

**The University of Scranton
Panuska College of Professional Studies**

Celebration of Remembrance Ceremony

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Student Reflection

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This summer I had the privilege of studying anatomy with my classmates, spending up to 4 hours of the day with selfless individuals who donated their bodies to science. Today, I would like to reflect on my experience with all of you and thank the individuals as well as their family and friends for giving me this opportunity.

Entering the lab the first day of Gross Anatomy, a wave of emotions filled my body. What would it be like? Was I going to do well? Who would be in my group? I consistently told myself that I would be fine, that it was merely a means of learning information. It was a rite of passage for individuals in this field. Cautiously, I joined my group. A sheet was laid over the table, and someone began listing the medical records of our subject. Age, weight, height, medical conditions... I thought to myself, "See you can do this, it's science. It's merely facts and you can focus on that." Calmly, they lifted the sheet away from the body and that confidence flew quickly out of my body... Suddenly the comforting facts of my individual became untold stories that I couldn't answer... His age, extremely close to that of my father, began to overwhelm me. Did he have a family? Kids and a wife? How did this happen to him? Do they know where he is? Did he still have a proper burial? Was he happy? But as I stood dizzy over the body, the most important question I wanted to know was, what was his name?

As if answering my question, someone in my group said "Fred." Everyone agreed his name was Fred for the summer, but initially I was very against this idea. What if his given name wasn't Fred? There are endless possibilities of what his name could actually be. Would he be mad that we had chosen the wrong one? Was he hurt that his identifying quality was taken away from him and given a new one?

Quickly the class began. I did not have time to let these questions swallow me. My competitive edge and need to learn took over and quickly the individual became facts again. I learned more each day than I could have possibly imagined. Every single day, we found new muscles, arteries, veins, nerves, and organs. We began to understand how the body worked: how we

moved, how we breathed, how we physically felt, and so much more. I focused on these scientific facts and clung to them each day. I pushed the hard questions out of my head of who Fred really was ... it seemed too overwhelming to me. Until one day, when we were reviewing for a practical. I was quizzing my friend, and I went to move Fred and suddenly his hand became visible to me. To my friend's surprise, I jumped away. Suddenly, I couldn't focus on facts or learning. I could only see his hand. To me, our hands took on new meaning that day. What did Fred do with his hands? Who did he hug with those hands? Did he hold his child with those hands? Did he enjoy sports and hold the baseball bat with those hands? Was someone holding his hand and loving him when he decided to give his body to us?

I never received the answer to any of these questions. However, I believe this summer I learned much more than Anatomy. I did not know Fred, or Fred's real name, but I know that he was selfless and brave. At the end of his life, which ended much too soon, he sacrificed himself so that others can learn. He gave the last thing he had physically on this earth to us, so that we may be able to help others in the future.

I hope to use all of the scientific facts that I learned this summer from Fred to help my patients. However, more importantly, I hope to carry the legacy of Fred with me through my hands. I hope that I can use my hands as he would want me to. As PTs, we are told that our head and our hands are our most important asset. I hope that I can use mine, to improve lives and help people to embrace each day to the best of their ability. When life becomes confusing, I hope all of us can look at our hands and remember that each day is a gift, an opportunity to learn, to love, and to embrace.

I would like to thank each of the individuals who donated their bodies to science so that we may learn. I would like to also thank their families and friends. We will never know these individuals as they have. They hold the answer to all of our questions and the memories of these individuals. We are deeply sorry for their loss and hope to give a little bit of meaning to these sorrowful moments.