



JOSEPH MEHLING

Medical students Kara Detwiler and Christopher Jordan learn to observe.

Connecting paintings to patient care

I was waiting to see if anyone noticed the third eye of the cyclops,” Lesley Wellman says gleefully. She’s referring to a humanlike creature tucked in a corner of a painting of Venus and Vulcan at Dartmouth’s Hood Museum of Art. DMS students were studying the details of this painting, and others, as part of a pilot program to sharpen their observational and diagnostic skills. Wellman, who is curator of education at the Hood, designed the program, which coaches students “to really go into the depths and get very specific details.”

The program came about when Dr. Joseph O’Donnell, DMS’s senior advising dean, heard about art workshops at other medical schools. He decided to develop one with “a Dartmouth stamp on it,” he says. “As we get more technology, and all the devices that look inside the body, we’re really not paying as much attention to exquisite physical diagnosis.”

When he approached Wellman, she was eager to help out. “They described what it was like to diagnose patients,” she says, “and we said, ‘Bingo, that’s exactly what we do with works of art.’ . . . For example, if you’ve overlooked a couple distinctive details in a painting, you might arrive at an inaccurate interpretation—very similar to patient diagnosing.”

“In a way, the paintings become the patients,” adds Vivian Ladd, a museum educator and codesigner of the program. Students were given 15 minutes to look carefully at a painting. Then they discussed what they’d seen as museum staff challenged them to support their points with visual evidence. Student Crandall Peeler recalls identifying “two Native American figures in this painting, and the Hood staff would say, ‘How do you know they are Native Americans?’ It would get me to break down the even more subtle details that allowed me to reach the conclusions I came up with.”

O’Donnell is also planning to start a music interest group to enhance students’ listening skills. He hopes, he says, to help them learn to “listen better to heart murmurs, or beats in the lung, or inflections in patients’ voices.” M.C.W.

Moving from the Big Apple to the Big Green

New Yorker Barry Ladizinski can’t wait to head north to New Hampshire to begin his final two years of medical school at DMS. “Plus I love to ski,” he adds. “Most invigorating thing I’ve ever done aside for driving in Manhattan.” Ladizinski is one of five students in a pilot program between DMS and New York City’s Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education.

The program was started by Dr. Stanford Roman, Sophie Davis’s dean, and Dr. David Nierenberg, DMS’s senior associate dean for medical education. The two knew each other from the 1980s, when Roman was DMS’s deputy dean. Nierenberg liked what Roman was doing at Sophie Davis “because it sounded like a really good effort to get more underprivileged, underrepresented minority high school students into college, into medical school, because medicine really needs to diversify . . . just as the diversity of the population is changing.” And, adds Nierenberg, he and Roman both realized the program would benefit DMS by bringing in students with “different life-time experiences [and] added social, economic, and ethnic background diversity, which is something we are always striving for.”

Sophie Davis’s five-year curriculum combines college and the first two years of medical school. Then the students transfer to one of several partner medical schools to complete their M.D.’s. DMS is the first partner school outside New York State.

At Sophie Davis, students are encouraged to consider careers in primary care. They also sign a service agreement, in exchange for low tuition, promising to work for two years as a primary-care physician in a designated primary-care shortage area.

DMS is accepting the Sophie Davis students as “equally prepared and fully engaged members of the third-year class,” says Nierenberg, “with no special preparations other than orientation to the School.”

Choices: The pilot group will join the DMS ’09s next year. In the meantime, two alumni will help the five students prepare for the transition by sharing details about their clerkship experiences and their own adjustment to rural New Hampshire. These alumni—Dr. Junko Ozaio ’03, a surgical resident, and Dr. Sonja Olsen ’01, a gastroenterology fellow—now live in New York City. So they can swap tales with the Sophie Davis students not only about Big Green traditions but also about Big Apple traffic.

MATTHEW C. WIENCKE



Barry Ladizinski, left, and the four classmates he’s pictured with, will join the DMS Class of ’09 next year.