

Steven L. Berk, MD

What is a white coat ceremony and why is this tradition so important for medical students?

00:05

These students have been working very hard for a long time top students in high school and college, they've given up a lot, they've sacrificed a lot to get to medical school. And so this is a celebration for them, and for their parents, but it's also a time to remind them that while this is a great profession, it comes with a lot of responsibilities. We've probably learned that more in the COVID-19 era than ever before. So when they don their white coats, they're also making a commitment to the profession of medicine, and all the responsibilities and professionalism that it requires. So it's a reminder to them that they're starting their professional career as physicians.

How did the pandemic change the significance of what the white coat stands for—for both students and physicians?

01:00

Well, I think for physicians, it was a reminder about just how important the responsibility of being a physician actually is that sometimes you have to put your self, even in a dangerous position, for the sake of your patients, you may even sacrifice your own health for the safety of your patients. And so that was a tremendous reminder. Many physicians died in COVID-19, we were very lucky, we didn't have any students, that got severely ill, we didn't have any residents like that severely ill. We did have one faculty member that did pass away. So it's a reminder of the tremendous responsibility of being a physician. It's the responsibility to society. For medical students, it's a very challenging position for us because we want to give them the best possible medical education. But we don't want them to be put at risk of COVID-19. So for students, it has to be a compromise between safety and the best possible education. And that's what we did for last year students. And that's what we'll do, again, for this for this group of students.

How did COVID-19 impact the admissions process for the incoming class?

02:29

We had more students than ever before, apply to medical school. And I think it reminded us even more, that we care about the GPA, and they have an average GPA of 3.8. But it's more about who they are, then how much they know. And it's more about their commitment to medicine than it is about the organic chemistry grade they got. And it's about resiliency, not just being able to get good grades, but be able to handle all the challenges that may come before them as a physician. So I think even more than ever, we looked at those characteristics of character and resiliency, and commitment maybe than we ever did before.

What do you want the community to know about this class?

03:25

It's a group of 180 students that were chosen out of over 5000 applicants. Like I said they had a GPA of 3.8. They came from 49 different schools, but 90 of them are from West Texas. We have more students that came from Texas Tech than ever before. 55 students that came from Texas Tech. In the past, we've usually had about 30 students from Texas Tech, but they came from all over Texas, and really all

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over the country. From the north at University of Washington and the south of the Rio Grande and west of UCLA and UC Davis and east to Tufts and Princeton so they come from all over 49 different schools. Lots of interest in Texas Tech students to go to medical school. Not all of them have just graduated college, some of them have had other jobs, EMTs registered nurses, athletic trainers, lots and lots of different jobs before medical school science teachers and elementary school teachers. A tremendous interest in service. Many of them volunteered in the COVID-19 pandemic and one way or the other quite a few of them have been missionaries. So it's a very well rounded, very competitive class.