

## **Orientation Opening Ceremony & the UMSOM Honor Code Registry**

The HELPERS-PRO Student Advisory Committee proposes the following Orientation Opening Ceremony for incorporation into the Orientation schedule at The School of Medicine. The main goal of the Orientation Opening Ceremony is quite simply to impart upon incoming students that being at our University, and beyond that, being on track to become a physician, carries with it a certain level of responsibility that cannot be divorced from a need for the highest level of professionalism.

We recognize that an Honor Code already exists at our school, but feel that this Honor Code is not, as of yet, sufficiently present in the minds of our University community. However, because actually changing the Honor Code would be a rather lengthy process (as it is a legal document), our goal is not to edit it in any way for the time being. In fact, we do not think that changing the text is significant to our present goal.

Whatever the text of the Honor Code, individuals will never choose to adhere or not adhere to its greater ideology and purpose because of particular jargon or certain consequences over others. Our main impact can be had by simply emphasizing the operant word of the code – Honor – regardless of its details, in our impressing upon the entering class the incredible level of responsibility and integrity which will be necessary as they progress through their journey toward becoming physicians.

### **The ceremony should be run roughly as follows:**

Have the entire class enter Davidge Hall in complete silence, while historical slides are shown on the overhead screen. The goal is to have a ceremonial feel, just as in the white coat ceremony. (Perhaps we could hand out pins with some medical symbol – or the pins that used to be placed on the white coats – as a reminder of this induction to the medical community. A pen would also accomplish this, and be symbolic of the event as well).

If Dean Reece could deliver the address, that would be ideal as he is a figurehead and the school's leader, but in the event that Dean Reece is unavailable, a dean with powerful speaking abilities could give the address in Dean Reece's absence.

The idea of the address is to instill a sense of awe in the history of our university, as well as respect for the practice of medicine, starting with a quiet aura of respect as they enter Davidge Hall for the first time.

### **We recommend that the speech begin roughly as follows:**

“The University of Maryland School of Medicine was founded in 1807, and was the first public medical school in the United States of America. You are currently sitting in the oldest building in the Northern Hemisphere which has been continuously used for medical education to this day. It is here that the first cadaver dissections were used as part of a medical school curriculum in the United States. Physicians such as [insert famous alums here] began their education – physicians who went on to discover cures for [insert cool trivia here]....”

### **This feeling could be built upon, and then the idea of the honor code could be introduced:**

“All of our nation's great universities have majestic histories which carry with them a great aura of honor and pride. At your undergraduate institutions, this aura was likely very closely intertwined with the school's Honor Code. At the University of Maryland School of Medicine, as at all medical

schools across the country, there is something extra to our Honor Code. You are no longer promising to write your own papers, or not copy your neighbor's essay. You are pledging to uphold the honor of the entire medical profession, and you will soon be signing the *University of Maryland School of Medicine Honor Code Registry* with the same signature which one day will sign birth certificates, and death certificates; prescriptions, and missed-work permits – your signature will determine how much your patients will pay for health insurance, and whether or not our nations CEOs will be able to purchase a life insurance policy. This weight on your shoulders cannot be overestimated, and to underestimate it would be to deny the responsibility you have just started to take on as you have entered this great hall. But with this responsibility also comes great honor as you are taking on the most honorable profession known to man – the job of caring for and protecting lives....”

We think if properly delivered, this address could have a massive impact, and deeply instill in the new class a sense of responsibility, a sense of being part of something greater, and a sense of pride in what they have worked so hard to achieve by getting to medical school. Whoever delivers it can make the address their own, and the talk will need some additions and modifications, but we can not stress enough how many of our previous experiences, like the one outlined above, are burned into our memories and moral fiber.

The main goal of introducing this ceremony is that we have a great tradition of excellence at Maryland as well, but do not embrace or publicize it enough, nor do we use it nearly enough to empower our future physicians. If we add to the responsibility of upholding the University's honor, the responsibility of keeping up the honor of the entire medical profession, then our message can be more powerful than would be possible at any non-medical institution of which any of us has previously been a part.

The closing of the ceremony should include the signing of a new *University of Maryland School of Medicine Honor Code Registry*, which will have a section for each class. This book is not intended to replace the book signed when picking up graduation tickets, but rather as a permanent record of incoming students' commitment to our school's great history and honor. This book should be quite large and used for years to come – when full, it will be a wonderful historical piece for the university, and a testament to our tradition of excellence.

As a brief addendum, to incorporate the current upperclassmen, this book will be signed by those classes at the following times (sufficient space must be reserved for these classes, in their proper order in the book):

- The Class of 2005 will sign this book at their Match Day Ceremony.
- The Class of 2006 will sign this book at their Match Day Ceremony.
- The Class of 2007 will sign this book at their Year Two Orientation.

This closes the recommendation for the Orientation Opening Ceremony and *The University of Maryland School of Medicine Honor Code Registry*, as presented by the HELPERS-PRO Student Advisory Committee. An introduction to be printed in the Registry Book is forthcoming.