
FOSTERING CONVERSATIONS: SUPPORTING 1ST-GENERATION & LOW- INCOME STUDENTS IN MEDICINE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the impact of low-income/first-generation backgrounds on students' experiences in medicine
- Acknowledge the barriers that these students face in their journey to and through medicine
- Understand the unique strengths these students bring to the medical profession
- Discuss how to support these students in medicine

CHALLENGES

1st-generation/low-income students experience more challenges in their educational journeys than their peers^{1,2}

- Financial pressures
- Lack of community and mentors
- High level of family needs
- Low cultural capital
- Poor academic achievement
- Lower medical school acceptance rates

CHALLENGES

While in medical school, first-generation students report:

- Lower self-reported quality of life
- Less social support
- More stress
- Fewer role models among faculty members than their peers³

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

“It can be very discouraging when you see that your peers are getting access to opportunities or your peers have things to add to their application because of the fact that... they come from a higher socio-economic position. ... These students, these peers, were not attending poorly-funded public schools as I was”²

-Quote from pre-medical student

STRENGTHS OF STUDENTS

First-generation/low-income students have well-documented strengths:

- Resilience, determination, and persistence
- Demonstrated insight into health disparities
- Putting others above themselves¹

IMPACT ON FIELD OF MEDICINE

- “Patients’ health outcomes are generally better when more diverse healthcare teams are involved with the provision of care”¹
- First-generation/low-income students are more likely to care for underserved populations than their more affluent peers in their future careers^{2,5}

OUR PERSPECTIVE

We wanted to build a welcoming community for students from a **spectrum of backgrounds**:

- First-generation or low-income students
- Students with personal, family, or community experiences of increased disease burden, incarceration, homelessness, substance use, physical, financial, or emotional abuse, poor access to health providers/services

STUDENT GROUP

- Conversations began in Fall 2020 with students, residents, fellows, and attendings
- Became an official club in March 2021
- Goal: Provide support and resources to students who come from low-income families and/or are the first in their family to attend medical school

SUPPORT GROUP

- Hosted multiple conversations via Zoom to provide a safe, confidential space for sharing for students, residents, fellows, and attendings
- Oftentimes these conversations were the first time individuals had openly shared about these backgrounds
- Cathartic to hear from others with similar experiences and challenges navigating the journey to and through medical school

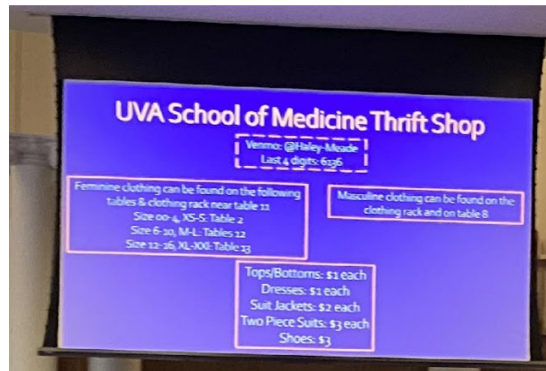
RESIDENT PANEL

Organized low-income/first-generation resident panel for students to discuss:

- ERAS
- Financial costs of applications and interviews
- Family dynamics during residency

CLOTHING DRIVE

- Collected gently used business attire from students, faculty, staff, and residents
- Hosted a thrift shop for medical students to purchase gently used business attire at an affordable price for patient presentations, third year clerkships, interviews, etc.



FUTURE THOUGHTS

Overarching Support:

- Peer-peer and peer-faculty mentorship programs for low-income/first-gen students built into medical school experience (UCLA, Stanford, Georgetown)
- Bridge program to support students in the transition to medical school

FUTURE THOUGHTS

Educational/Career Support

- Orientation sessions dedicated to low-income/first-gen students (what are Step exams? What is Academic Medicine?)
- Increased awareness in SIM lectures, practice questions

FUTURE THOUGHTS

Financial Support

- Assistance with financial aid forms, faculty-student dinners to discuss financial literacy (UNC, Georgetown)

FUTURE THOUGHTS

Mental Health Support

- Counseling services for medical students (offered at Darden and Law School)
- Flexibility in attendance policy for family emergencies

REFERENCES

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