Dear Future MLS Student,

I am writing to you from the hematology department at the end of my very last rotation. I'm sure you're feeling all the same feelings that I was at this point – nervous, stressed, excited, relieved, and so many more. At the beginning of my time here, I sat in the chairs in the classroom with no confidence in myself as a student, thinking to myself "How am I going to do this?" but here I am, and if I can do it, you can too!

I think one of the most important things I learned from this program is to **have confidence** in myself. In high school and college, I was never a student who had to excessively study for exams, I always did well, but I never felt smart. After I failed an exam during rotation I, Michele and I had a talk about my confidence as a student, she reassured me that I know my stuff, now it's just up to me to be confident. I have not failed an exam since. To me, confidence going into an exam is just as important as knowing the material (even if you have to fake it till you make it).

Next thing I want to talk about is **studying**. If you don't have an effective way to study currently, find one before your clinical year officially starts. The study tips lecture that we have during the first week will come in handy, I promise. You might sit in that chair the whole time and not listen to anything Michele or Kyle say, but if I were you, I'd listen. I thought I knew how to study at the beginning of this program, I mean how hard could it be right? Wrong. What works for you might not work for everyone else but here's my advice: **study out loud**. This was the main reason why I retained so much of the information from rotation I and it made exams so much easier. Next, I used study guides…yes, the dreaded study guide. I know at the beginning of the year we're told no study guides, but I fully believe this was one of the other reasons why I did so well on exams. Yes, they are time consuming and can be very long (my hematology study guides were about. 30-40+ pages each), but reinforcing that information was so helpful for me, even if it was just by typing I was forced to reread through everything. Side note: they also come in handy during rotation II for quick reviews). Like I said, what works for everyone else might not work for you, and that okay, just **find what works for YOU.**

My third tip is **step out of your comfort zone**. I am a very anxious person and have become more of a homebody over time. If you would have told me at the beginning of the year that I would be going to Pennsylvania for my micro rotation, I would have told you "You're crazy, I would never do that." I did it and it was one of the best things I could have done for myself. I volunteered to go on a whim because I enjoyed learning micro and wanted to learn as much as I could, and boy did I. My experience at UPMC Jameson was one I will never forget. The things I learned and saw there were so valuable and made me find a passion for micro so much so that I got a job as a micro tech after graduation!

Lastly, soak it all in. It will be the hardest, most demanding academic year of your life. You will probably have to say no to hanging out with friends, you will definitely experience FOMO, but I promise, **it is worth it 1,000%**. If you ever feel like you can't, **you can and you will.** Don't limit yourself and **don't be afraid to try something new**.

Good luck, you got this!

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