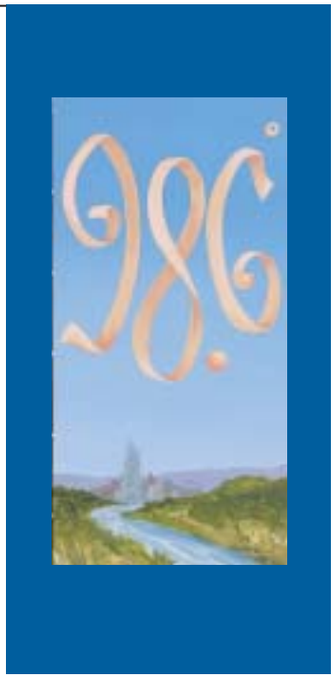
People and programs that keep the school healthy and vibrant

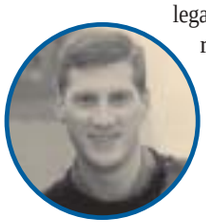


STANDOUTS

THE CLASSES OF 2001 AND 2002 SET EXAMPLES

BY MARK DRAGOTTA

When the envelope came, it seemed to validate Matthew Agnew's existence. After earning a bachelor's in history from Princeton University, Agnew spent three years in Manhattan, one as a paralegal in the district attorney's office, two raising money for a fund that sent South African blacks to college. For much of that time, however, he thought about following his father and sister into medicine. So Agnew quit his job and New York life and moved to Boston to take premed classes at night at the Harvard Extension School. Over the next two years he opened 35 rejection letters until Pitt offered him a chance with the Class of 2001.



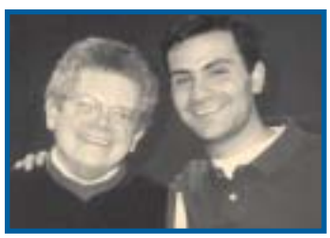
Agnew

Brett Perricelli received a rejection letter, another noting that he'd made the wait list, and finally an acceptance letter, all in the same year from the School of Medicine. Soon after his last correspondence from Pitt, he was packing up and leaving his apartment in Hershey, Pennsylvania, where he had already enrolled in the medicine program at Penn State University (his dad's alma mater).

Agnew, MD '01, and Perricelli, MD '02, each would become president of his class. The struggle to get there only increased their attachment to the school. "I felt like I had something to prove," says Agnew, now a general surgery resident at the University of Washington. He didn't disappoint: Agnew co-coordinated the Surgical Interest Group, served on curriculum committees, was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society, and started the Class of 2001 Fund. During his fourth year of med school, Agnew sent e-mails to his classmates, called them on the phone, even stopped them in the hallways, to ask for a pledge to their school, whatever they could afford, once a year for four years after they graduated.

Perricelli, now a general surgery resident at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital, showed the admissions committee they hadn't made a mistake in choosing him for one of those coveted 150 spots. Like Agnew, he helped to lead the Surgical Interest Group; he also was awarded the Merck Book Award for student leadership and started a class fund. Perricelli set up a network of some 20 graduates, each responsible for calling 10 classmates to remind them of their pledges.

The enterprising ways of Agnew and Perricelli make their classes stand out. On average, less than a quarter of the members of a class donate to the School of Medicine after graduation. Yet, so far 60 percent of the Class of 2001 has made donations. Similarly 59 percent of the Class of 2002 pledged donations—at a time when grads have an average debt burden of $128,000.



FROM LEFT: professor Jamie Johnston and Perricelli

Officers for both classes plan to meet at Pitt during their five-year reunions to decide how to use the funds. Some possibilities include endowing scholarships and professorships, funding projects and student groups—anything that adds texture and value to the learning environment at Pitt. "Maybe," Agnew says, "in 50 years we can pay for everyone's education."

Beyond the money raised, Agnew and Perricelli agree, a class fund is a chance for classmates to keep in touch with one another and the University and start a tradition. "A lot of people go through their education without ever feeling a real attachment to a place," says Agnew. "If you're part of something larger it makes your time there and afterward a richer experience."

FOR MORE INFORMATION: **877-MED-ALUM**

BOOSTER SHOTS

After Richard N. Harris, MD '74, died in May 2001, fellow med school alum **John Kokales, MD '73,** wanted to honor a friend with whom he'd shared an internal medicine practice in Pittsburgh. So came to be the **Harris Memorial Golf Outing**. The event is about more than fixing your slice. With the help of local physicians, businesses, UPMC Health System, and pharmaceutical companies, the first tourney netted $30,000 for a fund in Harris' name set aside for scholarships to medical students from Pennsylvania. As we went to press, Kokales and a few other alumni were getting ready for a second tournament.

Charles William Vates Jr., MD '45, maintained his ties with the School of Medicine long after graduation. After all, his parents, Charles William Vates Sr. and Rose Stanley Vates, were members of the Class of 1912. So, in the years before he died in 1993, Vates Jr. donated more than $450,000 to a low-interest medical student loan fund established in memory of his parents. Since then, his sister, **Elizabeth Vates**, has upheld the Pittsburgh family's connection to Pitt, now donating in her brother's name. She most recently made a gift of $200,000 to the loan fund. —*DRE* ■

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