Memorandum

To: Medical Student Class of 2015

From: Shanta Zimmer, MD

Re: Assignment for Introduction to Being a Physician

Date: July 5, 2011

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. As the director for the course entitled Introduction to Being a Physician, I am assigning a book for you to read over the summer that will be discussed in small group sessions with your fellow students on Monday afternoon August 15, 2011.

The book is Complications: A Surgeon’s Note on an Imperfect Science, by Atul Gawande, a surgeon at Harvard medical School, Brigham and Women’s Hospital. One review describes this book as “…essential reading for anyone involved in medicine—on either end of the stethoscope.” It is both entertaining and instructive in describing many of the situations that arise in medical training from a very human perspective.

Some of the areas to consider for potential discussion when you arrive in August are:

○ The comfort level of patients who have “new” doctors providing some of their care.

○ The comfort level of a medical student in approaching a new patient for the first time and asking questions considered very personal outside the field of medicine.

○ How certain can a physician be that a correct diagnosis is made and that the correct treatment is given.

○ What does it feel like not to know what is causing a patient’s problems (or, for that matter, not know a LOT of stuff-this will be new to many of you).

○ How will the study and practice of medicine affect your own life?

The book is being sent to all incoming medical students as a gift from the medical school deans. We look forward to meeting you in August.