

PERFECT (MEDICAL) MATCHES

Tomorrow's doctors learn where they will complete their training

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Like other medical students across the nation, those at Wake Forest School of Medicine learned last Friday where they would conduct their residency training.

Match Day, as it's called, is a tradition at medical schools, marked by the sight of nervous and excited students opening envelopes to learn where they will spend the next 3-6 years for the final portion of their medical training.

"This is the first rung on the ladder of the career trajectory that leads students to independence as a physician," said Steven Block, senior associate dean of the medical school, said of residencies.

Students interview at medical programs around the country for residency spots. Although students list their top picks, the National Residency Matching Program uses a computer program to match students with medical facilities.

One hundred-and-thirteen Wake medical students slated to graduate this May learned their fates. An envelope for each of them was laid out neatly across tables at Bridger Field House. The tables were roped off until exactly noon, when the students were given the OK to open the envelopes.

Orange, Calif.-native Tammy Pham, who plans to go into neurology, got her first choice — Oregon Health & Science University in Portland

Pham's father, Peter, came all the way from California for the occasion. Pham said Match Day is an important time in the lives of all med students.

"This, for me, is bigger than graduation because you find out where you're going to be ... for the next portion of your life," said Pham, whose mother is also a physician.

Louis Frazier, a native of Clearwater, Fla., also talked about the importance of Match Day.

"It's all of our hard work poured into an envelope opening," he said.

Becoming a doctor has been a longtime dream for Frazier. In the fifth grade, thinking of his aunt's struggles with cancer, he drew himself on the cover of Time magazine as the doctor who found the cure for the disease. He said his sixth grade science teacher kept encouraging him to become "Dr. Frazier."

Frazier was only 12 when he lost his



The medical students pose for a class photo after opening their envelopes.

Photos by Todd Luck

father to complications from alcoholism, but he said his dad's death only encouraged him to work harder to achieve his dreams. He was a straight 'A' student throughout grade-school, eventually earning a full-ride football scholarship to Wake Forest.

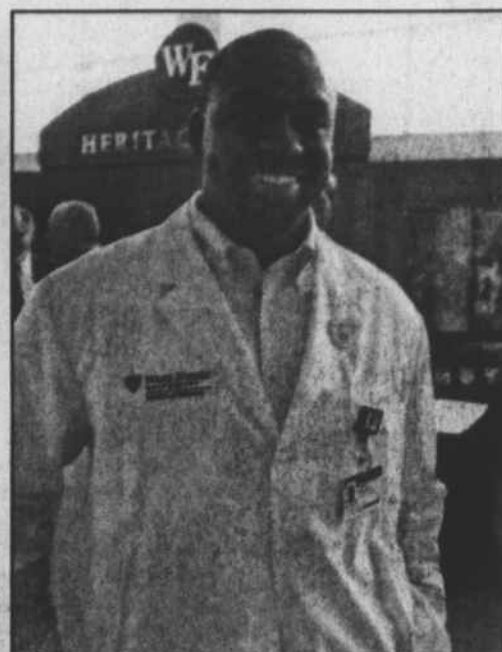
Some doubted if Frazier could juggle the grueling left tackle position and intense pre-med courses, but again Frazier beat the odds, finishing his undergraduate career with a 3.76 grade-point-average and numerous academic honors. He became the first Demon Deacon

to be named to the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America team since 1959.

Frazier is going into emergency medicine, which he said requires him to be a "jack of all trades, master of none." He said he's used to handling a variety of activities in his life so the constantly varying situations he'll face in an emergency room are a good match for him.

"I've always been great at multitasking," he said. "I just love the variety you always have in the emergency department."

Frazier said as an African American, he's



Louis Frazier is headed to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville.



Tammy Pham and her father, Peter.

definitely in the minority in the medical field. He is one of only five African Americans in the Wake Forest School of Medicine Class of 2012.

He said that his top residency picks were hospitals with diverse programs. He ended up getting his top pick: Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn.

He said he would encourage any African American who wants to go into medicine to pursue that dream.

"I would tell them to follow their heart's desire and just be strong along the way, because I had a lot of people tell me I would not be able to do it," said Frazier. "If they have interest in medicine in any facet, then they should do it because it is a great field that's made me very happy."

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