

**IAFP Student Delegate Report**  
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My first experience at the AAFP National Conference was a phenomenal one, which further confirmed my love for the field of family medicine. Anyone considering family medicine should experience the enthusiasm and passion of those going before us that can only help fuel our motivations to become life-long agents of change in our nation.

I have been encouraged and supported in my desire to become a family physician by many family docs at my school and during my 3<sup>rd</sup> year rotations. But I have equally been discouraged by attending physicians in other fields that have questioned my specialty choice with dismissive to outright negative comments. However, as soon as I stepped inside the exhibition hall at the National Conference, all of these nagging judgments quickly dissipated as I became acutely aware of the energy and buzz surrounding FM at the convention. The excitement was so palpable that throughout the weekend my fellow students and I continue to talk about how it was such a refreshing burst of air to be around other like-minded individuals excited about the endless possibilities in family medicine.

The speeches by inspirational individuals gave a good framework when thinking about future goals and pondering your place in the field. I found the workshops I attended especially helpful in dispelling some of the myths that I've heard about family medicine. The presentations gave me real data on issues that concerned me. For instance I attended the *Maternal Care and Childbirth* workshop, which gave me specific statistics and data regarding the ability of family physicians to practice OB if they desired. This helped dispel some of the rhetoric that I got from OB/GYN doctors who time and time again told me that if I actually wanted to practice OB I was crazy to go into FM.

Other workshops I found helpful included applying to residency, wilderness medicine and fellowships in FM. These workshops are excellent sources of knowledge on discovering where your niche in FM might be, through real life examples of those physicians on the front lines doing the work that you hope to be doing in the future.

As a delegate, I had the unique opportunity to be Illinois' voting member on the many resolutions that were put forth to the body of student congress. This was a new experience to me and I think I would have greatly benefited from attending a previous conference in order to more fully take advantage of the opportunity to submit resolutions. Nonetheless, it was a great experience to be able to vote and discuss the issues important to the student members.

I find it rewarding to see so many individuals passionate about so many topics that have significant impact on our colleagues and patients. Some of the resolutions that stood out to me included topics such as the standardization of refugee health care, creating a global health database with information of current/past physicians doing international work, and supporting a single payer model of health care reform. Both the student congress and the

resident congress came out in support of endorsing a public health plan option, which clearly is a headline issue on our national stage. It was very important for us to make our statement on this subject, in a time where the future of our nation's healthcare system is at stake and we will be carrying the torch of whatever legislation comes out of Washington.

It was also interesting to see some of the more hotly debated topics amongst the students. There were also resolutions that were discussed that did pass for various reasons, including one resolution supporting the increase in the number of residency spots in FM. The resolution was defeated on the grounds that a similar resolution was previously passed. Other resolutions that I voted for that did not pass included the AAFP publicly supporting gay and lesbian couples wanting to adopt children. It was voted down on the grounds that the AAFP has already stated its belief in equal opportunity and did not see the need for specifically outlining this issue.

Fun and laughter also peppered the experience with "80s night" events and dinners, affording everyone the opportunity to chat with colleagues and residency programs in a more informal atmosphere. The conference provides such a unique opportunity to explore programs throughout the country and attend diverse workshops, that I would highly encourage anyone considering the field to explore this opportunity early in the decision-making process. As I was a first-time attendee and had the additional delegate responsibilities, there were so many more workshops that I would have loved to attend and programs I wanted to talk to, but simply did not have the time.

I would encourage all 4<sup>th</sup> year students, and especially 3<sup>rd</sup> year students, to experience all that family medicine has to offer. Anyone interested in applying for the delegate position or wanting more information about the conference, please feel free to contact me: [mferguson@lumc.edu](mailto:mferguson@lumc.edu).

Thank you for the opportunity to help represent the IAFP.