

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE COLUMBIA!

*A How-to Guide for Successfully Navigating
Your First Year of Medical School*

WELCOME TO COLUMBIA

A Letter From the Editors

UofSC SOM First-Year Medical Students:

The Class of 2023 is delighted to welcome you to the UofSC SOM family! While the first year of medical school might have flown by for some and others would argue it seems like a lifetime has passed, we were in your shoes just a year ago. We remember feeling the same excitement and nervousness you all are likely experiencing now. We hope to alleviate some of those nerves with this “how-to” guide. Here you will find everything from recommendations on where to eat to how to maintain your sanity during this first year. This was compiled from responses of many members of the Class of 2023. Please realize our curriculum layout was different than yours. We imagine the content of the material will not be all that different - just the presentation - so we hope and anticipate the class advice will hold true.

There are other unknowns yet still with these unprecedented times. The past few months have shown that previous classes and our administration will prevail and come out on the other side of these times as more flexible and adaptable. While none of us are able to predict the upcoming academic year, we know regardless of what the future holds you will do just fine. Every one of you was intentionally chosen for the UofSC SOM Class of 2024. The Admissions Committee knew you to be resilient, compassionate, and adaptable - undoubtedly able to conquer the journey that awaits. The Class of 2023 and the UofSC SOM administration are here for you. We hope this guide will provide a solid foundation for the questions you may currently have. Whatever questions remain - be sure to ask!

Wishing you the best,
Bailey Alkhatib and Chandler Melton
UofSC SOM Class of 2023

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The following information is the compiled, personal views and/or recommendations from students of the Class of 2023 and not that of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia.

Where to Live?

Location	Pros	Cons
Apartments on Devine Street	Great location, 5-8 min from campus	
Creekside at Greenlawn	Super close to school, newer & nicer amenities, valet trash, fob access, lots of other med students live here, 24/7 gym access, pool, fast maintenance response time, washer/dryer included	A bit pricey (but rent includes cable, internet, water), left turns in morning to get to school, WiFi sometimes slow, sometimes neighbors are loud
Hampton Forest	Convenient, good neighborhood for walking	
Hampton Greene Apartments	Close to school, other med students live here, pool, gym, reasonably priced, quiet, some have screened porches	Smaller than Creekside, older, further from hospital so consider moving for M3 year, maintenance is slow, WiFi can be spotty, gate breaks sometimes, water can randomly shut off but uncommon
House in Rosewood/Shandon	Not far from school, young/active neighborhoods	Could be expensive, picking right location
Huntington Place	Good price for square footage, located across from med school, pool, dog park, playground, car wash, laundry room, gym, dog friendly w/o weight limit, \$25 discount per month for being SOM student, 2 & 3 BR only	Need to rent or purchase washer & dryer for in-home set up, gym is very small, older appliances
Shandon area	Nice neighborhood	A little far from school
700 Woodrow	Very quiet, restaurants & shopping nearby	A bit expensive

- Additional comments
 - If single and unsure about roommates, consider living alone for one year to avoid incompatible roommate
 - Consider living with a non-med student to vary interactions with people
 - There is some movement in living/roommate situations between 1st and 2nd year so if you want to change your living situation it's possible
 - You don't have to live right beside the school, but likely want to be within 15-20 minutes to save time

Where to eat/drink?

- **Local favs**
 - Pawley's Front Porch
 - Rockaway's
 - Hickory Tavern
 - Midwood Smokehouse
 - Henry's
 - Cinnamon Roll Deli (brunch)
 - Home Team BBQ
 - Gourmet Shop (brunch/lunch)
 - Southern Belly (BBQ)
 - Spotted Salamander
- **Ballin' on a budget**
 - Cantina 76
 - Chipotle

- Firehouse
 - Jimmy John's
 - Zaxby's
 - Kairos
 - Tsunami
 - Miyo's
 - Taziki's
 - Eric's San Jose
 - Cafe Strudel (brunch)
 - Chick-Fil-A
 - Moes
- Village idiot (Wednesday night trivia, BOGO large pizzas)
 - Moctezuma Taqueria
 - Minato (cheap sushi)
 - Duke's (Thai)
 - Basil (Thai)
 - Midwood BBQ
 - Smash Burger
 - Mellow Mushroom
 - Publico
 - Egg Roll Chen
- **Feeling fancy**
 - Saluda's
 - Cola's Restaurant
 - Bourbon
 - Motor Supply Bistro
 - Blue Marlin
- Tazza Kitchen
 - Hendrix
 - Pearlz
 - Hall's Chophouse (\$\$\$\$)
 - The Joint @ 1710 Main (Jazz music)
- **Vegetarian/Vegan**
 - Good Life Cafe
 - A Peace of Soul Vegan Kitchen
- **Breweries & Bars**
 - River Rat Brewery
 - Columbia Craft Brewery
 - Steel Hands Brewery
 - Hunter-Gatherer Brewery
 - Twisted Spur
- Jake's
 - Tin Roof
 - Upstairz Lounge at Pearlz
 - The Whig
- **Coffee Shops**
 - Blum
 - Starbucks (on campus and beside Target)
 - Panera (offers unlimited coffee subscription for like \$9 / month)
 - Krispy Kreme (right across from school)
 - Dunkin' Donuts
- Indah Coffee
 - Cool Beans
 - Sweetwaters Coffee and Tea
 - Front Coffee and Tap (coffee during the day & beer/wine at night)
 - Drip Coffee
 - Immaculate Consumption
 - The Local Buzz
- **Grocery Store Recommendations and Additional Comments**
 - Walmart grocery pickup
 - Trader Joes for pre-made salads
 - Whole foods
 - Publix
 - Food Lion
 - Bi-lo
 - Meal boxes
- Freshly (food subscription delivery service)
 - SOM vending machine Monsters
 - Marble Slab for a sweet treat
 - Kaminsky's (dessert)
 - Duck Donuts

What to do?

- **Indoors**
 - Studio Cellar
 - Mad Platter – fired arts studio
 - Craft Axe Throwing
 - Bowling
 - The Grand
 - TopGolf Suite on Main St.
 - Shopping: Vista, 5 Points, Devine St., Main St., Harbison Mall Area
 - Play music/instrument
 - Binge watch TV/Netflix or play video games
 - Eat, sleep, exercise (or at least think about exercising)
 - Read, puzzles
 - Cook or learn how to cook (time to start #adulting)
 - Movie night with friends
 - Trampoline park
 - Get caught up on life things or do nothing
 - Columbia Art Museum (\$10/year student passes)
 - Yoga
 - Listen to podcasts

- **Outdoors**
 - Float the river
 - Congaree National Park
 - Walk around the Horseshoe
 - Soda City Market
 - UofSC Football Games (MSA has a tailgate spot)
 - West Columbia Riverwalk
 - Columbia Canal and Riverwalk Park
 - Owens Field Outdoor Park
 - Walk your dog
 - Intramurals (i.e. tennis at SouthEast park)
 - Day trips - change of scenery is refreshing
 - Hang by the apartment pools
 - Breweries
 - Go for a run

Where do I ... doctors, dentists, gym, hair, nails, pets?

- **Doctors**
 - USC Student Health
 - Palmetto Health USC Medical Group - Women's Health Care (1301 Taylor Street)
 - Columbia Skin Clinic
 - Laura Kessler, NP at Three Rivers Medical in Forest Acres
 - Dr. Dorothy Park at Doctor Dorothy Park and Associates (Eye Doctor)

- **Dentists**
 - Berger Dental (recommend Dr. Crockett)
 - Cottingham Family Dentist
 - Leslie Pinter (orthodontist)
 - Forest Drive Dental Care

- **Gym**
 - The SOM has a small gym with basic machines

- Barre classes (a few local studios)
- Planet Fitness on Garners Ferry
- Tennis courts at Southeast Park
- Creekside gym
- Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center on main campus
- Hair
 - Kings Row in 5 points
 - Shear Xpectations (close to school)
 - Urban Nirvana (hairstylist named Apples)
 - Process Salon on Forest Drive (*disclaimer simple hair cut)
 - Cho on Main in Lexington (great prices for haircuts)
 - Clines Hair Salon in the Vista
 - Five Points Salon
 - Salon Bella (ask for Cat)
- Nails/Spa
 - Polished in Shoppes at Woodhill
 - Sparkle Nails off Exit 17 (great quality & prices)
 - Capital Nail Spa (Mr. Brian is my go to)
 - Occo Spa in the Vista (treat yo-self occasionally)
 - Urban Nirvana (massages)
 - Beautique Skin (facials, ask for Kathryn Leno)
- Pets
 - Pawmetto Lifeline (affordable)
 - Garners Ferry Veterinary Hospital
 - Shandon Wood Animal Hospital
 - Emily Douglas Park (free dog park in Columbia)

GENERAL ADVICE

Self-care

- Stay in “your zone” in medical school. You will hear a lot of things that people do to succeed that did not make much sense to me entirely, and it is 100% acceptable and advised to follow the plan you think is best for yourself. It is easy to feel like you need to study to the level that someone else is, but maybe they learn differently. Success looks very different for every person - especially at this level.
- I made it a point to take nearly every Friday and Saturday night completely off to spend with my girlfriend (and now fiancée) and others. This is not being lazy - this is prioritizing people and time that makes you more successful and happier Monday-Friday.
- Everyone in medical school is a high achiever. It doesn't benefit your mental health to necessarily try to “out achieve” everyone at this level.
- Hang out with friends in the evening after studying.
- Take one day off every week or do something you enjoy at least once a week (lots of people recommend taking off Friday afternoon/evening).
- Don't give up hobbies you enjoy (i.e. if you play an instrument, try to keep that up!)
- Build in study breaks.
- Block out time for real-world things: sleeping, cleaning your room, grocery shopping, cooking, personal hygiene, being with non-med school people.
- Be aware of your finances - Jerel Arceneaux can help you.
- Mental breaks are important, especially at the end of test cycles.

Mental health

- Some level of stress is normal, especially as you start to take tests that matter. I think it's important to harness that stress and do a lot of reality checks with yourself to realize that no matter how important the test is, you are more important. Think about how you feel when you submit an exam that you stressed over - I normally think I should have stressed less.
- Reach out to Dr. Eric Williams, Mrs. Samantha White, and other admin at the school. They absolutely want you to succeed in your entire life, not just within the curriculum.
- YOU ARE NOT ALONE & the faculty really do care about your well-being.
- Make time for yourself (even when you feel like you don't have time) - this can/will make your study time more productive & be beneficial for your mental health.
- Try out the app headspace or try practicing some form of meditation.
- MAJOR KEY: try not to compare yourself to others.

Exercise

- This may start to fall apart some when school starts because it is normal. Try to keep up with going outside even when you feel like there is literally no time for it. As you make time for it, you will easily find time for it. This will improve as you find a groove over the first few months.
- Try to exercise - aim for 30 minutes a day (walk, run, yoga, weights) or 3-5 times per week.
- A walk is better than nothing.
- At some point if you find yourself needing to get back into cardio check out the app Couch to 5K (it's free).
- Try to get into some sort of routine before classes start - doing so in the middle of a semester is hard.
- For at-home exercise videos check out Chloe Ting on YouTube (free) or Kayla Itsines app "Sweat" (~\$120/yr).

Sleep

- Stick to a schedule as best you can - do not listen to the people who tell you how little they sleep (I think they were sleeping anyways lol). Studying instead of sleeping is only cool for a few weeks.
- Very debatable topic in medical school (haha).
- Do your best to get 7-9 hours (that's each night).
- Don't pull all-nighters.
- Nothing wrong with a nap.
- Sleep is crucial for functioning.

Cooking

- Have some go-to meals that you rotate through weekly that are healthy. You probably will not want to spend hours thinking and preparing meals most nights.
- Meal prepping is a must.
- Try to eat healthy; feeling good physically can help with mental status too.
- Don't feel guilty about making take-out a staple - cooking can be stressful because of time demands.
- If your family asks how they can help - have them mass produce food and freeze it for a later date!

Family Life

- Go see your family if they are nearby. If they live far away, make a point to see them as much as possible in some way. They will remind you not only of why you are doing what you are doing, but also of everything else going on around you that you should take some time to enjoy.
- Studies can wait if you need to see your family or friends.
- Block off one evening a week to spend time with friends/significant other/family.
- FaceTime your loved ones.

- If you're from out of town and your family can come here for Thanksgiving - it's super helpful so you can minimize travel time and maximize studying (finals were right after).

Social Life

- Personally, I tried to fit as much time into my schedule to do the things I wanted to do. Continue to connect with your non-medical school friends, they understand what you are doing is hard and intensive. They will appreciate you reaching out and spending time with them.
- Prioritize your relationship with your significant other if you have one. They will be the person there for you when medical school is not. The longer you are on this path over the next year you will realize how important people are to you succeeding in all aspects of life.
- Find a group of like-minded people - having people you can vent to is important!
- Go out and socialize at least once a week → talk to people.
- Go to MSA extracurriculars (i.e. post-gross & Halloween) - non-school socializing is good for the soul.
- Misery loves company :)

Study Tips

- Let me go ahead and address one of the elephants in the room: Anki. There will be people who know how to use Anki great when medical school starts, and some that have no clue (like myself). Do not worry on week 2 that you will be lost soon because you can't make flashcards on Anki, it won't really matter, and someone will show you.
 - Anki is a great resource to use as you go throughout the first year, but no reason to stress early on.
 - You got to medical school because you were an effective learner, hone those strategies now for whatever works for you.
- #1 resource for first year classes: the professor's PowerPoints!!!
 - They make them, teach from them, & test from them.
- Despite common myths, very high grades can be made by effectively learning the material presented in lecture.
- Find a friend and study together. Quiz each other, talk out loud, and make sure you know the material without having to reference notes.
- If recently out of undergrad, try studying how you did then (if you had good practices) & modify from there.
- Dr. Harvey will become your best friend.
- Failing a test is not the end of the world!
- Try to avoid post-exam chatter - it can be stressful.
- Invest in a good iPad and Apple Pencil - then buy Notability or use OneNote for PowerPoint notes (saves paper and helps with organization).
- Minimize outside resources - tests are lecture based.
- Cycling to an extent is unavoidable but try to avoid it as much as possible (i.e. only studying for one class/test then switching to another after the test) ***this is controversial.
- Stay up on other lectures, but learn how to prioritize upcoming exams.
- Be flexible - different classes may require different approaches.
- Ask questions and ask them early.
- Look over lectures briefly before they are given.
- MAJOR KEY: Find out what works for YOU (ask others what works for them, but don't get caught up in comparison).
- If a studying method isn't working for you ABANDON IT ASAP and find a new strategy! Holding on to a bad study method will tank your grades.
- The golden ratio: 50 min studying / 10 min rest/break.
- Find a study environment that works for you whether it's solo in the library (always someone there to chat or grab food with), at a coffee shop, at home, etc.
- Don't fall into the trap of passively clicking through PowerPoints to "study"; be sure you are actively engaging with the material.
- Recommend 3 passes of the material on the PowerPoints/handouts before an exam.

- Use the weekend to catch up & start the week ready to learn some knowledge.
- Everyone is NOT studying 24/7 - people's hours and effectiveness vary.
- Make a plan before the week - be intentional with what you are studying and when.
- Study groups are extremely helpful but recommend keeping to 4 or less people.

CLASS-SPECIFIC ADVICE

Anatomy

- First and foremost: treat your first patients with the utmost respect - they gave you themselves to give you the opportunity to learn.
- Come to class prepared if you can; look through the PowerPoints, fill in any blanks or places where you anticipate questions.
- It is in your best interest to have a general idea of what will be taught - cold calls are not uncommon.
- Use the lab frequently; pin structures and ask secondary questions (questions about function and other higher-level aspects).
- Personally, I was most productive in lab if I studied diagrams and anatomical pictures from atlases prior to going in; once I was in lab, I knew what everything would look like and just had to find that structure on various patients.
- Many people prefer to go straight to lab, pin structures, and guess; that was not my favorite way to study because it can be overwhelming when someone has been studying anatomy and you have not. Different approaches work for different people; the majority of people do most of their identification learning in the lab.
- You will be concentrating a majority of your time on anatomy material; you will still have enough time for the other classes.
- Dr. Blanck loves to connect with students - word to the wise: be respectful, do not ignore her or be rude - see her as a mentor, not someone to be timid around.
- Utilize TAs; they are wonderful!
- Study the museum items as they will show up on the test.
- Find people in other dissection groups to walk you through their dissections.
- Find a partner and go through each dissection guide and identify all items before the test (preferably multiple times).
- The teaching faculty are very aware of who spends time in lab and is putting in the effort.
- Fill out the study guide that they provide; it will be helpful to be proficient on all these items.
- Use the Top 100 Concepts Anki deck when preparing for the final.
- Atlas Guide
 - Rothen atlas - most helpful for lab, has real cadaveric images.
 - Netter's - historic, has great detail, online (app version) is interesting to use and has radiographic pictures as well.
 - Thieme - where the majority of the lecture atlas figures come from; has a clean look, easy to understand, figures are great.
 - Some of these atlases are in lab; you might want to order one and then see how the first week or so goes and change it up.

Biochemistry

- There can be a pretty steep learning curve to some of the sections.
- Go ahead and learn all the amino acids at the start - this will prove important throughout the course.
- Concentrate on processes that are discussed; draw out processes repeatedly to learn them.

- Make sure you know all the diseases and regulated steps; make disease charts, it will help you to mentally be able to grasp all the different diseases and the causes.
- This was our first medical school test, so I was surprised by the detail of the questions. Yes, they will ask about small details that you may/may not think are important...welcome to medical school :)
- Learn all the details from the PowerPoints; focus on the PowerPoints for the majority of your studying.
- Learn diagrams and figures that seem relevant for the tests.
- Dr. Edie Goldsmith presents a great amount of material in what looks like very few words. Pay attention to every bullet, attend lecture, and look up what you do not understand in the textbook to get a full idea of the context.
- The learning objectives can be a very good guide for what they are going to test from the material, fill them out as you go along.
- Attend class and do not be afraid to ask questions in real time.

ICM

Fall

- Pay attention during your group sessions; they are fairly interesting, and it helps to make learning the parts of the history easier.
- Go to class and you will not have to waste extra time studying later on to catch up.
- Be PROFESSIONAL!
- Do not stress: this is the fun, hands-on class.
- This class does not have to be your main focus but keep up with it steadily.
- Pay attention to detail when writing the notes and learning the interview.
- For the OSCEs, practice on a friend and work on going through all the parts verbally.

Spring

- The physical exam is not as daunting as it may seem. Take it week by week and the pieces begin to come together (from our limited experience lol).
- It is completely normal to be nervous around standardized patients.

Microanatomy

- Make a large PowerPoint of all the images for each block and go through them with someone else. It makes learning these way more fun (Anki works great here too).
- They will not throw you random images you have never seen before. Almost all will be versions of ones you have been given (they could be zoomed or cropped).
- Doable course - put in the time to learn, even if you are not interested.
- Concentrate on learning the details from the slides as the tests are divided up between lecture content and lab images.

Neuroanatomy

- You may feel a little lost when this material starts being taught, I think everyone does.
- Once you get past the first couple of weeks, it starts to fall into place and you can contextualize the information.
- Learn where the structures are even if you haven't been taught what they do because you eventually will.
- Draw out pathways/tracts so that you can remember what each does and where it connects.
- Schrandt files are very useful, especially for the first test (these should be put on your class Google Drive eventually).
- Learn gross structures and then follow that by learning cross sections (it is more effective this way).
- Make sure to know the cases that Dr. Fadel reviews because they are tested heavily.

- Anki is a great resource for learning lab pictures; they again will not go pull random pictures that are unidentifiable.
- Buy the DeArmond Atlas, it is very helpful (some people didn't buy and just printed the slides they give you).
- There will be many small details tested from the PowerPoints; go through them as many times as you can because it will benefit you.
- The lab introductions that Dr. Fadel holds are helpful in getting you started on learning the material; plus, you have a better idea of how he might go about testing them.
- Overall, a really cool class if you are interested in the nervous system.

Physiology

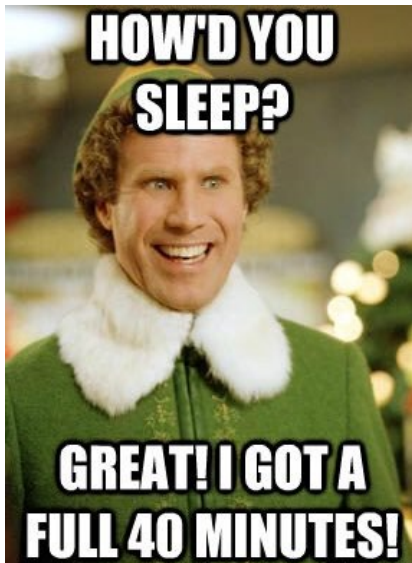
- This is basically anatomy round 2 in terms of lecture intensity and material load.
- Dr. Wilson is amazing - even when you do not understand why you are learning how to move different curves around, there is a real purpose that you will realize by the end of the course.
- It is very important to stay up to date with lecture material. There will come a point in the semester when it feels like you cannot, but I advise you to just continue to go to lecture when this happens so that you at least see the material one time.
- Make sure to attend Dr. Wilson's lectures if possible.
- Every detail for the most part is in the outline. I personally would fill out the PowerPoint during class and then transfer that material to the outline as I started studying.
- If you do get behind in this class, it can go downhill quickly!!!
- Do the practice tests early and take them under normal exam conditions; try to take the first practice test a week before the real exam.
- Study the explanations from the practice exams - really clues you in on how the professors are approaching the material and what distinctions are significant for the exam.
- The practice exams are highly reflective of the test, so understand why an answer choice may be wrong because that same choice may come up on the exam.
- You will learn new material in the practice tests and better understand concepts you have already studied.
- Review the practice tests twice (at least).
- His tests are going to be more difficult than you expect; get a feel for how he tests and then study accordingly.
- This class is all application, make sure you completely understand the concepts.
- You will spend the majority of your time studying for this class; many people will dedicate nearly the entire week before the test to physiology.

CLOSING NOTES

We hope this answered some of the questions you might have had. For the ones that remain, please ask - we and administration are here to help make this transition easier. - Class of 2023

"Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion." - Simon Sinek

"You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so... get on your way!" - Dr. Seuss








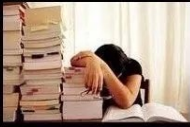
M1s preparing for their first exams



M1s by the end of the the semester



Medical Students

 What my friends think I do	 What my family thinks I do	 What my patients thinks I do
 What society thinks I do	 What I think I do	 What I really do