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NYMC Synapse Issue 29

School of Medicine Student Senate, New York Medical College

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NYMC Synapse

Transmitting news to the students of New York Medical College

February 2021 Issue 29

Good Luck Class of 2020!

By Jood Ani

You are almost there! I am sure you have heard this time and time again, but this is no small feat. You have made it through: M1, M2, Step 1, M3, a PANDEMIC, Step 3 and soon enough M4 and Match. So from all of the student body of NYMC, Good Luck Class of 2020 (I am sure you don't need the luck though)

What is Synapse?

The *NYMC Synapse* is a newsletter published by the NYMC Student Senate for our classmates, faculty, administration and other students at NYMC. We highlight news from student senate, medical education, student affairs, and financial planning, give important updates for each class and highlight big events, outstanding students, and extraordinary professors.

Keep an eye out for these newsletters about once a month and don't miss out on the amazing things that are happening at NYMC!

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Meet the New Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion: **Zuleika Cuevas**

Interview by Mariah Fontanez-Lutsky, MS2

Favorite Quote: “I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Martin Luther King, Jr.



Zuleika Cuevas was born in Brooklyn and raised in Long Island, NY. She is a first-generation Afro-Latina Panamanian American who feels strongly connected to her roots in Panama and goes back often to reconnect with her family and the culture. Because of her diverse upbringing, experiences, and the values of education instilled by her parents, she soon realized her calling was to teach others to understand the importance of knowing their own/ others cultural identity and how to empathize with those that feel excluded. With this calling in mind, she pursued a career in education, communication, organizational ethics, and Diversity & Inclusion

Over her career, Zuleika Cuevas has worked with different organizations as a multi-cultural liaison. In this position she mentored minority candidates to help get them to the next level and led implicit bias training. She also has worked as a professor for many different universities within the tri-state area where she helped students reach their full potential by helping them answer the question: what does the world need from you?

Zuleika Cuevas has had many different titles and experiences throughout her career. A few things she learned that has helped her become so successful, is the importance of being patient, listening, and learning the culture of the institution before you add something to it. With these lessons in mind, she is excited to explore the culture of NYMC and see what she can add! Knowing the goal of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at NYMC is to bridge communities, she will be partnering with Dr. Mill Etienne, MD, MPH, FAAN, FAES, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion and NYMC to fulfill the following priorities:

- To provide support and resources to URM students and student organizations that will help them reach their true potential, complete their goals, and help them find their voice.
- To provide support to faculty and academic leaders to enhance our curriculum with regard to equity and diversity and inclusion
- Continuing to contribute to the hiring/retention of URM faculty and admitting/retention of URM students
- To collaborate with all organizations and communities on campus

Mrs. Cuevas has officially settled into Room 146 in Sunshine Cottage and will soon have office hours available for students who are interested in a coach and mentor, looking for life/career advice, or just in need of someone they can confide in and trust. With her background in communication, she can also help empower students/ student organizations to use their voices to become advocates.

Zuleika Cuevas is not all work and no play, but rather has a rich life outside of her career! She has been with her husband since college, and has 3 beautiful children—a creative, a scientist, and an athlete, that bring her so much joy. Her self-care routine includes reading books like *Think and Grow Rich*, *A Black Choice*, *A Promise Land* by Barack Obama, and *This is my America* by Kim Johnson; taking long walks to help her mediate, and dancing to salsa, bachata, or merengue music. She has lived a full life without many regrets, but if she had one it would be not having the talent to be on the Mickey Mouse Club House. The stage has always been her calling.

I'll reiterate that while these techniques may sound simple in theory, they can be truly difficult to implement - rewiring our brains is hard work! But practicing on your baseline days will hopefully help you on more difficult days, as has been my experience. I also want to mention that if you're going through a difficult time, it may be hard to learn these skills right now. When I first started practicing, I often struggled to find the motivation to reach for the tools, even though I knew they existed. If this resonates with you, please try not to judge yourself. Doing our best looks different every day, and the input is far more important than the output. We all deserve to hear kind words from ourselves, and we all deserve to feel proud for simply trying.

To All the Anxiety I've Experienced Before (and do not desire again)

By Kelsey O'Hagan, MS3

Dear Anxiety,

You always know just what to say to get me out of bed or scare me into staying in bed all day. You are the reason I ask questions before trying something new and the reason I chickened out of performing in front of others.

Anxiety you are the epitome of a catch 22 emotion. You are helpful in small doses and smothering when you stay a minute past curfew. You have this way of knowing when stressful times are coming. I'm not sure if you know this but in times of stress, I don't need more of you. Specifically, I need less. You might think you're being helpful keeping me company and cozying up next to me on the couch when my to do list seems impossible but in reality, that's when I need you to take a walk and give me space.

Please consider this your 30-day eviction notice. In the coming months I have big plans (my 1st medical school summer, STEP 1, applying to residency, Match day). I'm not saying I want you to move far away I just can't live with you anymore. I'm happy to grab coffee together and chat in the hallways but I need to make sure that you are a positive force and not a negative force in my life.

Sincerely,

All humankind, but especially the members of the NYMC community

P.S. Munger is a beautiful building on campus with vacancy. It's far enough away that we will have our own space but close enough for us to remain in contact.

While all of us underclassmen are cheering and celebrating our 4th year friends finishing their medical school careers this time also has a tendency to throw everyone into a tizzy thinking about everything that must be accomplished before we all cross the threshold of graduation with a residency match or simply the next school year.

We are all capable of excelling through the stresses of another transition period. We have all learned how to make it through so many of these periods to get here. As we enter into this transition period if you ever find yourself leaning heavily on your friend anxiety reach out to a physical friend, a faculty member, a dean, mental health and wellness, parents and/or any other person that can provide you the confidence boost you need to check one thing off the to do list for the day.

Medical school is not easy and the NYMC community has a culture of supporting its members through tough times. Don't hesitate to reach out to anyone in the group as we can offer more constructive and concrete conversations than the anxiety friends/foes in our heads.

Mental Health and wellness: https://nymc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_43crx9nQMXoaEip

In case of crisis https://nymc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4IamnQaQym4lJMp

Peer2Peer: nymcp2p@gmail.com

The Do's and Don'ts of Interview Season

By Tucker Callanan

Disclaimer - I'm providing one opinion from someone going into one specialty, so feel free to do whatever makes you most comfortable/feels right. Because at the end of the day the goal of these interviews are not to evaluate your credentials... By receiving an interview you're past that. No matter what specialty you apply to there is no such thing as a "pity interview". Your main purpose of the day is to determine your fit with the program. So although its corny to say, the more you act like yourself and are calm/relaxed, the more likely you are going to end up at a program that truly fits and where you'll be happy for the next 3-6 years.

That being said.. Cynthia Ozick once wrote "Two things remain irretrievable: time and a first impression" so here are a few tips to make sure you start out on the right foot.

ZOOM Specific

If the next class is "lucky" enough to go through virtual interviews

Do - *Invest in a ring light and a camera.*

- You can get both on amazon for a grand total of <\$100. As you will be saving thousands by not traveling to each interview, it is a small price to pay in order to look professional. As a side note I thought my lighting (natural light in front of a window) was perfect. However, after the first interview on a rainy day I realized investing in a light was much more consistent. On this note - investing in an ethernet cable to plug directly into the router is a good idea too. Some of the interview platforms (thalamus) are notorious for lagging if your internet speeds are not top notch and the cable often gives you the extra boost of speed required.

Don't - *Use a virtual background*

- It is distracting to see the background constantly rendering around your silhouette. In one pre-interview social, one of the ice-breaker questions was "what is ___name of applicant who had a virtual background___ hiding". Don't be that person.

Do - *Record yourself doing a practice interview - focusing on where you are looking.*

- This was brought up during my practice interview session with the school (see below). It's impossible to know exactly what you look like during interviews or where you are looking without recording yourself. It's easy to do on photobooth or zoom.

Don't - *Think that you can get away with wearing sweatpants.*

- Although trivial, I've heard horror stories of people on the trail being asked to stand up during interviews. Although I'm not sure if it actually affected their ranking, it shows you're taking things seriously if you can muster putting on pants. Shoes is overkill though in my opinion.

Do - *Manicure your background*

- Some will say have a white background no exceptions, some will say make yourself memorable (I chose to have a bookshelf with a plant in the background). If you chose the later, make sure it looks like Martha Stewart did your interior design. People will ask about it and you don't want to look like you are a messy person (regardless of if you actually are).

General Advice

Regardless of in-person vs. virtual

Do - PRACTICE

- I found preparing for interviews to be extremely difficult at first. Talking about yourself is an awkward balance of wanting to show your accomplishments while not wanting to come off like you're bragging. So, the only way to get more comfortable with the whole thing is to practice. The school has a number of faculty willing to do mock interviews and provide feedback. Take advantage of this! Additionally, you can get together with a few friends over zoom and just take turns asking each other questions. The more reps the better in this scenario.

Don't - Schedule back-to-back interviews if you can avoid it.

- It's shocking how much mental energy a full day of interviewing takes. Having back-to-back sessions/days is exhausting. Try to schedule your interviews accordingly.

Do - Have an idea for what you're going to say for the most common questions

- You don't want to be overly rehearsed, but take an afternoon and try to come up with an answer for the following questions from the AAMC (40 in total). https://aamc-orange.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/09/bf/09bf383c-3ff6-41bd-95c5-19e0f1f3dc55/frequent_interview_questions.pdf. Although I found that I used the same example for multiple questions (which is completely fine on interview day) I would encourage coming up with different examples for each of these questions. It can be difficult to come up with answers to weird questions on the spot, so being robust in your preparation and having a lot of different stories will allow you to cruise on interview day and not get tripped up with nothing to say.

Don't - Leave without asking questions

- In EVERY interview I was in I was asked if I had questions. This is the time to show how much research you did about the program or the individual interviewing you. I used post-match surveys, the programs website and reddit (guilty) to find out more about the program. While specific questions about the program are best, here are a few generic ones that I came back to time and time again.
 - To the program directors/assistant program directors
 - "If you had unlimited funds/resources, what part of your program would you put it towards and why?" (this is a sneaky way of asking about the negatives/areas that need to be improved)
 - "What are you most proud of of the residents who graduate here?"
 - To all other faculty
 - "What makes you excited to come to work each day?"
 - "What do you wish you could show me in person if this interview wasn't virtual?"
 - "What type of residents do well at your program?"
 - "What is your personal approach to resident education/progression?"
 - If your interviewer did their training at the program
 - "How did your experience as a resident contribute to who you are as an attending now?"

Do - Have your first interview at a program that is not very high on your list

- Again, interviewing is a skill that takes time to develop. I felt 100x more comfortable after my first interview was over, so if possible, schedule a program that isn't at the top of your list.

While interviews are stressful at first, they become much easier as you go on. Although difficult, do your best to relax. You earned the right to be there, and all the most difficult aspects of matching are behind you. Remember that they need you as much as you need them, so really be critical in evaluating if you fit in with the vibe/culture you see. No matter what you go into, you'll be spending a lot of hours in the hospital so it's incredibly important to be spending time with people that you enjoy being around.

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