

TESSA ZOLNIKOV

Targeted Rural UnderServed Track

WWAMI
TRUST
UW MEDICINE

Montana

Entering Class of 2016

TRUST seeks to provide a continuous connection between rural, small city underserved communities, medical education, and health professionals in our region. Our goal is to create a full-circle pipeline by guiding qualified students through a special curriculum that connects continuity communities in WWAMI to the University of Washington School of Medicine and its network of affiliated residency programs in an effort to help meet the workforce needs of the region.



My name is Tessa Zolnikov and I am delighted to be starting my medical training in the lovely town of Lewistown. I've heard so many wonderful things about Dr. Bennet, Dr. Marchion, Dr. Sura and the excellence of the Lewistown medical community. I have worked tirelessly to get to this point; my appreciation knows no bounds and I'm so excited to start my training as a University of Washington TRUST student.

Though born in Redland, Oregon, I will always consider Montana my home. My mom, dad and three siblings moved to Roundup, Montana in 1994, where my parents built the round dome coffee shop some of you frequent - Blue Star Espresso. They have been in business for over 18 years while raising their family. After graduating from Roundup High School, I went to the University of Montana and in 2007 graduated with a degree in Russian and Political Science. After graduation, I moved to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to volunteer for the World Health Organization (WHO) for nearly 6 months working alongside a native OB-GYN, focusing on HIV prevention and local emergencies.

That experience opened my eyes to the scarcity of primary physicians and basic rural healthcare on an international as well as domestic level. I returned to school and received a Master's in Business Administration, choosing to research, write and defend my Master's thesis on brain cancer tumor drugs, intellectual property and public and private financing. I found myself intensely curious about the workings of the biological brain and completely fascinated by the human body and its capabilities, and unfortunately, its limitations. Knowing that I have always wanted to help others improve their lives, I realized that medicine was the correct path for me. Despite already achieving a BA and MBA, I returned at the age of 28 to enroll in freshman courses to start my pre-requisite medical classes. I have spent the last three years taking these courses and then applying to medical school with the primary intention of gaining admittance to the UW TRUST Program - and here I am!

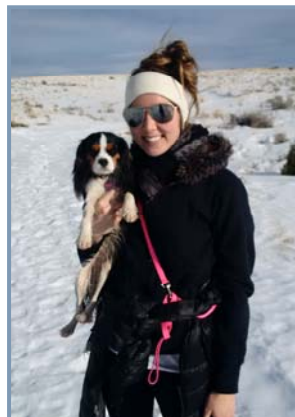
I cannot imagine how many informative lessons and invaluable information I will gain during the visits to Lewistown over the next few years, but I know it will shape how I practice for the rest of my life. Training in Lewistown will enable me to become a skilled and proficient physician with the directive of working in a rural, underserved area.

Beyond my studies, I enjoy almost everything Montana has to offer. I love deep country backpacking in the summer and hiking with my Cavalier Spaniel, Maisie, on a daily basis. I also play several instruments, the piano, trumpet and cello, love reading and have thus far lived in or visited 20 countries, as well as 45 states.

Thank you WWAMI for accepting me into your program, and thank you Lewistown for allowing me to continue on my path towards becoming the most understanding, empathetic and informed physician possible.

See you in June!

Tessa



Tessa and her
hiking partner,
Maisie

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