

The Battalion

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A&M medical school respected

by Diane Yount
Battalion Reporter

The Texas A&M College of Medicine began in 1977 with no building, no accreditation, no reputation, and only 32 students.

Now, in 1982, the school is about to move into its own new building, it has received an unusual five-year accreditation from the Liaison Committee of Medical Education, its reputation is growing, and more than 800 students have applied for entrance into the Class of '87.

"We will be conducting interviews until April," William E. Ward, associate dean for Student Affairs says. "We expect to actually interview 300 students out of the hundreds of applications we receive. From those 300, we will get a class of about 40 that will graduate in 1987."

The process of getting in and out of medical school takes many years. Beginning with undergraduate work, entrance tests, and interviews and continuing with classroom studies, clinical work and more interviews, the time it takes to become a doctor averages 10 years, although it can take as few as eight and may seem more like 15.

"The interviews to get into medical school aren't very high pressure," David Barnett, a senior at Texas A&M says. "It's pretty relaxed but even so, you know you have to impress the interviewer."

Starting with their first year of college, students attempting to get into medical school must always keep that goal in mind.

"I liked the medical program at A&M my junior year in high school," Andy Dean, a fourth-year medical student says. "I knew I wanted to go to A&M so I was ready to study hard to get in. I was accepted as a sophomore. It was the only school I applied to."

Texas A&M is one of the few medical schools in the country that accepts applications from undergraduate sophomores,

Ward says. Most schools require accept at least junior standing.

"I feel like I had a distinct advantage," Dean said. "I didn't have time to get burnt out on school like some other people did."

During the interviews, each student is given a tour of the school's facilities in Temple, in addition to a tour of the Texas A&M campus. Each interview takes two days and introduces the student to the entire medical program.

The Texas A&M program involves two years of classroom work in College Station and two years of hospital work in Temple. The first year is mostly studying courses such as anatomy.

"I studied like I've never studied before," Philip Sissons, a medical student, said. "It was class work all day. Pretty much from 8 to 4."

Sometimes study goes beyond books.

"The first day of school we had three or four classes in the morning and then we walked into lab," Sissons said. "There was a body there."

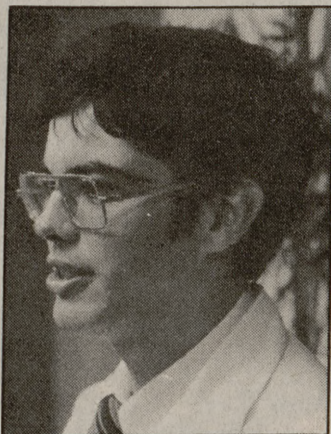
Both Sissons and Dean recall that first day of school.

Dean: "At first all you see is a big slab of skin. You never really know what to expect. It was a little easier for me because both of my partners were repeating the course."

Sissons: "I was the first one to cut. Right down the back. You have depersonalize the cadaver. We named ours Elsie."

Dean: "Ours was a red-headed man with a big tattoo. He died of heart failure. You know, some of my classmates said that they would never donate their bodies to science after that class, but I will. My mind won't be there so why should I care?"

Sissons: "You don't see the body's head until 75 percent of the class is finished. It's not that bad. The first thing that strikes you as being really human is the hand. What's more human than a hand?"



Phil Sissons

Classes dealing with subjects such as human anatomy are taken in the first and second years of school. These classes currently are conducted in facilities on campus, mainly in the Teague Research Center. The new medical building, located on Highway 60 past Wellborn Road, will be ready for occupancy in February. A new medical library next to the building is in the design stage.

"We hope to have ground broken for the library in a year,"

Dean Ward said. "Right now our medical library is in the vet school and doesn't get as much use as it should."

Sissons rates the current facilities for first- and second-year students as very adequate.

"As a matter of fact they are pretty good. You can't beat the microscopes," he says.

During the second year of studies, some of the work load occurs outside of the classroom and laboratory. Students visit the offices of local doctors in a program that is unique to Texas A&M — the preceptorship program.

"It was really nice to get a brief glimpse of the various doctors practicing their specialties," Sissons said.

Ward also is enthusiastic. "The patient response to this program has been overwhelming," he says. "We hope to continue this program. We feel it is an advantage to the student."

After second-year finals are completed, the students have about three weeks in which to move to Temple.

"Boy, was that a disaster," Sissons said. "We had three weeks to get everything packed and over to Temple. I was lucky. My wife came and found a place for

us to live."

For those students who wish to live close to the Veterans Administration Hospital, the medical school provides housing on the grounds. The price for each student is about \$90 a month.

"The price is pretty cheap," Dean says. "Nothing like College Station."

The third and fourth years in-

volve the student in "hands-on" experience. During the junior year, each student serves various clerkships in surgery, medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology. During this clerkship, the student gets to see and diagnose patients under the guidance of doctors and hospital interns.

"A lot of students at other schools complain that they do

scut work — IVs, blood-drawing — we got to work closer with the interns," Sissons says. "I would make first line decisions on some patient's care and the intern would check my decisions. More or less, half of the service was mine."

The demands of medical school can be trying.

"The third and fourth years

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