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**Class of 2025 Students Launch Medical Careers at White Coat Ceremony**

***Incoming medical student class most diverse in school’s history***

COLUMBIA, Mo. (July 30, 2021) ― Students from the University of Missouri School of Medicine class of 2025 took their first steps toward becoming physicians during the White Coat Ceremony this afternoon at Jesse Hall. The 128 students were selected from more than 3,000 applicants. Students, guests and presenters gathered in the large auditorium while other friends, faculty and family joined the celebration via livestream.

“The white coat signifies a covenant to knowledge, skills, mutual respect and humanity,” said Steven Zweig, MD, Hugh E. and Sarah D. Stephenson Dean of the MU School of Medicine. “It’s a symbol that is universally recognized and carries with it a commitment to patient-centered care and clinical excellence.”

The School of Medicine continues to become more diverse, and the incoming class is the most diverse in the school’s history. A goal of the medical school and others across the nation is to increase enrollment of individuals who belong to racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population. Of the students in the MU class of 2025, 20% self-identified as [underrepresented in medicine](https://www.aamc.org/what-we-do/equity-diversity-inclusion/underrepresented-in-medicine). This includes students who are Black/African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and mainland Puerto Ricans. Additionally, 42% of students self-identified as an ethnic minority within the US.

Additionally, 26% of students are from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, 20% are from rural areas and 88% are from Missouri.

“As a land-grant institution, the University of Missouri takes seriously its responsibility to train Missourians and to prepare physicians to care for Missourians,” Zweig said. “We’re proud to be the state’s leading educator of physicians who practice in our state, and I’m pleased our incoming class reflects the diversity of our state and nation.”

At the ceremony, the students received their first white coats, the most common symbol of the medical profession for more than a century. The annual event encourages new medical students to begin their education by upholding the highest values and standards of their profession.

The first White Coat Ceremony was conducted in 1993 at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. The ceremony was created by Arnold Gold, MD, a pediatric neurologist, who called the white coat his profession’s “cloak of compassion.” The Arnold P. Gold Foundation estimates that a White Coat Ceremony or similar rite of passage is now held at more than 90% of schools of medicine and osteopathy in the United States, as well as at all four medical schools in Israel. The first White Coat Ceremony at MU occurred in 1997.

**Did you know?**

The length of a white coat indicates a person’s level of medical training. Medical students are presented with a short white coat during their White Coat Ceremony that distinguishes them as students. Physicians receive a long white coat when they begin residency.

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**About the MU School of Medicine**

The MU School of Medicine has improved health, education and research in Missouri and beyond for more than 170 years. MU physicians treat patients from every county in the state, and more Missouri physicians received their medical degrees from MU than from any other university. For more information, visit [*http://medicine.missouri.edu/*](http://medicine.missouri.edu/).

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