



Residency Match Day: March Madness 2016? A faculty perspective

By Dr. Loretta Jackson-Williams

We couldn't resist comparing Match Day to the annual NCAA basketball tournament because we know it has felt a bit like "March Madness" around the office. Now that SOM Match 2016 is completed, the results are available at www.umc.edu/Education/Schools/Medicine/Office_of_Medical_Education/Residency_Match.aspx.



Jackson-Williams

This is, however, a good time to reflect on how we get to Match Day from an educator's perspective.

Match preparation is an ongoing process. The current M3 students are now considering their top specialty choices. This listing of their choices enables us to place them in groups for advising through the match preparation process.

The meetings between students and their administrative dean ensure that students are making informed career choices and supplement the other aspects of our career counseling system, such as the weekly career development series, the annual fall residency fair and class meetings. In addition, the students will be asking the faculty questions about career choices.

We encourage each of you to engage the students in these conversations and to maintain a balanced view of all specialties.

This spring, students also will begin asking for letters of recommendation (LORs). Any faculty actively involved in the teaching environment could be asked to write an LOR for a student. These LORs provide a statement of support for the student, but should also provide a balanced assessment of that individual's educational progress, professional promise in the selected field and personal characteristics.

Here are some basic guidelines for writing LORs:

1. Identify and define your relationship with the student and the basis for your assessment. This helps to frame the context of the letter for readers. A letter that is written by an individual who has worked closely with the student is interpreted differently from a letter written by someone who is relying on the assessment of others who have very little personal contact with the student.
2. Provide practical information about the student's qualifications. Give an example or anecdote about things that support the provided assessment. This offers evidence of specifics upon which the assessment is based.
3. Note the areas that are outside of your ability to assess for the student.
4. The LOR should be written on appropriate letterhead. Focus on the usually inconsequential details in your letter. Include the preferred name of the student,

correct pronouns (no "he" for "she!"), correctly spelled words, appropriate capitalizations, etc. Unfortunately, these easy-to-miss mistakes can reflect poorly on the individual requesting the letter, as well as the letter writer.

5. Obtain written materials, such as a CV and/or a personal statement, to provide factual information for the LOR. We encourage students to prepare these for you.

6. Meet with the student. This provides an opportunity to establish the framework for the letter and to give honest feedback to the student about the type of letter that will be written.

If the student has made a minimal or negative impression, it is important to be candid about the

type of letter that can be provided. This protects the integrity of the process and your reputation as a letter writer, and it also provides honest feedback to the student for his or her continued growth and development.

Finally, we offer to all of our students a presentation series, "The Road to Match," which will help guide them through the process. It can be viewed at www.umc.edu/Education/Schools/Medicine/Office_of_Medical_Education/The_Road_to_Match_Series.aspx. Feel free to browse it and offer suggestions.

Before you know it, we will be back in Match Madness for 2017. Enjoy!

Draft day, Tinder combined: A student perspective

By Brian Mitchell, M4

It all comes down to this: The residency application, interview and NRMP Match process could be compared to a professional sports draft mixed with online dating.

It is with eager anticipation that students await their version of a championship game. The months and years of hard work culminate in one high-stakes event: Match Day!

While Match Day gets the spotlight, it is important to reflect on the myriad steps necessary to make it to this point.

M4 students conquered two years of classroom-based basic science education, USMLE Step 1 in the summer between their M2 and M3 years, an added dose of introduction to clinical medicine and a clinical preceptorship.

During clinical rotation exposure in the M3 year, students narrowed down and solidified a list of specialties, located their mentors, developed research projects and created a list of potential authors for letters of recommendation. By the second semester of their M3 year, preparation for the Match began in earnest, with coordination from the Office of Medical Education.

While students check off dozens of additional boxes leading up to Match Day, faculty support and guidance are of utmost importance.

Here is a reflective list of essential steps to ensure a successful path:

1. Identify a clinical faculty mentor. This could stand alone as the most important step. I could expound exponentially on the benefits a mentor provides in prepara-



Mitchell

tion for the Match. Mentors assist in finalizing senior electives, discussing specialty selections and offering practical life advice. In my experience, the faculty at UMMC does an outstanding job of taking time to meet with students and answer even the most overwrought emails. Faculty members are making a lasting impression on students' futures by serving as mentors.

2. Meet with clinical faculty in various specialties. As a student who enjoyed (almost) all of my clinical rotations, I was struck by a bout of indecision regarding my specialty of choice. The meetings with Dr. Jimmy Stewart and Dr. Zeb Henson helped enormously to clarify, inform and map a pathway to residency.

3. Arrange and attend the MSPE interview. The oft-discussed dean's letter is vital to a residency application, and it is vital to get it correct. Aside from getting to know your friendly letter writer (mine was the awesome Dr. Loretta Jackson-Williams), it helps to solidify your plans and to coherently organize your medical school experiences. This helps immensely during residency interviews.

4. Request and receive letters of recommendation.

5. Prepare and submit ERAS. Even the best authors have editors, and the personal statement is no different. Luckily, finding a smart and willing faculty member at UMMC is easy, and outside feedback will focus and amplify your document's message and quality.

Residency may be where "you really learn how to be a physician," but first, medical students have to navigate interview season and Match Day.

Looking back, I understand that guidance from a dedicated faculty member is critical for a seamless transition into the "Big Leagues."

Faculty spotlight: Michael G. Holder, M.D.

Dr. Michael G. Holder Jr. is executive director of simulation and interprofessional education at UMMC. His work brings together the simulation center, the clinical skills assessment center and the training center, three centers that are central for the entire continuum of medical education: undergraduate, graduate and continuing education. Holder also works in the Pediatric Emergency Department at Batson Children's Hospital.

In addition to patient care and bedside teaching, he will coordinate and expand the simulation offerings on campus.

"Health professions simulation affords us a unique opportunity to enhance our educational offerings, increase patient safety and ultimately improve patient outcomes," Holder said. "Our faculty can better demonstrate the clinical manifestations of normal and disease processes and learners can demonstrate their ability to manage patients.

"It's not just about what they need to improve; time should be spent reinforcing what was done well."

Faculty conduct debriefing sessions after every simulation scenario, and students are able to review and discuss what transpired in great detail. This process also can be adapted to follow actual clinical events to improve provider and team performance.

"Simulation is not just for students and trainees – it's a great tool for maintaining provider skills and



uncovering latent safety threats and systems issues. It's not just about hands-on training and practicing procedure skills. It's also about learning how to communicate more effectively and developing the skills to work closely with others."

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Holder is the first physician in his family. He completed his bachelor's degree in biology summa cum laude at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in 1991. He attended Robert Wood Johnson Medical School for his undergraduate medical training and completed his general pediatrics residency and his pediatric emergency medicine fellowship at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

After developing the simulation program at Akron Children's Hospital in 2007, Holder joined the Austen Biolnnovation Institute to design and launch its flagship 35,000-square-foot simulation center.

Holder said the most enjoyable events in education are "the light bulb" moments when the student actually "gets it." He also values the relationships that he develops with students, residents and faculty.

"Every time I teach, I learn something new and it's the best way to keep my commitment to lifelong learning," he said.

Curriculum Corner

By Dr. Jeni Tipnis



A new administrator and an instructional designer have joined the Office of Medical Education.

Tanya Reed, our new education administrator, comes to us from Kaplan Higher Education, where she served as the university registrar.

At Kaplan, she managed the registrar's office and was involved in projects campus-wide involving student records and registration, data privacy and informing and interpreting academic policy related to student records and registration.

She received her master's in public administration and public policy from Jackson State University. She said she looks forward to working with the School of Medicine and helping with the implementation and management of the curriculum.

Leah Stayer is an instructional designer who came to us from Scholastic Education Group and the International Center for Leadership and Education, where she worked with K-12 school districts in Mississippi, Louisiana and the Midwest to develop and implement curriculum.

She has developed and delivered professional development sessions on student engagement, blended learning models and the use of a backward design approach to writing curriculum. She has a master's in leadership and education in curriculum.

As you can see, our office is growing. For more information or for questions, call us at 4-1212.

Education Tip

By Dr. Thais Tonore

What the world needs now is feedback, sweet feedback. Feedback is something there's just too little of.

We often confuse criticism, praise and evaluation with feedback. Feedback is communication about something specific with the goal of improvement. It can be viewed as positive (praise) or negative (criticism), but really should be framed as guidance to achieve a desired result.

Many times the feedback we give students is on what was done wrong rather than what could be done better. It should be directed toward problem-solving, changing behaviors and reaching a desired outcome.

Students will be more satisfied with compliments, but their performance improves more effectively with

constructive feedback. Research backs me up on this (for more information see Boehler ML, Rogers DA, Schwind CJ, et al. "An Investigation of Medical Student Reactions to Feedback: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Med Educ.* 2006;40:746-9).

Feedback should be issue-specific, actionable, motivating and delivered with the purpose of effecting an improvement. As teachers, we should guide the students by reflecting on how they are doing. Then we must make suggestions on how to improve, which will help students reach rotational goals. This is best done privately and close to the time of interaction.



Ideally, we need to give feedback every few days. Remember, the goal is to motivate change, so we need to give ongoing feedback on how the changes are developing.

Students are accountable to learn all that they can on each rotation to enable their development into the best all-around doctors they have the potential to become. They are being encouraged to ask for feedback, and if it is not specific, to ask for clarification. Therefore, the feedback to us is to provide students with feedback for improvement as often as possible and to accept their questions for clarification.

This isn't "just for some, but for everyone" (my apologies to Burt Bacharach).

CALL TO ACTION

The Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is sponsoring a series of noon discussions called "Ed Talks."

These sessions will be an opportunity for faculty to discuss current educational research projects, potential topics for future research and current educational literature. The goal is to improve the faculty's knowledge and skills related to educational research and scholarship.



The sessions, run by Dr. Nicole Borges, chief education officer, research and scholarship, are scheduled for noon on one Tuesday of each month in the second-floor board room of the Norman C. Nelson Student Union (room G in April and October) on the following dates: March 29, April 26, May 24, June 21, July 26, Aug. 16, Sept 20, Oct. 25 and Nov. 29.

Attendees should bring their lunches. To suggest a topic, lead a session or be added to the email distribution list, call Borges at 4-1337 or email her at nborges@umc.edu.

Follow-up

The Office of Medical Education recently solicited clinical faculty to mentor students who are getting ready to make career decisions.

Faculty response was extraordinary, and office staff would like to thank the 148 faculty members who volunteered to advise and share their specialty with students!

The Specialty Advisor Listing will be posted under Career Counseling page on the Office of Medical Education's website at https://www.umc.edu/som_mededu/.