

SCOPE



Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
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On The Cover:

Beacon of Solitude

2nd Place Photography

Abdul Moiz Hafiz, MD

Faculty

SCOPE

Scope is the literary arts magazine of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. This publication showcases the depth of talent within our campus community as we seek to enrich our lives through creativity. SIU School of Medicine encourages our patients, employees and learners to pursue wellness of the body and soul, and we are proud to provide an outlet for some of those pursuits here.

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2025

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 32nd edition of Scope, the literary arts journal of SIU School of Medicine. Since 1994, Scope has been a creative refuge for our medical school community—a place where students, physicians, faculty, and staff can share their unique, artistic voices.

As someone with a background in writing, I have found Scope to be a constant source of joy throughout my medical training. Contributing to and now editing this publication has reminded me that art and science are deeply intertwined. The stories, poetry, photography, and artwork in these pages reflect not only talent, but also the depth of human experience we encounter every day.

This edition is a testament to the vibrant artistic spirit within our community. Whether you are a longtime reader or discovering Scope for the first time, I hope this edition inspires you, moves you, and perhaps even encourages you to share your own creative voice in the future!

Jenna Ribbing
Co-Editor

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Starfish Beach, Panama

First Place Photography

Nathan Grant Bernacet

Community

Haiku Collection of the Medical Students

First Place Poetry

Adam Western

Student, Class of 2025

The Beginning...

First birth I've witnessed,
The baby's first breath, a cry,
I can't help but smile

Only 15 Minutes

History taking.
"Tell me, when did this begin?"
The patient sighs deep.

Anatomy

Late nights, books open,
Cadavers whisper nearby,
Bones and nerves align.

Student's toil

Questions fill my mind,
Answers buried in the book,
Learning takes its time.

The Patient's Question

Patient's question: "Why?"
I answer, "I'm not quite sure"
Later, I Google!

Operating Room Disaster

"That smell," said surgeon
"A perforated bowel?"
No, student passed wind.

Next Strain

Cries in the hallway,
Flu season fills up the rooms,
Children's lives to save

Seeing Eye-to-Eye

Blinded, need consult
But if only I could spell...
"Ophthohmology"?

The Dermatology Resident

I see her beauty
And it takes my breath away
New onset Asthma.

Resident Breakroom

What I crave on shift
That which is wrapped in plastic
Girl Scout Samoa's

The Rounds Confusion

Rounds are underway,
I nod and smile with no clue—
Was there a question?

Scrubbing In

Sutures, sharp and clean,
Each stitch a path to restore,
Hope in every knot

Compounds and Complexities

The Stanford Pathway
A first-year student's nightmare...
Biochemistry

Paths

Microscope's lens shine,
Cells divide in silent dance,
Life's secrets revealed

The Scrub Dilemma

Scrubs so fresh and clean,
Stain appears out of nowhere,
Not even lunch. Great.

My Vice

“Avoid Drugs” we say
But, on my fourth espresso,
A shot for the soul.

Pager Duty

A code blue rings out,
Adrenaline floods my veins,
I watch, and learn fast.

...And The End.

As pulse fades away,
I stand as time slips through me,
Death’s quiet lesson.



Snow Day

Tina Ludwig

Staff



Chicago

Third Place Photography

Mackenzie Sanner

Staff

Perspective

Second Place Poetry

Hailey Hollinshead

Student, Class of 2025

Our healthcare system will never see better days
And I simply do not believe
We can overcome profit-seeking behavior in medicine

Making money
Is more important than
The right to healthcare

And we need to accept that
The system only benefits the wealthy
It is pointless to fight for a future where
Making health care affordable is possible

It may take time to recognize, but
Our passion for medicine is no match for corporate greed
And only a fool would think
Our generation is capable of making a meaningful difference

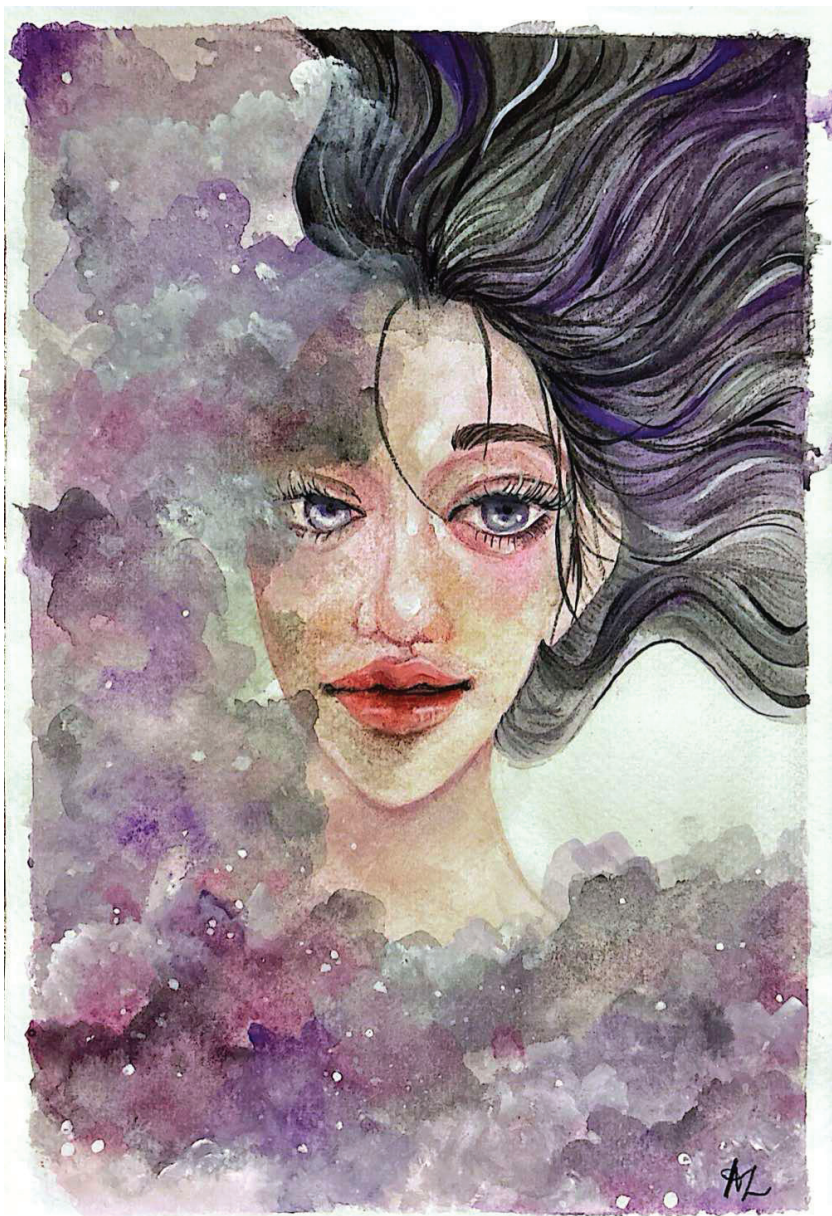
This argument may be a met with resistance, but
Equitable care is an impossible feat
And we should reject the idea that
Advocating for vulnerable patients is foundational to our medical oath

There is absolutely no doubt
We fail to see our patients as more than names on lists
And we will not live in a world where
We will overcome our biases and practice medicine simultaneously

We are in agreement that
Our allegiance will lie with big pharma and insurance
I just cannot imagine a reality where
Change is possible.

Maybe we should just start over, from the bottom up?

you are invited to read in the reverse the order



Serenity

Third Place Art

Gouache

Amy Lee

Student, Class of 2027

Imagine a Woman

Second Place Prose

Beth Ingalsbe, RN

Staff

Imagine a woman, unshackled by the whispers of history, who strides into the future with the grace of her convictions, cradling her spirit. A woman who wears her identity as a tapestry of unparalleled beauty, woven from threads of trials and triumphs, failures and feats.

Imagine a woman whose love for herself is so profound, it radiates like dawn's first light, casting out darkness with the luminescence of self-acceptance. A woman who gazes into the mirror and sees not just flesh, but the stardust of her soul, the resilience of her heart, the wisdom of her mind.

Imagine a woman who speaks with the eloquence of authenticity, whose words are not merely heard but felt, like the reverberations of a deep, ancient drum echoing through the canyons of existence. A woman whose laughter is a melody that plays the tune of genuine contentment and whose tears are the sacred waters that cleanse and renew her vision.

Imagine a woman who is an architect of her destiny, a sculptor of her dreams, a painter of her experiences, and a composer of her reality. A woman who crafts her life as a masterpiece, celebrating each stroke of challenge and each hue of joy with the reverence of a true artist.

Imagine a woman whose strength is forged in the fires of courage and cooled in the waters of wisdom. A woman who stands firm in the face of adversity yet moves with the fluid grace of a river, knowing when to push against the obstacles and when to flow around them.

Imagine a woman who loves fiercely, with a heart unbound by conditionality constraints. A woman whose compassion is a beacon that guides the lost ships of the disillusioned to the shores of understanding and empathy.

Imagine a woman who transcends the myths of fragility and the legends of conquest. A woman who builds bridges with her presence and tears down walls with her insight. Who recognizes the interconnectedness of all beings and honors the web of life in which she is a vital thread.

Imagine a woman who reveres the temple of her body, who anoints herself with the oils of self-care and adorns herself with the jewels of self-respect. A woman who understands that her body is the vessel of her spirit, a sacred chalice brimming with the essence of her essence.

Imagine a woman whose intellect is her compass, whose intuition is her guide, whose reason is her roadmap, and whose imagination is her wings. A woman who sails the vast oceans of knowledge, not just as a passenger but as a captain, charting her own course toward enlightenment.

Imagine a woman who dares to dance to the rhythm of her own heart, who sings the songs of her own truths, and who writes the poetry of her own journey. A woman who embraces her individuality as the ultimate freedom, and who expresses her uniqueness as the ultimate gift.

Imagine a woman who is the embodiment of dignity, the epitome of grace, the personification of elegance, and the exemplar of virtue. A woman whose presence is a source of reassurance, and whose legacy is a tapestry of empowerment.

Imagine a woman so in love with herself that her very existence is a declaration of love to the world. A woman whose self-love is a beacon that lights the path for others to follow, illuminating the way toward a future where every woman can stand tall in the love of herself.

Imagine you, as this woman!

Piecing

Sumi Rebeiro, MD

Faculty

I have quilted all my life, sewing together patches
of found happiness,
turning and piecing
the color of the sky around the evening star
with the smell and taste of jasmine tea
with the happiness of a new or beloved poem
with a new place, a new subject, a new puzzle...
There is no well of joy within; rather
a lake that drinks from
many small streams.



tired

Jenna Ribbing

Student, Class of 2026

Period.

First Place Prose

Jenna Ribbing

Student, Class of 2026

I'm on the hunt for a handful of off-brand Tums. The inevitable post-Doordash heartburn has made it impossible to sleep and it's 1:00 AM; I need to be at the hospital by 6:30, out the door by 6:00. My alarm is set for 5:30 and I've begun the mental negotiation with myself — could I change it to 5:45, and not regret it? The linen closet is a jumble of pill bottles, towels, blankets, and band-aids. I rifle through everything like a gremlin — I've refused to turn on the hallway light because it's just too bright, but now I'm making a right mess and taking so long that the cats are sure to be eagerly taking advantage and tearing up our cache of paper towels. Something hollow and pointy tumbles from above and lands at my feet. I swear under my breath, shining my phone down to illuminate...a box of super plus tampons.

This same box used to live in my bathroom, right next to the toilet, for easy and prompt access. To ever leave anything just *laying about* is unheard of for me. I have a maddening drive for everything to have a designated home, to be put away, nice and clean and neurotically organized. The tampons had become a grudging exception to this rule in recent years, a decision made out of both practicality, desperation, and exhaustion.

Ask any woman, and it's certain they'll be able to recall the details of their first period. I was thirteen, it was a Sunday in January. My mom was out of town — my grandfather's health was in decline, and she'd been making frequent trips to Arkansas to coordinate his care. I was still in my PJs, lounging in the living room with my dad while he queued up a movie for us: *Silence of the Lambs*. Ironically appropriate, in a macabre way. I was excited to watch something not only rated R, but also something so *disturbing*.

About halfway through the film, something was amiss, and I realized immediately that it was THE day. I'd been preparing for this, anticipating this, and I knew exactly what to do. There was a package of pads waiting for me under my sink, ready to go. I was back in front of the TV in under five minutes, nonchalant like nothing was different. My dad hadn't even

noticed I'd gone. I decided against calling my mom. I didn't want to worry her or add more stress to her plate. I remember thinking, *It's no big deal. It's just a period.*

Three months later, the other girls at school started to chatter about *swimsuit season*. My pads were NOT going to cut it any longer. I scaled the sides of my bathroom cabinet, barefoot and feral, and retrieved my older sister's abandoned box of tampons. She was eight years my senior and living across the country — I was confident she wouldn't mind donating to my venerable cause. The cardboard was waxy, and colorful, and smelled a bit like stale air freshener. I unfolded the flimsy packet of instructions and warnings, made myself comfortable on the linoleum, and studied every single word closely, twice over. Shortly after, I waltzed out of the house like I was Superwoman. I was conspiratorial, invincible, mutinous — my body was not my enemy.

We had a kind of working relationship, my period and I. A mutual understanding. I accepted it as part of my life, welcomed it in the bittersweet manner all young girls must, and naively believed my autonomy would remain respected and intact in the aftermath.

I never considered that the sense of control I felt over what was happening inside me was a complete and utter deception.

On my 25th birthday, a physiological switch was flipped, and everything changed. Each month, as that time approached, I became near crippled with lower back pain and so fatigued it was tough to get out of bed. My migraines tripled in frequency. The corniest commercial could bring me to tears.

I went from mild and low maintenance bleeding to something comparable to body horror. I switched from light or regular tampons to super, then super plus, and then reluctantly layering diaper-thick pads underneath. Where a box could previously last me several months, now I was tearing into and emptying multiple in one cycle. My cramps became so violent I was convinced I had appendicitis or a twisted fallopian tube. I bled through so often that I began setting frequent alarms. It was mortifying — to be this old and having so many *accidents*. It seemed as if I was spending every day in the laundry room, angrily scrubbing stains and berating myself for not being able to *get it together*.

Nights were brutal. Up every two to three hours for a week straight. I'd scowl at my reflection in the mirror, red-rimmed and wispy, and waffle between helplessness and terror.

I was at my wit's end by the time an OB/GYN could see me, but *so* relieved to finally be getting some help.

The appointment lasted less than fifteen minutes.

I barely got a few sentences out before a script for oral birth control was in my hands and I was being ushered out the door. I remember sitting in the parking lot, zombie-staring through my windshield, wondering how I could feel even worse than I did before. I had tried various hormonal birth control pills in the past — they all caused such severe nausea that I had given up on it being a viable option for me. Maybe, if I could stick out the side effects for long enough, it would be worth it; I could get back the body not at war with itself.

I went to the pharmacy, picked up the prescription...and laughed in disbelief — *Ethinyl-Estradiol*.

I suffer from migraines with aura. Estrogen-containing medications increase my risk of having a stroke. My appointment may have been short, but I stated this numerous times.

The pills went straight in the trash, and I invested in a medical-grade incontinence pad to layer under my fitted mattress sheet. At war indeed, but I refused to yield.

Two years passed before I braved another OB/GYN visit. This appointment lasted a few minutes longer than the first, but ended much the same — the answer was hormonal birth control. I wearily accepted *another* prescription, verifying it was estrogen free. On the way out, it was blithely suggested that my periods might improve if I make adjustments to “lifestyle choices”. This was certainly not bad advice, but they had not asked about my “lifestyle choices” at all. And if they had, they would know that I was running eight to ten miles a day, that I was a strict vegan who was low sugar, caffeine-free, drank no alcohol, and had never smoked a cigarette a day in my life. What adjustments could possibly be left?

Ever hopeful, I gave them and their prescription the benefit of the doubt.

I bled nonstop for two weeks and was so nauseous I spent more time on the bathroom floor than anywhere else. I'd glare at the ceiling, palms on my abdomen, arguing with my uterus: "Is this your revenge for disappointing you every month?", and, "Why are you doing this to me?", and "Please, please, please, just calm down, I'm begging you."

Finally, I waved the white flag.

The remaining pills went straight in the trash, and I invested in countless packs of so-called "period underwear". I was an endurance runner, after all, and I knew a thing or two about persisting, even when you've hit a wall.

It took three more years and another failed doctor's visit — where I was told it was *stress* making my cycles pure hell, and that I should really start meditating — before I went to see someone who could finally help.

Their office was two hours away. I got up at 4:30 to make an 8:00 appointment, so I could be back in time for an 11:00 class. The doctor spoke with me for over half an hour. They sat down. They were curious. When I explained how my life was being taken over, stolen from me, how I couldn't make choices that weren't affected by what was going on in my body, how I couldn't sleep, travel, study, work, or simply exist without my menstrual cycle commandeering control...they listened. When they said they were concerned about my *symptoms*, I was a bit dumbfounded, because it was the first time any medical professional had expressed any sort of sentiment thus far, the first time there was any indication that what I was experiencing wasn't just *normal* or *something I had to learn to deal with*; in fact, it was the first time the word *symptoms* in relation to my period had been used at all.

I might have cried the entire 130 mile drive home. It felt warm and achy — like catharsis.

A few blood tests, a transvaginal ultrasound, and a D&C later, and I at long last had a final diagnosis: multiple endometrial polyps and endometrial hyperplasia. During the procedure, an IUD was placed in order to prevent future recurrence of *symptoms*. I don't recall much about when the doctor came to check on me after surgery, my mind a fog of

anesthesia, but what I *do* remember is their smile. My friend later told me I had pretzel pieces all over my hospital gown, so I'm sure I was a sight to behold.

It's been six months since I've needed a tampon. It's been about two months since I was reckless enough to tempt the universe and return the box currently clutched between my fingers to the top shelf of our dingy closet.

It's difficult, sometimes, not to feel robbed of several years of my life — and it's something all women must grapple with in more ways than one. So often, our bodies betray us, and we are forced to carve out room for the betrayal — to make space and welcome pain with open arms without making a fuss, or asking too much, or becoming too visible. And if we cannot...we are weak, we are failures, and most of all, we are liars.

I strain on my tippy toes, sliding the box into its designated home, nice and clean and neurotically organized. I find my handful of Tums, rebelliously popping four into my mouth like candy, uncouthly chomping away. The heartburn recedes. It takes ten minutes to extract the cats from their various hiding places, and then finally, I'm back in bed, grateful my nights of dashing to the restroom every couple of hours have come to an end.

I close my eyes, and think — *my body is not my enemy.*



Growing Tall

Mackenzie Sanner
Staff

Lethal Boy

Third Place Poetry

Jenna Ribbing

Student, Class of 2026

He's a lethal boy.

Beautiful
with a
gutter soul.

His voice is midnight in the desert. A wasteland between the
first and final act where heroes go to
die
or
abandon their past.

His eyes are early October. A fall
promised
yet
not arrived.

He will share his rope to set an example. He will cut the rope to set a
second example.

He will take a bullet for all the wrong reasons.
He will keep the bullet inside himself as a symbol of your debt.
He will turn himself into a gun
to get
what he thinks
he's owed.

He will not regret any of this. He is born of it.

Beautiful boys do not learn to regret.

Gutter
souls
stay
in
the
gutter.

Can't You See

Third Place Prose

Haley Davitz

Student, Class of 2028

How do you not see the blood that is spilling from my chest? It's all over me. It's coming right from my heart. Look. *Can't you see it?* It's all over me. My hands slippery, my fingernails stained. This shirt is ruined. It's all over the floor, wet and sticky. Don't step there! I'll clean it up. I just need time. I promise I will.

It's loud, too - *can't you hear it?* Can't you hear the pain that's screaming from inside of me? I can't hear anything else. I can't escape it; it won't even let me sleep. It's loudest at night. I'm worried it's all I'll ever hear. You really can't hear the pain that's deafening my ears? I'll tune it out, I swear.

The force is ripping through my flesh. You don't see my tattered skin? Look, pieces of it are on the floor. Like I said, though, I'll clean it up. Just don't get too close, and you won't get it on your shoes. I'm mopping it up now.

Oh, those scars are old. Wait, how do you see those but not the cuts that won't heal? *Can't you see that I'm still bleeding?* It never stops, just slows. You haven't noticed? Yeah, I'm pretty used to it I'd say. No, it still stings just as badly.

The darkness is terrifying, I need a light. It's not dark over there? Are you sure? It's cold and isolating. It keeps me from you, from the tenderness of our kinship. I keep trying to break through it, to warmth and light we could share. *Can't you see the oblivion that envelops me?*

Of course I experience happiness. Of course I know love. That spills from me too. It's in the blood that's on the floor. It's in my attempts to clean it up. It's in the scars that have healed. It's in the holes I've made in the darkness, even if they're small, even if they close up sometimes. *Can't you see I've made progress? Can't you see I am so full of love?*

You can see it now? I knew you would! Can you see the love too? Can you see how it's in everything I do? How it replenishes the lost blood and nourishes the wounds and coats the tip of the spear that I poke holes

through the darkness with? Oh, you can't... are you sure? You waited until you saw the blood and the pain, can you stay and try to find the love in it? *Can't you see it's the love that defines me, not the darkness and the scars and the blood?*

I know, I know - the blood is getting everywhere now. I know, you don't want to deal with the mess. It's getting on you now, and I said I would clean it up. I'm trying. I've got most of it. It's just that the wound got infected and now it's bleeding more and I don't know how long it will take me to bandage it so I can clean up the rest. But I'm trying, I promise. I'm getting the bandages now. No, you shouldn't have to deal with it, you're right. Okay, no worries. I know some people can't stand the sight of blood. Go ahead. I've got it.



Nina

Second Place Art

Acrylic

Nina Litvak

Student, Class of 2028

Where I Am From

Djamina C. Esperance

Student, Class of 2025

I am from the sound of roosters crowing in the early hours of the
morning.

From squirming and wiggling while my mom untangles my hair.
I am from playing soccer with my classmates with anything we can find:
juice bottles, crumpled
paper, and occasionally a real ball.

I am from evenings on the balcony with my family, eating mangoes and
papaya, grown in our yard.

I am from spontaneous dance parties and jam sessions with my sisters.
From pruned fingers after a long day at the beach.

I am from a place known to most as the poorest in the western
hemisphere, but to me, the pearl
of the Antilles, for its natural beauty.

I am from disruptions, chaos, and devastation.
From cornfields, liberal arts, unsanctioned dancing, and deconstructing.

I am from delays, uncertainty, anxiety, and acceptance.

I am from being the first and hopefully not the last.

I am from understanding all of this informs my trajectory.



Going to the Light

First Place Art

Acrylic on Canvas

J. Vincent Thomalla, MD

Alumnus, Class of 1979

Tumors Give Us Butterflies

Alana Goodson

Student, Class of 2026

No one ever wants to come to the oncology clinic
I never heard anyone say it aloud
But they never had to
The anxious faces that you see when you come into the hall
Feverishly waiting for results and answers
The wince as they get their blood drawn, again
And the anticipation in the air,
Waiting for the doctor to say the magic word: remission

I could always empathize,
but never really understand their overwhelming emotions
then I got a call during calculus, with her diagnosis

Tumors, like all things in nature, come in all different shapes and sizes.
I wish hers was a star, an astrocytoma perhaps
with a high percentage 5-year survival rate.
But it was a 46mm glioblastoma,
Which I'm sure you can guess, has lesser odds

Glial from the latin root glue, which was fitting
Because she really did hold us together
She had planned our annual family beach days and ensured all full
stomachs on Thanksgiving

She did not get to cook that year
Intoxically overwhelmed with chemo, like smoke from the potatoes i
burned that year
It was hard to see if it was hope or despair on the other side of the fumes
But she braved the cloudy air of the treatment (and my cooking)

For a moment she started to feel better,
And we started talking about the next thing on our adventure list together
Parasailing, scuba diving, it was only fitting that skydiving was next
But the tumor, like most things in nature, was resilient

We spent our time together painting our nails radiant colors
Guessing Family Feud answers
And I planted her seeds for this years garden

Large glioblastomas can take on the shape of butterflies
Which was fitting, as she had one tattooed on her ankle
She believed it resembled hope and freedom

While I do not see butterflies as much where I am from.
Living in the city and such
But one day when there is nothing but brilliant zinnias and milkweed
I believe that my butterfly will be there,
Waiting for me



Fall Colors at UIS

S.M. Raiyyan

Faculty



Embden

Mackenzie Sanner
Staff

Between Now and Then

Diandra N. Donkor

Student, Class of 2026

A simple Google search could've answered this,
but I want to test my theory.
My younger brother's dog, Scooby, hates his dry food.
He picks out the meat bits first, leaving the rest behind.
I wonder... What if I add chicken broth?
Maybe then he'll eat it all.

I put the kibble in the bowl,
and while I wait for the broth to boil,
I watch his excitement—tail wagging, tongue flicking.
“Scooby, wait.”
He starts to whine, sensing something's up.
“Scooby, wait.”

As the broth cools, I crumble in leftover burger patties, shredded into
tender pieces.
He can't wait—but it's his stillness, his patience—that stops me.
I watch him, and for a moment, I envy his calm.
Could I wait with that same trust?
His composure is a quiet knowing—faith in what's coming because he
can see it.
How often do I lose sight of that?

Of all the things we're taught in medical school,
no one ever taught me how to wait.
I wait for test results—pulse-quickenings, stomach tight.
Every hour of study feels like it's hanging in the balance.
I wait for proof that my effort isn't in vain,
for a sign that all this sacrifice will lead somewhere.
But no one showed me how to wait in stillness—
how to trust when the answers aren't coming,
how to sit with what I can't control.

I wait, heart racing, as the clock ticks toward the moment I've been
dreading.
A rush of warmth floods my face;

my ears burn as the heat creeps beneath my skin.
A heavy pressure settles on my chest.
I check my portal, fingers trembling, thoughts scattered.
My hand hesitates, frozen, just before I open the score.
It's as if the world has shrunk, leaving only this word:
FAIL.

The next few weeks pass in a haze.
I sway between disbelief and wonder—
Is this real, or have I fallen into a dream I can't escape?
I search for clarity but find only more questions:
Have I failed Him? Have I done something wrong?
Why has He forsaken me?

Amid the turmoil, one thought keeps resurfacing:
Had I failed because I had disobeyed?
I always believed failure was punishment—
a consequence of not doing what I should.
But now, I wonder: Maybe failure isn't retribution—
but part of something I can't yet see,
a necessary p a u s e.

I seek guidance from a counselor,
her voice firm as she asks,
“Where do you put your confidence?”
Her question lands like a spark in the dark.
In the silence that follows, something stirs inside me.
I look at her, but the words feel foreign now.
In that quiet, I realize—
I've always placed my confidence in myself.

Time slows thick with the weight of waiting.
The emptiness of the night is comforting, not lonely.
Books and papers are scattered but my mind is anchored.
Prayers float quietly in the dark.
“Diandra, wait.”

I'm still holding onto the faintest hope that something good will come.
It feels like standing at the edge of something, waiting for the ground to
catch you— though you can't see how.

The moments stretch on, each one heavier than the last, until the **stillness breaks.**

I check the portal yet again in the quiet of my apartment,
fingers steady now, though my heart is not.
I hover over the screen for a moment, the seconds stretching like hours.
I click and open the score...
PASS.

It's a relief, but not without its weight.

I think of Scooby—waiting with a patience born of knowing what's ahead.

But what if that certainty is out of our grasp?
What if, at times, waiting leads to nothing—nothing we expect, or nothing at all?

How then does one wait?
In the fragile quiet of hope, or the heavy grip of fear?
And when the waiting finally ends, when the silence breaks, what remains of us?

Reflecting on my journey, I realize waiting isn't passive. It's a quiet pressure, shaping what's unseen. In waiting, the seed takes root—silent, hidden, yet already growing. Perhaps waiting, in its purest form, prepares us for a harvest we never expected—or for something entirely unforeseen, something we didn't know we needed.



Jellyfish

Acrylic

Nina Litvak

Student, Class of 2028

Some things

Sumi Rebeiro, MD

Faculty

Some things are simple, convenient of savor,
unsullied by analysis:

Fruit pie, quick sneezes,
salt and vinegar, soft fuzzy things,
the sound of unhurried breath,
the scent of vanilla,
cold wet toes warmed by a fire,
the smell of fallen leaves going to earth.

These voices
need no translation, a whisper
of universal wind
against skin, through mind, to bone.

American Health Insurance: A Review

Mackenzie Peck

Staff

A battle, vicious and bloody, casualties unknown.

Will this be the last stand?

Limbs heavy, dragging the body down down down until there is a real fear it might be swallowed up by the ground itself.

Eyes darting, jarred by continuous explosions, fireworks unseen and unheard but felt, so very felt.

Oh, and what is this now? An earthquake? A lightning storm? An earthquake in a lightning storm?

Don't make any sudden moves, lest the ground crumble right out from under you.

Don't let go of your tether, lest you float right out to space.

A radio dial turns, an attempt to boost troops' morale—the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in—flight of the bumblebee in A minor—at least 50 dead in latest air strike—baby you're a firework—the patriots face the cowboys—static, unending, all-encompassing static—

A race against time: just hold out for two more days, two more days, and then the battle is won.

(But not the war. Never the war.)

Drag your hand to the nightstand, press play for a fifth time and listen again to the automated voice that took the first shot:

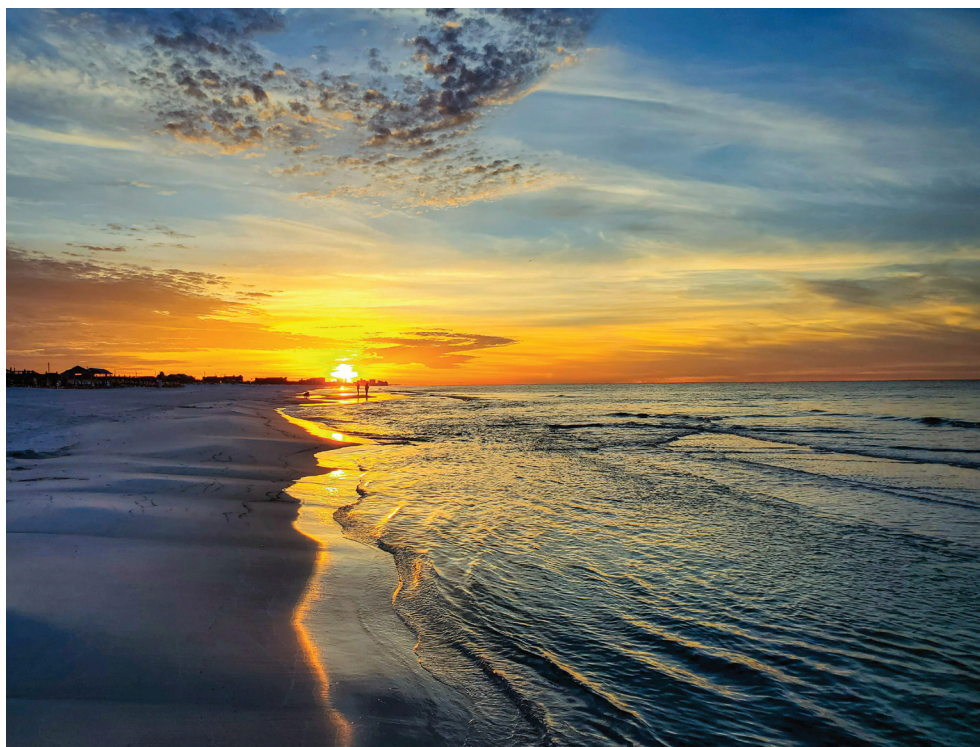
"First saved message: Friday, 4:15pm. "There was a problem refilling your medication for: VENLAFAXINE. We have contacted your prescriber for approval."

Remember your panicked return fire, as fruitless as in the previous two bloody battles: "We're sorry, your insurance only covers one emergency supply, and you've already taken advantage of this benefit."

Benefit. Taken advantage. As if it's an add-on to a subscription— “for the low cost of: ‘WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO: EVERYTHING IS TERRIBLE AND NOTHING MATTERS; YOU ARE NOT REAL; THE GROUND IS OOBLECK; YOUR BRAIN IS FULL OF BEES;’ you can add on one (1): ‘NORMAL FUNCTIONALITY.’”

Bone-weary sigh, a glance at the clock. 2:27pm, Saturday.

Repeat the familiar chant: two more days. Two more days. Two more—
pause to reorient yourself after another soundless explosion—days.



Sunrise on the Beach

Ian Pollock

Staff

A Note to My Providers

Katie Eichinger, MD

Alumna, Class of 2010

Please listen to me.

I cannot do this.

Please hear me.

This is not avoidance.

Please understand.

This could kill me.

Please know.

This is not exaggeration.

I must let go, for now, to heal.



Wonderland Trail

Peter Somers, PhD/MD

Alumnus, Class of 2000

Débarquement

Ireland Smith

Student, Class of 2026

City lights folded into plaits of indiscernible colors
as I sit aboard the Frecciarossa.
Since embarking, never once it stops—
an eternal engine propelling forward with a speed
that leaves the world panting to keep up. I myself am breathless
in the stifling musty air of the train;
windows permanently sealed against the harsh gusts.

Not alone, as most of the community joins me
in the futile race against the motion of time.
With endless tasks to complete before the streetlights illumine.
Yet, even then, no time for respite aboard this train; no reward.
A staleness permeated with exhaustion; regret.
Oh how difficult, to leave this train after boarding.
However, frightening to leave the safety of the train, I fear more to stay.

Foremost, I unfasten a stagnant window—
harsh frozen winds swirl inside settling my weary bones.
The fresh air rouses something beneath my skin.
Tugging the brake cord, the train pauses
for only a second before continuing in renewed haste
with me standing bereft on heated train tracks.
Unsure of what to do with this newfound freedom.

Trembling fingers grasp weakly at the unknown.
Pine and maple trees whisper to me as old companions—
sounds previously lost to me— as my mind finds traction
underneath the light of a pillowing sun.
Doves thrill overhead as they cut through cumulus clouds,
water rustles as it tumbles over thousands of pebbles.
Fragrances of sage and cloves washing away the vapidness of the train.

Life, such a beautiful being.
Its simplicity forgotten
in our rush to retrieve what time has stolen,
what it will steal as we move forward
before our bones are brittle, beyond use.
But what do we really gain, if we miss *this*?
For what *can* we lose, if we breathe in *this* slowness of life?



Waiting for Mama's Return

Pastel

Mary Corrigan Stjern

Community

Composure

Avani Yaganti

Student, Class of 2025

It was almost time to go home
You said, around the city let's roam

Down the city streets we walked
About all the colleges we talked

Would I go to Boston or New Haven
Or become a New York City maven

Our departure time was nearing
To the schedule we were adhering

Down the hotel hallway, you walked in front of me
Talking about having one more glass of tea

I was scrolling on my phone
When suddenly there was no tone

I look up and see
And I know you're starting to seize

And as you fell to the floor I screamed from my core
Someone help me please!

I knew all the rules
I was given all the tools

But all that left me
As soon as I saw it come to be

I cried and cried for any aid
As people exited their hotel rooms, my sobs fade

Strangers emerge asking, has this happened before I say yes, once when I
was in grade four

They asked about seizure meds
And the last time you stayed in a hospital bed

We zoomed through New York City
In an ambulance where the EMT took pity

She said to me, "Are you okay?"
I instinctively said "Yes, it was just a crazy day."

But it was more than just a crazy day

I lost all sense of calm
Because that "you" was my mom

And even though that day ended well
A large doubt over me fell

I doubted my future career
Because a doctor shouldn't have that much fear

How could they trust me with their family
When my composure dissipated so easily

But I've come to learn
When it's your turn

To be a physician instead of a loved one
You can hold objectivity by the ton

And remembering that moment so clearly
Grants me the privilege of understanding the family in front of me

For it's much easier to have composure for another
Than it is when it's your own mother

Vacuuming

Christine Todd, MD

Alumna, Class of 1993

You remain in a dream of sterile cleanliness until you step on something. Or you drop a precious bite of something on the kitchen floor so you pick it up, you snatch it up and eat it and you eat cat hair. So then you must incorporate the reality that your floor is covered with cat hair into your universe and this is what ultimately - days later, you understand - weeks later sometimes, depends on what's happening -but after nights and nights of insomnia where one of the starring characters, an antihero if you ever saw one - is the cat hair covered floor. Which, dear reader, you don't have to have a degree in English, although you personally do, means something. We know that. It means that you are a horror, a slob of epic, possibly hoarder level proportions. It means there are good reasons you are alone eating cat hair, as teleological as that seems.

And so at some point you must vacuum. The act of vacuuming comes after things like eating breakfast and shopping and taking naps, but it comes before or perhaps in lieu of going to the park for a nice long walk (a euphemism you use for exersize) or answering or let's be honest, actually reading one of the thousands of emails in your inbox. It is not just something you will do in order to decatify your kitchen floor. It is an epic task, a herculean task. There is good reason you left it so long. You had to build strength, store calories, prepare. You had to carb load like someone planning to run a marathon.

But it will not be in vain that you waited so long because this will be a Vacuuming for the Ages. You will move the furniture. You will get behind things. You will roll up the rugs. You will vacuum the ashes out of the fireplace. You will use the crevice tool on the upholstery and the floorboards. You will locate the crevice tool. There is a reason you do not vacuum often. Vacuuming on this scale is like a 100 year flood. A saga. Something you tell your grandchildren about.

The vacuum lives in the coat closet. The lady who comes once a month to do some cursory cleaning (the stove top, the microwave, the sheets on the bed, the toilets) always stores it there with the cord neatly wrapped but the bin full. Is this a comment, a criticism? "Look how filthy," the layers of dirt testify in the clear canister of the machine. It's up to you to

empty it, to squint and sneeze and be revolted by the cloud of dust that is realized when the trigger of the waste bin is pressed. The trigger is tricky. It's hard to press with the thumb of one hand as you hold a trash bag with your other hand. Inevitably when the mechanism releases your arm jerks and only some of the filth goes into the bag. The rest is back on the floor from whence it came, gritty, greasy, grey. It makes you wonder what the point of it is, as you reassemble the vacuum and revacuum half the filth it just disgorged. Maybe the point is to give you an easy little project to get started with. Maybe the point is a pneumatic brand of job security. Maybe the universe is trying to tell you that this is a completely futile exercise, this compulsion to clean. Ashes to ashes, and who cares where they are?

The vacuum is a bourgeois fantasy, designed by a Brit who appeared in commercials for it on TV. He used his accent to explain that all vacuums prior to this vacuum were crimes against humanity, useless clunkers that, if anything, made things dirtier. This is ironic to you now, given the situation with emptying the waste bin, but at the time you were quite taken with this man and his outrageously priced product. But that's part of the bougieness of the vacuum: the fact that you are ashamed to tell people how much you paid. The fact that you have memorized the man's accent and the script of the commercial and perform it to your friends at parties is a pathetic cover for the fact that you had a deep, deep, desire to own it.

You were, after all, raised to be the kind of woman who eschewed the siren song of advertising and was far, far above thinking something was better or more intelligent because someone said it in a British accent. In sad fact you are precisely that demographic, precisely that person. The cherry on top of this greedy, envy-syruped sundae is the idea that simply buying this vacuum was going to make your house cleaner. But the anthropologic layers of silt and grime in the vacuum canister attest, and will continue to attest to future generations who find this vacuum, ultimately, in a landfill or a garbage barge floating listlessly in the Pacific Garbage Gyre, that you are as dirty as the next person. You're just a bourgeois sucker on top of it.

In the advertisements the vacuum glides sinuously through space, picking up crumbs and fuzzballs. In reality you can not vacuum for a minute without picking up the edge of a rug (you had plans to tack of these down with a tape you specifically bought for the job then immediately lost in one of the many junk bins you maintaining) or

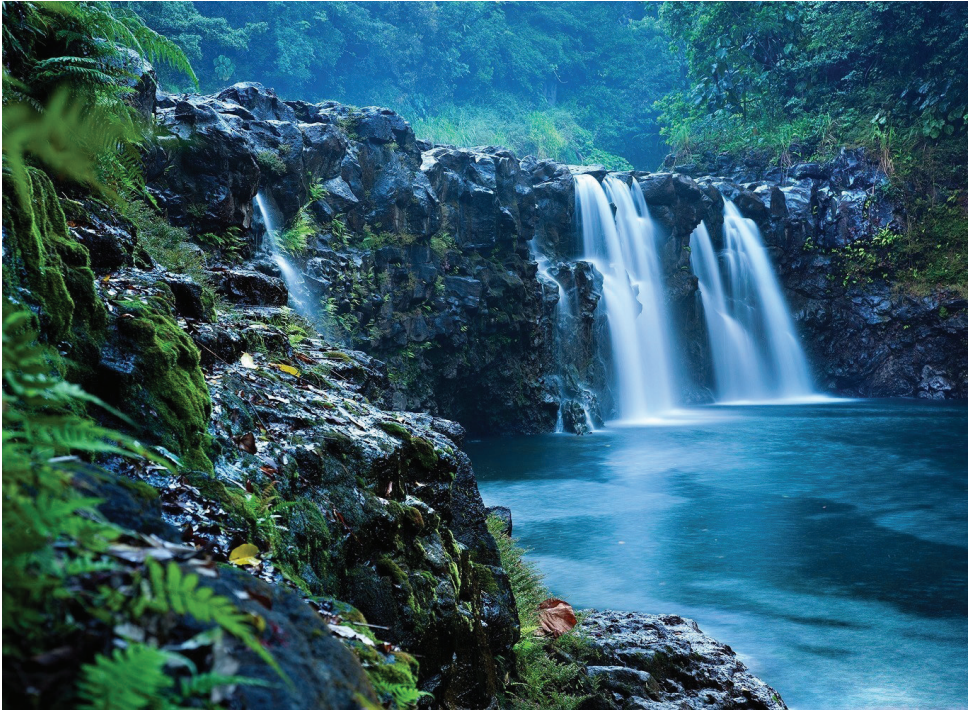
bumping into the legs of a table (all of which, now that you're looking at them closeley, are scarred and scratched from previous vacuuming forays) or scooting the legs of a chair across a floor until it tips and falls over. Everywhere you go things are are scooting and crashing and falling. It shouldn't be like this. You should be able to bump things with the vacuum and not have them tip and crash and break and cause bigger messes. Floor lamps. Plant stands. With each thing you bump more dirt is spilled or revealed making you swipe at the floor harder with the vacuum, sweat on your brow making your glasses slide off your face, which makes you push and pull the vacuum with more anger, more rage, causing more bumping, more scooting, more crashing. Dirt slops out of the plants, dust out of the edges of carpet that keep getting caught in the machine. You are now fully engaged in a fight, adrenaline coursing through your body.

You become so furious that when you feel the vacuum resist you, pulling back on you as you advance angrily to the next room, you yank it forward with all your hulk-like might, which wraps the taut cord around the fireplace tool stand, crashing it to the ground and cracking the ceramic tiles of the hearth. The cord becomes unplugged, the vacuum dies, and in the silence, your cat makes a plaintive sound. You will plug the vacuum back in while it is still on, causing a surge of electricity that blows a fuse. In the garage, as you flip the fuse back on, you wonder if this - vacuuming- is how you will ultimately die. You resume vaccuming nonetheless, stubbing your toe on the dining room table leg as you push the vacuum underneath as far as you can go, which also causes your glasses to fall off again.

It is difficult to suss whether you are supposed to pull the long tube out from the body of the machine to get at high palaces and in crevices when the machine is off or on. You have tried both ways, neither works the first time, the tube so solidly stuck in place that it seems that it wasn't build to detach. You pull harder and harder, pressing a myriad of red buttons situated in various places on the vacuum until one finally releases some sort of mechanism, causing the tube to come loose suddenly and poke you in the eye. Note to self: that button will not release the tube the next time you try it. Neither will it allow you to put the tube back in its place. This is not a machine that works by logic, or that you can learn to use by experience. This is a device designed to defeat you. It wins every time.

There is, in your closet, a neat pack of extensions and additions you can add to your vacuum for a myriad of first world circumstances - one for bare floors, one for tight spaces, one with a soft brush (for the cat?), one for reaching to the ceiling. You have never attached any of these attachments, for simply pulling the stretchy tube loose from the body of the machine usually causes enough of an injury (eye, shoulder, cheek bone) to erase any sort of plan from your brain. You just wave the open end of the tube in the direction of the ceiling, blinds, couch.

For who is witnessing this? No one except you, the victim - the willing, duped, recidivistic victim, the victim who willingly bought the instrument of their victimhood, who paid extra for it, who considered asking for it for Christmas. As the sole witness, you can control the narrative of this painful and chaotic saga, this vacuuming. The black eye can be from a tennis lesson. The mangled manicure from gardening. The limp from the stubbed toe from - listen, all of this can be from your new thing of tennis lessons, which you have never alluded to before and never will again. There is no reason for an overly complex story. I mean, until you vacuum again.



Blue Hawaii

Susan Thompson Hingle, MD
Faculty

I put my bias in a carry-on

Carmensa Remolina

Student, Class of 2025

Someone told me to “check” it, but that didn’t feel quite right
I’d like to keep it close to me
Plus I like the challenge of packing light

I put my attribution in small bottles and confirmation into cubes
Made sure my ageism and gender bias were less than 3.4oz tubes

Availability went in next, taking up a lot of room
How could it not?
I blame the news for being so full of gloom

I continued on with packing, assigning halos and some horns.
It’s easier to see people as good or bad
Than roses that come with thorns

Some of the biases I carry also affect me
I still make assumptions based on names no matter how many times I’m asked
“is it Remolini?”

I can’t forget my weight bias
I put that one at the top
So that I am more cognizant, and put assumptions to a stop

I didn’t even notice implicit bias, it just snuck right through.
It filled the spaces I had left
Like socks tucked into a shoe

It’s easy to feel burdened with all this hanging overhead
But I’d rather be aware of it
Than check my bag instead



Girl in the Polka Dot Dress

Tom Ala, MD

Faculty Emeritus

Special thanks to our judging panel:

Afamefuna Maduka

Amelia Frank

Amit Sapra

Anna Cianciolo

Christine Todd

Dawn Small

Diandra Donkor

Divinity Rhodes

Eric Woods

Haley Davitz

Hannah Struck

Ireland Smith

Jacob Schmid

Jennifer Hammonds

Jenna Lee

Jenna Ribbing

Kamil Hester

Kathryn Waldyke

Kevin Dorsey

Mackenzie Sanner

Nikkie Stefan

Samikshya Kandel

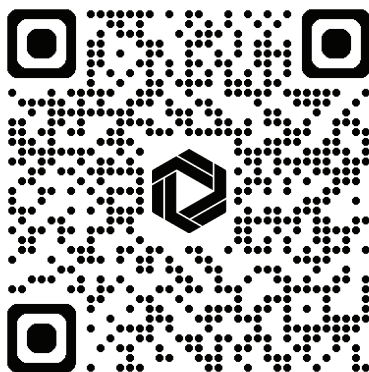
Steve Sandstrom

Steven Ippolito

Susan Hingle

Yiyi Ma

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