

WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

CHRISTOPHER BENNETT WANTS TO EXAMINE DIVERSITY IN HEALTHCARE

For Christopher Bennett '09, the world of medicine goes beyond the emergency department.

He currently serves on the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM) Board of Directors and is a clinical fellow and physician at Harvard Medical School. He has transitioned from studying vascular biology to genetics to studying medical education policy and healthcare workplace diversity. It has become a passion with his research appearing in a number of medical journals.

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Now in his third year of residency at Harvard, Bennett, who was a first-generation college student, sees medicine changing as more doctors use social media as a vessel to become more vocal about healthcare issues. His experiences as an emergency medicine resident physician at Boston-area hospitals allow him to work on the frontlines and make human connections to patients and families.

"Some of my most meaningful interactions have just simply been sitting and talking to people from all walks of life ... in a time of sickness," he said.

Late nights are frequent, but Bennett is intentional about distinguishing work from his personal life. He has become a Boston foodie, exploring the diverse food scene and frequenting corner dives. He bikes to school, work and home throughout the suburbs of Cambridge. Self-care also looks like indulging in a chocolate chip cookie after a busy graveyard shift or spending time with his four-legged pal, Henry, who regardless of what time Bennett gets home — whether it's 3 p.m. or 3 a.m. — is always eager to go for a walk.

Even on non-work days, the former scientist and Johns Hopkins fellow, still has his duties as a SAEM board member. Although serving on the board is a significant time commitment, he enjoys being an advocate for his peers; it "invigorates" him and gives him "a sense of purpose."

Discovering that purpose stemmed from his undergraduate research at Winthrop with Dwight Dimaculangan. As a National Institutes of Health fellow, Bennett began studying molecular biology as a biology major and chemistry minor.

"[Faculty members] Dwight Dimaculangan and Kristi Westover were huge in my development as a scientist. Laura Glasscock and Bill Rogers were educators who encouraged me to do better and be better," he said. Bethany Marlowe, dean of students, witnessed Bennett, who was selected as the 2013 Outstanding Young Alumni Award winner, grow into a leader on campus.

"He has always been an amazing person and a person that demanded the best for himself. He pushed himself but he was also very generous in his relations with students and his time," Marlowe said.

Bennett recalled one of his first experiences on campus: Convocation. He still remembers the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ playing in Byrnes Auditorium and later walking out on the front lawn to meet and greet with faculty adorned in robes — and smiles.

"I had never seen anything like it in my life. It remains one of my fondest memories," he said.

Bennett shares more about his experiences as a scientist, physician and writer on his personal website at www.cleebennett.com and on Twitter @cleebennett.



Photo credit: Jennifer Przybylo, M.D.