It is our honor to welcome you to the UNC School of Medicine. As part of your orientation, we, your peers, want to engage you in a discussion of the book *Body and Soul* by Dr. Alondra Nelson. As the subtitle indicates, this is a book about the Black Panther Party and fighting against discrimination in medicine. It is a powerful narrative, with insights relevant to all your courses in Foundation Phase and beyond.

Becoming a doctor means becoming a lifelong learner, gaining the capacity for self-study, and to evaluate a source’s utility. In reading *Body and Soul*, we encourage you to take a similar approach. Alondra Nelson is a respected scholar currently at Princeton’s Institute for Advanced Study. Throughout the 1970s, mainstream news about the Black Panther Party (BPP) focused on their violent confrontations with the police. But Nelson draws attention instead to health activism as essential to the BPP’s vision to protect poor and discriminated peoples, and especially Black Americans. The BPP’s low-cost clinics and its educational outreach required a great deal of knowledge of the communities they served, inter-professional and multi-racial coalition building, and mundane organizing tasks — not unlike what it takes today to offer quality care in medically underserved communities. The book addresses enduring questions about the promotion of more equitable health care and the path to becoming a trusted expert in the community.

Discussion of *Body and Soul* will take place the afternoon of Thursday, July 27. You will meet in small discussion groups led by student and faculty co-facilitators. In addition, your Social & Health Systems course will endeavor to continue conversations begun on this day throughout the year.

We encourage you to read the whole book, but we know that the summer before medical school is meant for you to enjoy yourself before entering the rigorous medical school life! Therefore, discussions will focus on the introduction and chapters 3, 4, and 5. The book is available through the UNC Libraries, in paper format, in an electronic version, and as streaming audio. You will need your ONYEN to log-in to the library. Come to orientation prepared to talk and listen to your peers’ insights. We will soon send you a discussion guide for the chapters we will focus on.

This is, by choice, a provocative book. If you feel yourself chafing against Nelson’s arguments while reading, think of it as an opportunity to develop your own counterarguments. Draw on your own experiences to critique and challenge the book. Listening to others carefully and disagreeing respectfully are skills we must cultivate throughout our education as physicians.

Again, this is only the first step on a longer journey. Our discussions of health care in/for communities will continue in many forms in the coming years, such as discussing structural considerations in medicine, especially in relation to other powerful (and intersecting) factors, such as socioeconomic status, race, occupation, education, gender, sexuality, and more. We are excited to have you here and weigh into these critical conversations. Welcome!

Ahlivia Mattocks  
Vice President of Education Development, UNC School of Medicine Student Government  

Raúl Necochea López, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Social Medicine, UNC School of Medicine  
Course Co-Director, Social & Health Systems 1-2  
Foundation Phase Co-Director