All MedStart students keep a monthly journal of their MedStart activities. Here is an entry from Grant Shafer of Centennial, Colo., written at the end of his freshman year.

Looking back on my first year in MedStart, it is really exciting to see the full scope of the activities I have undertaken this year. Most of the time I am so busy with the daily grind of classes, food, and trying to have some semblance of a life, that I can't see past the next 24 hours. But as I sat down to write this journal, I was really surprised and encouraged by the volume and depth of activities, which I had participated in through MedStart this year.

First off, I thought the MedStart Seminars all greatly contributed to my MedStart experience. To have the opportunity to attend monthly lectures with practicing doctors at the School of Medicine is a unique opportunity that really enhanced my growing understanding of the medical field. The presentations were genuinely interesting, and really allowed the doctors to share their passion for various aspects of medicine with us. My favorite seminar was the palliative medicine lecture by Dr. Raspa and Dr. Zalenski. I thought their ideas about integrating disciplines in the humanities with medical care were very compelling, and offered a different approach to the medicine doctors practice. The concepts both doctors presented on death and how doctors should deal with dying patients have a lot of future application, and left me with some very interesting ideas to ponder.

While the seminars offered new concepts in the theory of medicine, my doctor shadows allowed me to further explore the practical aspects of medicine. I really enjoyed all the shadow experiences I did this year. Scrubbing in with Dr. Edelman to observe a dog surgery was especially rewarding. This was my first time in the OR, and I gained a lot from the experience. Suturing the dog was also really fun (even I was terrible at it!). My shadow with the leprosy doctor was valuable, because it showed me a glimpse of a side of medicine that few in the Western World see these days. The cardiologist I shadowed let me sit in while he analyzed echocardiograms, which was a new and interesting experience. He also brought me on his rounds with patients which allowed me to see more of the doctor/patient interaction dynamic. Overall, all the shadows increased my exposure to different areas in medicine, and helped increase my understanding of the daily aspects of modern medical practice.

The community service I did this year also allowed me to stay active in the community, while I pursue my academic goals. My community service allowed me to begin to apply my thoughts on a doctor's duty to society in a real world setting. For example, the Spina Bifida conference gave me the opportunity to interact with the sick kids, which I found really rewarding. There is something intangible yet very valuable about this type of one-on-one interaction that truly makes us better people in the end. I hope that my future practice of medicine will incorporate this principle, and allow me to better connect with and heal my patients. The letter writing against the genocide in Darfur was important to me, because I feel it is very important that we in America remember that there is a world outside our own. We need to be aware of the injustice that does occur in the world, and take steps to do our part to right these wrongs. People who have the ability to better the world have a responsibility to do so, which I believe is an important principle for any future doctor to keep in mind.

In terms of my leadership on campus, I prefer to lead by example, earning others respect through my own personal merits, and using this respect as a foundation for leadership. This year has been good for me in that it has allowed me to excel in areas which I enjoy and let me help open pathways for others to follow. This is primarily in academic areas such as the AGRADE

program, which will allow me to earn a Bachelors and Masters in English during my 4 years before matriculation to medical school. I also hope to become very involved with a church in Sterling Heights and their young adult ministry. My faith has always been an integral part of who I am, and I hope to grow in this area throughout my college years.

Another area of MedStart that I really enjoyed this year was my participation in the recruitment of the MedStart ’07 class. I remember being the most stressed I have ever been during the interview process. Now it is interesting to be on the other side, watching other kids go through the application process. It also made me appreciate once again my spot in MedStart! Overall, I was very impressed by the candidates I met and am looking forward to meeting the ’07 class in the fall.

As much as I enjoyed most of the MedStart activities this year, I must admit that I was initially hesitant about the journals. I was worried about being able to month after month convey my genuine reflections in medicine without being superficial. But I must admit that I was pleasantly surprised to find that I actually enjoyed journaling. It offered me the chance to once a month sit down and reflect on where I was at in the pursuit of becoming a physician. The daily wear and tear sometimes distracted me from this, so it was nice to have time to reflect on a monthly basis. It also helped to keep me focused on the big picture, when all I wanted to do was lose myself in the next test or paper, and remind me what the end result will be in 8 years.

My message to the incoming class would be: Explore your options. We have been given a wonderful opportunity through MedStart, and it’s our responsibility to take it and continue to excel. The undergraduate years for us should be a time to discover exactly who we are and take the necessary steps to enter medical school prepared to become excellent and compassionate physicians.

Self-Evaluation

If someone had told me as late as Christmas my senior year in high school that I would end up in MedStart at Wayne State, I probably would have laughed in their face. I honestly had no interest in going to school in Detroit, and MedStart was not an option I had yet seriously considered. But I believe that things always work out as they should, and now I can say that I am genuinely happy that I am here. I believe that through MedStart I have already grown tremendously, and will continue to grow and challenge myself in the future.

Academically, I feel that I am in a good place. Coming in with several semesters worth of AP credit, I was initially concerned about being challenged in my classes, and finding some way to stay entertained/involved for four years. Fortunately on both of these counts I was needlessly worried. My course load this year has been challenging without being overwhelming, and I honestly feel that I have grown as a student this year. In terms of being challenged for four years, I believe I have found a suitable and exciting prospect. My initial plan to have a double major in Biology and English with a Spanish minor was good, but I am even more excited by the AGRADE/B.A.-M.A. in English program that I have settled on. I spoke with the English advisor, and it will be possible for me to complete both a B.A. and M.A. in English before my matriculation to medical school. This is cool because how many 22 year olds can say they have their Masters? In all seriousness though, I truly do enjoy English, and this option allows me to greatly expand my knowledge and ability in this discipline before medical school. I also believe this will make me a better doctor, by equipping me with a different set of skills to apply to my practice of medicine. This option would not have been possible without MedStart, because

without my guaranteed spot in medical school, I would not have had the confidence to deviate from the usual pre-med path. This is one more reason that I am truly thankful for MedStart and excited for the rest of my undergraduate experience.

Socially and spiritually, I also feel that I have grown this year. Moving from the upper-middle class Protestant white suburbs to Midtown Detroit was a huge change for me. But I feel that I have learned so much even in the short span of a year as a result. I have seen another side of America that I had no contact with previously. College is a time of change and growth, and I feel that this has been a valuable experience for me. As a doctor, I want to be able to touch/relate to as my different types of patients as I can, and I feel my experience now will help contribute to my ability to do so. I have also made some really great friendships here, which I look forward to further developing in the future. I believe that my friends here honestly make me a better person, and their support will help make me a better doctor in the future. My faith has also been challenged and expanded in many ways this year. Leaving my church of 15 years and primarily Protestant community to come to the very different environment in Detroit was one of the biggest adjustments, but now I believe it is making me a stronger person. Being more exposed to different faiths, and in turn reflecting more on my own has reaffirmed my convictions while giving me more of an appreciation for those of others.

Finally in terms of my desire to become a doctor, I can honestly say that I am more excited than ever to practice medicine. This has been my personal goal since the 5th grade, and the fact that this dream can now become a reality makes me more excited than ever. I know this is what I want and am supposed to do, and after my first year in MedStart I am ready to tackle another year towards achieving this goal. I have no doubts about my choice of paths. There is so much good a doctor can do in this world, and a such a powerful impact that a single physician can have on truly hurting people. This responsibility that doctors are given is so amazing to me, and I know that I will work my hardest to one day become an excellent and compassionate physician who truly touches the lives of my patients as an effective healer.