

One for all, all for one

Known as the “Three Musketeers,” these Franklin College students have serious academic and professional goals

By Ruhanna Neal

A trio of young men arrive at Old College on North Campus for the monthly Franklin College Student Ambassadors meeting, and I smile as I watch a mutual-admiration society at work. Seniors Nnamdi Asika and Michael Kassin laugh and chat with fellow pre-med student Jarrad Rowse (a junior), about classes, MCATs, and life in general. Beneath the jovial chatter are three serious-minded young men focused on futures in the medical field.

I talked with Asika, Kassin, and Rowse and invited them to share their thoughts about their experiences at UGA.

The scholastic strength of the University of Georgia was the foremost reason for all three in deciding to attend UGA. “I knew I wanted to go to a school with a strong science program, so I could get the best education and knowledge I needed to get into medical school,” says Asika, whose hometown is Stone Mountain. “UGA was close to home, and I learned of how highly touted the science program was.”

Rigorous science classes, such as “Introduction to Biochemistry,” not only challenged the three but confirmed their choice for a career in medicine.

“BCMB 4010 was my favorite class,” Kassin says, “because it taught me about how complex and fragile, yet resilient the

inner workings of life are, and gave me a new perspective on how to live.”

Rowse agrees, saying friends tried to warn him of the difficult biochemistry curriculum, but he found the courses both challenging and stimulating. “I seemed to breeze through the courses . . . so I did what any over-achieving ‘science nerd’ would. I added cellular biology as a second major,” he jokes.

But the strength of UGA’s science program was not the only factor that helped these men make their decision to attend this university. UGA’s outstanding sports programs and the diversity of a large student body also appealed to all three. “I like the idea of being somewhere with so many different types of people,” says Asika.

With more than 30,000 students on campus, UGA offers a myriad of opportu-



The “Three Musketeers,” (l-r) Jarrad Rowse, Michael Kassin and Nnamdi Asika

nities to become involved in student clubs and organizations. Asika, Kassin, and Rowse found time to balance the stress of their demanding majors by taking part in such organizations as the American Red Cross, AED Pre-Medical Honor Society, student government, HERO, and the Franklin College Student Ambassadors program. To relax they find time to be with friends, jog, watch television, and listen to music.

Medical school destinations for these three vary as much as their interests in medicine. Kassin, who grew up in Peachtree City, will attend Emory University School of Medicine this fall and hopes to study oncology. “My mother had cancer when I was in middle school. She passed away my freshman year of college,” Kassin says. It was this experience that influenced his decision to go into oncology. “I hope to be an academic oncologist as well as have an influence in the health policy of our nation,” he adds.

Asika will attend the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta with an interest in cardiology. “My grandfather and my father have been my biggest influences in pursu-



WILLIAM WEEMS

Franklin College students among those participating in week-long CURO international symposium in Costa Rica

Twelve UGA students, along with 12 Universidad de Costa Rica students, participated in an international undergraduate research symposium in May at the UGA campus in San Luis de Monteverde, Costa Rica. This is the second year that UGA and UCR have partnered on an interdisciplinary study abroad research experience, hosted by the Honors Program's Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO) and UGA Costa Rica.

"The CURO International Research Symposium in Costa Rica combines key elements in an honors education at the University of Georgia—research, study abroad and international civic engagement—into one exciting five-day experience for some of our top students who join top students from Universidad de Costa Rica," said David S. Williams, director of UGA's Honors Program.

The 24 students had the opportunity to present their research projects in a variety of disciplines ranging from economics to infectious diseases during the week-long symposium. They also shared their ideas, culture, and experiences in a relaxed setting during hiking, bird-watching, and other activities designed to explore the campus and surrounding Monteverde region.

During the visit, the students also completed a service-learning project that benefited the region and participated in UGA Costa Rica's carbon offset program, planting trees that will offset carbon

emissions related to their travel abroad and help establish long-term research sites as part of the Monteverde Biological Corridor project.

Franklin College students attending the symposium were Lee Ellen Carter of Macon (anthropology); Lauren Kelly of Alpharetta (microbiology, Spanish); Aqsa Mahmud of Conyers (political science, psychology); Diana Murro (Martinez) (microbiology, Spanish); Tulsi Patel of Acworth (genetics); Cleveland Piggott of Suwanee (psychology, biology); Traci Tucker of Roswell (sociology, psychology); Manouela Valtcheva of Alpharetta (psychology, biology); and Seychelle Vos of Seneca, S.C. (genetics).

ing a career in medicine," Asika says. "My dad is an emergency physician, and I just admire and respect everything he does."

Rowse will consider his options for medical school closer to the end of his senior year; however he has his eyes set on the University of California–San Francisco. "It is not only one of the top research and medical institutions in the country but also San Francisco is one of my favorite cities in the world," Rowse said, whose focus will be pathobiology and molecular medicine.

I asked whether, as upperclassmen, they had any advice for freshmen.

"Study abroad," Asika advises. "You won't regret it. Do well your freshman year to set the foundation for the rest of your years."

"Take every opportunity at the university to your benefit, using them as a learning experience," Rowse says. "Make new friends and really get to know your professors."

Kassin encourages students get involved in campus life. "Meet as many people as possible, all the while asking yourself, 'who am I and what do I stand for?'" ■



Leading the group as they zipline beneath the jungle canopy are three Franklin College students (l-r) Manouela Valtcheva, Lee Ellen Carter, and Cleveland Piggott.