



Manal Ahmed
Class of 2024

Hello all! My name is Manal, and I'm an MS4. From Vancouver, Canada, I think I have adapted well to Dallas, i.e., wearing a sweater during 70 degree weather. I enjoy reading, writing, and taking daytime naps. Starting medical school during a pandemic was quite the challenge. I, like many others, struggled to balance life outside of school, academic demands, and connections to my peers. It helped me tremendously to find community, develop coping mechanisms (read, sad girl runs while listening to Goljan), and lean into my support system. Wherever you're at in your journey, I'm eager to learn about you and support you through your experiences. I'll likely also ask you lame questions like what kind of animal best represents you (me: hummingbird), so do humor me!! :-)



Joseph Da
Class of 2024

Hello! I'm Joseph and I'm an MS4. I'm relatively new to Texas, as I grew up in New Jersey and attended college (Johns Hopkins) in Maryland. In my free time, I love all things fitness, namely basketball, tennis, running, and weightlifting. I've definitely found my own fair share of challenges in medical school, but was fortunate to have a community around me to support me through difficult times. As a peer advocate, I'm here to do the same for you! Please feel free to reach out anytime!



Jennifer Edgar
Class of 2024

Hi all! I'm Jennifer, an MS4 and a Dallas-area native. I double-majored in biology and music at SMU – you may catch me playing my flute with Heartstrings or singing with Lymph Notes! Apart from med school and making music, I enjoy reading (Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings nerd right here), writing, listening to true crime podcasts, camping/hiking, cuddling my cat, and hanging out with friends. School (and, you know, life in general) is challenging for everyone, though not always in the same ways. I can say from personal experience that talking with someone about those challenges, big or small, can be immensely helpful. You're not alone, and you don't have to try to do this alone. Like my fellow peer advocates, I'm here to listen and would love to chat with you!



Kaela Harvey
Class of 2024

Hi everyone! My name is Kaela (pronounced like Kayla) and I am an MS4 interested in surgery! I am originally from Chicago, but moved around a lot as a kid. Prior to medical school, I was in Philadelphia, where I went to undergrad (UPenn w/ a double major in Hispanic Studies and Gender/Sexuality/Women's Studies) and spent my two post-grad years before coming here. Growing up I was a competitive equestrian, but I don't have much time to ride now. I spend most of my free time watching movies and crime TV dramas, reading, trying new restaurants/bars/lounges, hanging out with my friends and family, and playing with my cat Luca. Med school can be overwhelming and sometimes feel really isolating, but you're not alone! Please never hesitate to reach out – even if it feels trivial or minor, I assure you it isn't. How you're doing and feeling matters, and I (along with the other advocates) truly want to help!



Mehvish Khan
Class of 2024

Hey everyone! My name is Mehvish and I'm an MS4. I'm originally from Toronto, Canada and went to Texas A&M. I came to medical school as part of the Joint Admission Medical Program (JAMP) so I'm familiar with some of the unique challenges of coming from a low-income background or being a first generation student in addition to the stresses of medical school. I know it's super important to be able to rely on peers and mentorship, and I'm super excited to be someone to vent to, get advice from, or just talk!



Morayo Lawal
Class of 2024

Hi, my name is Morayo Lawal! I am a Nigerian-American born and raised in Sugar Land, Tx (a suburb of Houston). I left the nest and went to Johns Hopkins University where I studied psychology. Afterwards I took a gap year as a research assistant before starting medical school with a dual master's of public health degree. Medical school was definitely an adjustment and I felt like year after year, block after block, I was trying to find my footing. Thankfully, I have been able to dabble in some of the things that keep me sane, such as cake decorating and baking. I also love going for walks on the Katy Trail. When I would rather stay home, I enjoy crocheting and watching Netflix. Also, as part of the class that started med school during COVID, I quickly became a regular at many coffee shops in the area, so hit me up if you would like some recommendations! More than that, I would love to chat about any and everything. Being in med school is challenging and support helps us get through it, so please reach out anytime!



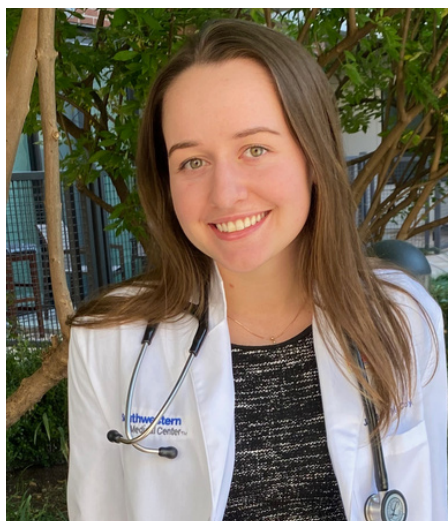
Kim Le
Class of 2024

Hi! I'm Kim and I am currently an MS4. I grew up in Houston and went to UT Austin. I love to read (anything from historical fiction to romance), exploring new restaurants and bakeries, making coffee, and just laying in bed watching Netflix. As a first generation student, I know how difficult navigating medical school can be. I would not have made it this far without my support network and learning how to take care of myself first. I hope that as a peer advocate, I can be a source of support for you. Please reach out if you ever want to talk, whether it is about a minor inconvenience in your day or a stressful event that you are going through, I would love to hear every detail!



Sandra Loza-Avalos
Class of 2024

Howdy, y'all! I'm Sandra, an MS4. I grew up in San Antonio but headed off to college in Philadelphia and stayed for a few years getting my MPH and working full-time before coming back to Texas for med school. I love dogs, martial arts, coffee, reading sci-fi and fantasy, and casual bike-riding. As a first-generation American and high school grad, med school has been an exercise in positive self-talk, humility, and managing imposter syndrome – all on top of studying hard to provide the best care for my patients. I believe perfection isn't truly attainable; there's always more to learn and improve upon, and once we let go of the expectation we have to be perfect, we can breathe a little easier (easier said than done). Like my fellow peer advocates, I'm happy to lend a supportive shoulder and talk through things with anyone.



Jordan McCoy
Class of 2024

Hi! My name is Jordan, and I am an MS4. I went to the University of Texas at Austin and majored in Biology and Plan II. I am the first in my family to go to medical school! I am interested in/applying to psychiatry. Outside of school, I like spending time outdoors, playing board games with friends, and exploring the city! Starting medical school was a difficult transition (especially during a pandemic!), and having someone to talk to was huge for me to find success. As peer advocates, we are always here to listen.



Michael Nemeh
Class of 2024

Hey everyone! I'm Michael, an MS4. I'm from Los Angeles and went to UC Berkeley, and now I'm enjoying the Texas life. I like to spend my free time with friends and family, watching sports, playing tennis, and reading fiction. I'm also always happy to talk about good food in Dallas. I'm excited to be a peer advocate because I know having someone to talk through things with can make medical school seem a lot more manageable. I'm looking forward to connecting with you!



Meghana Rao
Class of 2024

Hi everyone! My name is Meghana, and I'm an MS4. I'm from Shreveport, Louisiana and went to college at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. I graduated with a major in neuroscience and then started medical school here. In my free time, I love to sing, dance, play board games, read, and do yoga. I'm also a huge animal lover. I know everyone says to "schedule your joy" in medical school, and I'm here to emphasize how important that is despite how cliché it sounds. I know this can be difficult at times, but just remember that you are never alone. No matter what it is you want to talk about, I'm here to listen, chat, and support you any way I can. Please don't hesitate to reach out about anything. We are all here for you!



Anna Maria Reiter
Class of 2024

Grüßgott! I'm an MS-4 going into interventional/ diagnostic radiology. Hometown is Berlin Germany, but I'm a proud Comet (WHOOSH), and Texas has become home away from home. Once in medical school I quickly realized that we tend to struggle in silence and anonymity because of how high the stakes are. I remember every conversation where a classmate revealed that they are struggling with the same block, deadline or work-life balance because it made me realize that I'm not the only one having a hard time. I believe we are ultimately all on the team with the common goal of healing others and encourage you to draw strength from that. In my free time I enjoy watching anime, learning foreign languages and "veganizing" comfort foods and baked goods. I'm a certified advanced SCUBA diver and have a lot of recs on getting inexpensive diving classes in the metroplex. Please reach out to me if you need a reminder that you are doing beautifully. You attend a great school, and I'm rooting for you.



Cristina Sanchez
Class of 2024

Hi! I'm Cristina, an MS4 and UT Austin alum (HOOK EM'!) I was born in Mexico and grew up in Tyler, Tx (East Texas native!). I also like to attend Hot Yoga (I just lay there) and Pilates (I just cry a little). Attending medical school in the middle of a pandemic was definitely rough but having people to reach out to was so helpful and a reminder that you are not alone! If you are ever feeling overwhelmed by what is going on around you, don't hesitate to reach out! Medical school is not easy, being a young adult with other responsibilities other than medical school is not easy. You are here for a reason- we are here for you!



Namita Saraf
Class of 2024

Hi! I'm Nami and I am an MS4 from right here in Dallas. I am an avid book-reader and coffee-shop goer, two things I have tried to prioritize and incorporate into my life in med school. However, I do know how difficult it can be to make time for the things you love! I personally struggled a lot with feeling guilty for prioritizing my mental health. I want you to know how important and necessary that is! Medical school is definitely a huge change, but you do not have to go through it alone. I am here to talk about absolutely anything.



Stephanie Shea
Class of 2024

Hi everyone! I'm Stephanie, MS4 from Plano, Texas. I went to UT Austin for undergrad. Since no one in my life talked about mental health, I didn't know it was important to take care of myself until I fell apart. I have since learned how to ask for help and how to prioritize my mental health. I want to make sure you all get the help you need, too. My passions are talking about wellness and mindfulness, and I promise I can relate to how tough school is! I'm always here to listen and connect with you. Please know that you're not going through it alone. Also, I teach yoga in my spare time and can show you exactly how to stretch out any sore muscles.



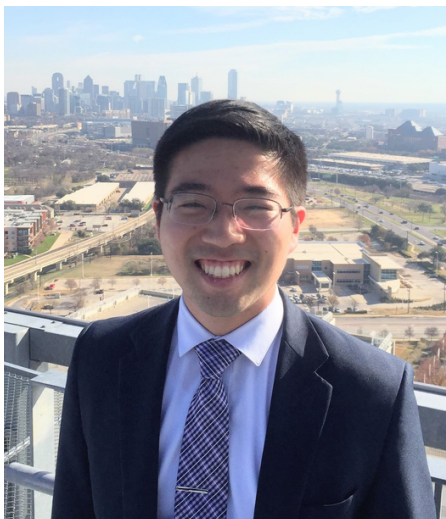
Sofia Shirley
Class of 2024

Hi! I'm Sofia and I'm an MS4! I was born and raised in Dallas, but hopped over to Nashville for undergrad at Vanderbilt and then spent a year as a scribe up in NYC. When I'm not doing med school things, I'm probably hanging with my cavapoo (Poppy the puppy!) or trying out a new restaurant. I think taking time for myself and the people I love has been absolutely critical for success in medical school, so I want to help anyone I can achieve that balance. Never hesitate to reach out - we're here for you!



Jesus Sotelo
Class of 2024

Hello! My name is Jesus, and I am currently an MS4! I was born and raised in the big city of Houston TX but lived for a time in rural Mexico. I stayed in Texas for college (Baylor) and then hopped across the pond for graduate school in England. Prior to medical school, I took several gap years working in research while my wife completed her graduate training in speech pathology. Transitioning into medical school is an arduous process, including both non-traditional students and recent college grads. Prioritizing mental health is not trivial, especially when medical school pushes you in one direction and life stressors in another. My wife, family, friends, and Student Wellness have been instrumental in my well-being. As a peer advocate, I am here to be your sounding board and provide support! Please don't hesitate to reach out, we are in this together! In the meantime, you can find me at home binge watching TV (the list is long..) spending time with my wife and assortment of mammals and reptiles and breaking in my new telescope.



Daniel Tai
Class of 2024

Hi everyone! My name is Daniel, and I'm an MS4. I grew up in Southern California, went UC Berkeley for undergrad, and stuck around in California for three years before heading to medical school, so I'm a true out-of-stater. I was heavily involved in my faith and in campus ministry during those three years and continue to find support and community in my faith. I loved the idea of peer advocates and would be happy to talk or lend a listening ear through the struggles of school and the ups and downs of life. Please feel free to reach out anytime about anything!



Madeline Tovar
Class of 2024

Hi! My name is Madeline and I am an MS4. I grew up here in Dallas, went to Texas A&M for undergrad, and came back home for medical school. In my free time, I like to run, grab dinner with friends, and hang out with my family & pets. Medical school is definitely not easy, and I often felt overwhelmed throughout my first year. Through making new friends (both in and out of med school), leaning on family, finding balance, and reaching out to older students and mentors, I have found school to be much more manageable and enjoyable. I wanted to join peer advocates to help other students feel at home at UTSW. Please do not hesitate to reach out. I am happy to listen, chat over coffee, and support you in any way I can!



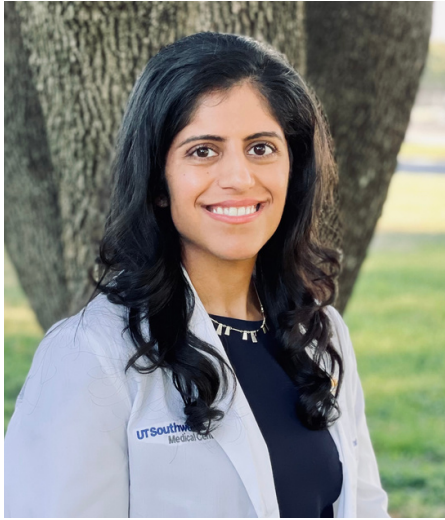
Lauren Truitt
Class of 2024

Hello there! I'm Lauren, currently an MS4. I grew up in North Dallas. After a hiatus for college at Cornell and gap years and the NIH, I am back! I'm a sucker for anything fiction - books, TV, movies. Bonus points if it's sci-fi related. I also love to bake and even applied to culinary school before choosing medicine. Life during medical school has comprised of many significant moments, with both personal and academic/career aspects, with both rosy and thorny emotions. I'm a huge believer that the full spectrum of experience is critical to reflect upon. I try to allow myself to fully feel the negative and try to make sure I celebrate the positive. My go to self-care is a long walk on the Katy Trail with a hand selected playlist. I'm excited and honored to get to know my peers and learn what makes them tick.



Chinmayee Venkatraman
Class of 2024

Hi y'all! My name is Chinmayee and I am a non-trad MS4. I'm a Dallas native, studied global health at Georgetown, and worked in clinical research, prior to starting medical school. Along with school, I love exploring new restaurants, singing and dancing, and spending time with family and friends. Everyone's journey to and through medical school is unique, however, we have many shared experiences. I am so grateful for the people who have helped me through challenges, both academic and personal, in medical school thus far, and I am always here to talk or be a sounding board - you belong here and are not alone.



Amber Altaf
Class of 2025

Hey everyone! My name is Amber Altaf, and I am currently an MS3. I grew up in Birmingham, AL and went to undergrad at Princeton. In my free time, I enjoy doing yoga, catching up on my favorite TV shows, and taking shopping trips to Costco. Starting medical school already burnt out, the transition was rough to say the least. From juggling complex family dynamics to experiencing med school as first-gen, I personally understand the value of not having to manage everything alone. Looking forward to talking with you!



Viviana Gonzalez
Class of 2025

Hey :) I'm Viviana, an MS3. I grew up in Puerto Rico for 13 years and graduated from Baylor and UNorth Texas. Aside from school, I am a former dance and yoga instructor who is into books, watercolor painting, and nutrition. Med school is demanding. Loneliness, problems at home, mean self-talk, and more can make it even harder. I'm here to lend you a listening ear because caring for our current selves is just as important as caring for our future selves.



Bilal Haque
Class of 2025

Hello everyone! My name is Bilal Haque and I am an MS3. I grew up in Dallas and did my undergraduate studies at UT Austin (Hook 'Em!). I served as a Peer Academic Coach for 3 years during my college years, where I helped students manage their mental health struggles with the stresses of school. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, playing pool, and watching wildlife documentaries. I am excited to continue my passion for uplifting mental health as a Peer Advocate. Medical school is extremely challenging, and I know firsthand that keeping anxieties bottled up just makes everything even more difficult. No stressor or issue is too small to seek help for, so please reach out!



Ariana Ishaq
Class of 2025

Hi everyone! My name is Ariana, and I'm an MS3. I grew up in Houston and took a couple of gap years before starting medical school. My hobbies include spending time with family, playing tennis, and watching Ted Lasso. For me, being out of school for some time before med school started made the transition a little difficult, but support from people close to me and the friends I made here made a huge difference. Medical school is constantly challenging us in so many different ways, and feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or lonely is really common. I think it's important to remember that talking to someone who has been through these same struggles can really lighten the load and remind you that you aren't doing this all on your own. Please reach out if you would ever like to talk, or even just have somebody to listen!



Nyssa Kantorek
Class of 2025

Hey y'all! My name is Nyssa, and I'm currently an MS3! I was raised in a small town called Sunnyvale, Texas and I lived there until I went out of state to Vanderbilt University for undergrad. I majored in Neuroscience and minored in Psychology. After graduating, I started as a med student here! In my free time, I love to crochet, watch anime, Latin dance, and go to the gym! I definitely stretched myself too thin my first year, but those struggles taught me a lot about myself, and I am here to support you if you ever feel things are getting overwhelming. My support system – friends, family, and my fellow medical students – really helped me through it all. I would absolutely encourage you to reach out for help whenever you need to or want to because there are so many on this campus waiting to help you, including us peer advocates!



Shivani Kottur
Class of 2025

Hey guys! My name is Shivani and I'm an MS3. I'm from Plano, Texas and went to UT for undergrad, where I majored in Biology and minored in Women's and Gender Studies. I love listening to music, going on walks, and finding new restaurants to try out in Dallas! I wanted to serve as a Peer Advocate because I understand how hard it is to balance medical school courses with the rest of our lives. Sometimes we need some extra support in our lives – let me be a listening ear or a shoulder to lean on. Having the right support system is so important. Please reach out if you need to talk or just want some restaurant recs! We are here for you.



Meaghan Lee
Class of 2025

Hi! My name is Meaghan (she/her) and I'm an MS3. I grew up in Mississippi and attended UPenn for undergrad where I majored in psychology. For my gap years, I stayed in Philadelphia and worked in clinical psychology research. Things that make me happy: exploring new restaurants, cute gifs, impromptu dancing, and lots of naps! I became a Peer Advocate because there were many times my first year that I felt overwhelmed with both personal and academic challenges. The pace of medical school can be unrelenting and often does not fit the messy, chaotic nature of real life. What got me through it (as cheesy as it may sound) was talking with other people who helped me feel less alone. I hope to do the same for other students, so please feel free to reach out about anything! We're all here for you :)



Linh Lieu
Class of 2025

Hi y'all! My name is Linh, and I grew up in Irving, TX. I graduated from UT Austin with a degree in Neurobiology and took a couple of gap years before starting at UTSW. Outside of school, I enjoy binge watching shows (anime!), napping after a long day of school or an Asian drama marathon, fiber crafts, and researching new restaurants with great vegetarian options to try. Medical school is an experience like no other but please know that you are not alone! I felt extremely overwhelmed my first year and it was my support system that really got me through the toughest times. During this process, I learned that just having someone to talk to can make all the difference so don't hesitate to reach out! I'm here to listen, chat about anything under the sun, and most importantly support you!



Jessica Nguyen
Class of 2025

My name is Jessica (she/they), and I'm an MS3 from the Dallas area. Outside of school, I like apartment gardening, collecting vinyl records, and hanging out with my dog. The first year of medical school was a rough transition for me, but by reaching out to my support system and Student Wellness, I made it to clerkships and learned a lot about myself in the process. It can be overwhelming to deal with everything that life throws at you, and the stress of medical school doesn't make that process any easier, but my fellow peers and I are here to make sure you don't have to handle it all alone. Please reach out if you want to talk!



Enoch Peng
Class of 2025

Hello! I'm Enoch and I'm an MS3. I grew up in Anaheim, CA, the home of Disneyland, the happiest place on earth. I then moved to Texas to attend Rice University where I majored in Neuroscience. In my free time I enjoy trying new restaurants, burning off those calories by exercising, and exploring the great outdoors! Throughout medical school, my family, friends, and church community have provided me with very needed support and encouragement, and I hope to provide similar support to you as well. As a peer advocate, I aim to provide a hopeful and peaceful presence amidst the chaos of life and school. I look forward to meeting you!



Evan Suzman
Class of 2025

Hey Everyone, my name is Evan and I'm an MS3. I grew up in Scarsdale, New York before moving to Tennessee for college at Vanderbilt, where I was a History and Child Development double major. I stayed in Nashville for two more years to get a Masters in Biomedical Sciences before moving to Dallas for medical school here at UT Southwestern. A fun fact about me is that I ran cross country/track in college, so you can find me on the Katy Trail whenever I have some free time. I decided to become a Peer Advocate because I found the transition to medical school to be really challenging, and I want to be there to support my classmates if/when they need someone to talk to.



Krista Thompson
Class of 2025

Hey everyone! My name is Krista, and I am an MS3. I am from the Dallas area but went to undergrad at OU (boomer!) before coming right back to Dallas to start medical school. In my free time I love to read, practice yoga, thrift, and do just about anything with the people I love. When I first started medical school, I was extremely overwhelmed and I largely credit my peers with helping me through that first semester. Medical school can be mentally and emotionally challenging for many reasons, so it's important that we support one another. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at any time for any reason! I am always here to listen and support you!



Brian Torres
Class of 2025

Hello everyone! I am Brian, an MS3 from Allen, Texas! I was born in Miami and lived in Oregon for about 10 years before coming to Texas. I went to UTD (woosh) for undergrad where I majored in biomedical engineering before coming here to UT Southwestern. My hobbies include playing/watching soccer, video games, playing the string bass (the tall one) and composing music! I look forward to lending an ear or a shoulder during your time in medical school. It goes without saying that medical school is challenging, but it is also a great time to learn more about yourself while also getting to make a lasting impact in the lives of others. Let me know if you need anything as I will be more than happy to support your journey!



Nathaniel Wu
Class of 2025

Hi everyone! My name is Nathaniel, and I am an MS3. I'm from the Houston area and went to Rice for undergrad. In my free time, I enjoy cooking, taking care of my plants, finding new restaurants, and staying active. Medical school can be an extremely difficult transition, but I've found that one of the best ways to cope is through finding your niche/support systems. Easier said than done! I'm also in a long distance relationship that has been going on for 3 years so let me know if you want to talk about that as well! Other than that, I want you all to know that you belong here and you got this :)"



Isabella Alexander
Class of 2026

Hello! My name is Isabella and I am currently an MS2. I am from Frisco, Texas. I went to undergrad at Indiana University where I studied neuroscience and psychology. I love reading, music and going to concerts, trying new restaurants with my friends, and watching movies. Medical school is challenging and a huge life change, but it can also be a great time to find community and explore the wonderful city of Dallas. I know firsthand that it can be difficult finding balance between school, self-care, and personal life, and this is something that I am working on every day. The peer advocates are always here for you, so please reach out do not hesitate to reach out!



Magda Anchondo **Class of 2026**

Hello! I'm Magda, an MS2. I'm from Lockhart, TX and went to Stanford University (majored in International Relations). I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin and spent eight years working in international public health before transitioning to medicine. Outside of school, you can find me with a book, chai and TSwift piano cover music playing. I also enjoy going for a swim, walking my dog, and trying new restaurants around Dallas. Starting medical school as a non-traditional student with a non-pre-med background was difficult and very overwhelming. You may think that everyone around you has it all together, but you are not alone in feeling like you have imposter syndrome or that you are going through a rough patch. I (along with other advocates) am here for you and want to help – please reach out even for what you may think is a small thing. I'm happy to support you through your experiences.

Dev Banerji **Class of 2026**

Hi! I'm Dev, MS2, and I am happiest out in nature. Coming to medical school was a long and unexpected journey for me. After graduating from UT Austin I lived in a tiny village in the mountains of northwest Thailand for 3 years, teaching first through sixth grade and doing HIV/AIDS education as a Peace Corps volunteer. I absolutely loved it. After Peace Corps I stayed in Thailand and worked as the manager of an NGO that offered health, education and employment services to sex workers. I worked with physicians who volunteered their time and expertise to help the most vulnerable communities in northern Thailand and thought, Sign me up. But I didn't have the guts to commit to medicine, so I did a Master's degree in finance at Yale University instead and worked for several years in finance until I found the courage to quit my comfortable job and apply to med school.

I am now 36 and one of the oldest students in my class, but I have no regrets. Ever since Peace Corps I have struggled mentally and emotionally but those struggles have led to so much personal growth. If you are also struggling know that you are not alone. Medical school can feel dehumanizing -- we are expected to achieve, to meet every expectation, to study endlessly as if we were robots. Never forget that who you are outside of your identity as a student as well as your health and wellbeing matter much, much more than anything else. We are here to support you and to listen so please do reach out!



Nikita Guntu **Class of 2026**

Hi! I'm Nikita, an MS2, and I'm super excited to meet you! I'm a proud Dallas native and went to UT Dallas for undergrad. Outside of school, you can find me getting a sweat in at hot yoga or Orangetheory, indulging in guilty pleasure reality TV, or spending time with family. Trust me, I understand the rollercoaster ride that medical school can be, but rest assured, you're not alone. I'm here to support you every step of the way and want to make sure your mental well-being remains a top priority throughout! So, whether you need a safe space to vent about school, have a friendly chat, or even find a coffee shop buddy, please don't hesitate to reach out!





Alex Iancau
Class of 2026

Hello everyone! I'm Alex, and I'm a MS2. I grew up in Chicago and went to the Ohio State University for my undergrad. Outside of school, I'm passionate about staying active, whether it's hitting the gym, embarking on hikes, bouldering at OSO, doing yoga, or engaging in landscape photography. Navigating the demanding journey of medical school can often present many challenges, both academically and mentally. A strong support system is vital to achieving success, and part of my support system consisted of talking to Peer Advocates. These individuals, who have walked in your shoes, provide a unique understanding of the challenges you might be facing. If you ever need someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. You don't have to face these challenges alone. We are here to support you every step of the way!



Chidera Ibezue
Class of 2026

Hi! My name is Chidera, and I am an MS2. I attended undergrad at Rice University, where I studied psychology. I've lived in quite a few places growing up but have called my little suburb right outside Dallas home for the past 8 years. Outside of school, I enjoy playing tennis, going to concerts, exploring the Dallas food scene, and watching reality television. During my transition to medical school, it was definitely a learning curve to realize how to manage my med school responsibilities while also making time to participate in my hobbies. Juggling the stressors that come with this period of our lives is best done with community and support, and I look forward to being part of your support system! Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need someone to talk to during the lows and to celebrate with you during the highs!



Brielle Johnson
Class of 2026

Hello! My name is Brielle and I'm an MS2. I spent most of my childhood in a tiny town outside of San Antonio and then went to Sam Houston State for undergrad, which is just outside of Houston. Outside of medical school you can find me reading, practicing yoga, learning how to play the piano, or bouldering! I also love Netflix, finding new favorite restaurants, spending time in nature, and being smothered by my rather chunky calico lap-cat, Oowop. Medical school is hard, stressful, demanding, and can be overwhelming at times, but remembering that you're not alone can work wonders. Support systems are so important, and I'd love to be a part of yours if you need someone to lean on... which we all do at some point. Please don't hesitate to reach out no matter the obstacle and no matter the size of the struggle. I am here for YOU and would love to support you in any way that I can, even if it's as simple as offering a listening ear. We've got your back :)



Rohini Kallianpur **Class of 2026**

Hello hello! My name is Rohini and I'm an MS2 from Carrollton, Texas. I spent most of undergrad doing Environmental Studies, so transitioning from being out in the garden to memorizing 6000 Anki cards a day was not an easy transition. Med school will take every ounce of energy you give it, so it's important to take time for yourself. Outside of school, I spend my time working with local queer orgs, hiking, and teaching my cat Goose how to do tricks :-). Med school's tough, but I believe every student brings a unique set of skills and experiences to the table. Though we're all capable of success, it's crucial to have a strong support system to get you through tough times. If you ever need advice, want to chat, or just need someone to vent to, don't hesitate to reach out. I'm excited to get to know you!



Priya Kumar **Class of 2026**

Hi everyone! I'm Priya Kumar, an MS2 here at UTSW. I'm originally from the Midwest, I grew up in Chicago and went to college there as well. I moved to Dallas for the first time to start medical school! Over the past year and a half I've really enjoyed getting to know my peers and the rest of the UTSW community, as well as exploring Dallas and the state of Texas. Transitioning to a new city, alongside starting medical school was definitely a very difficult time for me, and I hope that I can ease the way for future students along with any other problems that my peers may be having.



Medha Somisetty **Class of 2026**

Hi everyone! My name is Medha and I am an MS2. I was born and raised in Dallas and majored in neuroscience at UTD! I love reading, writing, and photography. Bookstores and coffeeshops are my happy places (especially if I have an iced matcha latte in hand:)) Medical school can test not only your own abilities but the strength of your social support system. I know first-hand how the doubt and stress can be overwhelming, especially when it feels like the most important people in your life can only watch from the sidelines. It's easy to feel isolated in your experience, but the first step is to talk about it! I am always willing to listen to and empathize with anything and everything you want to talk about: don't be afraid to lean on someone, especially us peer advocates!



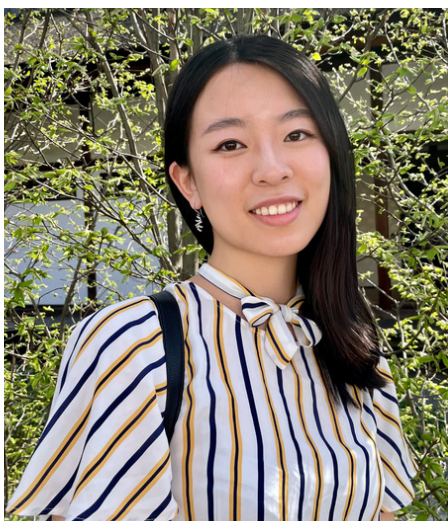
Ritu Sudhakaran
Class of 2026

Hi everyone! My name is Ritu, and I'm an MS2! I grew up in the Houston area and then attended UT Austin for undergrad (hook 'em!). Medical school has undoubtedly been tough, but one thing that I've realized is essential is making time for the things that bring us joy. For me, that often means curling up with the latest unputdownable thriller, baking my next batch of cookies, or attempting (rather unsuccessfully) to teach myself guitar, but I also love doing just about anything with friends or family. Having the support of the people around me has brought me so much comfort throughout medical school, and I hope we can do the same for you. You are absolutely not alone in this journey, and no worry or concern is too small, so please reach out. We're here for you, always! :)



Rhea Sudhakaran
Class of 2026

Hi everyone! My name is Rhea, and I am currently an MS2. I'm from Spring, TX, and I went to UT Austin, where I majored in Nutrition and minored in Health Communication. In my free time, I enjoy reading mysteries, playing tennis, trying new boba flavors, and spending time with my friends and family! Medical school and graduate school are challenging, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed and anxious. Whenever I felt that way, it helped me to reach out to others and ask for help. So please feel free to reach out anytime - you're here for a reason, and we're here to support you! :)



Aria Wei
Class of 2026

Hi everyone ~ I'm Aria, an MS2 from Philly (although I've also lived in China, Germany, New York, Michigan, Ohio, and Maryland)! I majored in neuroscience, economics, and psychology at JHU, where I also took my gap year. As an out-of-state student, I thought the beginning of med school was undeniably challenging. This was my first time living in Texas, and with my loved ones a thousand miles away, the adjustment was quite the feat. But let me assure you, it does get better—especially once you find your people and passions here in Dallas. Outside of school, I like to draw, run, and watch adult animation. However, nothing beats hanging out with friends after an exam. If you ever need a sounding board or space to rant over Zoom, a coffee shop, or a leisurely lunch (I'm obsessed with matcha lattes and I'll basically eat anything), please don't hesitate to reach out! :)



Alea Zone **Class of 2026**

Hey y'all! My name is Alea, and I am an MS2 from New Orleans. I went to college in Philadelphia and moved to Texas for the first time to attend UTSW for my MD/MPH. Outside of class, you'd probably find me reading historical fiction, watching Stranger Things for the 100th time, hiking, or shopping (a non-guilty pleasure). I also LOVE making new friends and learning new perspectives. I take mental health seriously and am so excited to be one of your Peer Advocates. Medical school can be incredibly isolating, and my goal is to make you feel seen, heard, and most importantly, respected. Please do not hesitate to reach out – I really look forward to talking to you!



Michael LaCroix
MSTP- Class of 2024

I grew up in Buffalo, Minnesota a small town on the outskirts of Minneapolis and attended the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, graduating with a B.S. in Neuroscience, with a minor in psychology. I began at UTSW's MSTP in 2016 and just started my MS4 year. I love to rock climb, play guitar, and spend time with my family, friends, and my two cats. As a peer advocate, I hope to give back to the UTSW community by being present for others through the trials of medical and graduate school, as well as balancing school responsibilities with life away from school.



Cooper Mellema
MD-PhD
Class of 2024

Hello, my name is Cooper Mellema, and I am a 8th year MD-PhD student (back to MS4, now). I am from the Pacific Northwest and went to the University of Washington for undergrad, majoring in Physics, Computational Neurobiology, and Biochemistry. My second time ever in Texas was when I moved here, which was definitely a bit of an adjustment! I hope to be able to offer helpful support and advice for students of all sorts during all phases of their training with the peer mentorship program. When in doubt, reach out! I am here to help



Savannah Taylor
MD-PhD
Class of 2024

My name is Savannah Taylor, and I am a 4th year medical student. Actually, this is technically my 8th year at UTSW because I am a MD-PhD student and I did my Ph.D. here too. That goes to say that I have gone through a lot of different experiences here-- both good and bad, in both the medical school and the graduate school, both personal and professional. I feel like that makes me a good person to talk to if you have something you want to get off your chest. We peer advocates are here for you! Hope to hear from you soon.