

STUDENT AWARDS

HONORING LEADERSHIP, SERVICE, and THE FUTURE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Student Doctor of the Year:

Payton Sparks, OMS-IV

Honors an osteopathic medical student who demonstrates a dedicated interest in advancing international understanding of osteopathic medicine. The individual exhibits strong leadership in global health outreach, participates in international medicine initiatives, and fosters cross-cultural healthcare education.

Payton has demonstrated exceptional leadership and advocacy within osteopathic medical education. As Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) MU-WCOM Chapter President and National Diversity Chair, he has championed student leadership and inclusion. He founded a scholarship fund to expand educational opportunities for youth in rural Indiana and has dedicated countless hours to community service through medical mission trips, art therapy for dementia patients, and free-clinic volunteering. Payton has built an impressive research portfolio focused on plastic surgery outcomes, authoring nine publications and presenting his work at national and international conferences. He exemplifies the osteopathic philosophy through compassionate leadership, service, and a commitment to providing holistic patient care.



Student Researcher of the Year:

Samuel Baule, OMS-III

Honors an osteopathic medical student who has made exceptional scholarly contributions to medical science. This prestigious honor recognizes individuals with highly competitive backgrounds in clinical, translational, or basic science research.

Samuel has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to scholarly inquiry through an extensive research portfolio that includes seven peer-reviewed publications in prestigious journals like *Acta Neuropathologica* Communications and *eNeuro*. Investigating diverse topics such as neuronal cell death, soft tissue manipulation, and gallbladder volvuli, he has frequently shared his findings at national conferences, notably earning second place for Best Scientific Poster Presentation at the Annual Clinical Assembly of Osteopathic Surgeons (ACOS). Samuel also recently published a study in *Cureus* evaluating the five-year match competitiveness of osteopathic medical students in general surgery, offering crucial insights for future residency applicants.



Global Scholar of the Year:

Austin Howell, OMS-III

Honors osteopathic medical student who demonstrates a dedicated interest in advancing international understanding of osteopathic medicine. The individual exhibits strong leadership in global health outreach, participates in international medicine initiatives, and foster cross-cultural healthcare education.

Austin is passionate about advancing healthcare in underserved communities and has demonstrated a strong commitment to global health through leadership, service, and advocacy. As President of the MU-WCOM Global Health Alliance and a Mercy Ships Ambassador, she has promoted global health engagement and healthcare access. Her service aboard the Africa Mercy hospital ship in Madagascar, Senegal, and South Africa provided firsthand experience addressing healthcare disparities through patient care, public health operations, and healthcare training. She also served as an emergency medical technician assistant and clinical assistant at an HIV/AIDS clinic, supporting patient care in a low-resource setting. Austin plans to continue advocating for equitable healthcare access throughout her career as a physician.

