

student spotlight

Rob Strong



EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES

WITH SUCH A STRONG EARLY EXPOSURE TO MEDICINE, it's easy to see why Alex Lindqwister '21 has always had an affinity for the profession.

"My mom had me when she was in her fourth year of medical school at UCLA, where she then did her residency—so visiting the clinical settings where she worked while I was growing up felt natural and comfortable to me," explains Lindqwister, who ended up spending most of his youth in rural Peoria, Illinois, where his mom helped establish an oncology clinic.

Another important influence was his maternal grandparents, who as Vietnamese immigrants helped to raise him. "They were refugees following the fall of Saigon," he says. "My grandfather, who was a very formative person in my youth, had been a surgeon and had treated a lot of the American soldiers during that time. I heard many stories about what their lives had been like and gained a great appreciation for the struggles they had endured."

When it came time for college, Lindqwister returned to the West Coast to attend Stanford University. While eventually going into medicine may have seemed like a foregone conclusion, the path he found himself on came by serendipity.

"My friends convinced me to take a popular 'intro to computer science' class, even though I had no initial interest in it, and I really liked it—it actually changed my academic trajectory entirely," recalls Lindqwister. He ultimately earned an undergraduate degree in computational engineering (with an emphasis on social network analysis and infectious disease control) and a master's in biology (with a focus on virology and immunology) at Stanford.

While still an undergraduate, he got to apply the knowledge and skills he was acquiring on a summer trip to East Africa as a Child Family Health International global engineering fellow. "It was kind of fortuitous—I'd taken Swahili for my language require-

ment just for fun, and by chance the fellowship came up. I'm pretty sure that was the only thing on my application they actually cared about!" he says, laughing.

In addition to being able to practice his Swahili in rural Kabale, Uganda, Lindqwister worked with fellow students and local residents on a water management project and visited medical settings such as HIV clinics. "It was a great experience, and very eye-opening to see how markedly different parts of the world live and what their standards of healthcare are like," he remembers.

Of all of the medical schools that Lindqwister visited and interviewed at, Geisel stood out for its sense of community. "I thought the sense of stewardship between classes was really nice, and I appreciated the way Dartmouth focuses on the more experiential aspects of medicine," he says.

At Geisel, he has also found a supportive environment for pursuing areas that he has become particularly passionate about—equity in medical education and medical futurism (assessing how medicine is likely to change in the future). He plans to use his position as incoming chair of the American Association of Medical Colleges Organization of Student Representatives (OSR), which will begin in November 2019, to advocate for both of these issues.

"It's an honor to be elected to represent medical students at the national level," says Lindqwister, who co-leads both the qMD (LGBTQ) and Medical Education Scholars programs at Geisel and has served as a curriculum representative and Northeast regional medical education delegate for the OSR.

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Lindqwister's other activities at Geisel have included: teaching an elective on hemorrhagic fever viruses with David Mullins, PhD, associate professor of medical education and of microbiology and immunology; and doing resuscitation research (using advanced imaging modalities) in the lab of Norman Paradis, MD, an emergency medicine specialist at Dartmouth-Hitchcock and a professor of medicine at Geisel.

He plans to continue his interest in imaging technologies next year as a Robert Jeffery Fellow in Radiology, which will allow him to more fully commit to his OSR chair duties, before beginning his clinical rotations at Geisel.

While his long-held interest in medicine has never wavered, "I've had some pretty monumental shifts along the way, and the number of paths to choose from has expanded," says Lindqwister. "But I feel comfortable about where I am, and I'm excited to see what lies ahead."

TIM DEAN