

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Lauren Griggs and Victor Do

Lauren Griggs: An Alberta medical student's financial expertise is making waves across the country

As VP Finance for the University of Calgary's Medical Students Association, Lauren Griggs has advocated for projects to give back to the students and community since day one. In collaboration with Lenka StafI, VP Student Affairs and Wellness (SAW), Lauren initiated budgetary changes to help fund multiple initiatives designed to increase student wellness, promote team building and educate students on health promotion.

Some of those initiatives include the development of a wellness library in the SAW office, a wellness retreat, funding for University of Calgary's Student Advocacy Day Symposium and fitness equipment upgrades to the "dungeon" gym that many medical students frequent. Lauren is a can-do person who is committed to supporting her peers' ideas and creating strategic plans to financially support them. She is always seeking opportunities for improving the learning environment for medical students at the U of C.



Lauren Griggs is known for her financial expertise, business background and positive attitude (photo credit: Sarah Zahabi)

Lauren's financial expertise, business background and positive attitude led to her election as the VP Finance for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS). Since assuming her position, she has continued her passion for supporting student initiatives at the national level. She currently leads a selection committee that provides funding to student initiatives across the country, and she is constantly researching opportunities to fund initiatives that promote wellness, education, advocacy, resilience and resource development. Lauren is committed to enhancing the Student Affairs portfolio and offered to spearhead the financial health segment of the National Wellness Program (NWP), which will provide resources and guidance on how to manage finances during medical school, while maintaining balance and mental health. Lauren's leadership within this role will ensure students gain a greater understanding of financial literacy and decrease their stress in financial matters.

Lauren has also been actively involved with the resiliency portion of the NWP, as a co-lead and instructor for the Simulated Training for Resilience in Various Environments (STRIVE) program, which launched as a pilot at the U of C last November. Through the CFMS, this resiliency training is now offered to medical schools across the country, with

the goal of encouraging schools to incorporate resiliency skills teaching into their medical school curriculums.

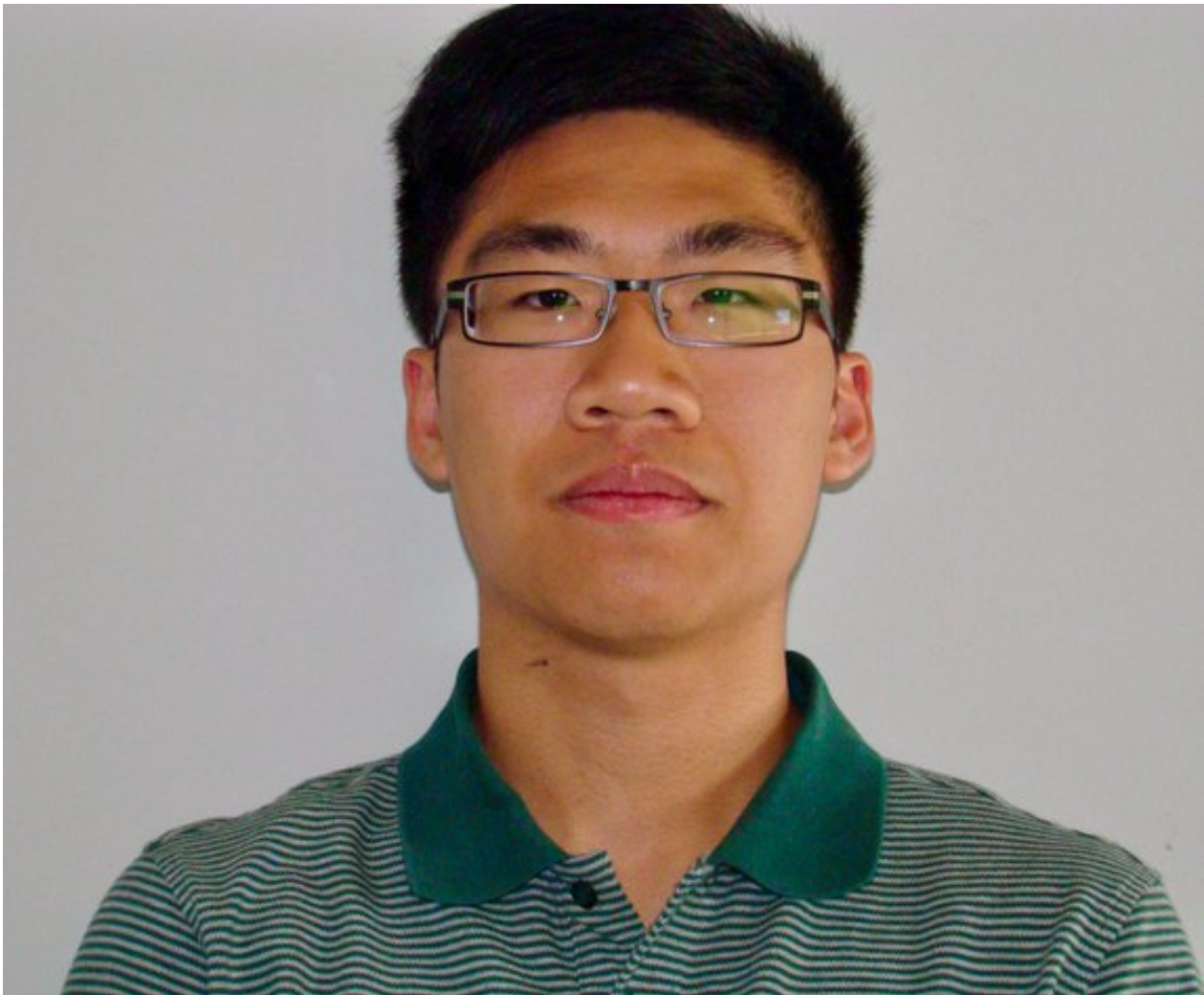
Due to increasing numbers of medical students exhibiting signs of burnout and suicidal ideation, STRIVE was designed to teach medical students important resiliency skills, hoping that this would lead to decreased burnout and increased empathy, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and improved job satisfaction. This program is receiving interest across the country and will hopefully be offered at the University of Alberta's medical school in the fall.

Lauren is committed to the health and well-being of her peers, and she will passionately advocate for initiatives, even when there is limited support for funding. When something seems unachievable, Lauren's creativity, commitment and enthusiasm leads the team to summit the mountain.

Victor Do: Leading change and supporting medical student wellness

Leading change and taking initiative is second nature for Victor Do, a second-year medical student from the University of Alberta. Victor's clear commitment to advocacy and his passion for supporting medical students across the country, led to his selection as the Western Regional Representative for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) in September 2017. In addition to his role as a representative for all western medical students, Victor actively sought out opportunities to support the Student Affairs Vice President and to develop the wellness portion of the portfolio.

Initially, Victor collaborated with the National Wellness Officer to adapt the Wellness Challenge and improve medical student engagement. Within this role, he recognized the potential for growth within the portfolio, and he was consequently selected as the National Wellness Program (NWP) lead to develop a national-level medical student wellness initiative. The program, launched in January, has impacted students across the country, at all of the nation's medical schools. It is an innovative idea that aims to raise awareness, foster strong advocacy, develop supportive wellness programs and promote resilience and self-development skills in Canadian medical students.



Victor Do: Leading change and taking initiative is second nature

The program is composed of four major pillars: student spotlights, longitudinal wellness initiatives (LWI), advocacy and resiliency. These initiatives are focused on raising awareness and promoting a positive environment for medical students to collaborate and support one another.

Each of the major pillars plays an important role within the NWP. The student spotlights highlight medical students from across the country in their wellness journeys through short abstract writing pieces. The LWI focuses on five broad wellness themes, including nutritional, mental, physical, financial, and social/relationship wellness. The LWI is preceded by a one-month wellness challenge, designed to encourage students to start the new year with healthy lifestyle changes.

Regarding advocacy, the NWP represents students on issues such as learner mistreatment, accommodating students with disabilities and building health-promoting learning environments. Additionally, *Safe Space: Let's Get Real* teleconferences, which are national conversations moderated by health professionals, were developed to promote cross-country dialogue in many important topics and to advocate for student wellness. The final arm of the NWP is promoting resilience and self-development through the course *Simulated Training for Resilience in Various Environment (STRIVE)*,

which takes its roots from the *Canadian Armed Forces Road to Mental Readiness* program.

Victor's leadership and ability to guide his team of medical students from across the country, coupled with his creative ability to develop social media and website promotion of the NWP, has led to the success of the initiative. He selflessly commits substantial hours to ensuring the success of the program and is always one step ahead to ensure that the team is prepared to respond to the needs of medical students. Through his leadership, this program represents the first comprehensive, evidence-based, student-led national wellness program in Canada.

Thank you, Victor, for your commitment to student wellness!

Nominate a medical student to be recognized in a Student Spotlight

If you would like to nominate a medical student to be recognized in a Student Spotlight, please submit a maximum of 500-word narrative to the AMA Committee on Student Affairs. We are looking for stories about medical students who are advocating for and leading change in their school, clinical environment or community. We want to recognize these students for their efforts and their ability to positively impact the health care system in Alberta. Together we can make a difference!

Please submit your nomination narrative and a picture to daphne.andrychuk@albertadoctors.org. If you submit a picture, please also include a signed AMA photo consent form for each person in the picture. Here's the form: [AMA-consent-for-disclosure-of-personal-info.pdf](#)

Banner image credit: Harishs, Pixabay.com