

‘A monumental day’: Inaugural class of John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering receive white coats

Families gather to witness emotional ceremony signifying the start of students’ journey

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
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Story highlights

Inaugural class of 36 receives white coats from John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering

HonorHealth CEO tells students they are making history

Shufeldt School’s blend of medicine and engineering attracts students

The family members came in first, taking their seats inside the Katzin Concert Hall on Friday as they clutched bouquets of flowers and awaited a moment they will forever hold tightly.

Their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, grandsons and granddaughters, 36 in all, would soon receive their white coats in the Class of 2030 White Coat Ceremony, officially becoming the first students in Arizona State University's John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering.

In a video message, ASU President Michael Crow called the ceremony a "monumental day" for the students and the Shufeldt School, which is part of [ASU Health](#).

"You're on your path to medical engineering degrees, which is a thing we're very proud of," Crow said. "And we at ASU are taking all the tools of learning that we have, all the tools of intellectual design that we have, all the ways in the last 20-plus years of doing, teaching, learning and discovering new ways, and we're bringing all those things to bear for you as students."

"You're not just the inaugural class. You're a whole new type of physician that's going to be produced, and that's what we're really excited about."

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8bFRwc5G-8>)

Students in the 2030 class speak 19 languages, have contributed a combined 23,515 service hours and range in age from 19 to 33.

"Each of you have earned your way into this school," Crow said, "and each of you are a part of the vision that we have for this school."

The [Shufeldt School](#), together with [primary clinical affiliate HonorHealth](#), will train students to blend multiple disciplines — medicine, engineering, technology and humanities — in order to create health care leaders with a strong sense of innovation and problem-solving.

Students will receive two degrees in four years, concurrently earning an MD and a Master of Science in medical engineering. Graduates will leverage new tools such as artificial intelligence and data science to connect with patients and develop innovative practices.

"This (school) was founded on a very simple but transformative idea that the future of medicine belongs to physicians who can not only diagnose disease but develop better solutions," Holly Lisanby, founding dean of the Shufeldt School, said at Friday's ceremony. "Here, engineering is not an add-on to medicine. It's a new way of viewing medicine."

"That mindset of problem-solving innovation is essential to the future of health care, and you are here to become a new type of physician who has that mindset from the outset."

The school's integration of medicine and engineering is what attracted Cody Pham, who received a degree in computer science from the University of California, San Diego and has worked as a software engineer with Amazon.

"Coming from an engineering background, I really found different problems that were not yet being solved in the tech industry," Pham said. "So I wanted to blend that with my passion for medicine, and ASU was the perfect program."

"I think the school's curriculum and then the way they incorporate the two disciplines ... there really could not be a better place to implement that."

Class member Natalie Smith, who said she has wanted to become a doctor since she was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 6, is illustrative of the nontraditional demographic of students attending the Shufeldt School.

Smith majored in English at Georgetown University, fell in love with the study of humanities and worked in a research lab with writers, scientists, physicians and software engineers.

"I learned that interdisciplinary collaboration is vital for moving medicine and science forward," Smith said. "This program just feels like the next logical step for me in my career. I feel like it's a perfect fit for me, and I'm a perfect fit for it."

In his keynote speech, Shufeldt — an ASU alum, an emergency medicine physician and the founder of multiple health initiatives — said the school that [bears his name](#) is built around the "and."

"Medicine and engineering," Shufeldt began at the white coat ceremony. "Biology and design. Patient care and systems thinking. The person in front of you and the devices around them." Shufeldt urged the students to be great, to be curious and humble, ambitious and kind, deeply technical and "wonderfully human."

"Wear that white coat with pride, and let it represent not only what you know, but how deeply you care," he said.

HonorHealth CEO Todd LaPorte told the 36 students they are making history.

"Years from now, people will talk about this first class and the group bold enough to step into something brand new and help define what it becomes," LaPorte said. "That's you. Today is the beginning of an incredible journey, one that will challenge you, inspire you and transform you."

The ceremony included a poem written by inaugural Arizona poet laureate Alberto Ríos, titled "Threshold," and the Class of 2030 Oath of the Physician-Engineer, written by the 36 students. (See both at the end of this story.)

The oath reads, in part, "I will innovate — charged by my interdisciplinary training — not only to heal but to engineer a healthier future. ... I will pursue lifelong learning and stay at the forefront of medicine."

As each student received their white coat and stethoscope from Suzi Templer, associate dean of student affairs in the Shufeldt School, family members clapped and cheered, their joy and pride for all to hear.

"It was emotional," said class member Hannah Lennon, who was raised in rural Arizona, spent most of her childhood in the Dewey-Humboldt area and is a Flinn Scholar who received her bachelor's degree in global studies and her master's degree in health care innovation from ASU.

"Oftentimes, we think about the white coat ceremony as something that we've been working towards and that we finally achieved. But, really, it's just the beginning of our journey."

A journey, Lisanby said, that will hopefully last long past the four years they spend at the Shufeldt School.

“Class of 2030, when you receive your white coat today, I hope you look back on this day and realize that what you truly received was a calling,” Lisanby said, “to heal, to discover, to innovate and to serve.

“The white coats you received today are not symbols of what you’ve already accomplished. They’re symbols of what the world has trusted you to become.”

From the ceremony

Class of 2030 Oath of the Physician-Engineer

We take this oath to our colleagues in medicine and engineering, our patients and our collaborators, committing to uphold these values for ourselves and for the wider communities we serve.

I vow to provide and sustain compassionate, human-centered care that honors the dignity, autonomy and confidentiality of every patient.

I will take a holistic approach to care that honors the patient's values, lived experiences and identity.

I will be courageous and advocate for patients' rights in all matters of health and health care.

I vow to support scientific discovery, disease prevention and informed policy to meet health care needs.

I will innovate — charged by my interdisciplinary training — not only to heal, but to engineer a healthier future.

I will strive to ensure resources are used wisely and ethically.

I will pursue lifelong learning and stay at the forefront of medicine.

I will commit my attention to learning, development and my well-being, acknowledging that these are required for the betterment of my patients.

I will share medical knowledge for the advancement of humanity, and I will recognize the limits of my expertise and admit what I do not know.

I will foster a culture of collaboration that promotes justice and fairness.

I promise to embody the values of humility, integrity and respect in my practice.

From here and onwards, I accept my calling to serve and cherish the privilege of becoming a physician-engineer.

'Threshold,' by Alberto Ríos

You arrive with your own story,
Yet you enter into many:
The hand that steadies,
The voice that calls your name,
The unseen chorus of others
Who have walked this same hallway.

You enter carrying more than your body—
You bring the quiet weight of hope,
The breath of others, the voices of those waiting,
Every step is a possible beginning,

Every door a second chance opening.
Here, pain does not vanish,
But it is met.
Here pain is named,
But so is courage.

In this place, healing is not a promise
But a labor shared,
A work of many hands.
Time slows here to the rhythm of care,
To the enduring work of listening.

And when you leave,
You will not leave as you arrived:
This home will have remembered your story,
And you will carry a quiet courage
Back into the waiting world.

So, come in:
This harbor has been prepared for you,
And somewhere in these rooms
Is the tomorrow you need,
The tomorrow your hope
Has already begun to shape.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Medical students recite the Oath of the Physician-Engineer at the inaugural white coat ceremony for ASU's John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering on Friday, Aug. 7, in the Katzin Concert Hall in Tempe. Thirty-six students make up the Class of 2030; they will help shape a new model of medical education that unites medicine, engineering and systems thinking to improve patient care and transform health systems. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

Gallery



Dr. John Shufeldt chats with HonorHealth CEO Todd LaPorte before the inaugural white coat ceremony for ASU's John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering on Friday, Aug. 7.



The students' white coats feature the logos of both ASU and HonorHealth, the primary clinical affiliate of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering.



Zainab Kadhim (center) and the rest of the new medical students wait to proceed into the auditorium of the Katzin Concert Hall in Tempe for the inaugural white coat ceremony for ASU's John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering on Friday, Aug. 7.



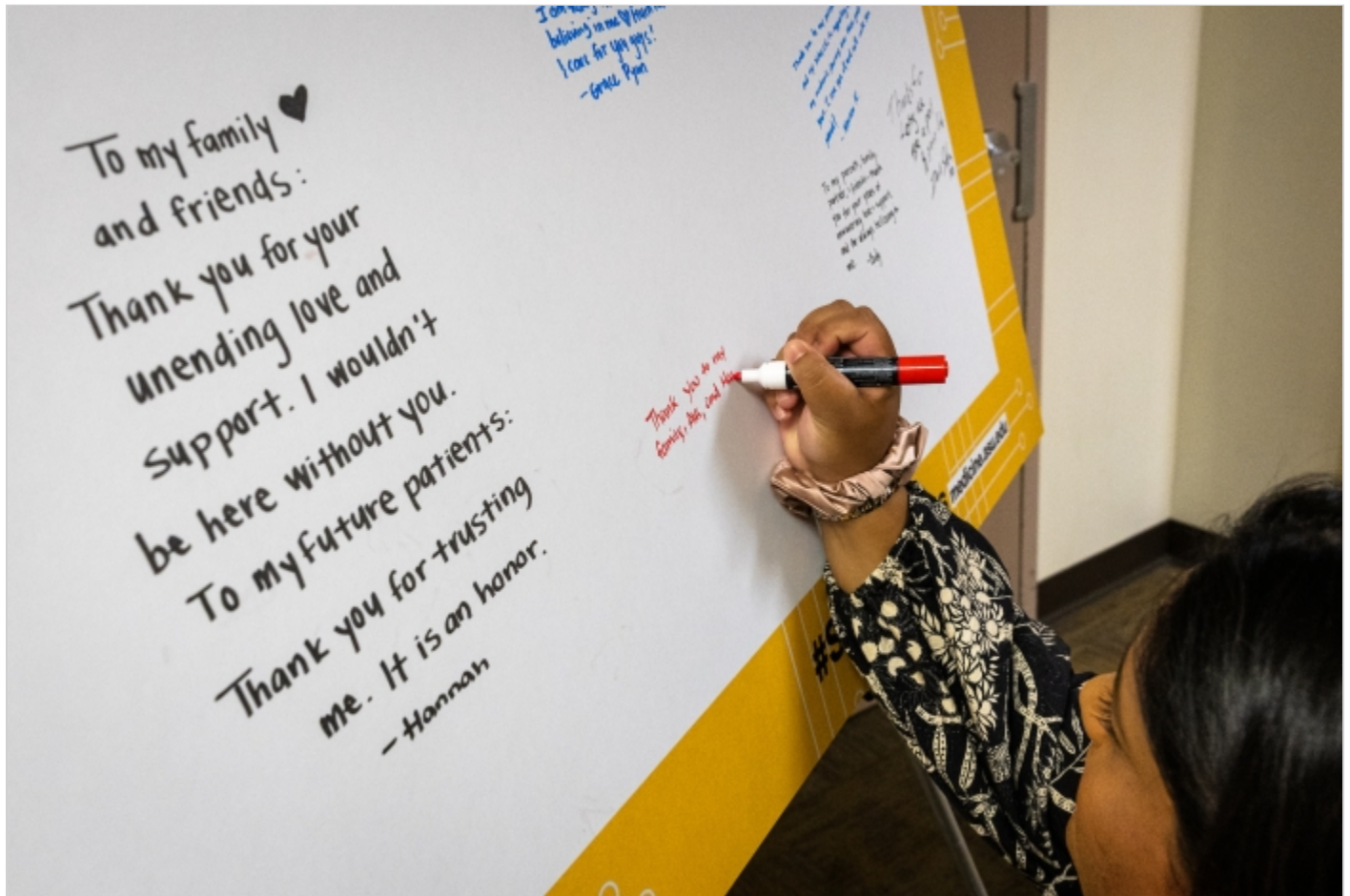
HonorHealth CEO Todd LaPorte told the 36 students who make up the inaugural class of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering that they are making history.



Medical student Cody Pham receives his white coat from Associate Dean of Student Affairs Suzi Templer.



Medical student Hannah Lennon said the ceremony was "emotional."



Students wrote notes of gratitude for family and friends who gathered Aug. 7 to support them at the inaugural white coat ceremony for ASU's John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering.



Medical students thank their families and friends for their support.

Gallery



Dr. Holly Lisanby, founding dean of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering, speaks at the orientation for the first cohort of 36 students on Monday, July 27, at the school's temporary home at the Mercado building in downtown Phoenix.



Distinguished Professor of Medicine at the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering David Sklar speaks with some of the students during a break at the opening orientation.



Students in the inaugural class of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering pose for photos Monday, July 27, during the school's orientation.



Justa Center Director of Operations Rudy Soliz talks to the 36 members of the inaugural class of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering on Thursday, July 30, about older adults experiencing homelessness. The talk was part of the orientation for the school.



From left: Shufeldt School students Grace Pyon, Zarrin Tashnim and Zainab Kadhim join others assembling heat survival tool kits for homeless people.



Natalie Smith, one of the 36 members of the inaugural class of the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering, listens to a panel discussion on the "State of Health in Arizona" as part of the school's weeklong orientation.