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### *An inspiration and a role model*

“My job this weekend is to convince you to be a doctor.” I was 19 years old and going through the stages of committing to being a physician when I met Melissa Martinek, DO. I had been going back and forth, unsure I wanted to take on all of the responsibilities of becoming and being a physician, but Melissa quickly convinced me to follow my heart. That weekend we discussed medical school and the challenges that it brings; she answered every question with excitement and passion. No matter how minute the question, she was never annoyed. To this day I communicate with her at least once a week about whatever challenge I am facing as I make my way through medical school.

Melissa has given me the courage to choose the life of a physician. In my heart, I always knew it’s what I wanted, but society’s old standards for women always seemed to hold me back. The old standards dictated that I shouldn’t put my future children in daycare, but should stay home with them; that I should have dinner on the table for my future husband when he gets home from work; and that I should withhold the power and the capability of my mind, in order to fit into the antiqued model society has set for me. Melissa gave me the courage to say, “Yes!” to what I already knew. She gave me the strength to know that I can be a physician, a wife, a mother, and be successful and great in all of these roles.

They say that first impressions are powerful. Well, the quote above is the first thing Melissa

ever said to me. She is a friend of my cousin and the two apparently had discussed my life before I had the chance to meet her. After that weekend, I was committed and determined to follow my dream and become a physician. I had the confirmation that I had been waiting for, and when my mind is set nothing stops me. Melissa has guided me through my undergraduate years; she helped me as I studied and prepared for the MCAT, supporting and encouraging me every step of the way.

She has reviewed my essays and applications, and though she herself is always buried in her own work, she has always helped me and never complained. As I worked my way through my degree, my Senior Research, the endless pages of applications, and the fear that comes with interviews, Melissa has stood by me every step of the way. From what to wear to interviews to how to prepare for boards she always answers my questions as if they are incredibly important. Last Christmas, while most visited over cookies and a warm fire, we visited over a suture kit, practicing suturing, while discussing how to survive my upcoming classes. She has been the brightest of role models through both the good times and the dark times.

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Though Melissa has been incredibly encouraging, she has been tough on me when necessary. For example, when I didn't apply to as many medical schools as she thought I should, wow, did I hear it! I appreciate her tough love, because it is preparing me for what is yet to come. As I continue through school and prepare for residency, I realize that my attendings are going to be hard on me. People's lives are on the line; therefore, I expect to be challenged and questioned. Melissa is not afraid to tell me when and if I have messed up, though she protects me from making too many mistakes. She is honest and direct, and I genuinely appreciate her honesty.

When I was accepted into medical school, not only did Melissa load up my car with all of her old books, notes and board review material, she also said to me, "Enjoy it. It is so much fun! I miss being in medical school!" Some weeks, I wonder what she was thinking when she said this. Yet whenever I am having those weeks, I think of her advice and remember how lucky I am to be here. I remember that this is what I have been dreaming of since I was a child. I tell myself that, currently, my job as a future physician is to study as hard as possible and to learn all that I can. Whether she realizes it or not, Melissa has made me appreciate being in medical school and to see how awe-inspiring it truly is.

To be honest, I'm not sure I'd be in medical school if it weren't for Dr. Melissa Martinek. She has truly been an inspiration and a role model in every way possible. She seems to be the one to pull me to my feet when I feel like giving up. I respect and value her opinion, because she has been through everything I am going through right now. I often take her advice over others' (even my own Mother's!) because, as a woman, Melissa understands how difficult it is to become a physician. She defines the kind of physician I want to be; she is selfless and wants only what is best for others. Whether it is in the Operating Room, or for a trivial medical student like me, she gives all that she can to better people's

lives. I am blessed to have a role model such as her, guiding me along this crazy but wonderful path to becoming a physician. I could rave on and on about the impact she has had on my life; however, simply put, Melissa saw the potential within me that I was blind to and has motivated and pushed me to become the best physician that I one day will be.