

What's it Worth? The Value of Sponsoring Students

I am a December graduate of Texas Christian University who finished my clinical education at Hillcrest Medical Center in Tulsa. As a native of Texas, I had always assumed that I would return to Texas after graduation. Largely because of friendships that have developed and opportunities here in Oklahoma, my wife and I stayed in Tulsa and I now work at Hillcrest. I am looking forward to helping the OANA promote and protect our practice here in Oklahoma.

I'm sure we all can remember our time as a student. For some that may be a distant memory, but for others, the memories and experiences of being a Student Registered Nurse Anesthetist (SRNA) are relatively fresh. I wanted to share with the members of the OANA some experiences I had as a student and the impact that was made on me. The education I gained attending state meetings in Oklahoma and Texas, as well as national meetings of the AANA was made possible directly through the generosity and dedication of CRNAs just like you.

During my final 16 months of the program, I attended each of the state meetings here in Oklahoma and in Texas. It was through my participation at these meetings and priceless mentorship that I graduated from TCU fully prepared to speak about the issues with legislators, administrators and fellow CRNAs. I spent time lobbying at the state capitol in Austin, Texas. Alongside Juan Quintana, I lobbied the nation's capitol in Washington D.C. at Mid-Year Assembly. In both Texas and Oklahoma, I have been welcomed at Board of Directors meetings. I chaired the Tellers Committee at the Fall meeting of The TxANA where we were in charge of counting the ballots and presenting the results to the membership. I participated in the AANA College Bowl at the national meeting in Boston, Massachusetts and attended the AANA Leadership Academy in Newport Beach, California. I will never forget the incredible meals with the TxANA leadership in Washington or the free ticket to the Boston Red Sox game that I attended with Oklahoma CRNAs Jason Whiteley and Jeff Hensley. I made the most of my time as a student. Actually, CRNAs afforded me the opportunity to make the most of my time as a student.

My attendance at each of these meetings was essentially *free-of-charge*. What I gained was **priceless**. I graduated from TCU equipped to take an active role in a state association, speak intelligently about the issues facing this great profession, and familiar with the importance of focused, organized leadership within an association. I want to thank all of the CRNAs who sponsored a student while I was attending. It did not go unappreciated.

I hope that my experience will serve as encouragement to each of you who wonders if sponsoring a student is a value to the OANA. The impact you make on the education of students must reach further than the clinical setting. I have developed close friendships with some of the nation's finest CRNAs and will cherish those relationships for years to come. This is a process that starts here at home. Please consider sponsoring a student and encouraging them to participate in our association. Your passion is contagious and your generosity will be multiplied when a student like me becomes a CRNA.

I will be sponsoring a student for OANA meetings. Will you?

Matt Mitchell, CRNA