



## **First Year Notes of Podiatric School at UTRGV** **– Shared by the 2022 August TPMA & TPMF Inaugural Scholarship Winners**

### **Madeleine "Maddy" Mehaffey**

**| Class of 2026 ,UTRGV SOPM Student Government Assoc. President**

“My first year at UTRGV SOPM has been a whirlwind. I have achieved honors in all of my courses, including lower extremity anatomy, biomechanics, and more. Besides classes, I have also been elected president of the UTRGV SOPM Student Government Association (SGA), joined the Applied Biomechanics of Lower Extremity (ABLE) Research Lab, and attended multiple conferences. I have learned a lot about myself while trying to balance these responsibilities, my classes, and my family life. It has been challenging to find my groove, but it is definitely worth it. My future expectations throughout podiatric medical school are to continue doing well in my classes, get published in research, grow UTRGV SOPM’s organizations and clubs, pass all of my boards with flying colors, and complete my externships at the best hospitals available. I know the next few years are going to fly by, but I am so ready!

### **Nicholas Obias – Class of 2026**

“As part of the inaugural class to the first podiatry school in Texas, I expected to find top tier faculty, a comprehensive curriculum, and modern skill-development tools on my path to becoming a foot and ankle specialist. I gained all of this and more at UTRGV SOPM. Enabled by the mentorship of Dr. James Kutchback and the financial gifts of Dr. Maureen Caldwell & Dr. Andrew Young, and Dr. & Mrs. Kutchback through the TPMF TPMA scholarship fund, I exercise my curiosity as a biomechanics researcher and my drive for service through student leadership roles. I am privileged to work with my classmates and friends every day. I look forward to growing as a physician and a person alongside my fellow future podiatrists.”

\*Study session at a boba shop



### **Ariana Ruiz- Class of 2026**



“Wow! Honestly, I cannot believe how quickly my first year of podiatric medical school is going. Although the first couple of months was quite challenging in trying to figure out a good study schedule that is most effective for my learning style, it seems I have figured out what works best for me. I never realized how much I could learn in the span of one day, from learning about the basic sciences like biochemistry, to biomechanics and podiatric concepts. Pushing myself out of my comfort zone and constantly telling myself I belong here for a reason is what has made me a successful first year student thus far. I am once again very grateful to be part of the inaugural class at UTRGV- SOPM and a TPMF scholar. With just a couple of months left in my first year I can only look forward to what my second year has to offer as that puts me one step closer to my dream of becoming a foot and ankle specialist.”

### **Elissa George – Class of 2026**

“As a recipient of the Texas Podiatric Medical Foundation & Texas Podiatric Medical Association scholarship, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generosity. I am currently completing my first year in podiatry school. It has been a privilege to learn from



such esteemed faculty, and I am grateful to be able to pursue my passion of becoming a physician. My plans in the future include volunteering my extra time to work in a community setting, as a means of giving back for the generosity I have received. Currently, I am spending my extra time shadowing podiatrists to gain additional insights into my field. I will forever be grateful to the donors for this generous gift. It has truly lightened my financial burden and helped me focus on my goals of becoming a foot and ankle surgeon. ““

### **Ricardo Gonzalez – Class of 2026**

“As the end of my 1<sup>st</sup> year approaches, I still can’t really process the amount of information I was exposed to and expected to retain. I always heard the “medical school is like drinking from a firehose” analogy, but I never really understood what that meant until now. I still haven’t perfected my study method, but in the process of trying I’ve learned, and continue to learn, a lot about myself. I learned I can endure more than I ever thought possible, and that the imposter syndrome I feel all too often is not as much reality as it is my own lack of self-confidence. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship at the start of my academic year which I used to purchase an iPad. I had never owned an iPad, but I cannot begin to explain just how much it has impacted my success as a 1<sup>st</sup> year medical student. The anatomy applications have really aided in my visual learning, and the Good Notes application has allowed me to hand-write notes onto every single lecture PowerPoint we are given. I only hope to continue improving my study and organization skills, as I now see how crucial those skills will be to my success as a Podiatric Physician. I want to thank TPMA & TPMF once again for providing me with this gift and look forward to completing the scholarship application for this upcoming academic year.”

### **Serena Markose- Class of 2026**

“Dear TPMF-TPMA Scholarship Fund Inaugural Donors,

Once again, I want to sincerely thank you for giving me this scholarship. Because of this, I wouldn’t be where I’m today and I’m deeply grateful. A quick update for you, I have been doing exceptionally well in all my classes and exams. With the scholarship, I been having more time to sleep and study which are key factors to my recent achievements! I have also been able to continue many of the things I love, especially dance! As someone who grew up learning Indian classical dance, I was worried about stopping; yet to this day, I’m still able to practice and occasionally perform. I’m hoping to one day do research on my art form (Bharatanatyam) in association with podiatry and I’m currently in talks of it. I’m also in the process of starting an American Association for Women Podiatrists chapter at our school. Before starting my first year at the UTRGV School of Podiatric Medicine, I was worried on how I would balance my education along with my daily and academic expenses; however, it’s because of your generous contribution, I’ll be forever thankful!”

### **Olivia Mackey- Class of 2026**

“As I approach the end of my 1st year of Podiatry school at UTRGV there is one word that comes to mind - gratitude. The 1st black woman to be accepted into the 1st podiatry school in Texas; given a scholarship by TPMF & TPMA, organizations that support leaders in the field; and opportunities to serve the vast majority of an underserved population here in South Texas through groundbreaking research & service with help of the NIH. The list of exciting updates can go on, but it is clear that there is a lot to be thankful for. With the support of my school, TPMF & TPMA, & more I am sure that my 2nd year & beyond will be full of many more exciting developments that will help me one day join the likes of the foot & ankle surgeons that fill TPMF & TPMA. Thank you! “



**Peter Elvin- Class of 2026**

“I am very happy with how my first year has gone. Time has flown by fast, but I have learned so much. I accredit learning so much to the amazing basic science faculty and podiatrists we have teaching us. I feel that they really care about our success and are always available to help us. They make learning very exciting and are amazing role models. I have no doubt I will be successful in my future education and training with their continued help. “

**Jonathan Rodriguez**

“It is truly incredible to think that the first year of the inaugural class at the UTRGV School of Podiatric Medicine is already coming to a conclusion. It has been an amazing year in Harlingen, and I am grateful to be a part of it. It has been a year filled with many challenges, especially academically, but I can confidently say that we have the most knowledgeable and caring faculty out of any podiatry school. They have all been so supportive every step of the way and have made difficult subjects appear seamless. I have also had the challenge of being away from my wife (who is currently in nursing school back home in Fort Worth) and my 4-year-old son (who started pre-k this year). However, I realize that what I am doing is not just for myself, but mostly for them and that has kept my drive going strong. I want to take this opportunity to thank TPMF/TPMA and all of the wonderful donors. I am so appreciative to have received a scholarship and that has helped me tremendously throughout the course of the last two semesters. Thank you for your support!”

**Sharmin Bootwala – Class of 2026**

“Dear TPMF-TPMA Scholarship Fund Inaugural Donors,

To start, I want to thank you for your generous scholarship, and am grateful that I was selected as one of the recipients of your scholarship. Being the first in my family to gain an American education as well as being the first in my family to pursue a career in medicine, especially Podiatric Medicine is great. But to be part of the Inaugural class of 2026, as well as being the first cohort has been an honor. I have been told that the first year of medical school is the hardest, especially since being away from home, learning new information every day, and having to adjust have been quite a challenge. However, I would not change anything. Each day at the UTRGV School of Podiatric Medicine is a day closer for me to be a Podiatric Physician. The faculty and staff have been kind and will help you every step of the way as they share the common goal of student success. The support I have received from faculty and classmates has been great. I have been able to do well in my classes and gain experience from the DPMs who teach us about future procedures we will do and give us insight into their time as students and practicing physicians. As I am continuing my education, I am appreciative to be relieved of the financial burden so that I can focus on my pathway to podiatric medicine. I want to thank the TPMF-TPMA Scholarship Fund Inaugural Donors once again. As I hope to complete my education at UTRGV School of Podiatric Medicine, I look forward to being able to give back and support future students to achieve their goal. Thank you again for your generous and thoughtful gift.”