

Narrative Pre-Health

Reflections from UC Davis students

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NARRATIVE PRE-HEALTH

The mission of the Narrative Pre-Health (NPH) is to mirror narrative medicine on the undergraduate level. The NPH Journal provides an opportunity for pre-health students at UC Davis to share their multitude of experiences and personal stories as aspiring health professionals through discussion, writing, art, photography, and virtually any other creative form.

We aim to learn about the art of medicine and encourage thoughtful reflection during the pre-health years at UC Davis.

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DEDICATION

To UC Davis students who aspire to become our future health professionals and to those who inspired, supported, and guided them along the way.

Language of the Heart

Jacqueline Lee

At the age of seven, I only spoke Vietnamese and Cantonese. I realized I was, in many ways, different from my classmates. My clothing came from Chinatown, with depictions of popular cartoons, in the wrong colors. I refused to eat cafeteria food, choosing instead to bring my own lunch of vermicelli noodles and ox tail soup. I slowly lost confidence and became secluded. One day, I was playing jump rope alone when a boy named Vinh asked to join me. To my surprise, he also spoke Vietnamese and was having a difficult time adjusting to the United States, having just arrived from Vietnam. I realized he was even more alone than I was especially being in a new country, a new school and having to learn a new language. I promised to help him and in a short amount of time, I was speaking English. The next recess, we joined the other classmates in their games. Even when we could not fully understand each other, communication occurred using facial expressions and gestures. Soon, I was laughing and having a good time with classmates I had been so sure, were too different from me. I learned so much from Vinh, but above all, I learned to not fear the unknown and to use my love of languages to build relationships with others. Throughout the years, I have tried to live my life this way and as a result, I have made wonderful memories and built life-long relationships, further cementing my desire to assist others in the field of medicine.

My desire to interact with others results from my early childhood when patients would visit my grandfather. He was an apothecary in China and well versed in art of Chinese medicine.

Growing up, there was a constant stream of people seeking his herbal remedies. Assisting in the preparation of the herbs gave me the opportunity to get to know the patients. I always had an inquisitive mind and seeing all the patients piqued my interest. I wanted to know their history, their illness and how my grandfather was going to cure them. I constantly asked why along with a million other questions and the desire to know more only increased. Occasionally, an English speaker would arrive and I would translate the symptoms into Chinese for my grandfather. Being the mediator between the patient and doctor showed me the influence language has in getting the best healthcare possible. Although my grandfather sparked my interest in medicine, my own experiences have kept the flame burning over the years.

One such experience occurred while I volunteered at Camlu Assisted Living. As I was decorating for the holidays, a woman named Chan wandered down the hallway, attempting to leave. Chan had Alzheimer's and only spoke Cantonese so she was hysterical, frantically searching for her daughter. But when she saw me, she mistook me for her daughter particularly because I was the only one able to converse with her. Chan would invite me for tea and reminisce about the past. Even though she was strange, I did not mind keeping her company. One day upon arriving for my shift, the nurse informed me of her passing. Despite her real daughter never visiting, Chan looked happy. Her last wish to see her daughter had been fulfilled by me. I never realized until then the power language had over people's hearts. By speaking the same language, I was able to help a woman find peace. This motivated me to learn other languages to comfort other patients in their times of need.

My curiosity of how the cell functions along with my determination to academically challenge myself led to a research internship with Professor Su Hao Lo at the Center for Tissue Regeneration and Repair. Through the course of my undergraduate career, I was interested in how biochemical research could lead to better health care. Working with Professor Lo enabled me to perfect laboratory techniques such as DNA cloning, polymerase chain reaction and running gel electrophoresis. Using these techniques, I was able to assist in research that focused mainly on cellular components and how their interactions led to the inhibition or growth of cancer cells. In the future, I hope that my background in research will be useful in improving patient care.

Due to a desire to work in pediatrics, I have spent a lot of time learning how to communicate and be patient with young children. For two years, I worked with Applied Scholastics as a tutor for low-income children who were performing under grade level. Within three months, I raised their testing scores above grade level by re-teaching the basics of reading and arithmetic.

During high school, I also worked with children as a choreographer at the local community college teaching hip-hop classes.

Wanting to gain more patient experience, I interned at Bayanihan Clinic. This gave me the chance to take a patient's vitals, offer health education and counseling and be a patient advocate. The clinic focused on the underserved communities and as a patient advocate, I generally translated for Spanish, Vietnamese or Chinese-speaking patients. Working closely with these patients and seeing their faces filled with joy as the struggle to be understood disappeared gave me the feeling that I was making a difference in

their lives. Speaking an array of languages ensures that every patient's needs are being addressed and they feel comfortable to speak honestly. Building a good relationship with the patient is essential to being a good doctor.

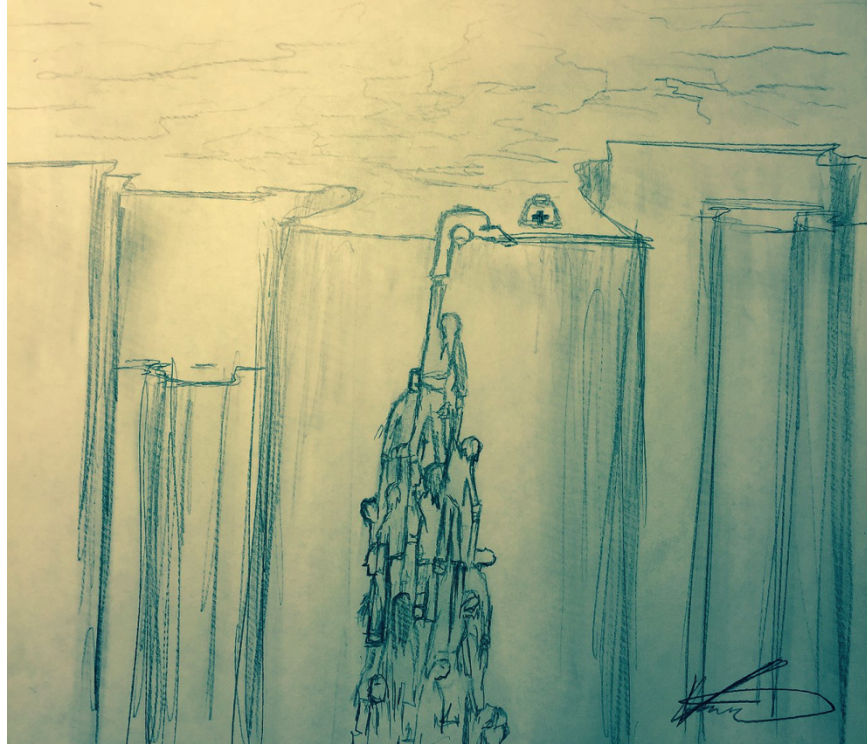
Communicating in a clear and concise manner with patients is what makes a successful doctor. My previous employment in retail at Juicy Couture improved my communication skills as I had to listen attentively to the customers' needs and find specific items. Working in retail has also enhanced my leadership abilities because I had to organize daily meetings to inform the associates of their sales goals. Being a sales associate for a luxury fashion line, I had numerous international customers with whom I conversed in their native language, making them feel more at ease.

My past interactions have educated and improved me. The numerous experiences in health care have given me a more complete view of medicine. I strongly believe my activities and relationships throughout the years have prepared me to be successful. I will strive to be a physician who listens to her patients' concerns and places integrity and responsibility above all.

Jacqueline is a fourth year Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior major pursuing medicine.

Paragon

Veena Do



Veena is a second year Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior major pursuing medicine.

Tidbits for Sprinkles Act I: The Antithesis

Jade Peralta

Be original.

The harsh rays beaming from the sun glinted off the fillet knife as I pressed the point behind the catfish's pectoral fin. I glanced around; my father was preoccupied with hooking his bait so I quickly chucked the squirming fish off the houseboat and into the chilly Lake Shasta waters...

Aaaiiiieerrrghhhhh! The suffocating silence that followed my distraught screech was unnerving. I couldn't believe I had embarrassed myself by slicing my forearm with the 22 gauge needle and bled all over the client's Siamese...

Two hours ago I was ready to pump out a killer personal statement for vet school applications. Two hours into it and I'm still stuck on my first paragraph. Now that it was time to buckle down, I can't think of any defining moment that made me say "Yep, I love veterinary medicine!" I could talk about volunteer experiences and the different departments for which I've interned, but each on its own cannot convey "originality." I clearly don't know what I've gotten myself into. So why did I want to be a veterinarian?

"Why do you want to be a veterinarian?" The interviewer unimpressively stared at me; stray grey hairs poked out from her bob. Be original. I didn't clear my throat so my first few words came out choked, "I want to safeguard animal healthcare, educate the public on medicine, pursue lifelong learning, and dedicate myself to the welfare of both animals and my community," I listed with confidence, pacing my answer conversationally. I was proud of this response because it was well-practiced and I had nailed the subtle inflections that hinted at an underlying passion. Not as "original" as I hoped, but elegant with eloquence. The interviewer stared silently for a few more seconds, unimpressed, before jotting a note down that dictated my fate. Well... I don't think she bought my crap.

There really are no defining moments in my life that epitomize this aspiration. Rather, it is the everyday, commonplace delights and despairs and the colorful highlights of my life that drive my passion:

The inviting scent of leathery vanilla rising from the pages of the National Geographic magazine in my parents' pristine bathroom...

The pricking of the barbed wire as I leapt over the fence to the green expanse of rolling hills when I ran away during a church retreat...

The feeling of solid muscle beneath my legs as I rode a horse through the cerulean waters of Half Moon Cay...

Seeing the limp, pitiful body of my rabbit after a great hawk had swooped down and decapitated her...

Being mesmerized by the odd underwater ritual my Ninja Turtle red-eared sliders engaged in before they sank to the bottom of the tank...

The exhilaration and ecstasy as my jet ski sliced across the deep blue water, whipping my hair into nest-like knots...

Watching the five jewel-adorned Asian elephants of the Ringling Bros. Circus line up side-by-side like members of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade marching band...

Falling asleep on the trampoline to the sounds of the waterfall and crickets chirping below me on a warm, midsummer night...

Running my fingers through my maltipoo's soft curls as we sit beside the crackling fire, dozing in and out of dreams with A Charlie Brown Christmas on the television...

These precious memories and the thousands of untold ones are irreplaceable moments that weave together the fabric of my entire being: my hopes, my dreams, my fears. Everything that I have seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and felt have inevitably influenced my desire to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. And though I've been dreadfully obsessed with finding the perfectly "original" answer to a seemingly simple question, originality is not always the truth nor is it organic. Sometimes it's better to just be myself, even if I am awfully bizarre at times.

"Auntie Jade, why do you want to be a vet?" My niece and I swayed back and forth on the faded, white porch swing. I glanced at the hooks attaching the swing to the roof of the veranda, fearing that that last metallic squeal was the swing's way of telling us to hop off before we came crashing down. Pastel sprinkles fell from my niece's mint chocolate chip ice cream.

“Aw why’d you put me on the spot? I’m blanking here.”

“C’mon tell me! It’s not a secret.”

“Well no it’s not but it’s sort of a long, jumbled story and I think I’ll lose you here and there.”

“Auntie Jade I’m ten already and I like stories!” She was getting exasperated.

“Alright, alright, alright. You know, I didn’t think about the ‘why’ until people started asking – which was when I started applying. I just always said I’m going to be a vet so here I am.”

“That’s not a long story...”

“Yeah, it’s not. I dunno I guess I’ve avoided answering truthfully because I don’t have a clear-cut answer. And I’m scared people will judge me. Judge me for not saying something original or saying something wrong.”

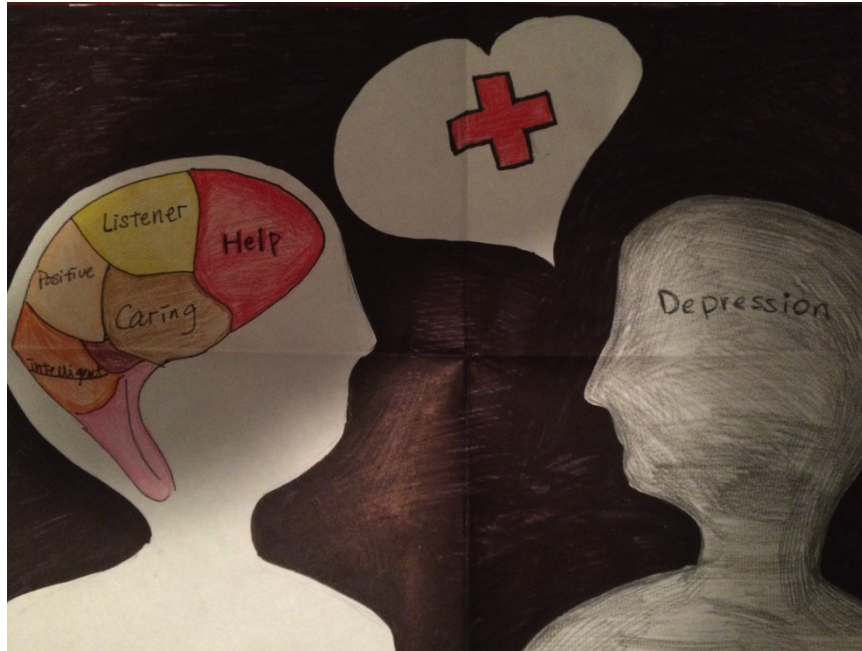
“I won’t judge. Now tell me why.” My niece nodded encouragingly. For someone so small, she sure did have a big heart and a kinder mind than 98 percent of the people I knew.

I exhaled heavily. Be yourself. “It-it just feels...right. The right path. It feels good and natural and like there’s nothing else I’d rather do. Forever and ever. Like you know how you dream about basketball and sprinkles, well I dream about being a vet. But all the time. When I’m playing piano, when I’m in the shower, when I’m eating pizza rolls, when I’m falling asleep to the sound of crickets, when I wake up to the jays...all the time. And then it’s like warm butterflies in your tummy and I don’t know if it’s nerves or excitement but I know it’s what I want. Because sometimes you just know. You just feel that this is your future and you want to live it already. A future where I’m doing what I love and making the world a better place, one animal at a time...”

Jade is a fourth year Animal Biology student pursuing veterinary medicine.

Untitled

Florrie Zhu



Florrie is a second year Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major pursuing medicine.

The Road to Veterinary School

Katie DeVore

Veterinary admission panels will not see the quarter that I only got three hours of sleep because I was juggling an internship, school and everything that comes with life.

They won't see the forest I killed from practicing organic chemistry (the evidence has since been recycled).

Nor will they know the amount of tears shed and hours I worked for a B in upper division organic chemistry.

They won't know that I stood up against one of my general chemistry professors.

And was called out during lecture or speaking up for over 1,000 students.

They won't know that I skipped that class in fear of being called out and then self-studied my way through the rest of the quarter for general chemistry.

They won't know why my GPA plummeted Winter Quarter of my sophomore year – my worst GPA to date.

Nor will they know why I had to withdraw as a student the following quarter during week 8.

They won't know about the emotional rollercoaster that I endured the summer after my withdrawal.

Nor will they ever know that I ran a household by myself while taking online courses for 2 ½ months during that time.

They won't see the passion, dedication and drive that 9 other pre-vet women and I poured into rebooting Pre-Vet Students Supporting Diversity club.

Nor will they know how many hours and the thought that went into planning events to provide our members with.

They won't ever know that a graduate student threatened to ruin my name and reputation at Davis after standing up for a fellow intern that was treated unfairly.

Nor will they know that I only continued with the internship because I needed research experience to apply for school.

But most importantly, they won't know how many times I was discouraged from applying to vet school because I'm a woman with a mediocre GPA. So competitive, right?

So why am I still pre-vet?

I could give a cliché answer and say it's because, "I love animals," but I won't.

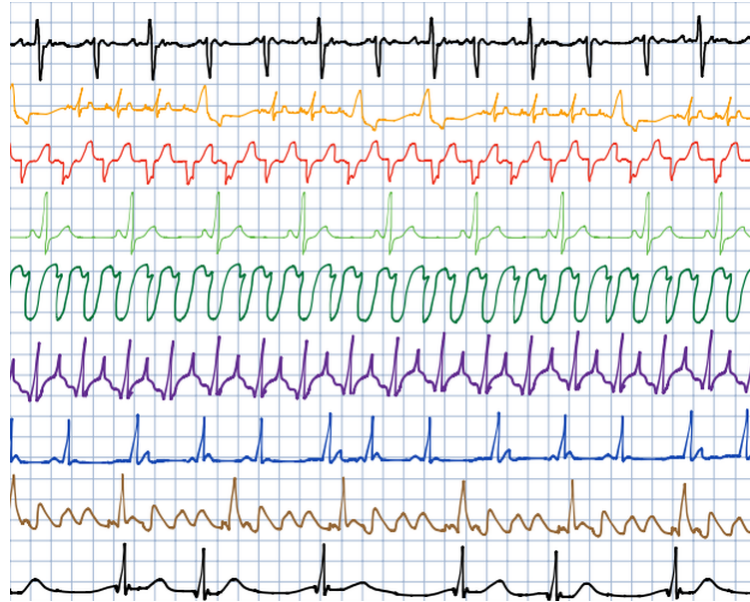
My main passion stems from over a decade of rescue work with the Redlands Humane Society. Over the course of 12 years, I saw a lot of really bad veterinarians. I saw the ones that had terrible "bedside" manner and did not offer condolences to their clients after putting their pets to sleep. Then, there of course were the ones who wanted to put down kittens just because they had a common cold. There were also the ones that did not have any payment plans for the disadvantaged communities.

My main motivator is a 13-year-old, 20.2 lb, black cat named Puss. He's literally gone through all of his nine lives, but is somehow still living. He's diabetic, had kitty cancer, benign tumors and viruses that have sent him to the vet more often than I'd like. He's the reason why I continue. I think about all of the bad experiences that we have had with vets and I realize that I want to be the vet that I would want Puss to have. A vet that will pick her brain and her colleagues' if they can't figure out a diagnosis. A vet that will have payment plans for underrepresented communities because life-saving surgeries are expensive. A vet that has relationships with her clients. And a vet that will go to the ends of the earth to save animals like my 13-year-old, 20.2 lb., black cat named Puss.

Katie is a third year Animal Science student pursuing veterinary medicine.

Tracings, Tracings, Tracings

Maggie Chen



Volunteering at UCDMC's Cardiac Rehabilitation Department has taught me to value patient individuality. Each cardiac patient has not only their unique personalities, backgrounds, and struggles but also their health journeys and cardiovascular physiology. During my volunteer shifts, I observed many patients' EKG tracings on the main monitor and was fascinated by the differences. These differences occurred because each patient had unique cardiac events and therapies. This experience affirms the importance of delivering each patient individualized care by evaluating their unique tracing. Volunteering at cardiac rehab has inspired me to illustrate these EKG tracings that represented a variety of cardiovascular pathology. This art piece celebrates patient diversity and acknowledges the importance of personalized care that each patient requires during his or her recovery towards better cardiac health. I am proud of each and every patient I've encountered for their resilience and growing dedication towards a healthy life.

Maggie is a Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior major pursuing medicine.

Red

Mahitha Murali

The rug in the lobby and the entry door to the right wing.
The newborn's feet just 8 minutes after birth.
The young woman's lipstick
stained on her gown, and the faded glimmer of her nails.
The calendar in the month of February, scented like strawberries,
And the face of a new father pacing in the hallway.

There are posters of muscles in the nurse's room,
sinews, striated, voluntary and involuntary distinguished
distracting a child about to get a flu shot.
The fifth grader's finger is inflamed after an injury on the swing;
her delicate appendage is now lined by a piece of metal.
She only remembered the surgeon's cap
that had Santa Claus on it, before the anesthesia kicked in.
The teenager's soccer jersey,
and the sanguine ooze from his knee.
With a smile on his face, he says, "the win was worth it".
The man's thumb after he tried to frame a picture for his wife,
and the candy the little boy got after his malaria prick.

The red second hand on the clock that seems so slow, now
as Dr. H listens for a heartbeat.
The bag of B positive, hangs on a stand,
next to bed number 2 in the middle of the room.
The samples are in tubes crowned with purple caps,
as they run to the labs, and back with results.
"What's taking so long?" shrieks Dr. H.
John Doe, unknown, no family, no immediate contact,
diagnosed with meningitis has not been awake for 52 days now.
Today might be the day of change.

Mahitha is a Genetics major interested in pursuing medicine.

Childhood Dreams

Sarah Eusebi



Sarah is a fourth year Biological Sciences major pursuing wildlife veterinary studies.

Designing My Future in Medicine

Karyn Kershaw

When I tell others that I'm a design major who's studying pre-medicine, I usually get crickets and blank stares. It's understandable, since most people assume that in order to become a physician you must pursue a hard science in your undergraduate years. I was under the same impression until the end of my first year at UC Davis. I had retreated from the notion of going to medical school and was pursuing solely graphic design at the time. My designer dream was to be an Imagineer and work at Disneyland, but by spring quarter I been bogged down by many obstacles and was feeling very discouraged from this idea.

Something felt missing from my education and myself. My hope for my future all changed, however, when one rainy spring day I heard a student in my drawing class tell his neighbor that he was an art major but was applying to medical school. Something clicked in my head at that moment, and I knew that I had the ability to do the same thing, but with graphic design.

Since that day, I have taken the prerequisites for medical schools and the MCAT on top of my graphic design courses. On a given day, one hour I could be learning about the intricacies of typography or the settings on a DSLR camera, and the next I could be studying organic chemistry reactions or the endocrine system. This juxtaposition between art and science complements the mechanics of my mind, which can be described as scattered at times.

For the next two years, however, I wasn't very confident about my decision to continue studying graphic design. Balancing my two lives proved to be a challenge and I wasn't sure how helpful it would realistically be for a doctor to know how to design something. Every day I struggled to come up with reasons for why studying design would make me a better physician. When I told other pre-medical students what my major was, I felt like I wasn't being taken seriously as an aspiring doctor.

It wasn't until my fourth year at UC Davis that I realized how much potential I had actually set myself up with. I started taking higher-level design courses, in which professors gave me the freedom to take my work in whatever direction I pleased. If the project guidelines allowed for it, I always steered my design work towards medicine or science. I'm currently starting my fifth year of college, and so far I have created a poster of

Rosalind Franklin, a website showcasing campus greenhouses, a brand identity for first-aid bandages made of honey, an information sheet for patients about to undergo a diagnostic x-ray, and have redesigned emergency room discharge instructions.

And this is only the beginning.

In the medical field, there is a slew of poorly designed forms, sheets, websites and computer systems that interfere with patient care, just waiting for someone to redesign them and give them new life. And I can't wait to get my hands on them.

I spent the majority of my undergraduate years trying to figure out how design was a metaphor for medicine and how graphic designers and doctors share many the same qualities. Both graphic designers and doctors need to be good listeners; in one world the speaker is a client, in the other world the speaker is a patient. In the end, both speakers have some problem they need the listener to address. In both medicine and design, context is crucial. A designer has to understand the tastes and goals of her client before creating work, while the doctor has to understand the culture and background of her patient before prescribing a treatment. And neither designer nor doctor can help others without the right communication.

While I've noticed and thought about these parallels since the beginning of my pre-medical journey, the idea of literally using my design skills in the medical field is a fairly new concept for me. For the first time in my life, I feel like I know what I am meant to do and I think that I can make a difference not only with my own patients, but with patient care on a larger scale. Design is not just a major; it's a state of mind. Hopefully my unique state of mind can one day help revolutionize communication with doctor and patient.

Karyn is a fourth year Graphic Design major pursuing medicine.

"I had an aunt who was bipolar who lived in a subdivision across the street from my school and she had a bipolar episode while I was at school. She had a fit and ran into the four-way intersection and... died. So, basically, I usually say that that has heavily influenced me to go into the field of medicine, just because I feel like everyone should get the proper healthcare that they need.

I feel like she could have been treated better, definitely."



Paving the Way

Anonymous

Late nights at the library studying; long hours working as an intern; too many cups of copy to count. Being a pre-health student is never easy, but it is always rewarding. As a pre-vet student, I have had the opportunity to not only meet students and professionals interested in veterinary medicine, but also work with what I love the most, animals! When my weeks are long and my days feel even longer, knowing that I am working toward a career in veterinary medicine makes all of the difficulties worth it. Working two jobs and trying to do well in my classes is difficult to say the least. I feel overwhelmed several times a week, but I am motivated and refuse to give up on my dreams. I will admit that as a Chicana from a low income household it has been difficult finding mentors or role-models from my own community. I have no family members or family friends who work in the field of veterinary medicine. I have had to pave my own path, find my own mentors, and look for my own opportunities, and though this has been difficult, I have learned more about myself and my own capabilities. For the remainder of my undergraduate career I will continue to work diligently and hope to accomplish all that I have set out to do. I hope that, as a board member of Pre-Vet Students Supporting Diversity, I can help pre-vet students find the resources and support they need.

“What is the hardest part of being a pre-med student?”

"Living with that mentality, the negative stigma associated with the word 'pre-med student.' I was considering, or am considering, a path down medicine. Faculty and peers sometimes treat me differently the moment I say I'm thinking of medicine as a career. Peers treat you as if all you're looking for is that A, as if you're willing to do anything to get forward. Faculty aren't as excited when they talk to you about research or class material because they think that you're just looking to check off a box for your CV or med school application."

What advice do you have for pre-meds feeling the same way?

"I think it really takes confidence...confidence in what you really want to do in your future career, because at the end of the day, it's going to be your path forward, not theirs."



The Unknown

Murtaza Khan

Every time I visit, I brace myself. I come to do research and continue on with the study, but I can't help but to harbor, in the very back of my mind, a constant, lingering fear of what I see all around me. I'm soaked in it. Drenched.

If I stop working, the thoughts quickly resurge from my subconscious. There, they lurk quietly, like panthers ready to spring. It's not just me either. The other research assistant feels the same gnawing discomfort - but she's more vocal about it. "This place depresses me", she once sighed after interviewing our last study participant. "Mhm", I said. Very true, I thought.

A skilled nursing facility is unlike any place you've ever been to. It houses senile, otherwise mentally incapacitated adults. Penned into a single, 30 room facility, residents of all backgrounds, ages, ethnicities and cultures live together in one building with one important commonality: they all have mental health issues.

Dementia, Schizophrenia, Depression, Bipolar disorder, and many more medical issues that come with old age claim the minds of these folk, imposing an adamant rule that black box medication, endless rounds of rehab, and a veteran team of nurses toil to dismantle.

It's difficult walking by a room echoing with the screams of an old woman begging "Please, get me out of here" over and over, in an unnatural, mechanical way, as if something inside of her, that wasn't her, was screaming. Your palms go sweaty just from hearing her. It's difficult because you want to do something, but you know you can't. So you simply saunter by.

You know it's not them, but their atrophied minds. You calm yourself by explaining it that way. But when you hear those same words echoing from the same room, visit after visit, for weeks, it becomes very difficult to avoid the fact that you don't really understand your mind. You utilize it daily, every second of the day, but you don't understand it. How can something so vital and so familiar to you as your own brain turn on you in such a horrible way? Neurological degradation, when allowed to play out in front of you, is terrifying because you can't understand it. You fear the unknown. Medicine seeks to make that unknown a known, but when you look past

the toxic Tau buildup and genetics, you realize that, even then, there's still a little bit of unknown. And that is the ultimate source of your fear.

Murtaza is a second year Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior major pursuing medicine.

"Medical school will always be there for me, but for now, I feel really confident that public health is a better fit. Don't get me wrong, I love working with patients, but I realized the questions that keep me up at night are mainly about policy, about social determinants of health, and about making systemic changes in the healthcare system. I think I want to see where that pans out in the future."



PSSD: Not Just a Club, But Also a Family

Brigitte Clark

When I first came to UC Davis, I had no idea where to begin. All I knew was that I wanted to go to vet school and to get there I would need to be serious and work hard. Being overwhelmed, I saw in an email listserv that there was a club called PSSD (Pre-Vet Students Supporting Diversity) on campus that was for pre-vet students, so I went despite not fully knowing what the club was about. After a while of hearing the student board, what I found extremely admirable, was that part of this club's foundation is to help students just as smart and capable as I am, but are from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged communities. Part of this club's mission is to provide students with the resources they need to get into vet school and ultimately support diversity in the field of vet medicine. What I loved even more was that the President made a point to say that every member here belonged to the club even if you didn't think you fit in, because the point of this club is to help everybody. Diversity is giving every single person a chance to excel and get the resources and support needed no matter what economic or racial background you have, in hopes that in the future the field of medicine would be filled with diverse, caring individuals. Vet school is hard enough to get into as it is, and creating a safe, fun place where everyone can share their stories and meet new people in the veterinary field opens doors to opportunities. Opportunities where students can actually see themselves working hard to pursue a career that seemed impossible to do in the beginning.

This club's board members work hard to offer vet skills workshops, a mentor program with UC Davis vet students, field trips, VMCAS application workshops, bulletin announcements for any events, internships available, and much more. This club also offers a chance for anyone to get to know one another and network so when you need help, you can rely on us to get you where you want to be. And with that, people begin to bond and help each other without competition, because no matter where we all go, we know we can all get into vet school with everyone's help. And that is why I love PSSD, and hope to continue the goal that the founders of this club made a reality for so many students. I want to continue the cycle and help other people that might have felt like I did freshman year before I found this club. PSSD supports and encourages diversity in the veterinary field but we are also here for a broader goal. We are all here to inspire and

help each other in the hopes that one day when you see someone in need,
you will give back and keep the cycle going.

Brigitte is a third year Animal Science major pursuing veterinary studies.

"As a peer advisor, especially when I talk to a student, you have to always think about everything about them. You can't just look at their units and major but you also have to look at if they did this or that or if they met certain requirements. If you forget that some side information you know... you might give them wrong information. I feel like it is the same for medicine. The more you know, the more you can apply. People get misdiagnosed all the time. The more you know and have in front of your mind, the better you can find the right medication and the right diagnosis because a lot of diseases are masked with false symptoms."



Storytelling in Medicine

Alice Lee

“How’s Joy doing today?” the physician asked my 3-year old sister on a routinely visit to the doctors. Joy had been weak lately – loss of weight, lack of appetite, pale face and glazed eyes. Joy’s blood sugar came out higher than 500, when the norm is between 80 and 100. Without any serious disease in her family background, the doctor simply sat there appalled. Joy was then transported to the hospital with one hour left to live if untreated.

“Type 1 Diabetes,” the physician said, in a soft yet sad tone. He continued to tell us that Joy’s body had stopped producing insulin, a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other foods into energy for the body. Therefore, her life had to be extremely limited, with a minimum of 3 shots of insulin daily, which in turn affected our lives as well. The physician grieved alongside us, fully aware of how unfair and untreatable this disease is, how it changed the way we lived and how much Joy would need to suffer for the rest of her life. That’s when I realized how amazing it was to have this physician alongside Joy – one who understood the disease and the problems associated with it while accompanying us through every step of the process.

When people think of doctors, no one pictures them as storytellers let alone expect doctors to have the time to relate their stories in detail to others. However, having doctors who can empathize with patients and speak honestly and daringly of their experiences is, what I believe to be, the basis of narrative medicine.

Medicine incorporated with narrative competence is narrative medicine and has been proposed as a model for effective medical practice. Narrative medicine gives physicians an opportunity to voice personal insights, stories and reflections from their practice. It has the ability to allow others to interpret and be moved by different stories of diseases and illnesses. Providing such narratives allows those in the medical field to align themselves with patients and identify with others’ perspectives. However, sharing narratives doesn’t benefit just the patients, for physicians are able to recognize their own personal journeys through medicine and build relationships with other professionals in the medical field.

Through Joy’s illness, I was able to see how crucial it is for physicians to have the ability to listen to patients’ narratives and act accordingly on their

behalf. Without physicians who understood her situation and walked by us step by step, we would've been overwhelmed by the seriousness of the disease. By bridging the gap that separates patients and physicians through narratives, physicians can improve their practice, effectively share insights, and ultimately better themselves and the public.

Alice is a fourth year Biological Sciences major with a Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior emphasis pursuing medicine.

“As a recent UCD alumni, what advice would you give other pre-health students?”

"I think to ask yourself 'why you want it' and 'how you are going to achieve it' whenever you decide on a career path or endeavor. And to assess your strengths and limitations whether it be academically, physically, or mentally and how they will coincide with your end goal. I faced multiple struggles as a pre-health student, including assessing my mental health and motivation to stay focused. And as individuals, we learn from our experiences every day, so be open to change and learn from ourselves and others."



The Moment I Knew

Mark Cubillan

Last summer I shadowed some doctors at the Philippine General Hospital, which despite being the top teaching hospital in the Philippines, is grossly underfunded and in need of better quality in care.

When I entered the parking lot of the hospital, I could see numerous people sitting on the sidewalks on sheets of cardboard, trying as best as they can to wait for their turn to see the doctor. Many of them were coughing very vigorously, in need of serious attention yet there was little to be found with too many patients and too few doctors and beds for the hospital. It was an extremely depressing first impression of the hospital. When I entered the out patient department where I was to be shadowing, I met a pediatrician who seemed quite ecstatic to see the hordes of patients coming through. I assumed she was just happy because she was new, and like me found everything about the scene so fascinating from the patients with such rare diseases like pneumonia, leprosy, etc that we would almost never see in California so abundant in the outpatient clinic. We saw our first patient. It was a 3-month old infant with Down's syndrome, whose condition was so severe he needed a feeding tube in order to eat. The mother was worried because the child was starting to turn to a pale yellow and looked so sickly, I would've thought he was at the brink of death. The doctor just smiled and calmly told the mother that we only needed to change the feeding tube of the child. She released the biggest sigh and told us to do it immediately before her child would starve.

What was most exciting for me was that the doctor told me to go with her to help change the feeding tube of the baby. I was surprised given that I was not trained in anything close, but I didn't complain at all. I was too excited for the hands on experience. The doctor told me to prepare the tube while he prepared the other materials, and then as the doctor inserted the tube into the child's nose bit by bit, I slowly handed him more and more of the tube, so that it would go all the way down to the esophagus until we saw fluids come up, which

meant that we got to the stomach. If air had remained it would have meant that we hit the wrong hole and actually entered the lung. She used a stethoscope to check that the baby was breathing normally and had a steady heart rate. Once everything was all set, we brought the baby back to her mother who was so grateful for helping her as if it were a favor we did, instead of a job that had to be done. Before she left the mother told me she had been waiting for almost four hours to come in. She said she felt scared and angry that she could not be helped sooner, yet the second she stepped in and talked to the doctor, she immediately felt thankful and grateful that at least her child could be helped at all.

In the Philippines there are limited supplies, a lack of bed, medicine, and doctors. However, what they do not have a lack of is hope. The smile on the face the patients make after they talk to the doctor is just priceless. It's that genuine grin like the doctors really changed their life even with the smallest procedures being done. I shadowed there for two months and I saw that smile every single time before a patient left. Somehow, not a single patient left disgruntled or frustrated, even in the face of terrible news about their health. It is that smile, that silver lining in an otherwise depressing setting that made me know I wanted to be a doctor. To have a livelihood based on making patients happy and bettering their lives, making a change, is what made me know that medicine was for me.

Mark is a third year Psychology and Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior double major pursuing medicine.

"The way I see (Clinica) Tepati is that that is the true, real, fundamental medicine. You strip away all the insurance bullshit, all the hospital overhead, all the clinic bureaucracy, and you're just seeing patients. And you're relying on your knowledge and your resourcefulness, and the goodwill and volunteer efforts of all the students. That to me is what medicine is about. That sort of became the light at the end of every week-long tunnel. So even when I was on inpatient service, where I was working 30 hours shifts - even if I did a 30 hour shift on Friday going into Saturday - I would still show up at Tepati on Saturday morning. To me that was really important, because it was like, 'Ok, this is why I'm going through all this crap, this why I'm working 30 hour shifts, so that I can do this.'"



Choosing the Right Path for Me

Allison Gabbert

As a little girl, I decided that my purpose was to help people and make a difference in the world. I was not sure how I would accomplish this huge undertaking, but I was sure that by learning all that I could and following my passions, a path would appear that would lead me to this goal. The first and most obvious career option that came to mind was becoming a doctor. This appealed to me because doctors personally interact with their own patients and can often almost “instantly” fix what is wrong with people. This line of work gives instant gratification and doctors can directly see the impact they are making on their patients.

As time went on, my knowledge of and passion for science continued to grow. I discovered how complex the health field is, and how many different directions I could go. With all of these options available, I needed to look inside myself and make a choice on what I truly cared about and what I wanted my future to look like.

I knew I wanted to help people, but I also had this nagging curiosity at the back of my mind where I wanted to ask questions and discover things and know more. While taking in patients and diagnosing them and prescribing medications would benefit people, I still felt personally unsatisfied with this role.

I explored various scientific career possibilities and spoke to friends and advisors about this, and I concluded that rather than a doctor in the health field, I wanted to be a scientist. I dreamed of investigating medical mysteries in a lab, asking questions, testing hypotheses, and always discovering more about the human body and various diseases and health problems. To be confident of my decision of switching from a pre-med career path to one of medical research, I joined a research lab studying cell-stress response pathways in yeast cells. These pathways translate to pathways in human cells, and their dysfunction and dysregulation lead to human health problems such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and cancer. While my research does not directly benefit patients and cure them of their diseases, it helps others in the health field better understand how these diseases work in order to better combat them and create more effective medications and treatments. I found this work to be exciting and fascinating, and most importantly, it satisfied my curiosity of discovering the unknown.

As a researcher, I do not receive the instant gratification of a cured patient, nor am I responsible for daily interactions with hurt and infected people that need my help that may or may not be treatable with our current knowledge. I work more behind the scenes, helping to increase the amount of happy, healthy patients released from the doctor's office or hospital, and reducing the medical cases that are not understood or cannot be fixed. I will work hard with other scientific researchers and health professionals to investigate every disease and health problem until we understand everything about them and can wipe them out.

This is a huge and almost unrealistic-sounding dream, but it can be obtainable with the teamwork and cooperation of scientific minds across the world. I do want to personally help people, but this dream is not just mine. I will work hard and do my best in this global team to expand our knowledge, create medical solutions, and help the world so that people can live long lives in good health.

Allison is a Cell Biology major interested in becoming a scientific researcher.

My ZigZag Journey

Kaitlyn Yajjoco

Working with animals has always been a great passion of mine. All of my friends, family and coworkers can attest to this, as well as my elementary school collection of Animal Ark books. However, my passion did not evolve in a linear fashion. It took me many years to realize that I wanted to seriously pursue a career as a veterinarian. I did not grow up in an environment that placed a heavy emphasis on agriculture and work that involved large animals. Thus, I was only exposed to companion animals such as dogs, cats and rabbits. Though I've always loved taking care of them, back then, I genuinely believed that it wasn't even feasible to entertain the idea of going to college just so that I could become an "animal doctor."

When I was in the 2nd grade, I presented my parents with a hand-drawn picture detailing what I wanted to be twenty years down the road—an "animal doctor" (I could not pronounce "veterinarian" correctly at the time). Naturally, it was a crayon depiction of me in a lab coat, equipped with a stethoscope and head mirror, cradling an injured pup on my lap. This is the earliest memory I have of wanting to become a veterinarian.

Why Medicine?

Kamal Gill

My life has been plagued by a pervasive sense of nihilism. I have always questioned why anything matters. When money can be devalued and history can be forgotten, what are accomplishments, accolades, and awards even worth? I chose to go into the field of medicine because I wanted to make a difference that mattered. I have come to realize one's legacy lives on vicariously through the people that he lifts up.

I chose to pursue an M.D. degree not only because it allows me to make a difference in people's lives as a doctor but also because the road to that degree is inundated with opportunities to help people. Previously I've volunteered at a community hospital working in the front desk and delivering flowers to patients. As insignificant an act that delivering flowers seems at first glance, one can only measure its true effects by seeing the smiles of the people to whom the flowers were delivered. Essentially all of the non-academic activities required to become an M.D. leads one to help people along the way. The process of becoming an M.D. inherently presents opportunities to make the meaningful difference that I have sought to find.

I believe that being the public relations officer of Narrative Pre-Health Club at UC Davis is one of those opportunities. What better way to lift people up than to share with each other our personal narratives? This is what I believe Narrative Pre-Health provides, an avenue to share one's story and impact others' stories. I intend on being as impactful as humanly possible in my role for this club.

In the very near future, I plan on volunteering at one of the student-run health clinics in Sacramento. This I feel would give me the most direct opportunity to impact people that I have had my entire life. My whole life has been devoted to healing people on a more and more direct level. Thus, when people ask me why I chose to pursue medicine, my answer is "It gives my life purpose."

Kamal is a second year Cell Biology major pursuing medicine.

Listen

Krista Sakogawa

The morning started off with TPR, abdominal palpations, and medication refills—the usual services offered at the homeless pet clinic. The next patient was a feline. The veterinary student and I immediately saw that the patient was suffering from a necrotic tail. The last few vertebrae were visible beneath the blackened, rotting flesh; it needed to be amputated before further infection. We explained that the feline needed surgery, that all costs would be covered, and that the patient would receive the best care possible. Reluctant to do surgery, the frustrated owner and a relative began yelling, swearing, and threatening each other. The student and I tried to intervene to no avail. We both stood against the wall, wide-eyed, until Dr. G came on the scene. Dr. G is a petite, soft-spoken, elderly veterinarian. Like a mother stepping between two angry children, she empathetically but sternly calmed them down. She listened. She wasn't fazed at all by their rage. She explained that the feline needed surgery, that all costs would be covered, and that the patient would receive the best care possible. The owner miraculously complied. Wait, isn't that exactly what we said?! The information was the same, but what the veterinary student and I lacked was nonverbal communication—a reassuring hand on the shoulder, a few concerned head nods, and listening. These soft skills made a world of difference.

I want to relate to people so they know I care not only about their animals, but also about their struggles. I have noticed that while science and diagnostic skills can be taught, compassion for people and animals cannot. I hope that no matter how tired or busy I become, I can remember this truth throughout my veterinary career.

Krista is a fourth year Animal Science major pursuing veterinary studies.

Of Golden Independence

Allisa Tran

During the autumn, leaves sway in the slight breeze and dapple the ground, creating a beautiful palette of red, brown, yellow, and orange colors across each front yard. When it comes time for the sun to set, a dim golden glow is cast on all of the houses at a perfect angle, turning my neighborhood into a surreal vision that dispels any thought of the problems that plague us.

My own household has experienced its fair share of issues. I live in a middle class family that uses the comparison of money, material, attractiveness, and intelligence to measure our comparative value. The people I know have to come to live in an unspoken world based off a narrow perspective.

Although I was always considered a reasonably bright student in school, my parents were constantly urging me to improve and overcome my classmates. I quickly became unsure of my potential to accomplish when compared to my peers as a result. However, as I grew older, I increasingly realized that it was the mindset of my parents and not their intentions that caused me to question and even resent them.

They believed that the best for me came from my being the best. This goal led to an unending cycle of not just competition, but also dissatisfaction. The more I matured, the more I understood why they pushed these beliefs on me. Nonetheless, I learned to disagree. In my life, I have met so many people that taught me that pride in my personal efforts and work ethics, not accomplishments, would make me happy. I learned that I should strive not to be the best out of everyone around me, but to strive to be the best I can be. The achievement of others should never have to affect the way that I viewed my own success. I have chosen to adopt a hard ambition and motivation when pursuing my dreams while accepting that things happen and that I may not always come out on top.

A few summers ago, I learned how my outlook could create an impact when I attended a pre-med program at UC Irvine. Although I had always been interested in becoming a doctor, it further exposed me to the true goal of those who work in the medical field: to improve upon the lives of people and treat them to the best of their abilities. I was surprised to learn that healthcare was not just concentrated on tasks such as taking a patient's heartbeat or how to inject an IV - rather, it was about asking the right ques-

tions, interacting with patients, and thinking of innovative and personalized approaches toward helping them. My dream profession is to help others grow in their own way, mentally and physically.

During the autumn, our neighborhood is a surreal vision with a touch of gold, serving as a reminder that there are always things to learn and look forward to even in a world of unhappiness.

Allisa is a first year Biological Sciences major pursuing medicine.

Taraval

Jolene Won

I run my first code 3 to Bishop Briggs on the ambulance radio:
the wail of a Valkyrie screaming through the Sunset,
sirens peeling the cars from the pavement.
Snap on my nitrile gauntlets, throw the doors open
the noon-high sunlight and red lights flaring in my darkened eyes.

Outside the store, a gawky, curly-headed cashier waits for us:
This way. Over here.
Please hurry.

We find her on the floor in the produce section,
twitching and moaning among the lettuce and radishes
and this isn't training anymore, this isn't
lecture slides and flash cards and rote exercises on plastic mannequins
it's boots pounding on grimy linoleum, gurney wheels rattling over the curb,
machine-gun radial pulses firing against the walls of her veins –

but all I hear is the quiet rush of my own blood.

Hoist her onto the gurney, roll back out into the beating-blinding sun.
Up front, Freddie guns the engine. I slam the doors shut behind me
and we run, sirens keening, lights blazing.

Crack a tank of O2, prime a line. On the radio, dispatch
is circling, squawking bursts of shredded static
and Noah's looking coolly down the barrel of an 18-gauge needle,
the handset tucked under his chin.
Suction, insert an airway

then we're screeching into the ambulance bay
crashing through the ED doors
to where the cavalry waits.

Finally, we fall back, empty-handed
watch the nurses and doctors bear the fight away from us.

In darkened scan rooms deep within the hospital
they will study black-and-white battleground topographies,
the shadow of a bleed whispering grayscale treasons.
As they draw out their endgames with scalpels and sutures,

we will return to the field,
where a thousand more wars are waiting.

Jolene is a third year Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior student.

List of Things that (Made) Me Feel Less Pre-Vet

Nicole Doan

I didn't know I wanted to be a veterinarian when I was 5 years old. I didn't own any pets until college. Even now, I don't believe I love animals as much as most of my peers. To add to the list of "Things that Make Me Feel Less Pre-vet", I also suffer from chronic pain from scoliosis that has not only affected my physical health, but also has taken its toll on my mental health about my body image. Feelings of body dysmorphia? Every day. Depression? Done that. Anxiety? Yup. I fluctuate day-to-day between confidence and self-doubt, strength and defeatedness, peace and turmoil. However, with all the irregularities I find in my own life, one of the few parts of me that has stayed consistent is my passion to become a veterinarian.

I remember the day I first volunteered for Mercer Veterinary Clinic for Pets of the Homeless that I realized I found a world I wanted to be a part of. I was thrown in a tiny trailer full of more dogs and cats that I have ever encountered, and watched as the veterinary students and pet owners piece together a puzzle from seemingly random bits and strings of facts and words. Animals were examined (and played with), tests were performed, treats were given, medicine was prescribed, and then owners cuddled with their pets to congratulate them on being such good patients. But what made my experience at this clinic so enlightening was the incredible sacrifices these big-hearted owners had made to provide their pets a shelter in their arms when these people could not afford a shelter for themselves. I found self-healing in helping those who put their animals before themselves, and found myself excited about the science that made it all possible.

Ever since then, the veterinary medicine world has only welcomed me more and more. I became involved with other clinics and pre-veterinary clubs. I found families within these groups that have offered me support, guidance, and even shelter. Thinking about it now, I don't know if I would have ever found the same level of support as I have received from pre-vets, faculty, and veterinarians if I had pursued any other profession. In many ways had I initially felt like an outsider amongst my pre-vet peers, but in so many more ways, has this community continuously reaffirmed the reasons I want to become a veterinarian.

Nicole is a fourth year Animal Science major pursuing veterinary studies.

Untitled

Jolene Won

Patient: Jabari H. Room #: 4. D/C date: TBD. The volunteers and staff who are on shift at George Mark Children’s House on this Wednesday morning all understand the significance of the three letters on the white-board behind the nurses’ station. After all, it is never easy to predict when an end-of-life patient will be leaving us.

Most of us give Room 4 a wide berth, either out of respect for the patient’s family or – in my case, at least – a deep-seated sense of uncertainty. I have just turned seventeen, and I am perpetually getting in people’s way, knocking things over, putting my foot in my mouth, or all three at once. So when the head nurse asks if I’d like to play some music over in 4, I am certain that she’s joking until she has already started back down the hallway. “This way, hon,” she says over her shoulder.

Room 4 is Milky Way-themed; a mural of shooting stars, satellites, and supernovas decorates the walls. The door is open, but I tap on the frame anyways before stepping gingerly inside.

Jabari cannot be more than eighteen months old, with dark hair like peach fuzz and an oxygen mask strapped across his smooth, plump brown cheeks. His parents – an attractive black couple in their late twenties – are also present; Mrs. H sits in a chair beside the bed, stroking Jabari’s forehead, while Mr. H stares outside from the window seat, his gaze far away. They greet me in brittle, polite voices, but do not acknowledge each other. Two planets, alone in their weary-eyed orbits, and a tiny sun, collapsing in on itself.

So I stop talking, and sing. I play Jack Johnson, Bruno Mars, Tracy Chapman, even a stripped-down version of “Sweet Child O’Mine.” When I can’t think of what to do next, I fingerpick riffs and hum along, an improvised acoustic score bridging the silences. The last song I play is “Godspeed (Sweet Dreams)” by The Dixie Chicks. *Godspeed, little man, sweet dreams... All my love will fly to you each night on angel’s wings.*

As the last chord fades, I look up. Mr. and Mrs. H have climbed onto the bed with Jabari; arms twined around their son and each other, they

whisper to each other in soft, unbroken currents that I can't quite make out. Quietly, I sling my guitar across my back and tiptoe out of their little three-person universe back into the hallway.

On Monday when I come in for my next shift, the Milky Way room is empty and Jabari is gone.

The day after I return home for winter break following my first semester of college, I go to Whole Foods with my boyfriend. I'm halfheartedly examining a crate of \$5 avocados when I hear a voice behind me. "Excuse me?" The woman is about thirty, with glasses and curly brown hair; her voice and her face are familiar, but I can't place them until she continues. "Did you volunteer at George Mark about a year ago, singing and playing guitar?"

Mrs. H tells me that she's doing okay. That some days are still hard, but she gets through them. That she and Mr. H have been thinking about trying for another baby. Before she leaves, she gives me a hug and thanks me for everything I did for her, her husband, and her son.

When my boyfriend reappears, I'm still gazing out the door after Mrs. H. "Who was that?" he asks. I tell him that she was the mother of this kid I'd known in high school. That his name was Jabari, and that I'd learned a lot from him.

Jolene is a third year Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior major pursuing medicine.

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CLUBS

Molecular and Cellular Biology Club

The MCB Club is a group of students interested in learning about molecular and cellular biology. MCB Club creates a way to meet fellow students and be involved in the life sciences.

Pre-Vet Student Supporting Diversity

Pre-vet Students Supporting Diversity supports students from underrepresented/disadvantaged communities pursuing careers in the field of veterinary medicine by providing resources that will enhance their preparation to veterinary school. PSSD seeks to increase diversity in the veterinary field by providing a support system, mentorship, and other resources to pre-veterinary students at UC Davis who have faced barriers leading to higher education.

Vet Aide Club

Our members come from a variety of animal-related disciplines, including Animal Science, Avian Science, and Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology. Vet Aide Club provides students with the resources to help them realize their post-undergraduate goals.