

Diversity and Inclusion

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Alumni Column: Biftu Mengesha, '11, MD

I wasn't one of those people who knew as a kid what I wanted to be when I grew up. I started college thinking I was going to be a meteorologist. In my first semester of college, I learned that meteorology wasn't the right path for me, and surprisingly found myself really loving my life sciences courses, which brought me to explore medicine. I volunteered on a labor and delivery unit at a local community hospital and knew right away this was what I needed to do. I wanted to be a part of helping others in a time when they may be the most vulnerable, and I was drawn to the strength and trust in the patient-physician relationship.

I had a similar realization when I visited Feinberg while interviewing for medical school – it just felt right in so many ways. I wasn't 100 percent certain that I was ready to leave my home state of Colorado and my family for medical school – until I visited Feinberg. I walked into the doors of the Tarry building when I came for my interview on that cold December day, and from the moment I set foot inside I knew I was where I absolutely needed to be. Seeing how happy the students were, the incredibly accomplished yet completely approachable faculty and mentors available to students, the rigor and flexibility of the curriculum, and the breadth of activities and experiences students were engaged in had me walking out of that interview day knowing that Feinberg was my perfect match.

What I felt on that interview day rang true for me throughout medical school, as well as throughout my OBGYN residency at Northwestern. I'm so grateful for the education I received, the mentors I had and the multitude of opportunities that were available to me. From a clinical standpoint, my education was unparalleled in caring for a diverse patient population afforded to us by being in an urban setting as well as by the clinical complexity and acuity at a tertiary care center. Additionally as a black woman in medicine, I felt welcome from day one by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion; I felt a true sense of belonging and had strong support in a career that once wasn't as inclusive of women like myself. And on a personal level, I also have met some of my best friends at Northwestern and I'm incredibly thankful that Feinberg brought them into my life.

Now, as I'll soon be finishing fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco and looking forward to my future career, I'm so thankful for what Feinberg has given me. Feinberg is where I fell in love with medical education and was given the necessary tools, skills and foundation to be able to pursue the academic career I wanted. There

are few things as gratifying to me as fulfilling the role of clinician-educator, and Feinberg set me along the path of discovering my passion for this. Feinberg is where I made irreplaceable relationships with mentors that continue with me today – and I hope to pay it forward by being the best mentor possible for future trainees. Feinberg is where I learned the importance of diversity in medicine; I am committed to the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in medicine as well as creating an environment of equity and inclusivity because of the support that was shown to me by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Going forward, I now will be able to exercise what Feinberg taught me: providing approachable mentorship, placing a high value on medical education and a having genuine love for working in a multidisciplinary training setting while providing compassionate patient care. I'll be starting my dream job as an academic faculty member here at UCSF this fall, and I know that I have Feinberg to thank for getting me here.



Biftu Mengesha, '11, MD

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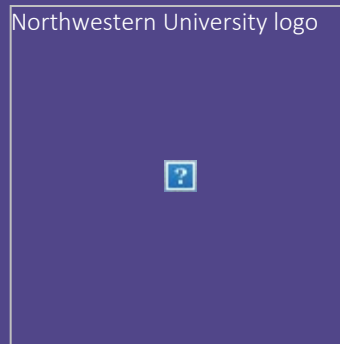
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