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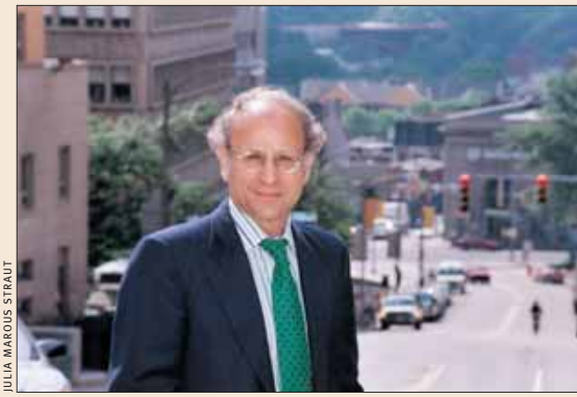
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JULIA MAROUS STRAUT

You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created.
—Albert Einstein

When I was in medical school, my classmates and I often volunteered to work after classes and clerkships in the larger urban community. We helped to care for patients who might have easily slipped through one of the many gaps in our healthcare system (and those gaps have only grown since my days as a student). But when I look at the medical students around me today, it's clear that something different is afoot. As a matter of course, medical students at the University of Pittsburgh provide care for underserved populations, as my classmates and I did. But their personal commitment to public service is truly impressive and sometimes heroic. The Class of '09 has committed to raising $90,000 by graduation to support a network of five free clinics in the Pittsburgh area. Another group of students was so moved by their experiences working with HIV-infected patients in Kenya that they founded the Kenyan Pediatric HIV Project to raise money to provide care and support for infected children and their families. Other students have stepped forward to care for the homeless; to be paired as a "novice physician and friend" with a pediatric cancer patient or a pregnant teen; or to cook meals at a men's shelter. That's the short list of student outreach activities. There's a level of humanism in our student body that greatly inspires us as mentors; and it bodes well for our students' future careers as physicians and medical scientists.

I credit the admissions committee—not blind chance—for creating this student body. It is a given that a person accepted to this medical school will be exceptionally bright and accomplished. But there are two things that I ask of the admissions committee over and over: Find those students who are creative and who are leaders. Why? One needs to be creative to be a successful scientist or to be among the best of diagnosticians, and we need leaders to address the extremely complicated problems that we face in the economics and delivery of medical care.

Our student body includes poets, composers, choreographers, entrepreneurs, and activists engaged in their communities. When these creative and driven men and women arrive on campus, it is our responsibility to further develop the fertile substrate we've recruited. To that end, we've designed research opportunities and minielective courses that expose our students to topics like the unfolding of evolution, physicians as authors, and the perceptions of artists—topics that place human health and illness in an appropriately larger context of history, society, and culture. In fact, this is precisely why our medical school is in a university. But beyond this campus, we are collaborating now with world-class institutions like the Carnegie Museums of Natural History and Art, so that our students' time here ignites their imaginations and expands their deepest sense of their potential as creative physicians and humanists.

Arthur S. Levine, MD
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