



Students and Graduates Flourish on Match Day



More than 850 SGU students and graduates matched into US residency programs in 2016, many into their top-choice specialties and locations.

Match Day has once again yielded tremendous results for St. George's University School of Medicine. More than 850 students and graduates secured highly competitive first-year residency positions at institutions across the US, many at their top-choice of programs, through the 2016 National Residency Matching Program (NRMP).

SGU alumni will report to PGY1 residency programs in the following specialties: anesthesiology, child and adolescent psychiatry, child neurology, diagnostic radiology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, internal medicine/pediatrics, neurological surgery, neurology, obstetrics & gynecology, orthopaedic surgery,

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University Mourns Louis J. Modica

On April 6, St. George's University announced the passing of one of its founders, Louis J. Modica. Mr. Modica is the father of Chancellor Charles R. Modica, and a founding member of the University's Board of Trustees. Mr. Modica was 92.

Mr. Modica shared his son's vision of establishing an independent school of medicine in Grenada, and on July 23, 1976, they, along with Patrick F. Adams and Edward McGowan, formed the University's first Board of Trustees. Their active involvement in the ensuing years ensured its growth into an innovative and international

center of higher education.

Mr. Modica's guidance and support resulted in the principles that shape the University to this day, including its deep commitment to its host nation. For their contributions to St. George's University, a newly constructed three-floor study hall on the True Blue campus was named Louis and Marion Modica Hall in their honor.

"My father was an amazing man who envisioned things that no one else saw," Chancellor Modica

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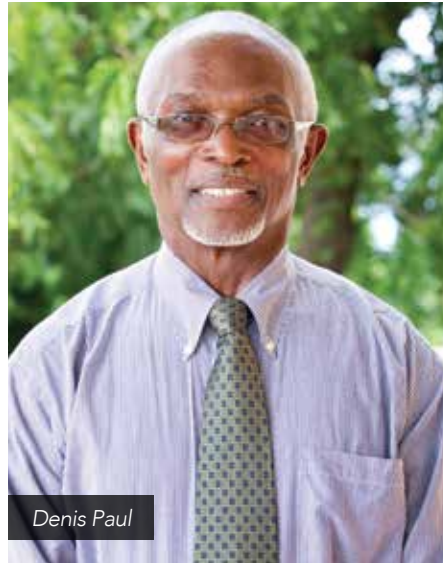
SGU Mourns Denis Paul

On April 6, 2016, Dr. Denis Paul, Vice Provost for Institutional Advancement at St. George's University, passed away at the age of 76.

"Dr. Paul was inspirational in his development of Alumni Relations at the University, taking time from his other important University initiatives in Institutional Advancement to ensure a vibrant and healthy relationship between the alumni and the students, the individual schools, and the University as a whole," said Dr. Allen Pensick, Provost, St. George's University.

Dr. Paul served as Vice Provost for Institutional Advancement at St. George's University since 2008, when he was promoted from his position as Director of Institutional Advancement and Professor in the Department of Liberal Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences. As Vice Provost, Dr. Paul was responsible for alumni relations, accreditation and quality assurance, new program development, scheduling, and the development of external relations with regional organizations and higher education institutions.

A native of St. David's, Grenada,



Denis Paul

Dr. Paul was actively involved in higher education development in the Caribbean and was a founding member of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network Foundation. After 40 years of living and working in the United States and the US Virgin Islands, Dr. Paul returned to Grenada to serve as Principal of TA Marryshow Community College and as a consultant to the Ministry of Education and other national organizations.

Prior to returning to the Caribbean, Dr. Paul was Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of the Virgin Islands, where he was responsible for all academic programs, including graduate and undergraduate degree programs



Denis Paul (center) welcomed Larry Palmer (left), US Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and US Chargé d'Affaires Bernard Link to the True Blue campus in June 2012.

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The North American Correspondent
3500 Sunrise Highway, Building 300
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US Phone: +1 (631) 665-8500
US/Canada Toll-Free: 1 (800) 899-6337

US Fax: +1 (631) 665-5590

UK Freephone: 0800 1699061

www.sgu.edu

OUC@sgu.edu

Contact Caroline McCann at
+ 1 (631) 665-8500 ext. 9 1396 or
cmccann@sgu.edu with any article
suggestions or comments.



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and the Reichhold Center for the Arts. He also held several senior academic posts in the United States including President of Medgar Evers College, City University of New York; Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education with the Regents of New York State; and University Associate Dean with the City University of New York. Dr. Paul held a number of faculty positions in the City University of New York system and was the recipient of major research and training grants from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.

Dr. Paul was an alumnus of Brooklyn College and earned his PhD in Chemistry from the Graduate School of the City University of New York. ■

"He took a chance on this crazy idea of starting a medical school in Grenada in the mid-'70s, and never looked back."
– Chancellor Charles R. Modica, of his late father, Louis J. Modica

Co-Founder Louis J. Modica Leaves Behind Legacy

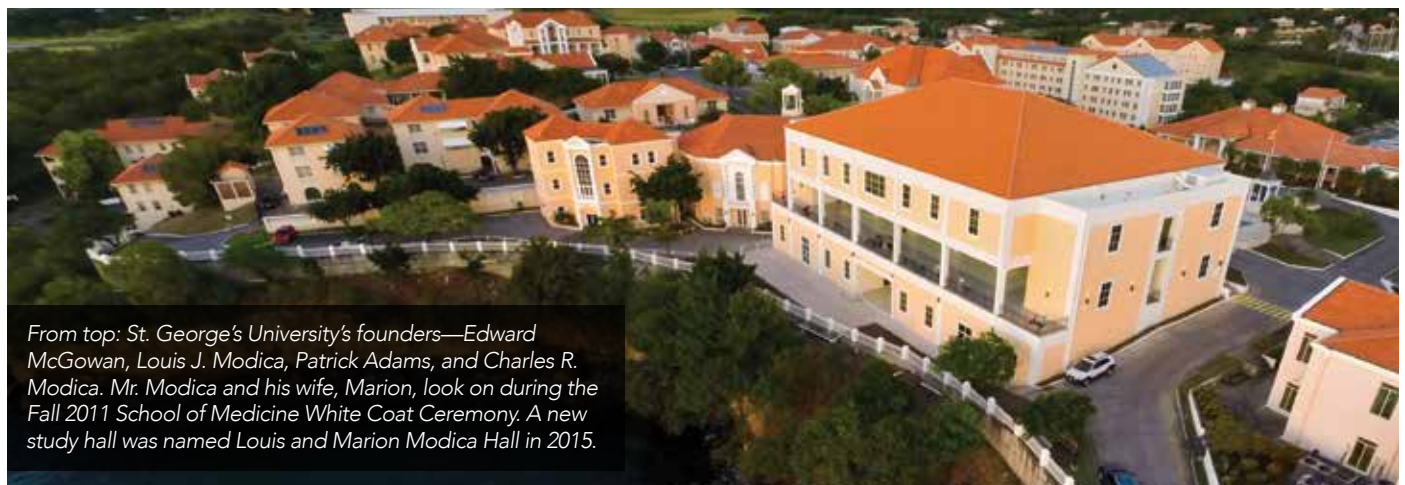
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said. "He took a chance on this crazy idea of starting a medical school in Grenada in the mid-'70s, and never looked back. He and the other trustees were critical to the University's success in the early years and then later as it developed into a full University with four schools and an international reputation. He was a true visionary."

Mr. Modica dedicated his life to developing real estate on Long Island, NY, most notably on its south shore, where he and his family lived since the 1950s. He was highly active in the Bay Shore community.

Mr. Modica is survived by his wife of 70 years, Marion; children Charles, John, and Lorraine; eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be made to the Fund for the Orphans & Elderly in Grenada. They may be sent to University Support Services, c/o Jackie Alaimo, 3500 Sunrise Highway, Great River, NY 11739. ■



From top: St. George's University's founders—Edward McGowan, Louis J. Modica, Patrick Adams, and Charles R. Modica. Mr. Modica and his wife, Marion, look on during the Fall 2011 School of Medicine White Coat Ceremony. A new study hall was named Louis and Marion Modica Hall in 2015.



St. George's University awarded scholarships to Mahidol University students Chandra Bahadu (second from left) and Natnicha Noppornmongkul (second from right).

Scholars Celebrate in Ceremony at Mahidol University

A dual degree affiliation agreement between one of Thailand's leading universities, Mahidol University, and St. George's University has been marked by the award of scholarships to two Mahidol students.

The main scholarship has been given to Chandra Bahadu from Myanmar, who studied for his first degree in biological sciences at Mahidol University International College. With a scholarship valued at 75 percent (approximately \$190,000 USD) of his total tuition fees, he will now be able to pursue his four-year medical degree at SGU. A partial scholarship, valued at \$85,000 USD, was also awarded to Natnicha Noppornmongkul, who will also study at St. George's University School of Medicine.

At the awards ceremony at

Mahidol, the Dean of Mahidol University International College, Phitaya Charupoonphol, said that St. George's University has "an enviable reputation for turning out international graduates who are successful in obtaining residency training placements in the United States and United Kingdom. I am confident that, through their mutual efforts and commitment, our scholars will achieve much more as they continue to develop their studies."

Dean Charupoonphol thanked the President and Chief Executive Officer of St. George's University, Dr. G. Richard Olds, as well as the Chancellor and Founder, Dr. Charles R. Modica, for their support for the scholarship awards.

"Through our affiliation agreement, our students need to complete

three years of pre-medicine study before being accepted as first year medical students and eligible for a dual degree. This is an enormous career-developing opportunity," he added.

In a special message, read for him by SGU representative Patrick Orr, Dr. Olds said that he was proud St. George's University had teamed up with one of Thailand's leading educational establishments.

"I am fully aware of the long and historic contribution that Mahidol has made to the medical profession in Thailand and the region," he said. "We, at St. George's University, have pioneered the concept of international medical education and have graduated more than 13,000 physicians into the global health care system. Our two new scholars will be very much at home on our diverse campus with representatives from all over the world.

"We have a philosophy at our university—that those who study with us, particularly those who benefit from our scholarship awards, should return to their countries of origin and bring home their skills, talents and commitment to their own medical professions." ■



MBA Student Named Commonwealth Jubilee Scholar

Dinnah Natukunda, from Uganda, East Africa, has become the newest recipient of St. George's University's Commonwealth Jubilee Scholarship, an award which will cover her full tuition for the duration of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Multi-Health Sector program at SGU.

Ms. Natukunda graduated from Makerere University, one of the leading institutions in Uganda, with a bachelor's degree in social sciences. After earning her MBA from SGU, she plans to start up a non-profit organization to reach out to the less fortunate in her community.

"Receiving this scholarship provides a great opportunity for me, one that I will not take for granted," said Ms. Natukunda. "It will allow me to acquire the skills needed to fuel my passion and desire to serve people, especially the underprivileged. In Uganda, 19 women die every day while giving birth, so I want



Dinnah Natukunda

to be part of a team that will work to improve the health care of my nation."

Ms. Natukunda is one of 60 Commonwealth Jubilee Scholarship recipients to be awarded by St. George's University in commemoration of the Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, celebrated in 2012. The scholarship program was launched by the Commonwealth

Secretary-General, Kamalesh Sharma, in 2013 and marks the Queen's 60th year as the Head of the Commonwealth of Nations.

The scholarship seeks to help academically gifted students with limited resources reach their full potential. It recognizes students, principally from developing countries and small states of the Commonwealth, who are highly motivated and possess a strong commitment to return to their countries, where the need for trained professionals is greatly underserved.

In the fall, SGU awarded five students with Jubilee scholarships—Rochelle Gourzong (Jamaica), Juliet Enow (Cameroon), Yavani Choudree (South Africa), Abidemi Oduwu (Nigeria), and Ramit Relan (India). Several welcomed the Queen's daughter, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, to campus for a special meet-and-greet ceremony in September. ■

There's a strong Grenadian flavor to the Division of Medicine at the University of Kentucky.

Left to right, Adult Cardiovascular Fellow Nathan Kusterer, '11; Vincent Sorrell, '89, Associate Division Chief, Cardiology Fellowship Program Director, and Director of Cardiovascular Imaging across the UK HealthCare Enterprise; and PGY1 internal medicine resident William Lippert, '15.



A Bluegrass Band

2016 Residency Match

"We applaud these students and graduates for the commitment to their goals and to the communities they will serve during the next chapter of their careers." — President G. Richard Olds



Students celebrate at the SGU Match Day party in New York City.

St. George's University Students and Graduates Flourish on Match Day

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pathology, pediatrics, physical medicine and rehabilitation, psychiatry, and surgery. Residencies were secured in 41 states, as well as the District of Columbia. In addition, nine students matched through the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS).

"St. George's University continues its proud tradition of providing the US and Canadian health care systems with highly qualified physicians," said G. Richard Olds, President and CEO at SGU. "We applaud these students and graduates for the commitment to their goals and to the communities they will serve during the next chapter of their careers."

Among them is Justin Roberts, who was overjoyed to have matched to an anesthesiology residency at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Staying local was

of utmost importance to the New Jersey native, and he and his fiancée celebrated at home when news arrived that he had matched with his top choice. Mr. Roberts will begin his postgraduate experience this summer by conducting a preliminary year with Jersey City Medical Center's internal medicine residency program, a position with which he pre-matched.

"I fell in love with the program at Rutgers," he said. "I really liked the program director and the feel of the place. It's everything that I wanted in a program. I look forward to practicing anesthesiology because I love working with my hands and I enjoy being around a patient in a true time of need."

Fellow 2016 graduate Nicole Bilbro spent three years in Grenada—the first to complete a Master of Public Health and the next two studying the basic medical sciences. She had

"an incredible experience" at SGU and on the island, and looks forward to starting her general surgery residency at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, NY, her top choice in the field, this summer.

"When I found out, I was ecstatic," Ms. Bilbro said. "Maimonides was my number one choice because of the outstanding faculty and residents. The hospital also has the only dedicated breast cancer center in Brooklyn and was a perfect fit as I plan to pursue a breast surgery fellowship following residency."

Since opening in 1977, St. George's University has graduated more than 13,000 physicians who have gone on to practice in all 50 US states and more than 50 countries worldwide. According to published information, SGU has placed more doctors in first-year postgraduate positions than any medical school in the last five years combined. ■

St. George's University Students Match in Canada

St. George's University has long provided a pathway for Canadian students to return to their home country to practice, and 2016 was no exception. Through the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS), nine students matched with first-year residency positions in Canada and will begin their postgraduate training this summer.

SGU students will complete their postgraduate training in internal medicine, family medicine, and psychiatry at such programs as Queen's University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Manitoba, the University of Ottawa, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Toronto, and Western University.

"We congratulate those students who were selected to launch their medical careers in beautiful Canada," said Dr. Stephen Weitzman, Dean of St. George's University School of Medicine. "We firmly

believe that program directors at these institutions will find that these future SGU graduates have the knowledge, skills, and bedside manner needed to shine from the moment they begin as first-year residents."

Having earned his Master of Science from the University of Toronto, Jason Lam was delighted to match into U of T's orthopaedic surgery program. He bolstered his credentials leading up to the match by completing electives in Canada, and worked closely with his Canadian clinical advisor to steer his way to his top-choice program.

"It was absolutely surreal," Mr. Lam said. "Being able to return home and to train in a field I'm immensely passionate about is a dream come true."

Paul Howatt matched in family medicine at Western University, his top choice in the field. He enrolled at SGU through the Keith B. Taylor

Global Scholars Program (KBTGSP), for which students spend the first year of their medical education at Northumbria University before one basic sciences year in Grenada and two more in clinical rotations.

"Attending SGU was an excellent opportunity for training to be a doctor, and it was particularly good at preparing me for the US board exams," Mr. Howatt said. "I had a blast living in England for my first year, with fantastic teaching from the instructors."

More than 1,200 Canadians have graduated from the School of Medicine since it opened in 1977, and over 635 Canadian students are currently enrolled at the University. SGU's Canadian medical students taking the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 for first time in 2015 registered a 97 percent pass rate and a highly competitive 228 mean score. ■



From One Grad to Another

What advice do you give to first-year residents?

"Something that served me extremely well in my residency is saying yes to anything. There are going to be so many miscellaneous opportunities, and every time you say yes, you expose yourself to a new portion of this incredible profession. Every time you say yes, you open not just a door to that experience but to many more experiences after that. By accepting any opportunity, despite being exhausted and working very hard to just keep your head above water, taking on as much as humanly possible is going to pay dividends down the road."

*John Dussel, MD SGU '11
Chief Resident, General Surgery, Waterbury Hospital
Vascular Surgery Fellow, Hartford Hospital,
University of Connecticut School of Medicine (July 2016)*



Alan True, MD

Diagnostic Radiology
Newark Beth Israel Medical Center

It happened quickly. Over a four-day span in the fall, Alan True interviewed for and accepted a diagnostic radiology advanced residency position at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center in New Jersey. He will begin his postgraduate studies during a preliminary year at University of Nevada School of Medicine before spending the next four at Newark Beth Israel, where he completed much of his clinical rotations.

"Coming back to this area is comforting," Dr. True said. "I know how the hospital works, and I know a lot of people in the hospital, from the attendings to the nurses and the security guards. It will be nice to see some familiar faces."

Dr. True came to SGU from the University of California at Davis, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in biology. During his undergraduate years, he grew interested in radiology while shadowing a local physician, and it was further cultivated in a four-week ultrasound selective while in Grenada.

Two years on the Spice Isle equipped him with the knowledge and skills to excel on his step exams and in his rotations. He looks forward to taking the next step in his medical career this summer. "I enjoyed my time on the island," Dr. True said. "Between what I was taught, what I learned on my own, and what I learned about myself, I was able to keep everything together during this year when you're juggling working at the hospital and studying. It's always going to be a little crazy when you go from being behind the books to actual clinical rotations, but I think SGU really gave me a boost." ■



Allison Kornblatt, MD

Emergency Medicine
Maimonides Medical Center

A New York native, Allison Kornblatt rejoiced when she learned that she had matched with her top-choice program, Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn.

"Maimonides has a mixture of very strong academics and a lot of hands-on teaching," she said. "Having spent a month there doing an elective, I already knew that I loved it, so I was very excited to match there."

In addition to attending to patients in need of critical care, Dr. Kornblatt looks forward to addressing the broad spectrum of cases that emergency physicians are apt to see. "I loved every elective that I did, whether it was pediatrics, OB/GYN, family medicine, internal medicine, or surgery. What I love is that emergency medicine really combines all those aspects into one," she said. "Also, I enjoy the process and the critical thinking that you find in the ED."

Prior to enrolling at SGU, Dr. Kornblatt earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish from the State University of New York at Geneseo. During her studies, she enjoyed her time living in several different countries and thus viewed her experience on the Island of Spice as yet another study abroad, working toward her Doctor of Medicine while also immersing herself in Grenadian culture.

"SGU gave me an opportunity that I wouldn't have had otherwise," Dr. Kornblatt said. "What I really enjoyed about SGU is how the people there—whether it's the students or the teachers—are extremely dedicated to their and each other's success." ■

Diane Day, MD

Family Medicine
Sacred Heart Hospital



The family medicine residency program at Sacred Heart Hospital isn't like most. As the only residency program at the Allentown, PA facility—and the only such unopposed program in the area—its residents are in position to take on a wide variety of challenges.

The well-rounded experience makes it the perfect fit for Diane Day, who with her husband, Ryan Day, MD SGU '15, hopes to someday open their own urgent care clinic.

"As a family medicine resident, I will be first assist on surgery. For OB, I will deliver babies. For pediatrics, I'm the pediatrician. We cover all other services," Dr. Day said of her top-choice program. "It's a bit more intense but it also gives you the training you need to open your own clinic. You have to cover everything but you also aren't competing for procedures."

A Florida native, Dr. Day graduated from the University of Miami with a Bachelor of Science in biology. Once enrolled at SGU, she took advantage of the University's award-winning student support services to prosper in her studies. She also served as President of the student group World Health Organization for Students, and took part in SGU's popular clinical medicine selective in Prague, Czech Republic.

"I loved my time on the island," Dr. Day said. "I had so many wonderful experiences at SGU, and academically, it gave me the opportunity to make my dream come true. I'm in the process of doing that now." ■

I-sanna Gibbons-Fideler, MD

Pathology
The Ohio State University



Even before she was a physician from St. George's University, I-sanna Gibbons-Fideler was a doctor, having earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and then spent six years in the field. However, in 2011, she felt her life would be fuller treating humans, and enrolled in SGU's School of Medicine.

Dr. Gibbons-Fideler now looks forward to beginning a pathology residency at The Ohio State University this summer. "The investigative aspect of pathology is intriguing," she said. "It seems appropriate, not just because I tend to be observant and descriptive, but also because I found that slides, body fluids, biopsies, and corpses tell their own stories, and those stories are usually well-founded."

During medical school, Dr. Gibbons-Fideler met and married her husband, a Peace Corps volunteer on the island, and they welcomed two sons to the world prior to her graduating in June. With both a burgeoning family and career, she managed to balance her time well thanks in part to yoga, meditation, and the help of the Department of Educational Services (DES). As a result, Dr. Gibbons-Fideler felt sufficiently prepared for her clinical training and step exams.

She now turns her sights toward Ohio State, the strongest program on her match list. "Residents impressed me as being self-assured and very knowledgeable," she said. "There was an easy rapport with faculty members, who were all very enthusiastic about their respective fields." ■

Graduate Overcomes Odds to Land Top Residency

With each hurdle that he cleared, Darren Cuthbert turned his sights toward another—a higher one in the distance. This March, the 2016 graduate of St. George's University achieved yet another goal, accepting a highly competitive emergency medicine residency at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. He rejoiced not only for the opportunity to continue his training at a state-of-the-art institution but for taking the final step in his long journey toward becoming a physician.

"Emergency medicine encompasses the exciting aspects across all specialties," Dr. Cuthbert said. "To me, the emergency department is a fun place, free of judgment. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from—it's your right to be cared for in the ER; which also shows the humanistic side of medicine. It just felt like a perfect fit early on."

Matching with such a competitive field validates the hard work and dedication put in by Dr. Cuthbert, who admits to having faced a difficult upbringing while growing up in New Jersey. After being confronted with academic failure following the loss of his father and two battles with cancer fought by his mother, Dr. Cuthbert took to heart the incredible work ethic displayed by his parents. Seeing his mother work three jobs while overcoming cancer helped steer him in the right direction, eventually prompting him to enlist in the United States Army.

While serving in the Army Reserves, he pursued his bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, and also began working as a Unit Clerk at St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, NJ. The introduction to



"When you treat patients, you see something you love in those people—the good traits, the human characteristics. It's not really a patient; it's someone's mom, someone's child, brother, or sister."

medicine only increased his appetite to care for members of his community. Over his five years at SBMC, Dr. Cuthbert graduated to other roles, including transporter, emergency department technician, and burn technician. He was also a volunteer EMT at Ironbound EMS and UMDNJ-University Hospital, both in Newark, until his acceptance to SGU.

Dr. Cuthbert's journey to Grenada began after several emergency medicine residents whom he worked alongside spoke highly of their experiences at SGU. He enrolled in SGU's Master of Public Health program,

with a focus on health policy and administration. With the help of the University's award-winning student support services, he graduated magna cum laude and became a member of the Delta Omega Honors Society in Public Health. Dr. Cuthbert earned a spot in the Fall 2012 MD class. A foundation in public health helped him then just as it does now.

Throughout his clerkship with SGU, Dr. Cuthbert earned multiple publications relevant to both emergency medicine and anesthesiology. His projects won SGU's Medical Student Research Competition, and he was runner-up at SJRMC's annual Research Day. Dr. Cuthbert attributes such successes to the knowledge gained from his mentors within the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, led by Dr. Satish Bidaisee.

He continues to take on new challenges. He is in the process of becoming a Fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine, and hopes his story resonates with the children he meets as a part of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson, and Union Counties in Newark, NJ. He cherishes the responsibilities that have been handed to him as a mentor and a physician.

"When you treat patients, you see something you love in those people—the good traits, the human characteristics," he said. "It's not really a patient; it's someone's mom, someone's child, brother, or sister. You want to treat them like you would want your loved ones to be treated. It reminds you to be careful, diligent, compassionate, and most importantly appreciative of the great gift we've been given." ■

Students Post 96 Percent Pass Rate on USMLE 1

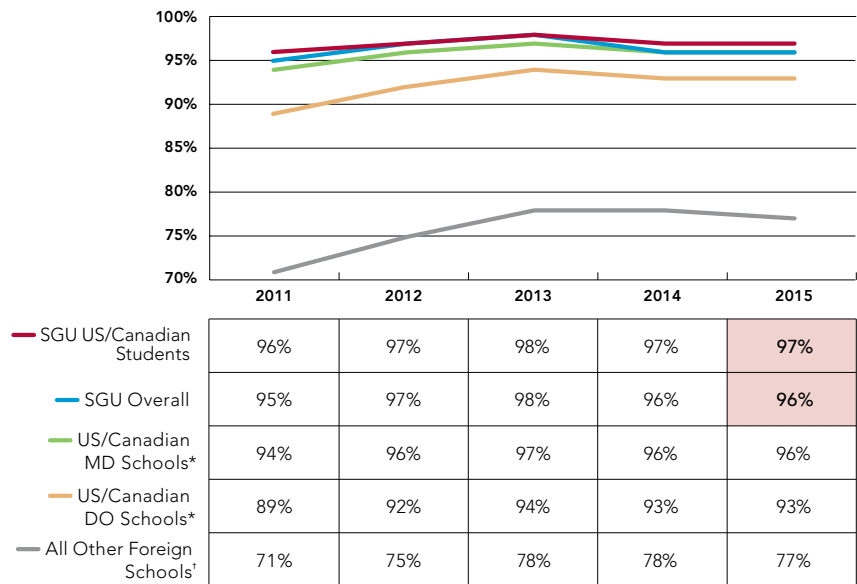
St. George's University students continue to make the grade on the first major step on the way to becoming a practicing physician in the US—the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1. SGU students taking the exam for the first time in 2015 registered a 96 percent pass rate, a mark achieved by students from 45 countries. These students recorded an impressive mean score of 224.

“We congratulate these students on their individual success as well as their efforts collectively,” said Dr. Stephen Weitzman, Dean of St. George's University School of Medicine. “Their aptitude on the USMLE 1 is a testament to their commitment to their studies and their future. In addition, we applaud our faculty and staff, who take great pride in preparing students with the knowledge and skills they need to develop into highly successful physicians.” St. George's University students from the United States and Canada who took the test for the first time posted a pass rate of 97 percent. The same category of test takers from US and Canadian medical schools registered a 96

percent pass rate, while students from US and Canadian osteopathic medical schools passed at a 93 percent clip. The 2015 pass rate marked the fifth consecutive year that the University's overall first-time pass rate on the exam surpassed 95 percent. Designed to measure basic science knowledge, the USMLE Step

1 is comprised of more than 300 multiple-choice questions on topics ranging from the biology of cells and human development to the central nervous, musculoskeletal, and endocrine systems, among others. A passing score on all three parts of the USMLE is required to practice medicine in the US. ■

USMLE Step 1 First-Time Test Takers' Pass Rates 2011–2015



*usmle.org/performance-data
†Excluding SGU



Gervette Penny

SAS Grad Earns Competitive PhD Scholarship

School of Arts and Sciences graduate Gervette Penny has been awarded a full PhD scholarship to Washington University. Ms. Penny, who is one of only 80 students selected, will begin her studies in August in molecular genetics and genomics, an area that draws over 1,200 applications each year to the St. Louis-based institution.

Born and raised in Grenada, Ms. Penny matriculated to SGU as a life sciences student in 2007. After graduating in 2010, she

became a Supplemental Learning Demonstrator in the Department of Educational Services, where her main role was to conduct collaborative review groups in molecular biology and microbiology, as well as assist with the training of student facilitators and clinical tutors. For her dedication, she was awarded the Student Government Association (SGA) Outstanding Faculty Award for Exceptional Contribution and Continued Support of Students in Spring 2015. ■

Medical Student Helps Drive Surgery Legislation in Washington

When Mohammad “Moody” Kassem, a third-year clinical student at St. George’s University, traveled to Washington, DC for the American Clinical Congress’ Leadership and Advocacy Summit in April, he expected to play a supporting role in lobbying for the organization’s objectives. Instead, he found himself as one of the lead voices in the Surgical Workforce’s efforts to ensure the availability of general surgery where it is most needed across the United States.

Mr. Kassem, who is currently rotating at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo, OH, visited the nation’s capitol from April 8-12. During that time, he and a team of ACS representatives met with a host of politicians on a variety of topics. Mr. Kassem headed his team’s presentation for the Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act of 2016. According to Mr. Kassem, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) designates funds and resources for its health professional shortage areas (HPSA), or underserved populations in the United States, in the realms of dental medicine, mental health, and general medicine. Surgery, however, is not considered, yet the ACS argued that it should be based on the critical service it provides.

“We need to figure out which areas are short on surgeons, what is considered a surgical shortage, and work toward having funds allocated for the areas most in need,” Mr. Kassem said. “We also want to incentivize this program so physicians are encouraged to stay in these communities that are underserved and improve the quality of care and life of these patients. It would give them a better chance of living through a traumatic experience, and it would save money for the government because these are lawsuits that you can prevent.”

The Surgical Workforce throng, approximately 500 people in number, was divided into small groups. Each presented on the five initiatives on the ACS agenda. When it came time to present for his delegate team, Mr. Kassem, who was well versed on his assigned topic, was asked to lead the presentation despite being, by his estimation, the only medical student among the 500 Workforce representatives.

“After giving the first presentation, I felt good about it,” said Mr. Kassem, who is set to earn his Doctor of Medicine from SGU in 2017. “I loved the interaction with such influential leaders. The overall process was extremely interesting. Political leaders forgot about partisan views and reached across the political lines in order to work together and help their constituents. The experience pushed my drive to pursue politics even further.”

The Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act (H.R. 4959) gained the support of US Representatives Larry Bucshon (R-IN) and Ami Bera (D-CA), both of whom are physicians, and on April 15, they proposed



Third-year medical student Mohammad “Moody” Kassem as part of the American Clinical Congress’ Leadership and Advocacy Summit in Washington, DC.

the bill, which “would direct the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the designation of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).” Mr. Kassem expects the bill to be brought to the floor of the US Senate and House of Representatives, and if it passes there, it would be brought to the sitting US President to be signed into law.

The experience was a boon for him as he hopes to one day marry his two passions—medicine and politics. For four days, ACS physicians and administrators led demonstrations on leadership and advocacy topics ranging from how to handle stressful situations to how to propose and push a bill through political channels. It led up to the fifth and final day, during which its representatives lobbied with state politicians for their support.

Politics has long been in Mr. Kassem’s blood. He came to SGU after having earned his Bachelor of Science in biological sciences from Wright State University. There, he heavily involved himself in student groups, including Director of International Affairs, as well as Student Affairs, for the Student Government Association. He was an active member of the



Mohammad Kassem with US Representative Phil Roe (R-TN)



... spent five days in Washington, DC, ... and Advocacy Summit.

SGA at SGU, while also serving as an Academic Enhancement Program Cohort leader, Footstep Buddy, human anatomy demonstrator, and biochemistry tutor.

“I’ve been involved in leadership organizations going back to middle school,” Mr. Kassem said. “I like coaching, teaching, and being taught. I would like to become a leader in politics, and I think the best path is to get started early, get to know many people, and move your way up.”

In addition to his lobbying experience in Washington, he met and networked with an array of politicians, who offered him guidance on how to launch his political career and balance it with his career in medicine. When he completes his MD, Mr. Kassem hopes to obtain a surgery or emergency medicine residency, and then explore fellowship opportunities in either the surgery or EM realm.

Of his experience in Washington, DC, Mr. Kassem said, “It allowed me to see the possibility of helping my patients beyond the individual level and instead, through making a larger impact on patient care by advocating for better medical legislation and policy.” ■

Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act of 2016

OBJECTIVE

To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the designation of surgical health professional shortage areas.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act of 2016”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

- (1) According to the Bureau of Health Workforce, the United States faces a shortage of physicians.
- (2) In order to accurately prepare for future physician workforce demands, comprehensive, impartial research and high quality data is needed to inform dynamic projections of physician workforce needs.
- (3) A variety of factors, including health outcomes, utilization trends, growing and aging populations, and delivery system changes, influence workforce needs and should be considered as part of flexible projections of workforce needs.
- (4) Given the particularly acute needs for surgeons in many rural areas, additional efforts to assess adequacy of the current surgeon workforce are necessary.

SEC. 3. STUDY ON DESIGNATION OF SURGICAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS.

(a) Study.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services (in this section referred to as the “Secretary”) shall conduct a study on the following matters relating to access by underserved populations to general surgeons:

- (1) Whether the designation of health professional shortage areas under section 332 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254e) results in accurate assessments of the adequacy of local general surgeons to address the needs of underserved populations in urban, suburban, or rural areas.
- (2) Whether another measure of access to general surgeons by underserved populations, such as hospital service areas, would provide more accurate assessments of shortages in the availability of local general surgeons to meet the needs of those populations.
- (3) The appropriateness of establishing the designation under such section 332 of surgical health professional shortage areas (as defined in subsection (b)).

(b) Surgical Health Professional Shortage Area Defined.—For purposes of this section, the term “surgical health professional shortage area” means, with respect to an urban, suburban or rural area in the United States, an area with a population that is underserved by general surgeons.

(c) Designation of Surgical Health Professional Shortage Area (SHPSA).

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the study under this section, the Secretary shall consider potential methodologies for the designation of surgical health professional shortage areas, including—

- (A) the criteria under which areas are designated as health professional shortage areas under section 332 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254e); and
- (B) the methodology described in paragraph (2).

(2) METHODOLOGY FOR THE DESIGNATION OF A SHPSA.—Among the methodologies considered under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall analyze the potential effectiveness and accuracy of the following methodology:

(A) DEVELOPMENT OF SURGERY SERVICE AREAS.—Development of surgery service areas through the identification of hospitals with surgery services and the identification of populations by zip code areas using Medicare patient origin data.

(B) IDENTIFICATION OF SURGEONS.—Identification of all actively practicing general surgeons.

(C) SURGEON TO POPULATION RATIOS.—Development of general surgeon-to-population ratios for each surgery service area.

(D) THRESHOLDS.—Determination of threshold general surgeon-to-population ratios for the number of general surgeons necessary to treat a population for each of the following levels:

- (i) Optimal supply of general surgeons.
- (ii) Adequate supply of general surgeons.
- (iii) Shortage of general surgeons.
- (iv) Critical shortage of general surgeons.

(d) Consultation.—In conducting the study under this section, the Secretary shall consult with relevant stakeholders with appropriate expertise, including representatives of organizations representing surgeons and patients.

(e) Report.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the study conducted under this section, including such recommendations for legislation or administrative action as the Secretary determines appropriate.

Follow H. R. 4959 at congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4959

Priya Garg

Class of 2004
School of Medicine



Every March, medical students eagerly await their fate on Match Day. It's the first step in their medical careers, and a big one at that. As the Pediatric Residency Program Director at the Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, MA, Priya Garg, MD SGU '04, annually experiences the excitement, reviewing hundreds of résumés and conducting dozens of interviews en route to welcoming a new class of residents each summer.

"It's a lot of work, but there are many, many benefits," she said. "I have the best job in the world because I teach people who are excited about learning."

The Floating program is highly competitive, drawing 1,800 applications for just 13 positions in 2016. She and her team conducted approximately 200 interviews, during which time she endeavored to get to the heart of individuals' interest in the program and in medicine.

"First and foremost, we're looking for someone who really wants to be at our program," Dr. Garg said. "A lot of people love the location, but we want someone who appreciates the learning environment here. Our program is medium sized and very resident-driven. Residents have to be comfortable being on the front line of patient care. Also, we are looking for people who know who they are, and have loved something throughout their life and have shown that throughout their career."

She recognizes the value of St. George's graduates, and in 2014,

"There hasn't been one step in my career where I was worried that I didn't learn what I needed to learn, or where I felt that I wasn't as good or better than the people I worked with."

Floating Hospital welcomed its first-ever resident from SGU. Ten years prior, Dr. Garg, too, matched in pediatrics, joining University of Maryland School of Medicine and ascending to the rank of Chief Resident in 2007. She worked as an attending physician at UMD for a year before accepting the hospitalist position at Floating Hospital.

In addition to her directorship, Dr. Garg splits her time between serving as a Pediatric Hospitalist at FHC, as well as Associate Designated Institutional Official, focusing on improving the quality and safety in graduate medical education at Tufts. In her role as hospitalist, she helps treat children who have been hospitalized, teaching and observing senior residents, interns, and medical students as they interact

with patients and their families. Dr. Garg also mentors fellows and junior faculty who are interested in an educational career.

"The most rewarding part is seeing medical students and residents graduate," she said. "It's wonderful to see a medical student fall in love with what you do, and to see residents evolve into physicians who take care of patients on their own. Being part of constructing that is amazing."

Dr. Garg relishes the opportunity to practice medicine at Tufts, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in quantitative economics in 1998. Several of Dr. Garg's classmates who graduated before her went on to excel at SGU, so when she was waitlisted for US schools, she jumped at the opportunity to obtain her medical education in Grenada.

"It was one of the best decisions of my life, hands-down," Dr. Garg said. "There hasn't been one step in my career where I was worried that I didn't learn what I needed to learn, or where I felt that I wasn't as good or better than the people I worked with."

At Floating Hospital, Dr. Garg cherishes the opportunity to treat community members, as well as train others to do the same.

"I also get to know these 39 residents in a very personal way," she said. "They treat me like family, and I treat them like family. It makes you really proud to see them finish. Not everyone is in the same place at the beginning, but everybody gets there in the end. That's the nice thing. It's my commitment to them." ■

Brandon Francis

Class of 2006
School of Medicine

The direction of the department will be his to determine, and Brandon Francis, MD/MPH SGU '06, looks forward to the opportunity.

Upon completing his fellowship in neurocritical care at Chicago's Northwestern Memorial Hospital this summer, Dr. Francis will move across Lake Michigan to become the Neurocritical Care Medical Director at Mercy Health St. Mary's Campus in Grand Rapids.

"It's a lot of responsibility, but because of the mentorship I have received through the years, I'm ready to take on the challenge," said Dr. Francis. "I'm having so much fun every day. I find it fascinating. I've been fortunate to have this unique critical care experience, and it has been a privilege to work with my colleagues each day."

His path to a career in a highly competitive field is an unusual one. After graduating from St. George's University in 2006, Dr. Francis completed a five-year internal medicine/psychiatry combined residency post at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Then, inspired by two of his uncles, Stephen and Dennis, Dr. Francis began a three-year enlistment with the United States Army Medical Command in 2011, a stint that included a six-month tour at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. He served as Chief of Consult Liaison Psychiatry under retired colonel Linda Evans at Fort Gordon in Augusta, GA, and received an Army Commendation Medal and Meritorious Service Medal during his term.



"I'm blessed to be where I am, and if I can help someone else and get them to be where they want to be, who wouldn't want that?"

"There are few other groups who are more deserving of high-level care than the military and our veterans," said Dr. Francis, who has stayed on as a Major in the US Army Reserves. "I met some wonderful people in the military. I learned a lot at residency, and when I finished that, I met some wonderful people like Dr. Evans who had been practicing for years."

In practice, Dr. Francis' perspective has been shaped by the numerous triumphs that he and his team have enjoyed. In addition, he draws inspiration from the challenges he has faced—two specific cases in particular—to remind him to keep learning along the way.

"I reached out for help, and the physicians who had been out of residency for 15-20 years were

stumped also," Dr. Francis said. "It's scary. I learned a lot from that experience, having to sit with this discomfort and feeling the need for more training."

His training began at Philadelphia University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in biochemistry in 2001. When he was denied admission to US schools, Dr. Francis instead chose to enroll at St. George's University, a decision that has paid dividends.

"It's a wonderful place," Dr. Francis said. "It has great teachers who have been very kind to me and are at the top of what they do."

Prior to earning his MD, Dr. Francis graduated from SGU's Master of Public Health program. In building his public health profile, Dr. Francis received education on the True Blue campus as well as beyond its boundaries, participating in the Uganda research selective through the campus-based Windward Islands Research & Education Foundation.

Since graduating, Dr. Francis has gone on to receive guidance from a wide variety of renowned neurologists. He is committed to paying it forward to the Mercy staff beginning this summer.

"I love learning and I love teaching," he said. "When I'm working and interacting with residents and fellows, it teaches me a lot in the process. It's so much fun. I'm blessed to be where I am, and if I can help someone else get them to be where they want to be, who wouldn't want that?" ■

The Chronicle



St. George's University
THINK BEYOND

c/o University Support Services, LLC
The North American Correspondent
3500 Sunrise Highway, Building 300
Great River, New York 11739-9002