student, especially with my public speaking skills, and networking to gain more key contacts. This is another example on how being a Medical Scribe can open new opportunities and help you develop as a young adult. It is a great experience that I would recommend to any undergraduate student pursuing a career in medicine

## BREAKOUT SESSION 5

### **My Path From Farquhar College of Arts and Science to the Field of Medicine**

Presenter: Crystal Romero, MPH, MD

Farquhar College Graduate of (2005)

MPH-Epidemiology Concentration [Biostatistics Sub-concentration], 2011, Florida International University

MS1, George Washington University

[crome007@fiu.edu](mailto:crome007@fiu.edu)

As an undergraduate student in the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences I was confident that I wanted to be a physician; however, I was also intrigued by the field of Public Health. Consequently, I pursued a Master's degree concentrating in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Personally, I saw the attainment of this degree as a means of developing a skill set for future practice as a physician. Public health concentrates on community health needs, while medicine focuses more on the needs of an individual patient. During this time I worked on a project at the Broward County Health Department that allowed me to investigate the Descriptive Epidemiology of dengue fever. In 2012 I started medical school, where I became actively involved in health policy and took a leave of absence. During that time, among other things, I worked as an external candidate for the CDC/W policy office on Capitol Hill. Being a part of the dynamic interplay between politics and medicine was enthralling; finding a profession that ignites such passion should be the ultimate goal. One of the life lessons I have learned along the way is a willingness to adapt to change and the unexpected nature of life. The true goal in any profession is a balance that allows you to be your best self both on and off the job. This presentation will highlight pearls I have picked up along the way (i.e. passion, adaptability, and goal-setting).

## BREAKOUT SESSION 5

### **My Path from Undergrad To Dentistry**

Presenter: Yanina Cox, DMD

Farquhar College Graduate 2006

Doctor of Dental Medicine, 2011, Nova Southeastern University

Dentist/Business Owner, Cox Dental Care, PA

[ycoxmd@gmail.com](mailto:ycoxmd@gmail.com)

Coming from a large family of dentists, I have always known that I wanted to be a dentist myself. It was important for me to attend a college where I would be able to have the education that would make me a competitive candidate for dental school.

I began undergrad at NSU in 2003, majoring in Biology, and graduated in 2006 with my Bachelor's in Science. I was involved in several extracurricular activities and had a student job on campus.

In 2007, I began my journey as a dental student at Nova Southeastern University College of Dental Medicine, where I obtained the latest and most advanced education among some great leaders and innovators in the dental field.

After graduating Dental School in 2011, I was an associate dentist in private practice and corporate dental offices, allowing me to continue to expand my knowledge in dentistry and in the dental business. My husband and I are now business owners of Cox Dental Care, PA. I love my job as a dentist, I get to know people and make an impact on their oral and systemic health. During my presentation I will share my path provide some tips that I have acquired during my career.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 5

### **My Journey Through the Pharmacy Profession**

Presenter: Jennifer Gershman, PharmD, CPh

Dual Admissions Pharmacy Program

Farquhar College Graduate 2004

Doctor of Pharmacy, 2006, Nova Southeastern University

Medical Reviewer, RxWiki

[jennifergershman14@gmail.com](mailto:jennifergershman14@gmail.com)

You can definitely say the pharmacy profession runs in my family, as both my father and sister are pharmacists. My father inspired me to pursue a career in pharmacy, through his dedication to the profession. Pharmacists play such an important role in patient care, and I wanted to make a positive impact on the community.

I completed the Dual Admissions Pharmacy program and then went on to receive my Doctor of Pharmacy degree at NSU. Postdoctoral training was the path for me, so I completed a Drug Information Residency. This residency inspired me through my role as a teacher, mentor, and researcher.

I served as a professor at NSU College of Pharmacy for 6 years, and I truly enjoyed my experience. Through teaching, research, service, and scholarship I played an integral role in the education of student pharmacists. I managed the Drug Information Center where we answered medication questions from patients and healthcare professionals. I also had the opportunity to publish research in various scholarly journals.

Currently, I am a medical reviewer with RxWiki, which is an excellent online drug information resource for patients. It is a truly rewarding experience to work with pharmacists who review and write cutting edge drug information for patients. I've always believed that pharmacy is a lifelong learning profession, as new medications and research are always on the horizon. I am excited to share my journey through the pharmacy profession with you, so welcome aboard!

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