

'Student Advising Directory for Streamlining Faculty Mentor Identification'

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MEDICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Background: Medical student advising needs are broad, evolving, and unique to individual student interests. Identifying willing faculty to provide tailored advice can be challenging for students.

Objectives: The objectives of this study were to 1) assess the feasibility of identifying willing faculty advisors to be featured in an advising directory and 2) evaluate the contribution of an advising directory to satisfying student advising needs.

Methods/Design: We surveyed 145 first-year medical students beginning medical school. Each student was asked to identify their five most important advising objectives from a list of 15 and estimate the helpfulness of an advising directory on a Likert scale. 162 WFSM faculty members were asked to complete a voluntary survey to be included in an advising directory. Responses were synthesized as faculty profiles and compiled in a document that was distributed to medical students. Students were asked to complete a survey six months later inquiring the number of times accessed, rate of success in achieving their intended goal, and a Likert rating of helpfulness for introducing new mentors.

Results: 74 students responded to the initial survey with 78% identifying "as my interests evolve, guide me towards opportunities and introduce me to possible mentors," as an important advising behavior. 57% predicted that an advising directory would be "extremely helpful," and 38% predicted it would be "very helpful." 106 faculty responded to the survey and were included in the directory. Six months after distribution, 61% of 51 survey respondents had utilized the resource with 48% of those users accessing it twice or more. All responding users reported that it helped them reach their advising objective. 48% of them reported it as "very helpful," and 17% reported it as "extremely helpful," for introducing them to possible mentors as interests evolve.

Conclusions: Students in this study perceived identifying appropriate advisors for their evolving individualized needs as a top advising priority and identified an advising directory as likely beneficial. Creation of the advising directory for students was feasible and required only time and an electronic platform. Willing faculty were readily identified. Ultimately, students found the resource to be a useful tool for satisfying evolving individual needs.