In a packed room in the Power Center in November, Dr. John Kauffman, the just-revealed founding dean of Duquesne’s College of Osteopathic Medicine, went through his western Pennsylvania bona fides:

Childhood in New Castle, Pa., where he was a paperboy for the New Castle News. Worked as an orderly at a hospital in Meadville, Pa. Earned his D.O. at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. And, to the journalists from all of Pittsburgh’s major media in the room, he also noted that he lived in Altoona until age 8 because his father was on the staff of the Altoona Mirror.

“My connections to this city and this region are longstanding and part of my foundation,” Kauffman said. “I am very honored to be able to add to the medical community in yet another way.”

The University identified Kauffman after a very competitive national search for a position that carries great responsibility and represents great hope. The new dean will launch the largest and most ambitious new college at Duquesne in nearly 100 years, since the surge of offerings that started in the 1910s and ran for two decades under then-Presidents Rev. Hehir and Rev. Callahan.

Kauffman is up to the job. He served as founding dean and chief academic officer of the Campbell University Jerry M. Wallace School of Osteopathic Medicine in Buies Creek, N.C., from 2011 until he was named dean emeritus in October 2019. The Wallace School was the first medical school to open in North Carolina in 35 years and presently is the state’s only osteopathic medical school.

Prior to his role at Campbell University, Kauffman served in several capacities at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM). Under Kauffman’s leadership, the number of residency positions at VCOM increased from 40 to 280 in family medicine, internal medicine, dermatology and neurosurgery. At University Hospitals of Cleveland, Kauffman established university-based osteopathic residencies in dermatology and pediatrics as well as community-based residencies in family medicine, internal medicine and sports medicine.

A physician and experienced leader, Kauffman understands well his field and what it will take to build a medical school worthy of the Duquesne name.

Kauffman and his wife, Sharon, have four daughters. He shared his thoughts with Duquesne magazine about the profession itself, the
opportunity ahead and how he likes to spend his time when not starting medical schools.

**On the connection between osteopathic medicine and Laura Ingalls**

Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., started the first osteopathic medical school in Kirksville, Mo., in 1892. Still originally had no intention of starting his own school or even founding a different arm of medicine, having been raised by a father who was both a pastor and an M.D. As a child he saw medicine practiced in the context of the whole person—mind, body and spirit—and as a part of the whole family.

In Still’s time, medicine was practiced in the home. Just like Ingalls’ *Little House on the Prairie*, when someone became gravely ill, you sent for the doctor, who often didn’t have much more to offer than holding your hand and saying a prayer. People also believed illness was caused by “evil humors” that needed to be purged from the body by bloodletting or substances that made you vomit or gave you diarrhea. A favorite was Calomel, which contained mercury that burned the lining of your intestines and made you evacuate.

Because of his faith-based upbringing, Still believed the body had the ability to heal itself and that the role of the physician was to help the body heal itself. He understood also that an individual’s health is not just physical but often shaped by circumstances—the home, family, work and other conditions.

As a result, Still hoped to improve and reform the practice of medicine to take into consideration the whole person.

Today, we understand much more about how living conditions, family and friend networks, workplaces, and other elements can shape health. Doctors know to consider them, and osteopathic medicine was first to do so, and thus very much ahead of its time.

**Why did you decide to go into academe?**

As a medical student, I had no intention of pursuing a career in academic medicine. My intention was to become a family physician and either go to Africa as a medical missionary or join our family practice in Lewisburg, Pa. As a student, I found I really enjoyed hospital medicine and shifted my focus to internal medicine. While a resident at Lehigh Valley Hospital in Allentown, I met my wife, got
married and started a family. I joined my family practice for a year in Lewisburg but missed teaching, so went back to Lehigh Valley and joined the teaching service. I then was offered the director of medical education position at a local community hospital and found I enjoyed lecturing and overseeing residency programs.

What makes you excited about starting a medical college at Duquesne?

The opportunity to do something I enjoy tremendously, in the area where I grew up, with a nationally ranked university, is truly the opportunity of a lifetime. Being able to develop the school in a major metropolitan area provides tremendous opportunities and resources both to teach and to serve communities in the region.

What is your favorite part of starting a medical college?

My favorite part of the job of starting a new medical school is that every day provides new and exciting challenges and opportunities. No two days are the same. This maintains a high level of excitement and keeps things fresh and new.

Who do you admire most and why?

I would have to start with my parents. My mother instilled in me a lifelong love of reading and learning. My father, who worked very hard to put himself through the University of Pittsburgh at night and worked as a teacher and then administrator, has been a lifelong example of what it means to work hard and set a good example for his family. Additionally, Dr. Jerry Wallace, the president at Campbell, has been a tremendous mentor and allowed me to build a quality medical school in North Carolina.

Do you have a favorite book?

I don’t really have just one favorite book. I love reading about history and thoroughly enjoyed Michael Shaara’s *Killer Angels*, which won a Pulitzer Prize and was made into the movie *Gettysburg*. My favorite historical medical book is *The Emperor of all Maladies*, written by Siddhartha Mukherjee and which also won a Pulitzer Prize. I recently finished the book *Just Mercy*, which is a powerful narrative about the unequal application of justice, especially concerning death row inmates in the south.

Hobbies?

I enjoy playing the piano and listening to jazz.

I feel inspired when...

I read a good book, see a good movie, or have a large and challenging project—like starting a new medical school.