

Good afternoon—

My name is Hannah Erlbacher, and I'm honored to speak to you all today on behalf of the Carver College of Medicine's class of 2024. I'd like to start by expressing my gratitude to those, and their loved ones, who gifted their earthly bodies to enrich our educational experience and for the benefit of our future patients.

I can't believe it has been an entire year since our class' days in the anatomy lab—a time that was transformative for all of us, in terms of our growth as students and as people. I'll always remember what our course director, Dr. Pizzimenti, said during our first visit to the lab: "Learn as much as you can. This is the best way to show gratitude for the generous gift the families and donors have made." Learn as much as you can—this intention echoed in my head for the rest of the semester.

While our class learned so much about the form and function of the human body, we also learned a lot about ourselves and what it means to be human. We were forced to contemplate our own mortality. And for me, in the moments where there was time to rest at the end of a long day, my mind drifted to thoughts of our donor—the life he lived, who he loved, who loved him—and overwhelming feelings of gratitude and often, sadness.

At the end of the semester, when I had time to reflect on the magnitude of my experience, I wrote this poem. And while it's short, I think it sums up the thoughts and feelings had by many of us. This poem is titled, "Gross Anatomy."

Gross Anatomy

No one understands what I mean

when I say I cried the day I saw your hands

I thought I'd gotten to know you well, but I hadn't.

No one understands what I mean

when I say I cried the day I saw your feet

or the day we each grabbed the piece of cloth, counted to three

I cried the day I saw your face for the first time,

the day I saw your eyes—

when I wondered what they had seen and who had loved them.

Now there is no going back to anonymity,

no storing feelings neatly on a top shelf out of reach—

no hiding from all that we are and all that we aren't

or the one difference between you and me.