

**ALEXANDER THOMPULOS**  
**YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH**  
**PHILO4THOUGHT INITIATIVE**  
**OCTOBER 2018 FEATURE**



This October marks the 9th Annual Founder's Day of the Philo4Thought Hellenic Mentoring Initiative. Our team is pleased to present one of our specially featured Young Professionals of the Month to mark the occasion!

As many of you know, the goal of the P4T publications is to provide positive, successful role models who will inspire the next generation of young professionals. Preliminary criteria for YPM candidates is that they are actively engaged in an entrepreneurial initiative or have made a successful career for themselves, thereby serving as strong role models to the next generation of young professionals. Candidates are typically of Hellenic origin and part of a humanitarian (educational, sociological, scientific, etc.) or environmentally--conscious field. Given the gradual expansion of our readership, we currently interview candidates who embrace a specific Hellenic philosophy best described in a word... *Philotimo* (*φιλότιμο*). The most important qualifications all our candidates share are the spirit and compassion to persevere and the heart to share their knowledge and experience with others. We are honored to share his story with you today.

This month's featured young professional, Alexander Thomopoulos, has served as the President of the National Hellenic Students Association ([www.nhsaofamerica.org](http://www.nhsaofamerica.org)) for several years and, literally leading by example, serves as a great role model for future generations.

**THE JOURNEY & "AHA" MOMENT**

Alexander is currently a Medical Student at the University of Maryland School of Medicine ([www.medschool.umaryland.edu](http://www.medschool.umaryland.edu)) after graduating from the University of Maryland – College Park with a B.S. in Biological Sciences. “I started my secondary education in Greece at the American Community Schools of Athens where I received a formative, integrative, immersive, diverse and holistic education. I joined the JV and Varsity swim team, participated in a mock trial as one of the prosecuting attorneys against President Truman circa 1950 and enjoyed many more educational experiences during my time there. I then moved to Middletown, MD, where I finished my high school education with honors, AP college credits and as President of my class.” Throughout his undergraduate years he was increasingly involved with the local Greek Heritage Society and in his third year of college he met the NHSA President of the time, Konstantine Ouranitsas, and became a very involved member of this national organization, which currently hosts two annual educational/networking conventions as well as summer initiatives to help the underserved populations of Greece, fight for environmental preservation, and more.

While this combination of scholarly and philanthropic duties already seems challenging, Alexander also actively pursued opportunities for the realization of his professional dream of becoming a physician by extensive shadowing

extensively private and public hospitals and research initiatives in the U.S. and Greece.

When asked what inspired him to follow his current professional interest, Alexander begins with his trademark grin and says, “I watched *House M.D.*” but then more seriously explains, that he’s wanted to pursue Medicine since as far back as he can remember. “I have always been fascinated by the world that exists within our bodies. A great deal of that influence may have come from my parents, who are healthcare professionals themselves and had many family friends and guests who were also health professionals.... But *House* fit in somewhere along the way.”

When asked what his “AHA” moment was, he says, “I have never found myself to be an individual encountering ‘aha’ moments in my life based on singular events. I spend a great deal of my time in self-reflection or in conversation, during which time a totality of circumstances and information would basically bring me to a new perspective, decision, or level of appreciation.... Medicine offers a trifecta of choices to benefit the community. Most physicians, in fact, choose to explore all three aspects of the profession – patient care, research/innovation, education. First, to care for a patient, in their specific time of need for a specific ailment, as well as in their holistic patient lifestyle as it pertains to their quality of life. Next, to research or innovate in the field of practice – a term I mean broadly, encompassing innovating cutting-edge techniques to improve care, or researching ground-breaking physiological or pharmaceutical mechanisms to apply in treatments. Finally, to educate the patient both on the reasons behind their treatment plan and self-care and the effect on quality of life, as well as to educate the future generations of physicians.... I do not find myself constrained, even in medical school, to learning only medicine. Having been recently described as φιλομαθής, someone who loves learning, I continue to pursue learning many different things from political science, to law, to sociology and psychology.”

Among Alexander’s additional pursuits and interests are law, politics and world news. “As the years pass, I have found my interests diverging, instead of converging or eliminating themselves...putting into perspective the intricacy of this increasingly globalized world.”

### **PHILOSOPHY, MENTORS & CHALLENGES**

In work and in life, Alexander embraces a “work to live” approach: “There is a saying in Greece, that many of the western and northern countries live to work, while Greeks work to live. I have grown up surrounded and raised by people who embody that very phrase.... I have come to embrace it, seeking inspiration in the exploration of life, to work.”

As far as mentors, Alexander shares that his mentors come from a combination of professional, academic, and personal mentors from his early youth to the present day. “Each of them has had an impact on my thinking and life, teaching me something different about motivation, work-ethic, professionalism, excellence, or life itself. I believe in constantly seeking out lessons from others, both on what to do and what *not* to do.”

When asked what challenges he has faced up to this point and how he has chosen to work through each challenge that arises, Alexander laughs since his time is divided between his professional studies and his leadership responsibilities. “I just take it week by week. Self-reflect. Talk with friends. Steer the course; correct; repeat.”

With regard to his studies and future career, Alexander explains, “For starters, the medical field is constantly expanding at an exponential pace, making it insurmountable for any individual medical professional to master entirely, so it becomes necessary to balance what you need to know about in a general sense and what you need to know well for your specialty. In addition to gaining content knowledge, a medical professional must also deal with the reality that the healthcare system has been on a catastrophic spiral of rising healthcare costs that burden patients, providers and companies because of a system-wide shift from providing quality care to meeting a quantity of care.”

Then, in his role as President of NHSA, “I have become increasingly sensitized to a wide range of challenges affecting our mission, our message, and our ‘products.’ The world is in a constant state of evolution where newer

generations are characterized as the ‘insta-generation’ (insta for instantaneous), it is becoming increasingly difficult to capture a young person’s attention.... *NHSA*’s mission to unite, educate, and empower the Hellenic youth all over North America is exceptionally challenging as we face multiple challenges relating to distance, diversity of interests and needs, and levels of assimilation (caused by being 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation and facing the necessity to assimilate and succeed here in current surroundings)."

## PHILANTHROPY

A few of the great accomplishments that NHSA has spearheaded under Alexander’s leadership are:

- Raising \$1000 for The Home Project to keep 200 children warm in 10 shelters throughout the winter months.
- A collaborative beach cleanup with Ethelon (Athens) to raise awareness, promote bonding and networking over a common cause, and to help promote tourism and businesses for a small coastal town in Greece.
- Preparing student scholarships (details T.B.D. as the NHSA Board continues to research their members’ needs).
- Bi-annual Conventions at lower-than-cost prices for students and young professionals.

"Through *NHSA* we offer the greatest diversity of education that we can. Through our bi-annual Conventions we bring speakers to educate our attendees on various issues, raising awareness; so far, we've covered the environment and sustainability, the fine arts, innovation and start-ups, leadership, the crises in the Aegean (immigration and Turkish violations) in just the past 2 years. We then challenge our attendees to think about these issues, ask questions of the speakers, and interact with our workshop leaders. Our ultimate goal is to inspire our members to act on the issues we find most compelling or in need of our attention. We also seek to educate our members through various initiatives such as the Stock Market Competition (for trading), our partnership and support of CLEO (internships in the field of epidemiology; combatting hospital acquired infections in Greece), and various informative articles we post on our social media, including my own opinion editorials and statements I occasionally publish relating to current events."

Beyond his duties with *NHSA*, Alexander has also joined the Board of *Project Feast* at the UM School of Medicine, through which he joins a number of students, faculty and staff in preparing food for hundreds of homeless and underserved individuals, which they serve on Thanksgiving Day.

## WORDS OF WISDOM

Alexander has many words of wisdom to impart to the next generation of young professionals:

- There are many powerful virtues important in creating and maintaining a “life worth living”. If I had to pick: passion, open-mindedness, and φιλομάθεια are the qualities I value the most.
- Be passionate about what it is you choose. Don’t be afraid to say you don’t know – as long as you care to find out.
- And lastly, don’t be afraid to change directions. Just be strategic in addition to passionate in your decision making.
- Travel. Go on vacation. At the very least get some sun – Vitamin D is more important than you think!

**MENTORING:** Alexander is willing to serve as a P4T mentor to members of the Hellenic community.

**CONTACT:** Mentoring inquiries should be submitted to [p4tinfo@gmail.com](mailto:p4tinfo@gmail.com).