

Student Advising Directory for Streamlining Faculty Mentor Identification

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Background

- Medical student advising needs are broad, evolving, and unique to individual student interests.
- Students often report lack of formal mentoring early in medical education as a major hindrance to ideal career development.¹
- Identifying willing faculty to provide tailored advice can be challenging for students.
- Objectives:
 1. Assess the feasibility of identifying willing faculty advisers to be featured in an advising directory.
 2. Evaluate the contribution of an advising directory to satisfying student advising needs.

Methods

146 M1 students were asked to complete a survey on their first day of medical school:

1. Select the 5 most important behaviors you need from your advising team from a list of 15.
2. On a scale of not at all to extremely helpful, how helpful would you find a database of Wake Forest School of Medicine (WFSOM) advisers listing their areas of advising expertise and non-medical interests when you are seeking advising services?

162 WFSOM faculty members were asked via email to complete a survey if they desired to be listed as an adviser in a new advising directory:

1. Which 5 advising topics from a list of 25 are you most comfortable/passionate about covering with medical students?
2. What information would you like to share about yourself for students to get to know you?

Faculty responses were synthesized into individual profiles (Figure 1).

A comprehensive matrix mapping faculty members' names to their selected advising interests was created.

These items were formatted into a guidebook and distributed to M1 and M2 students as an emailed pdf, as a pdf uploaded to student webpages, and as hard copies located in centralized spaces in the medical school.

John Smith, MD
Specialty: Pediatrics
Role at WFSOM: Clinical Skills Instructor
Email: email@wakehealth.edu
Education:
Undergraduate: Wake Forest University, 1994
Medical School: Wake Forest School of Medicine, 1998
Residency: Wake Forest Baptist Hospital, 2001
Advising interests: Relationship/family counseling, early identification of specialties of interest, arranging shadowing within the department, burnout/resiliency, success in pediatrics
Personal: "I am a father of two and enjoy playing with my kids whenever I have a chance. I also love dogs (especially my golden retriever Fido), hiking on the weekends, and trying new restaurants downtown."



Figure 1. Example of faculty profile. Information is fabricated for demonstration.

M1 and M2 students were asked via email to complete a survey with the following questions six months after distribution:

1. How many times have you accessed the guidebook?
2. For what intended reason(s) did you access the guidebook?
3. Did the guidebook help you achieve your goal?
4. On a scale of not at all to extremely helpful, how helpful was the guidebook for introducing you to possible mentors that can guide you as your interests evolve?

Results

Preliminary Student Survey:

- 74 M1 students responded to the survey.
- 78% of respondents selected, "As my interests evolve, guide me toward opportunities and introduce me to possible mentors" as a desired advising behavior making it the most commonly selected response (n = 58).
- 57% of respondents predicted that a database of WFSOM advisers would be extremely helpful (n = 42), 38% predicted very helpful (n = 28), and the remaining 5% predicted somewhat helpful (n = 4).

Faculty Inclusion:

- 106 faculty members responded to the survey and were included in the advising directory.
- 35 of the included faculty members were official student advisers as designated by WFSOM; 71 were not.
- Included faculty members represented 36 different medical specialties.

Post-Distribution Survey:

- 52 students responded to the survey.
- 60% of students had used the directory once or more, with 48% of those using it twice or more.

Table 1. Results of student post-distribution survey.

Reason for Access	% of users	N
Learn more about potential mentors' training, personal interests, etc.	63%	19
Identify a research mentor	27%	8
Identify mentors for interest group leadership	13%	4
Identify shadowing opportunities	10%	3
Career specific one-on-one advising	7%	2
Progress Toward Objective		
Consistently fully accomplished	41%	12
Consistently made progress	44%	13
Made progress some of the time	14%	4
Consistently no progress	0%	0
Helpfulness for Introducing Possible Mentors as Interests Evolve		
Extremely helpful	17%	5
Very helpful	48%	14
Somewhat helpful	34%	10
Not so helpful	0%	0
Not at all helpful	0%	0

- One respondent reported, "...this resource is great for presenting mentors not only in their academic/career interests, but also in their personal passions which helps us to better pick a mentor as a person we could have a strong relationship with."

Conclusion

- Students in this study perceived identifying appropriate advisers 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 to compile the responses and an electronic platform. Willing faculty were readily identified.
- Ultimately, students found the resource to be a useful tool for satisfying evolving individual needs.

References

1. Jackson VA, Palepu A, Szalacha L, Caswell C, Carr PL, Inui T. "Having the Right Chemistry": A Qualitative Study of Mentoring in Academic Medicine. *Acad Med.* 2003;78(3):328-34.