

Underserved Pathway Mentor Memo Fall 2010, Volume 3, Number 1

First Year Students

The transition to medical school is a big event. Fall quarter finds our students settling into class at a campus in the five state WWAMI region – the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington State University in Pullman and Spokane, the University of Wyoming in Laramie, the University of Alaska in Anchorage, Montana State University in Bozeman, or the University of Idaho in Moscow. This transition brings new classmates, new classes, and new demands on their time and intellect, as well as new opportunities such as the Underserved Pathway. Anatomy and the basic science courses will occupy the majority of your student's classroom time. Your student will also be starting Introduction to Clinical Medicine and will be interviewing real patients for the first time, specifically working on the social history and HPI.

Please remind your student to look into summer opportunities, most of which involve an option to complete their Independent Investigative Inquiry (III). The UP requires a III project that addresses an issue affecting underserved populations. The Rural Underserved Opportunities Program (RUOP) and the International Health Opportunities Program (IHOP) each offer a chance to live in a rural, underserved, or international community for a month or more during the summer, and a III completed in one of these programs automatically qualifies for UP credit. Applications for both IHOP and RUOP applications are due in January 2011. Your student can start a preceptorship of 8 half-day sessions in the Fall or sign up for one in Winter Quarter – a variety of underserved settings are available.

Second Year Students

Students from all five states and seven campuses are now in Seattle and the class is adjusting to a larger group of 216 students. Students from outside Seattle are adapting to their new home. The second year curriculum is hard and fast paced. Your student will complete an organ system course every few weeks and have classes such as Pharmacology and Introduction to Clinical Medicine (ICM) that run the whole quarter. Your student will also be in small college groups, where they will be seeing patients every week and conducting complete histories and physicals. They may appreciate the opportunity to practice their skills with you by writing a patient note or giving an oral case presentation.

It is important at this time to discuss your student's progress in the pathway. What online Underserved Pathway modules have they completed? Have they taken any selective courses with an underserved emphasis? Have they explored options for community service? All Underserved Pathway students must complete an Individual Investigative Inquiry (III) with an underserved population. Your student may have met this requirement through a RUOP or IHOP summer experience. Please confirm with your students that they did complete it or that they have a plan for completing this requirement.

Third Year Students

For those of you paired with third year students, this is a great time to check in with your student and find out about their initial clinical experiences. Your student will have completed

at least one clinical rotation by now. A number of personal hopes and fears about their clinical competence and their ability to work with patients may be surfacing. Your guidance can be very helpful as they think about their role in caring for patients and their future career paths.

This is also a good time to start talking with them about elective clerkships in their fourth year. These electives will help students to further identify and focus their career plans. Clerkships with an emphasis on underserved communities are available and students need to complete a total of 12 credits of clinical coursework at an underserved location to meet Underserved Pathway requirements.

Fourth Year Students

At this point, fourth years should have their residency applications well under way. Their personal statement, CV, and letters of recommendation should be nearing completion and they should have a list of residency programs where they are planning to apply. Mentoring your student through this exciting time can be a rewarding experience for both of you. Offer to help your student with their preparation for the interview process – perform a mock interview or work with your student to come up with a list of questions for potential residencies. Your student should have taken or will soon be taking both the clinical skills and the written step 2 board examinations. Talking with your student about preparing for these exams and about their experiences with these exams is a great way to connect further with your student.