

F A C T S & F I G U R E S

Women in white

Community and responsibility were Class Day themes

To a casual observer, the Medical School's 2007 Class Day celebration might have looked like lots of pomp and spectacle. Kilted bagpipers and robed marshals led the faculty and soon-to-be graduates into a grand tent towering over Derzon Courtyard on the Hanover campus.

But at its core, the event was down-to-earth. The speeches focused not on self-congratulation but on the ability and responsibility of medical professionals to serve their communities. "Excellence and service," in the words of Dr. Stephen Spielberg, DMS's dean, were the central themes of the day.

Keynote: The keynote speaker, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr., the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins, echoed those themes—and defined success as uplifting all the people in a community—as he told a story from his own career. In 1997, he led a team that separated conjoined twins in a 28-hour operation at the only black teaching hospital in South Africa. After the surgery, Carson said, "one of the twins popped his eyes open and reached up to the endotracheal tube, and [a little while later] the other one did the same thing . . . and today they are graduating the fifth grade."

But the real success, he continued, was "the reaction of the people who had been there following so closely something being done in their country and



The DMS Class of 1965 boasted two women—one of whom is front and center, in white, in this class photograph—and 46 men.

1849

Year Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to graduate from a U.S. medical school

1852

Year DMS denied admission to Blackwell's sister, Emily

1962

Year Valerie Leval became the first woman to graduate from DMS

2

Number of women in the DMS Class of 1965

1987

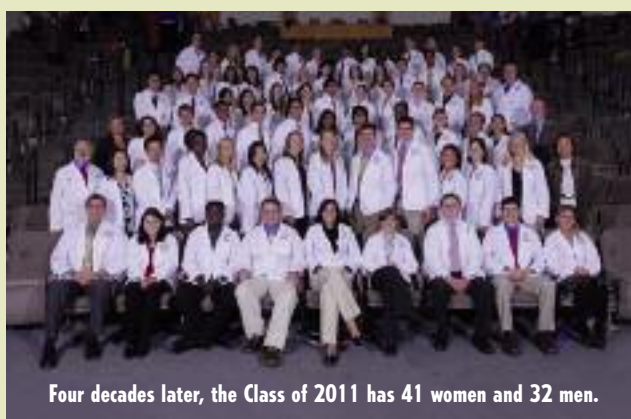
First year the entering DMS class had over 50% women

48.6%

Percentage of women entering all U.S. medical schools in 2006

56.2%

Percentage of women entering DMS in this fall's Class of 2011



Four decades later, the Class of 2011 has 41 women and 32 men.

SOURCES: DMS, ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLEGES

FLYING SQUIRREL GRAPHICS

community. Their level of self-esteem was so high, they were literally dancing in the streets." That, said Carson, is true success. It's the ability "to elevate other people [that produces] real fulfillment in life."

He called on the graduates to be leaders in solving such problems as lack of access to affordable medical care. "I don't think there is anyone more capable . . . than people in the medical field, because we have more education than anyone else in society," he said. "We have to come up with solutions. We cannot leave it to others."

After a standing ovation for Carson, medical student Kevin Desrosiers and graduate student Cary Boyd followed with rousing speeches of their own. Desrosiers recalled his motivation for entering medical school—"the ideal of helping other people cope with illness"—and encouraged his classmates to reflect on their own reasons for entering medicine. Consider, he urged them, "how our work has impacted the patients that we have already cared for, and how they have impacted us."

Moral: Boyd emphasized "the moral responsibility we have as doctors, scientists, and educators to be sensitive to the burden of shame" associated with mental disorders and diseases such as AIDS and SARS. The treatment of disease cannot be effective until shame is alleviated, she said. "Obtaining our degrees obligates us to break the silence." (See page 25 for this issue's Student Notebook essay, which is adapted from Boyd's Class Day talk.)