From a graduating MS-4 student. A reflection on the past 4 years:

Welcome to medical school and welcome to UAB!

I'm writing this to you because I loved my four years here and I hope you will as well. Also, the only advice I got before going into it was, "There's no excuse for not being in the top third of your class," so hopefully I can give a few more words of advice or encouragement.

I would write a book given the space, but soon enough you'll have plenty to read so I'll be brief:

First, know that it will be fine. Not that you want any of these things, but failing a test or forgetting an assignment will not stop you from getting your favorite residency or, more importantly, from learning how to take good care of your patients. I use those examples from personal experience. I know that your case will seem different when it happens, but trust me - whatever snag you hit, it will be fine.

Second, enjoy yourself! There are so many great things to do alongside your studying and they don't need to seem like résumé builders. Do something you love and do it actively - you will be glad you did.

Lastly, enjoy the work. It's such a privilege to care for any patient. Many people wish they could be where you are and where you will be, even when you're face down in a pile of lecture scripts after falling asleep studying. Conversely, no one drafted you into medical school. We are all here because we want to be, so keep that in mind; it's an empowering thought.

Honestly, though, these encouragements are really just for the first two years when it's probably hardest to push ahead. Once you get into the hospital, the patient contact really fuels the whole thing.

So there you have it – 2 cents from someone coming out the other end of the tunnel.

For better, wiser advice, carefully seek out a mentor. You'll find some physicians during your time here who impress or inspire you. You should get to know them. If you don't find any soon enough, read about some physicians who inspire you - they can be your mentors through their letters and books.

All the best and take advantage of the next four years - they can be some of the best of your life!