

Linda Chang – OMS-II

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As a first-generation college graduate and eldest daughter to poor Vietnamese boat refugees raised from a low-income immigrant community in East Los Angeles, my commitment to osteopathic medicine and ATSU-SOMA's mission aligned with my passion for addressing social determinants of health and advocating for my underserved community.

Before entering ATSU-SOMA, I invested my time advocating for my community on a national, state, and local level centered on social and health equity. I represented CA 27th district on Capitol Hill and succeeded in having our Congresswomen commit to expanding Medicaid and protecting the Affordable Care Act. I collaborated with lawyers and non-profit immigration organizations to secure a deportation pardon from our former Governor. Furthermore, I canvassed my disenfranchised neighborhood to raise awareness about voting.

Once I entered ATSU-SOMA, my role as SOMA Diversity and Inclusion student ambassador allowed me to continue to work directly with recruitment efforts and provide insight about ATSU-SOMA and osteopathic medicine to prospective and accepted students. Moreover, I collaborated with classmates in presenting "What is OMM?" workshop at the Student National Medical Association Annual Medical Education Conference. Not only did I continue to promote ATSU-SOMA and osteopathic medicine at conferences, but I was also invited as the only osteopathic medical student panelist at the regional Asian Pacific American Medical Association Conference, Student National Medical Association Annual Medical Education Conference, National MiMentor, University of California San Francisco, and National Medical Fellowship Primary Care Leadership Program. I also mentor 6 historically underrepresented pre-medical students aspiring to become osteopathic physicians in our student-run ATSU-SOMA mentorship program (SIMs) and established MCAT Resources for the program.

After a transformative summer experience with the National Medical Fellowship Primary Care Leadership Program, I became determined to continue my development as future osteopathic primary care physicians leading our nation's community health centers (CHCs). My research on providers and civic engagement as a social determinant of health was very personal and reaffirmed my belief in the importance of CHCs that directly serve disenfranchised communities to participate in voting registration efforts.

Thus, I partnered our university with VotER, a non-partisan organization that helps patients register to vote. To make this successful, I organized and collaborated with our administrators, faculty, and students across the country to serve in various CHCs. As a result, our university won 1st place in the regional competition and was the only osteopathic school to do. I continue to represent SOMA and osteopathic medicine in my civic engagement research at regional and national conferences.

Because of ATSU-SOMA's innovative curriculum model, it is without a doubt I will be prepared to become the primary care osteopathic community physician leading our nation's CHCs and advocating for our patients in the clinics and on Capitol Hill. I plan to continue to support the National Osteopathic Political Advocacy Honor Society transitioning from student member to resident physician advisor to foster the future of osteopathic political activists. Also, I will continue to provide mentorship to students and proudly return to ATSU-SOMA as faculty to continue living by ATSU-SOMA's mission.