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Summer 2017  
Internship with Dr. Madison Michael II

The Semmes Murphey clinic specializes in brain and spinal care. This past summer, I interned there with Dr. Madison Michael, a Sewanee alumnus, and I was not assigned any special projects or tasks to do. This internship was more of an introduction to the medical world, specifically neurosurgery. However, I took detailed notes of every surgery I watched and of every patient Dr. Michael saw in clinic. I asked questions whenever I was confused or something didn't make sense, and Dr. Michael would explain.

As a college student, I am not qualified to operate on patients, but I was able to help move patients from their bed to the operating table, hand physician assistants various tools, and help prepare the room for surgery in whatever way I could. I took notes of just about everything that was happening in the OR and in clinic, from the details of the operation to temperature of the room. I quickly noticed that having a successful practice is directly related to being able to work well with other people and overcome obstacles in the operating room and in clinic. Dr. Michael's success as a surgeon is in large part due to his easygoing personality. He keeps calm under pressure and maintains very professional relationships with his colleagues. I will never forget one of the conversations we had in which he told me that he looks for three things in selecting residents. First, he wants someone who consistently works hard. Second, he wants a team player who knows how to work well with other people. Most importantly, Dr. Michael wants someone who can keep getting up after being punched. He wants people that can respond well to adversity.

Watching surgeons communicate with each other and the other nurses in the room during surgery was a very valuable experience. For example, the second to last surgery I watched required a plastic surgeon, oncology surgeon, ENT surgeon, and a neurosurgeon. The patient they were operating on had re-occurrence of sarcoma for the 5th time. This operation in particular required team players. All of the surgeons had to work together to coordinate and organize the surgery.

Understanding exactly what Dr. Michael is doing throughout surgery is an impossible feat, but I began to pick up on small things after a few weeks. I realized that Dr. Michael offered more than just knowledge about the medical world. He taught me quite a few life lessons throughout the internship. Simple conversation during surgery and clinic turned out to be very helpful. I feel much more confident in myself and my career after spending time with Dr. Michael. I could not be more thankful for the time he gave up to teach me about the world of neurosurgery. He is certainly one of the “cooler” doctors I have met, and I was always impressed with the music he played during surgery. He was always very easy to talk to. At the end of the day, the best doctors are the people that can sit down and have a real conversation with you in clinic, and Dr. Michael is certainly one of these people.