

Match Day 2024

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

LETTERS FROM FACULTY

During the pre-clinical years, our social committee reached out to faculty members of our courses to write a letter for us to read on match day. These letters are compiled here for your enjoyment.





Dr. Aidan Ruth

Normal Structure and Function

Congratulations on the momentous occasion of matching to residency! As I write this letter, however, it is December 2020, and you are still in the very early stages of your career as medical students. In fact, you have just completed your Normal Structure and Function module, and – perhaps most notably – have gotten to know and interact with the entire human body in the gross anatomy lab. You have learned not only from your textbooks, lectures, and TBLs, but also from dissection of a whole-body donor. Through all of these methods, you have worked hard to understand and appreciate what 17th century English anatomist William Harvey termed the “fabric of nature.”

We first introduced you to the musculoskeletal system, and you learned how muscles shorten and lengthen to move us all around the world. We then moved into the thorax, where you were able to hold a person’s heart in the palm of your hands, actually witnessing the pathway of a drop of blood from atrium to ventricle. As we studied the head you learned the names of each of the muscles responsible for your smiles, including everyone’s favorite - levator labii superioris alaeque nasi - which hopefully didn’t cause too many tears to wash across your scleras as part of the lacrimal apparatus.

In addition to learning about these concepts in abstract terms, you were able to learn anatomy from what some call the “silent teacher,” or your “first patient”: Your gift of body donor. Perhaps your donor had undergone a knee replacement, or a coronary bypass.

Perhaps you found their liver riddled with tumors, or their vertebrae misshapen with osteophytes. You learned and witnessed things in your donor that they, and their own physicians, may never have known. Through you, that donor's gift is now multiplied exponentially to the hundreds of patients that you will treat in your careers. I hope that you remember your time with them fondly.

Finishing this course is no doubt but one of the many successes that you have had since matriculating into this program. Some of you will have gotten competitive fellowships, completed summer research projects, and published in top journals. As we complete our course now, I've discovered many of your personal successes, which are just important.

Some of you have had your first child, or gotten married. Some of you adopted a new puppy, started a new workout program, perfected your air fryer chicken wing recipe, or finished your first quilt. Some of you simply found the time to read a good (or maybe not so good!) book for fun, which in medical school can be no small feat!

You have also experienced setbacks as well. Maybe it was as small as forgetting that "alaeque" in levator labii superioris alaeque nasi on your practical exam, but you have no doubt felt it. Remember as you go forward that neither success nor failure is final. Continuing on from either takes courage and grit.

Most importantly as you move on in your careers– YOU BELONG HERE, wherever that “HERE” may be. You have gotten where you are by being bright and driven, but also by being compassionate and courageous. Throughout this course you have shared with me your talents: Your artwork, your musical ability, your baking prowess, your IT wizardry. You’ve also shared with me your vulnerabilities, be it the trouble you’ve had adapting to med school, an “embarrassing” question about the perineum (which actually turned out to be really insightful!), devastating health news, or your trouble concentrating after a tough breakup. Taken together, you’ve shown me how brave you all are.

It has been an honor to teach you about the “fabric of nature” and of your patients, and I am so proud of each and every one of you!





Dr. John Martin

Brain and Behavior

Congratulations on your match! I want to take you down a little bit of memory lane, the hallway down to room M400, the human gross anatomy lab. Upon stepping into the lab, finding your assigned cadaver, and meeting your dissecting partners for the first time.

Do you remember your first day of gross anatomy lab? Your anticipation and apprehension at your first dissection? Do you remember your first incision? Perhaps it was a midline incision along the back to dissect the vertebral column. Or it was performing a laminectomy to study the spinal cord and meninges.

Do you recall how difficult it was at peeling back the skin for the first time? How Dr. Tan showed you how to cut a small slice in one corner of the flap, so you could put a finger through it for a better grip?

Do you remember Dr. Daly, always willing to provide thorough and thoughtful explanations and assistance? Do you remember Dr. Ruth's enthusiasm and encouragement?

Do you remember the TA's – Shivika, Lokesh, Nigel, Dane, and Alex and their constant assistance and enthusiasm in the lab or as a tutor? Perhaps you might remember my assistance in the lab when you removed the brain? Perhaps you were lucky to remove a good brain with all 12 cranial nerves and all cerebral vessels attached.

Do you remember how exhausted you were after performing your dissection and teaching it back to your other dissecting partners?

Do you remember finding that anatomic variation in your cadaver? Perhaps it was the left vertebral artery originating directly from the arch of the aorta, or it was identifying an accessory lobe of the lung or it was a double ureter. Do you remember incorporating the anatomy with embryology, histology, and physiology? Do you remember Mickey Mouse's ears in identifying the midbrain of the brainstem? And volunteering your time and talents at the Gift Body Memorial Service at St. Francis College Church?

What a journey it has been since Normal Structure and Function! You have come a long way!

In a few weeks you will have graduated, and people will be calling you doctor. The faculty and staff are so excited and proud of you!

Happy Match Day and congratulations! I wish you the best of luck in your residency!





Dr. Carol Vogler & Dr. David Brink

Intro to Pathology

Congratulations to the Class of '24!

We're writing this shortly after the conclusion of the Introduction to Pathology module. As you probably wish to forget, that was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was the first time in the history of the module that the entire course was taught virtually. We did miss opportunities to interact with you in person, but, despite the challenges we faced, your class achieved some of the highest scores we'd seen. We hope that your mastery of Pathology supported you throughout medical school and continues to support you as you transition to residency.

Our best wishes on Match Day! And remember, when in doubt, read Robbins!



Dane Meyer

Fall 2020 Gross Anatomy TA

So, it's match day now, huh? That's exciting so first, let me say this.

CONGRATULATIONS!!! YOU'VE EARNED THIS! I know that each and every one of you worked so very hard to reach this point. And now, you finally made it here. So, it's time to relax, unwind for a little bit, celebrate, and bask in the moment. I'd say to have a drink for me, but I'm sure there will be enough of that going on already. Now before I keep going on and on about how great everyone is, how about we rewind time for a little bit to appreciate the journey here, shall we? Let's say to 2020.

The year started off like any other normal year, although that didn't last long. No, like literally, it only lasted one day. On January 2nd, raging wildfires caused Australia to declare their third state of emergency, while the rest of the world mourned for their loss. After that, anything bad that could have happened, happened. An impeachment trial, riots, stock market crashes, the Beirut explosion, and a pandemic, we saw it all and the year wasn't even halfway over! Yet, you didn't let any of that stop you in pursuit of your dream to help others. No, you pushed forward to start medical school and change people's lives! But just when you thought 2020 couldn't get any crazier, we introduced you to the most dreadful three letter acronym you hopefully ever encounter, NSF. And at the heart of Normal Structure and Function was gross anatomy or as what some might refer to as, "let's see how much information we can shove down your throat before it comes back up".

Now looking back in life, things always seem easier. I'm sure you'd agree with me right now and some of you might even say things like "Anatomy wasn't too bad" or "It made me a better doctor" or "It taught me how to really study." Yeah, you're probably right and some of those are true. However, if you'll recall when Dr. Lechner taught you the entirety of the respiratory system in eight hours, which I'll remind you was two days before the exam, you had other choice words to describe anatomy.

Unfortunately, my asterisk key isn't working at the moment, so I can't share those with you, but you get the gist of it. So don't kid yourself, it was tough. There was blood, sweat, tears, and a whole lot of other bodily fluids in the lab every day. Sure, we might have made some mistakes along the way. Maybe you skipped a lecture, two lectures, or fifteen lectures, honestly who even kept count. Or maybe you asked the TAs some silly questions from time to time, like how many spinal cord levels are in cranial nerve twelve or if this was the parotid gland. But I saw you grow and learn from those experiences and if you didn't know the answer, then you'd rely upon your peers to help you out. Within a few months of meeting a bunch of strangers coming from all across the country with such diverse backgrounds, you truly came together as a class and developed a sense of comradery that is befitting for SLU School of Medicine.

You are some of the smartest and hardest working individuals that I've had the pleasure of knowing and I'm sure that wherever life takes you next, you will be ready for it. That's not to say that difficult tasks and seemingly impossible challenges won't come your way again, because they probably will at some point. But that's okay because you know and have what it takes to buckle down and succeed so that you can cherish precious moments like the one right now. I'm so proud to have gotten a chance to experience part of this journey with you and for that, I thank you. I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors and hope that you enjoy the process with all the little victories you find along the way to wherever your dreams may take you.



Shivika Ahuja

Fall 2020 Gross Anatomy TA

Class of 2024, Congratulations on Match Day, what a monumental achievement!

I remember how nervous you all looked as you stepped into the gross anatomy lab for the first time, but you immediately began working to become acclimated to the space.

From learning how to correctly put on a scalpel blade to spending hours tracing nerves and vessels (and eventually learning that a scalpel isn't the best tool to do so 😊), you all worked together to create a safe learning environment amidst a pandemic and learn from the bodies that were so generously gifted to the university.

I hope you maintain this spirit of camaraderie as you work to fulfill SLU's mission of being men and women for others. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.



Dr. Yun Tan

Normal Structure and Cell Function

Congratulations to the class of 2024! You have endured an historic pandemic and believed in yourselves that nothing is impossible.

A picture is worth a thousand words, but a memory is priceless. I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to refresh your memories about the unusual situation you faced in the first semester at SLU medical school.

Remember how your faces were equipped with masks and goggles? Remember how we only knew you based on your bays and tables in the anatomy lab? Remember how we had to analyze the shapes of your eyes, the color and styles of your scrubs, and your hair for identification? Remember how we looked like strangers passing each other on the medical campus? Remember how we had to keep 6 feet social distance in policy, however, practically this was impossible in the lab? Remember how you were worried about catching COVID-19 and took extreme caution helping each other? Remember how you had to adopt new ways of learning remotely? Remember how you volunteered at the free clinic either in person or through Zoom to help underserved communities? Remember how you could not go home to visit your family members, especially your grandparents? There are so many more memories....

I am so proud of you that you have finished the hard part of career development. You made it through the cadaveric dissection in person during the pandemic while many other medical schools canceled this lesson. I hope the lab experiences will set up a solid foundation for your medical practice in the future and the pandemic experiences will make you stronger to cope with your life and career challenges. I would like to end this letter using a Chinese Proverb: "The old man on the frontier lost his horse, how to know if this is fortuitous or not?"

