Making dreams come true

“I was so anxious about the cost of medical school,” says DMS student Jessica Swienckowski. “I know I’m not the only person who has lost sleep over that. You work so hard for your dream—to think that you’re not going to be able to realize it because of money is distressing.”

That Swienckowski and many of her DMS peers are able to realize their dreams is thanks to the generosity of donors—many of them alumni—who have given to scholarships at DMS. In an average year, 88% of DMS students receive some form of financial aid, and more than 52% receive aid from DMS scholarship funds.

“Scholarship gifts are an incredible investment,” says Gordon “Dino” Koff, DMS’s director of financial aid. “Every dollar we’re able to give in scholarship aid lowers a student’s loans. Our financial aid is completely need based. This allows us to attract students with tremendous socioeconomic diversity.”

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“My family has never been wealthy,” says Swienckowski, who grew up in Los Angeles and attended Vassar College on a scholarship. “Although my parents have always done everything in their power to help me realize my dreams, they are just not in a position to help me with medical school.”

With the cost of four years at DMS nearing $300,000, scholarship endowments and current-use gifts for scholarships have allowed the Medical School to keep the average debt for its M.D. graduates under $125,000. This is well below many of its peer institutions, whose graduates leave with a debt averaging more than $155,000.

“I fell in love with DMS when I came to interview,” says Swienckowski. “During the application process, I worried that I would have to choose the school that offered me the best financial aid package, but the scholarship aid that Dartmouth offered allowed me to choose what my heart wanted. This is absolutely where I wanted to be, and I’m really loving my experience here.”

Swienckowski, who had always gravitated towards the humanities, stumbled into science and medicine at Vassar purely by chance. “I took a Psychology 101 class to fill a hole in my schedule,” she explains. “The teacher was a visiting professor who happened to be a neurobiologist, and the class was more like Neuroscience 101. I just fell in love with it.” Swienckowski went on to major in neuroscience and minor in molecular biology, and she spent several summers during college working for researchers at UCLA and UCSF. Shadowing one of these mentors as he worked with Parkinson’s patients in the clinic, she discovered the gratification of “being able to use your clinical and scientific knowledge immediately to help patients.” The experience sealed her decision to go into medicine rather than a research career.

Now a second-year student at DMS, Swienckowski serves as the School’s student representative to the Association of American Medical Colleges. She is also a member of the

Kate Villars is assistant director of development communications for DMS-DH.

Jessica Swienckowski ’14: “I’m so grateful to the donors who have made it possible for me to be here... This is a place that doesn’t just allow your dreams to come true—it teaches you to dream in new ways.”
Support for young physicians

DMS alumnus Barry D. Pressman, M.D., has established the Samuel D. Pressman Fellow and Resident Fund in Radiology to support young physicians doing outcomes research in radiology. J. Derek Stensby, M.D., is the inaugural recipient of the post, which honors Pressman’s father.

Barry Pressman, DMS ‘65, is a neuroradiologist and chair of the S. Mark Taper Foundation Imaging Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Annual funds excel

At a time when unrestricted giving is critically important to both Dartmouth Medical School and Dartmouth-Hitchcock, the Fund for DMS and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Annual Fund (DHAF) closed out a banner year on June 30. The Fund for DMS raised a record-breaking $642,267, while over 1,000 first-time donors helped the DHAF close the fiscal year with $747,622.

“Deaths pass into the reality of action. From the actions stems the dream again; and this interdependence produces the highest form of living.” —Anais Nin (1903–1977)