



Achieve your dreams with the
Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program





Imagine

being free to serve the communities you love, working in a system driven by kindness, excellence, learning and innovation — without the burden of medical school debt.

The Abigail Geisinger Scholars

Program relieves the burden, giving you the opportunity to pursue your dreams without worry.

The Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program:

What happens when better health is built on primary care?

Medical students like you overwhelmingly share the same dream. You want to build lifelong personal relationships with patients and to be a pillar of your community, someone neighbors see as a trusted source of knowledge and compassion.

Geisinger supports the ideals of its future doctors in an environment that places primary care, including psychiatry, where it belongs — at the forefront and as the leading concern of every innovation and technological advance that happens within Geisinger's walls. Through the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program, we back that pledge with relief from all medical school tuition and fees, as well as a \$2,000 per month stipend during your years at Geisinger Commonwealth.

Our primary care physicians and psychiatrists lead entire multidisciplinary teams dedicated to preventing disease and keeping people well and strong. And because we believe precision medicine is best practiced in the primary care setting, our MyCode[®] project delivers a patient's genome right to the medical chart. Our primary care physicians also access a universe of data that, thanks to Geisinger's powerful analytics, has been translated into useful, actionable information.



Here are some of the unique, primary-care-focused programs in which we immerse our students:



Research centered around primary care

This year, 82% of our first-year Abigail Geisinger Scholars took part in clinical research, studying everything from vaccine hesitancy in a federally qualified health center to barriers to care resulting in “no shows” for disadvantaged urban populations.



Primary Care Redesign

Focuses on team-based care, population identification and risk stratification while incorporating analytic support and electronic medical record solutions with the goal of caring for our patients in our communities.



Fresh Food Pharmacy®

Offers prescriptions for free, nutritious groceries to help food-insecure patients control diabetes and enjoy better health.

MyCode Community Health Initiative

This precision medicine project analyzes the DNA of registered patient-participants. Through this project, we are already improving healthcare by finding ways to diagnose medical conditions earlier — even before symptoms appear — and new treatments or medications to manage these diseases.



Geisinger 65 Forward

Primary care clinics are tailored to meet the unique needs of those age 65+. People get longer appointments, social activities, wellness classes and VIP-level, personalized care.

Geisinger at Home™

An at-home care program that delivers care where Geisinger Gold members with complex, difficult-to-manage health conditions need it most: Right where they live. Through this service, our team of doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers and other medical professionals help keep patients healthier and better connected to care by delivering it right to their doorstep.





From birth to death: Building connections for future primary care providers

Kim Kovalick, DO, loves her work as a family medicine physician, especially the way she gets to practice it in a Geisinger clinic. Geisinger’s focus on team-based primary care gives her more time with

patients, building the long-lasting and trusting relationships that make her calling a joy.

Now, as assistant dean, primary care and assistant professor of family medicine in Geisinger Commonwealth’s Department of Medical Education, Dr. Kovalick can share that passion as she shapes future family doctors. She led the effort to build a network of mentors for students in the school’s growing Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program. This fall, in addition to herself, there are 85 mentors to pair one-on-one with incoming Abigail Geisinger Scholars.

The mentors will form a close bond with their students and act as advisers as the students progress in their education. “The mentor role is not an in-clinic teaching role,” Dr. Kovalick said. “The mentor will be available to talk to students about their aspirations and guide them on their journey to becoming a primary care physician.”

When she mentors about primary care and family medicine in particular, she hopes her students will appreciate the breadth

of care a family doctor provides. “We see everyone, from birth to death,” she said. “No other specialty is like that. Family doctors really earn the trust of their patients. They come to us about everything. Even when they get advice from a specialist, they want to talk to us about it.”

Helping her students to begin to build that trust is one of the things Dr. Kovalick enjoys most in her career. “I try to teach students to talk to the patient the way they would want a doctor to talk to their family member — with kindness and respect. It helps that our patients have been very positive about helping students to learn. It’s a joy to see students gain confidence and interact with patients during their medical school journey.”

Intimate human connections make Dr. Kovalick’s role as both doctor and teacher deeply satisfying. When the newest Abigail Geisinger Scholars begin their studies, Dr. Kovalick hopes all mentors convey that message. “Family medicine is about caring for the whole person,” she said. “You need to understand everything about a patient — medical, social, family life as well as challenges the patient may face with their care. It really is the most challenging specialty, but it is also the most rewarding.”



Data and diversity: A founder continues to build a better school

Aliasgar Chittalia, MD, MHA, was an integral part of medical education in northeastern Pennsylvania long before Geisinger Commonwealth opened its doors. In fact, he helped found the medical school.

“I was on the board of the Scranton Temple Residency Program, where the conversations about establishing a medical school in our region first began,” he said. “A lot of people dismissed us, but the people on the board were positive.”

Dr. Chittalia was with founders Robert Wright, MD, and Robert W. Naismith, PhD, when the delegation approached Blue Cross of NEPA for seed money that made their dream a reality. “It’s an amazing thing we have here,” Dr. Chittalia said. “The school has revitalized northeast Pennsylvania. It’s also important because physician recruitment can be tough. And since integration with Geisinger, students are learning in an innovative setting. Few integrated health systems have their own medical school. The school is on a strong trajectory.”

Dr. Chittalia believes the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program was the next logical step in the system/school integration.

“The scholars benefit from learning in a system that has its own health plan. Geisinger is nationally known for its innovative approach to delivering healthcare. Geisinger 65 Forward and Geisinger at Home are two examples.”

Many second-year students get a taste of how to use quality data to improve care in Dr. Chittalia’s clinic. “I like to teach,” he said. “The students are exposed to the concept of population health. I also enjoy teaching how to use information technology to improve healthcare delivery.”

Dr. Chittalia’s interest in data-driven quality has created learning opportunities for residents as well as medical students. As a physician informaticist, he supports practice-management rotation that, among other things, helps residents efficiently use electronic health records.

Dr. Chittalia is a member of the Geisinger Diversity Council and leads the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) initiative at Geisinger. In 2019, he was awarded the Pennsylvania Diversity Council Leadership award for his contribution to improving care for our LGBTQ plus community. He started a multispecialty clinic in Tanzania in 2019, and his clinic will also support global health learning for interested Geisinger resident doctors.

Scholar Justina Warnick: A desire to focus on the underserved



Justina Warnick grew up in a Geisinger family. Her father is a mechanic at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, meaning she was cared for by Geisinger doctors since her birth, and her brother is an orthopaedic surgical resident at Geisinger Medical Center. Despite these close ties to healthcare, Justina said her parents didn't apply any special pressure when it came to her choice of career or of professional school. Instead, a novel project in high school served as her inspiration to pursue medicine.

"In ninth-grade algebra, I was required to complete an interdisciplinary project. I made a roller coaster called 'Murder She Rode' that reflected a parabolic equation and was surrounded by intricately detailed rooms of a crime. I had to use science and math, but also art," she said. "I enjoyed the project because of the breadth of expertise it required in several disciplines, and I realized medicine was the same — scientific knowledge is critical, but so are communication, empathy and compassion."

Justina chose a pre-med track at Dickinson College. It was there that she decided primary care was her passion. "During a course called 'Spanish for the Health Professions,' I completed service learning at a migrant healthcare clinic. I served as an interpreter and almost felt like I was a doctor, because I spoke directly to the patients. The patients were so grateful and the information we provided had so much impact. I felt that this is what I wanted to do with my career," she said.

Her decision to pursue medicine, and primary care in particular, made Justina's choice of medical school an easy one. "I want to stay in my own community and learn what the unique barriers to care are for my neighbors. Plus, primary care is a great way to provide health education and improve health literacy, ultimately improving community well-being. And I love the Geisinger health system — it's growing and expanding and is an exciting place to be," she said.



Scholar Frank Monney, MBS '19: 'Geisinger lives its mission. I want to be a part of that.'

Growing up in Cameroon, Frank Monney, MBS '19, MD Class of 2024, learned to connect doctors and hospitals with death and trauma. "I had several close relatives die for lack of access to care

at the most basic level," he said, noting his early negative impressions had persuaded him to avoid medicine as a career. Instead, Frank's love of science led him to study biological sciences with a concentration in STEM education at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, where — fortunately — positive research experiences changed his mind. "I conducted research with a shadowing component at the University of Connecticut," he said. "I learned that medicine doesn't always have all the answers, but doctors and scientists never stop looking for them. It was a big turning point for me."

To prepare for medical school, Frank chose first to get a master's degree in biomedical sciences (MBS) from Geisinger Commonwealth. That's when he fell in love with Geisinger and its approach to medicine. "While I was a graduate student,

I got involved in a lot of community service. As a Black man in medicine, I realized that Geisinger is encouraging diversity in all aspects. It's not just lip service; it shows through every activity. The school celebrates, encourages and understands the value of diversity in healthcare. I felt it from the first day of my master's program — that Geisinger wants to do right by its community and its people — and I continue to feel it today as a second-year medical student."

Citing programs like the school's annual cultural bazaar and the 25,000 meals project, Frank said there was only one place he wanted to go for medical school. "I like to be involved in my own community. I like being a mentor and role model for youth in the area. I want to stay here at Geisinger Commonwealth and do more," he said. That's also why Frank applied for the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program and is looking forward to his future as a physician in Geisinger's region. "The School of Medicine is young, but just look at the strides it's made already. There is complete cohesion between the stated mission and the developed programs. Geisinger Commonwealth truly is concerned with the health of its population, and I want to be a part of that."



Scholar Tiffany Garcia, MBS '17: 'I want to be there for my patients long-term'

Tiffany Garcia's family first emigrated to New York City from Colombia, later relocating to Reading. There, Tiffany observed some of the inequities in medicine. Knowing little English, her parents — particularly her mother — struggled to navigate the healthcare system, mainly because bilingual services were limited. An undergraduate medical service trip to Honduras proved pivotal. "I found that I loved helping the people, but I didn't like the feeling that we were helicoptering in and would soon be gone. I wanted more. The experience solidified my desire to study medicine, and the type of physician I want to be," she said. "I am drawn to primary care because it's the center point for patients. The primary care doctor guides patients and knows everything about them." Tiffany's ideas about the centrality of primary care have been reinforced by her longitudinal clinical experience at Geisinger's Kistler Clinic in Wilkes-Barre. "The team-based care and the wide range of services available to the patients excites me. I can see myself being part of that," she said. "During outpatient primary care rotations, I had the opportunity to see patients with similar chronic disease processes such as hypertension and diabetes, yet unique in their own ways. I valued the opportunities to educate patients about their conditions and learn about screening tools available to them. Whether inpatient or outpatient, there was always the opportunity to learn about the patient, understand their barriers to health and provide counseling. I was especially impressed with services available to patients through Geisinger such as community health assistants and Fresh Food Pharmacy, and it really demonstrated the various team members involved in the care of patients."



Scholar Scott Delenick, a former teacher, sees primary care as an opportunity to educate

Scott Delenick compares his first career — teaching — to a family member, while his second — medicine — is more like a soul mate. "My mother was a teacher, my dad worked in education as the business manager for a school district and my sisters are teachers. It's what I am familiar with, and it's a comfortable, meaningful life. But when I worked as an EMT, I began to have a change of heart," he said.

Scott taught high school chemistry, biology and astronomy, while spending his summers at Cape May as a lifeguard. His life changed when his summer job suddenly required EMT certification.

"When I worked as an EMT and we'd wheel the patient toward a waiting doctor, I thought, 'I'd like to be that guy,'" Scott said. He is interested in all four areas of primary care included in the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program and believes his teaching background will serve him well. "Being a teacher has helped me communicate with all kinds of people and being a high school basketball coach has helped me to break things down in ways everyone can understand. I wouldn't trade my teaching experience for anything."

How it works:

Geisinger believes that the future of medicine lies in robust primary care – care that anticipates and prevents disease, focuses on wellness and recognizes mental health and well-being as fundamental to stronger, more resilient communities. That’s why the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program focuses on the following specialties:

- Family medicine
- Internal medicine
- Medicine-pediatrics
- Psychiatry

Our scholars program frees medical students from the financial concerns that often derail their dreams. Abigail Geisinger Scholars will:

- Graduate without tuition debt;
- Receive a \$2,000 per month stipend;
- Become a Geisinger-employed physician in one of the specialties listed above upon completion of residency training. One year of service equals one year of support, with a two-year minimum.

Interested in applying?

Submit an American Medical College Application Service® (AMCAS®) primary application and Geisinger Commonwealth secondary application.

- Answer “yes” to the first question on the Geisinger Commonwealth secondary application regarding interest in applying for the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program.
- Complete the question regarding primary care and provide any updates to your experiences that align with the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program.

Students are selected to participate in this program based on the following selection criteria: financial need; merit; diversity; and likelihood of staying at Geisinger beyond the service obligation.

Students not selected for the Abigail Geisinger Scholars program will also be considered for regular admission into the MD Program.

To learn more, visit geisinger.edu/AbigailScholars.



What happens when better health is built on primary care?

Inside Geisinger's plans for healthier communities

In 2017, the Arnold P. Gold Foundation's Richard Levin, MD, offered a blunt observation about the current state of healthcare: "Doctors enter the profession to help and care for humans," he said. "They do not sign up to be scribes or billing agents." His statement struck at the heart of what plagues modern medicine, and particularly primary care — namely, inefficiencies and bureaucratic barriers that frustrate both doctor and patient and make good healthcare anything but easy.

Three years ago, a team at Geisinger led by J. Edward Hartle, MD, chief medical officer, began the process of restoring the bond between primary care doctor and patient that should be at the heart of good health. According to Dr. Hartle, the process, called "primary care redesign," had two simple goals: to make primary care a joy to practice for doctors and to ramp up the level of care patients received in primary care settings. For patients, ramped-up care means more intermediate care services, like IV infusions, and behavioral health services available right in the clinic. For physicians, primary care redesign removed the constant electronic distraction — excessive administrative burden on the physician — that negatively affects provider well-being.

Today, Geisinger's transformed clinics are frustration-free zones staffed by interdisciplinary teams that make primary care easier for patients and more rewarding for doctors. For example, patients long annoyed and deterred by having "homework" like getting lab work or a prescription handed to them after a visit can now get all of these services and more in one visit.

Everyone has more time with their doctor, and seniors even get things like social activity and a gym at special Geisinger 65 Forward Health Centers. And the physician inbox that once pestered clinicians with its constant electronic chatter is now a responsibility shared among team members.

"When I first started my career, before primary care redesign, it was up to the physician to get everything done for the patient," said Kim Kovalick, DO, a family medicine physician at Geisinger Kingston. "Now, we have a care team that collaborates in the care of our patients. From the moment I walk in the door, I have many team members who help me provide great care. For example, a nurse will give recommended immunizations before I even walk in the room. They order blood work and preventive screenings such as mammograms and DEXA/ bone density tests. We can take more time with patients with complicated medical conditions and have a team approach to make sure the patient has all the resources they need."

She adds, "If patients have multiple medical problems — congestive heart failure or diabetes, for example — we have case managers who can help educate them about their disease process. We also have dietitians and medical pharmacists to help educate our patients. All these team members have helped to not only reduce physician burnout, but also improve overall care."



For Geisinger doctors, primary care redesign means the paperwork threatening to drown them is now triaged and handled in part by nurses, case managers and other members of the interdisciplinary team. The effect this has on physician happiness cannot be overstated. The inbox, coupled with the demands of the electronic health record (EHR), has the power to erect a barrier between doctor and patient and routinely ranks among the chief contributors to physician burnout. Per *JAMA*:

Physicians spend approximately half of their clinic time on clerical and administrative tasks, including processing electronic messages delivered via EHR system-based inboxes. Such inboxes function similarly to email but deliver messages to clinicians, such as test results, messages from staff and other clinicians, medication refill requests, direct messages from patients via patient portals, and additional computer-generated messages. Management of the EHR inbox can add a substantial amount of time to physicians' work lives. Primary care physicians spend between 49 and 85 minutes per day managing their inbox. Some inbox messages are irrelevant to the recipient and can reduce their ability to quickly identify important and timely information.



Meet the admissions team



Michelle Schmude, EdD, MBA
Associate Dean for Admissions, Enrollment Management and Financial Aid & Associate Professor
mschmude@som.geisinger.edu



Kristen Greene, MS
Director of Admissions and Enrollment Services
570-504-9683
kgreene01@som.geisinger.edu



Stanley J. Kania III, PhD, MBA
Associate Director of Admissions
570-558-3954
skania@som.geisinger.edu



Deirdre Jones
Enrollment Management Recruiter
570-955-1339
djones@som.geisinger.edu



Amanda McIver
Administrative Assistant
570-955-1313
amciver@som.geisinger.edu



Suzanne McNamara
Director for Financial Aid
570-504-9682
smcnamara@som.geisinger.edu



Roxanne Seymour, MBA
Associate Director for Financial Aid
570-504-7303
rseymour@som.geisinger.edu



Janice Richardson, MA
Financial Aid Advisor
570-504-9611
jrichardson@som.geisinger.edu

Abigail Geisinger Scholars

MD Class of 2025

Garrett Alexander II

Hometown: Bowie, MD
Undergraduate institution:
Towson University

Joanna Bernatowicz

Hometown: Jefferson Township, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Cornell University

Andy Bui

Hometown: North Easton, MA
Undergraduate institution:
The University of Massachusetts Amherst

Richard Callum

Hometown: Oldsmar, FL
Undergraduate institution:
University of Florida

Luke Cavanah

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Virginia

Laura Christman

Hometown: Roseto, PA
Undergraduate institution:
King's College

Katarina Clegg

Hometown: Malvern, PA
Undergraduate institution:
New York University

Marybelle Daclan

Hometown: Galloway, NJ
Undergraduate institution:
La Salle University

Grant DeLozier

Hometown: Hollidaysburg, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Pittsburgh

Dayna DeSalve

Hometown: DuBois, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
Saint Francis University, Lake Erie
College of Osteopathic Medicine,
Master of Medical Science

Seth Ellison

Hometown: Danville, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
University of Mary Washington,
Duke University MBA, GCSOM MBS '20

Melissa Endy

Hometown: Westfield, NJ
Undergraduate institution:
Rutgers University

Jessica Fanelli

Hometown: Lenoxville, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The University of Scranton

Madison Frank

Hometown: Altoona, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Pittsburgh

Maya Glander

Hometown: Rockville, MD
Undergraduate institution:
University of Tampa

Steven Grampp

Hometown: East Stroudsburg, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The Pennsylvania State University

Emily Groff

Hometown: State College, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The Pennsylvania State University

Yousef Hakim

Hometown: Warminster, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Temple University

Mikayla Heid

Hometown: Archbald, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Ithaca College

Noah Hoffman

Hometown: Muncy, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Washington & Jefferson College

Geoffrey Huang

Hometown: Barrington, RI
Undergraduate institution:
Brown University

Khevna Joshi

Hometown: Nashua, NH
Undergraduate institution:
Dartmouth College

Andrew Jurgielewicz

Hometown: Easton, CT
Undergraduate institution:
Drexel University

Patrick Kowalski

Hometown: Bethlehem, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
The Pennsylvania State University,
GCSOM MBS '20

Benjamin Krouse

Hometown: Hunlock Creek, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Pittsburgh

Jaeger Kubikisha

Hometown: Englewood, NJ
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
Rutgers New Brunswick,
GCSOM MBS '20

Emily Kummerer

Hometown: Cape Coral, FL
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
University of South Florida,
GCSOM MBS '20

Nicholas 'Nick' Mikolinis

Hometown: Delta, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
The Pennsylvania State University

Alexis Nduka

Hometown: New York, NY
Undergraduate institution:
CUNY Hunter College

My Nguyen

Hometown: Atlantic City, NJ
Undergraduate institution:
Rutgers University New Brunswick

Kathleen Paterson

Hometown: Scranton, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
Boston College, GCSOM MBS '20

Riley Potter

Hometown: Media, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Evan Raubenstine

Hometown: Hanover, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The Pennsylvania State University

Sophie Roe

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Pomona College

Lauren Rowe

Hometown: Selinsgrove, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Susquehanna University

Tyler Schubert

Hometown: Mechanicsburg, PA
Undergraduate institution:
Franklin & Marshall College

Mahdi Taye

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Undergraduate institution:
Hunter College of the City University
of New York

Mathura Thileepan

Hometown: York, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The Pennsylvania State University

Leah Thomas

Hometown: Wilkes-Barre, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
Wilkes University, GCSOM MBS '20

Ryan J. Ulibarri

Hometown: Downey, CA
Undergraduate institution:
Arizona State University
(also for graduate degree)

SooYoung VanDeMark

Hometown: Ithaca, NY
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
Cornell, University of Baltimore (MA)
and GCSOM MBS '20

Marisa Vanness

Hometown: Little Meadows, PA
Undergraduate institution:
The Pennsylvania State University

Kevin Viera

Hometown: Wyomissing, PA
Undergraduate/graduate institutions:
The Pennsylvania State University,
GCSOM MBS '20

Lauren Yocum

Hometown: Bloomsburg, PA
Undergraduate institution:
University of Pittsburgh



Scholar Shauna Wassmus: Building on a life of service

Shauna Wassmus has immersed herself in community and in service for years. As an undergrad at Boston College, she spent every spring break not on a Florida beach but in some of the nation's most disadvantaged communities. She built houses for Habitat for

Humanity and worked in food pantries, tutored in afterschool programs and helped organize clothing drives. As a sophomore, she worked in a Boston healthcare clinic that provided foot care for homeless people. "We provided foot baths and clean socks. It was amazing to see how transformative this basic care was. People with infections and blisters had their pain relieved and were able to get around a bit better. This is what sparked my interest in primary care," she said.

When it came time to look for a medical school, however, Shauna admits to feeling disappointed. "It seemed that so many schools placed a lot of emphasis on metrics like MCAT scores," she said. "That's important, but I cared about their mission statements. So, I started to really look into how those mission

statements were being supported. That's how I found Geisinger Commonwealth and the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program."

At the end of her first year, Shauna said being a Geisinger Abigail Scholar has "been great." She's especially enjoyed the senior leadership seminars, where scholars have a chance to interact with Geisinger's most senior leaders, including CEO Jaewon Ryu, MD, JD. Her favorite experiences, however, are still the ones that connect her to community. "I've been going to work at the Fresh Food Farmacy," she said. "It's so incredible. The patients who go there get their fruits and vegetables, as well as recipes and help with meal planning."

She said the Fresh Food Farmacy and other experiences she will have at Geisinger sites like 65 Forward will play a big role in shaping her as a physician. "I know that when I'm at the Fresh Food Farmacy, I'm not just there to pack groceries," she said. "I'm meant to think about how people's lives are affected by things outside a doctor's office. And I'll always keep that in mind and question what else is happening in a patient's life. There's so much more to consider beyond diagnosis and treatment. Having early experiences in this kind of thinking is important. There's always more to understand."

Geisinger
Commonwealth
School of Medicine

525 Pine St., Scranton, PA 18509



Contact us

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine
Admissions Office

570-504-9068

[geisinger.edu/gcsom](https://www.geisinger.edu/gcsom)
admissions@som.geisinger.edu



Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine is committed to non-discrimination in all employment and educational opportunities.

2356-16262-8/21-EZY/SL