From a medical student who planned a wedding and married during medical school:

Hello there new MS-1’s and welcome to UASOM!

This is an exciting time! New faces, new surroundings, that oh-so-satisfying feeling of finally being able to say, “yes, I’m in medical school”--if you’re like me, you’ll remember it forever. Still, with all of that excitement inevitably comes a little trepidation. While some concerns are pretty much universal, others are more unique....And since my classmates will, I’m sure, have covered many of the other bases, I’d like to take a moment to addressWedding planning (and married life) in medical school.

I remember, it my third day of medical school, and I had a conversation with a then-MS-2 who had just planned her wedding. She told me the same thing I’m about to tell you, you can do it. Sure, med school puts huge demands on your time. But like anything else, if you’re committed to it, you can make it work. I even managed to go out of town nearly every weekend during my first year to visit my then-fiancé. The downside was I missed out on time with my friends in Birmingham -- so understand that there’s always a trade-off.

With regard to wedding planning:
- If possible, schedule your wedding date around school. I got married during the summer after my first year. Especially if you’re the bride, I personally think summer is the lowest-stress choice, but there are plenty of others who have gotten married at other times (winter break, fall break).
- Delegate, delegate, delegate! Not having to have a hand in everything will make your life a whole lot easier in terms of planning a wedding while in medical school. If I found something I liked, I emailed it to my mom to let her figure out how to make the idea a reality. So make your requests known, and let somebody else figure the rest out.
- Try to designate times when you’re going to be focused on school, and when you’re going to be focused on wedding planning. For example, weekends after tests are PRIME TIME to knock out some wedding planning.
- The pulmonary module is classically more relaxed and is right before spring break. So if you’re planning a summer wedding it’s a great time to get many things done.
- You can still do summer activities like research or mission work! Even if you get married sometime in the summer, explore options that won’t interfere with your wedding, because they DO exist! I was extremely fortunate to work with program directors who were flexible with my schedule, so don’t hesitate to ask.
- Of course, in the midst of all the craziness, don’t forget to spend time with your significant other.

With regard to marriage in medical school...
- I happen to be married to another medical student, and although we often have to actively work to steer the conversation away from medical school, I wouldn’t have it any other way. No matter whom you’re married to, there will be times when you have to fight to be able to spend time with your significant other. In those times, realize your relationship with that person is more valuable than a few more points on a test.
-When you take time off, really be “off.” For example, if you’re out on a date with your spouse and all you can talk about is how much you need to study to be caught up for your next test, you may as well just be studying. Two keys to success in med school are balance and efficiency.
-This one applies to everyone: try to avoid the “you don’t understand” mentality. Joining the field of medicine can have a very isolating effect. It’s a “whole new world” with its own language, own hierarchy, own culture, that is difficult to relate to if you’re not part of it. Becoming a physician is challenging, in a way that’s hard to communicate to anyone outside of medicine. Still, realize there may always be parts of your personal experience that are near impossible to communicate to someone else. Accept that, and don’t let the fact your loved ones don’t understand exactly what you’re going through ruin your ability to relate to others. Everyone has a story to tell, and wisdom to share. Don’t get to where you can’t listen.

Finally, I just wanted to share with you something I remind myself of from time to time. The care of others through medicine demands that we utilize so many aspects of ourselves simultaneously--heart, intellect, spirit. It is a unique challenge, something that can help you become your best self, or your worst. Just make sure it’s the former.

Congratulations again for being part of the newest class at UASOM! I look forward to working with you in the future...and in the meantime, have a BLAST!