In October Kirsten, Diana, myself and several other students traveled to Chicago to attend the annual American College of Surgeons congress. Overall, this was a very positive experience. The organization is working on strengthening its involvement with students interested in surgery and this year was the first year they had a dedicated student program. In total, there were probably 200-250 first through fourth year medical students from across the country that attended this program.

The ACS had two separate programs set up for either first and second year students or for third and fourth year students. The first program helped prepare students for upcoming rotations in surgery and helped to advise them when it came to choosing electives. The other program helped to educate and prepare older students for interviews, applications, personal statements, and many other things having to do with residency.

We only attended lectures geared toward older students, but overall we found them to be very reassuring and helpful. We still have another year before the need to start applying but the subject still causes some unease of thought and the program they had at ACS was both reassuring and informative. They had several program directors from across the country who shared information on interviewing strategies as well as what to do to prepare for internship.

In addition to the scheduled program for medical students, there were many lectures held everyday during the congress. Their topics ranged from trauma to orthopaedics to laparoscopy. The lectures were geared toward resident and attending surgeons, but they were still informative and enjoyable as a student. We attended several lectures that had to do with orthopaedic surgery as well as blood management and laparoscopy. We found the lectures to be very informative because they offered a different perspective than we receive in the classroom or during rotations. The lectures were presented by experts in that field; which helped the information to be presented in a very logical and helpful format.

One evening we were able to attend a cardio-thoracic workshop, which was held outside of scheduled events for medical students. The workshop was designed to show students and surgery residents some of the newest and most interesting techniques in cardio-thoracic surgery. They had several videos showing the use of robotics as well as lectures explaining some of the progress occurring in their field. After dinner and a few lecturers, they took the participants to experience several demonstrations of cardio-thoracic surgery. We were able to replace valves, dissect lungs, work with a CABG model on a beating heart, as well as several other demonstrations. Overall, the experience was very helpful and fun. We would recommend it to any student coming from UMKC if they have the program next year.

On the final day after the last set of lectures concluded, the ACS had a reception with program directors from across the country. They had the directors grouped according to geographic region who were there to speak with students interested in their program. This was a very helpful networking tool, especially for year four students preparing to interview.
The experience at the ACS was very helpful for year five and six students coming from UMKC. We would recommend that students interested in general surgery attend this conference next year. The planned lectures were informative and helpful, the workshops were enjoyable, and several networking opportunities were provided which will hopefully be helpful for residency. The only slightly negative experience had to do with the fact that the ACS dealt primarily with general surgery. Students interested in Orthopaedics, ENT, Plastics, or another specialty may not get as much benefit from the ACS as student interested in general surgery. That does not mean that students interested in a surgical specialty don't benefit from the programs at the ACS, but that they should not be expecting to meet Orthopaedic or ENT program directors at the congress.