



# Career Advising Guide for Advisors



*Advising Medical Students at Each Stage of Their Career Path.*

## **WELCOME**

*Dear Career Advisors,*

*Welcome to the UTRGV school of medicine guide to career advising and thank you for your commitment to the future of medicine! This guide will help you advise our future physicians as they embark on exploring their career path. Students are to meet with their advisors at least once a semester and this guide holds the latest NBME information regarding each of the different specialties and their level of competitiveness.*

*If you have any questions or recommendations, please feel free to contact our team.*

*Thank you once again!*

*Careers in Medicine*

## The Role of the Career Advisor

The goal of career advising at UTRGV School of Medicine is to ensure that each student optimizes his or her path to the MD degree by taking full advantage of the resources and services available to them in the Office of Student Affairs and the greater university. Each student is advised individually and as a class through careers in medicine while students select a career advisor via availability in Handshake. A career advisor will:

- Report to director of Careers in Medicine, Dr. Cristel Escalona and commit to a 3-year appointment in this new role.
- Provide ongoing collaborative and informative career advising to SOM students.
- Provide general career advising to students based on academic and NBME performance.
- Prepares students to effectively strategize course selections, away rotations, research, and overall academic success in obtaining the residency of their choice.
- Provides career guidance to assist students in self-evaluation and choosing a specialty in relation to their career and life goals.
- Utilize Handshake to maintain record of student data regarding career advising appointments.
- Participates in professional development programming, assessment, and mentoring opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge in career advisement and related fields.
- Provides referral to other UTRGV services as needed.

## What is career advising?

Mentoring is defined as the process where an "... experienced, highly regarded, empathetic person guides another individual in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development." In the context of medical education, effective career advising has been found to help with professional identity formation, professionalism development, research participation and productivity, career planning, support of overall student wellbeing and appears to be especially valuable for individuals who are underrepresented in medicine.

## What is the difference between an academic advisor vs a career advisor?

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### **Academic Advisor**

Focus on providing medical students with professional guidance and educational resources to enhance their academic and professional experience. Academic services include tutoring services, test preparation, review sessions, etc.

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### **Career Advisor**

offer advising about career exploration, help you clarify your goals and priorities, offer shadowing opportunities, and review the AAMC career advising resources. Often students will seek a career advisor from the specialty they are interested in applying for.

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## What is the value of career advising in Medical Education?

- It aids in developing professional identity.
- Develops professionalism.
- Monitors and develops career planning.
- Supports overall wellbeing.

## What are the ground rules for career advising?

- Consistent availability is needed to engage with our students.
- Personal and professional boundaries need to be set.
- Time and place for meetings need to be agreed upon.
- Create a safe place for students.
- Set clear expectations for roles and meetings.

### **How often do students meet with a career advisor and how are we tracking the advising sessions?**

Students meet twice per academic year with a Career Advisor individually. These meetings can be as brief as 20 minutes and may last up to an hour. The typical career advising meeting averages 30 – 45 minutes.

Prior to meeting with each student, career advisors may review the student's academic performance, board scores (if applicable) via the student's Career Advising Portfolio. The career advising portfolio is a pdf document that students may utilize to track career advising progression throughout their four years of medical education (this is an optional resource for students). Students may document advisement meetings, assessment results and resources utilized in their portfolio. The information documented should not be made available to other faculty, instructors, course or clerkship directors and is meant to provide continuity of the career advising experience.

Preparation for an advising session is typically brief, requiring less than 5 minutes. Scheduling of meetings can be done via Handshake. We train all of our career advisors one on one to utilize this software. Career Advisors typically meet with students via Zoom or at an agreed upon location such as the SOM.

### **What are the qualities of an Effective Career Advisor?**

Effective career advisors encourage student reflection, provide honest, constructive feedback, take an individual interest in the student, and balance providing guidance with giving the student freedom to grow and develop. The most effective career advisors also avoid complaining about issues beyond students' control.

## The Role of The Career Advisor

Effective career advising is a key element for student success in medical school and increases the likelihood of eventual student career satisfaction.

Advising skills are not traditionally taught as part of PhD or MD/DO training programs and few medical school faculty have received formal training in this area. Serving as a Career Advisor can stimulate interest in teaching and contribute to improved mentee discussion in each domain. For each level of medical student education. The prompts are not meant to be inclusive or exhaustive and not all prompts will be applicable to all mentees. The prompts are intended to serve as a guide to stimulate discussion and direct conversations.

In meeting with each student, Career Advisors should open by asking how things are going and whether the student has any specific issues or concerns he or she would like to discuss. Career Advisors should allow the conversation to flow naturally from topic to topic following the student needs and preferences and take notes as necessary. When the student has no other issues to discuss, the advisor should review the career advising grid for any content or topic areas that may not have been covered and ask the student about these issues as appropriate.

## Career Advising Prompts

### Student Issues and Concerns

- Do you have any specific concerns you would like to address today?
- I would like to make sure we spend time today discussing issues that are important to you. Is there something you would like to make sure we discuss today?

### Career Planning

- What are your thoughts about your future career and what steps are you currently taking to explore opportunities in your areas of interest?
- What questions do you have regarding the field of medicine you would like to pursue?

### Academics & Performance

- Are you staying on track with your studies/clerkships and how are your grades/scores?
- Have any of your instructors or preceptors expressed concerns about your performance?

### Personal & Social

- What things, outside of school, are you looking forward to this semester?
- How has school impacted your relationships with your family and friends?

### Personal & Professional Balance

- Tell me about the balance between the personal and professional aspects of your life.
- What are you doing to maintain your sense of self while in medical school?

### Research

- What needs do you have, if any, regarding participation in research as a student?
- Have you thought about the role of research in your medical career?

### Electives & Extracurricular

- What would you like to know about elective and extracurricular opportunities at this stage of your training?
- How are your elective and extracurricular activities meeting your goals?

### Health & Medical Concerns

- Do you have access to a health care provider that meets your current health care needs?
- Are you aware of the health resources available to you as a medical student?

	<b>Early M1</b>	<b>Late M1</b>
<b>Student Concerns</b>	<p>Advisor availability, review contact information for scheduled meetings and times of crisis. Address student concerns, ground rules, confidentiality, boundaries.</p>	<p>Student specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs.</p>
<b>Career Planning</b>	<p>Emphasize academic rigor. Encourage engagement with student interest groups &amp; organizations. Career goals and possible specialties.</p>	<p>Summer externships, global health opportunities, fellowships. Encourage AAMC Career Assessment tools to explore identity, skills, etc. Career goals and possible specialties.</p>
<b>Academics/ Performance</b>	<p>Transition to school, study habits, adjustment to workload. Integration of step 1 and course studying. Refer to Academic Advising</p>	<p>Review year 1 performance. Adjustments for year 2, step 1 prep, summer remediation. Refer to Academic Advising</p>
<b>Professionalism</b>	<p>Punctuality, coping with feedback, response to criticism, responsible social media use, appropriate dress for clinical activities, respect for faculty.</p>	<p>Reflection on 1st year. Develop plans for summer &amp; next year. Assess professional identity and identify areas for growth.</p>
<b>Research/ Scholarship</b>	<p>Discuss interest or need for research. Plan to follow up with research mentors, faculty opportunities.</p>	<p>Research plans, connect with summer program opportunities or mentors. Faculty introduction or connections.</p>
<b>Electives/ Extracurricular</b>	<p>Ask/assess/advise elective choice, extracurricular, co-curricular, global health participation. Student groups, community service, church activities, summer activities.</p>	<p>Summer courses, language training. Step 1 prep, review of 1st year courses, trip planning, 2nd year scheduling, prioritization of activities/opportunities</p>
<b>Personal/ Social/ Professional Balance</b>	<p>Briefly ask about self-care, support system and personal issues impacting academic performance.  Refer to Wellness, Counseling Services, Academic Advising.</p>	<p>Briefly ask about self-care, support system and personal issues impacting academic performance.  Refer to Wellness, Counseling Services, Academic Advising.</p>

## Career Advising Prompts MS2



	<b>Early M2</b>	<b>Late M2</b>
<b>Student Concerns</b>	Specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs.	Specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs.
<b>Career Planning</b>	Asking about student needs, referring to appropriate mentors, faculty, student groups, professional organizations	Ask about goals, career exploration; consideration of MPH, other dual degree opportunities
<b>Academics/ Performance</b>	Workload, study habits, consider alternate clinical experience/pathways at UTRGV. Step 1 prep, consideration of for-profit courses or school organized step 1 prep opportunities, verify Step 1 Schedule	Adherence to study clinical year(s) scheduling process; clinical skills deficiencies: note writing, oral presentation skills; introduction of ACGME and school specific professional competencies
<b>Professionalism</b>	time management, review schedule for year,; break plans; motivation, sense of self	reflection on year, transition to white coat and professional identity, clinical roles
<b>Research/ Scholarship</b>	ongoing activities, f/u on summer projects; encourage completion of efforts; re-evaluate involvement & level of engagement in projects with respect to career goals	completing projects; planning for M3/4 research rotations, identify research mentor
<b>Electives/ Extracurricular</b>	beginning to think about 3rd year/clinical electives or experiences; balance of required curricula and service learning	identifying specialty specific electives/opportunities, away rotations; balance of required curricula and service learning
<b>Personal/ Social/ Professional Balance</b>	talk with friends/family/ other re: balancing relationships and time devoted to USMLE prep .attaining & maintaining balance, coping strategies, healthy life habits, prioritizing use of time	level of connectedness to school, classmates, family, friends; risk for isolation, drifting Encourage discussions with family, friends, partners re: new roles on wards/clinical work

## Career Advising Prompts MS3

	<b>Early M3</b>	<b>Late M3</b>
<b>Student Concerns</b>	specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs	specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs
<b>Career Planning</b>	identification of specialty specific advisor; consideration of MPH, other dual degrees; scholarship applications; participation in professional conferences, impact on schedule; letters of recommendation; review step 1 performance	4th year schedule with respect to audition rotations, step, interviewing; coordination with advisor(s); appropriateness check for specialty selection given board scores & academic performance.
<b>Academics/ Performance</b>	Emphasize importance of clinical year grades to residency match, planning for shelf---exams & exam prep while doing clinical work; identify sources of academic support	review of clinical performance, 4th year scheduling, preparation for sub---Is, increased independence for senior students; guidance for step 2prep
<b>Professionalism</b>	responding to call demands, emails, keeping up with non--- rotation school requirements, core curricular activities, academic & clinical documentation, respect for hospital & clinic staff, patient ownership, team integration	review of clinical year, self--- identity as doctor in training, professional identity development
<b>Research/ Scholarship</b>	Ongoing activities, f/u on summer projects; encourage completion of efforts; re--- evaluate involvement & level of engagement in projects with respect to career goals	research mentor/plans; is research required for specialty? Plans to complete/present/publish work
<b>Electives/ Extracurricular</b>	identifying specialty specific electives/ opportunities	4th year away audition rotations, clinical Sub I experience, advanced electives; opportunities to address areas of need to prepare for internship
<b>Personal/ Social/ Professional Balance</b>	adjustment to wards, new schedules, call demands; adjustment to away rotations, sources of support wards, call, clinic, sleep, coping strategies, spiritual practice, maintenance of relationships, hobbies; relative loss of control	social/personal plans e.g. marriage, children, travel; addressing potential for partner separation with residency/match work; success of efforts; what's working; what's not working; appropriate use of elective time (e.g.vacation, vs. sub I,vs. nonessential electives)

## Career Advising Prompts MS4

	<b>Early M4</b>	<b>Late M4</b>
<b>Student Concerns</b>	specific concerns, timely issues, pressing needs	Outstanding concerns, role transitions, closure, thank you, reflection
<b>Academics/ Performance</b>	sub I scheduling, rotation adjustments to meet career goals; verify step 2 ck scheduled; address step 2 performance, if applicable; assure all graduation requirements scheduled	discuss transition for guided curriculum to life--- long learning required of doctors; assure graduation requirements met
<b>Professionalism</b>	tips/skills for successful interviews, coaching to address 'red flags'	transition from M4 to PGY1; increased responsibility, identity of self as doctor. Roles within community. Visibility as a health professional.
<b>Career Planning</b>	couple's match, costs of interviews; dual career planning, combined residency & other degree selection given boards & academic performance programs or training; appropriateness check for specialty	f/u on interviews, confidence; plans for unmatched students; transition opportunities; congratulations on match, satisfaction of match results; dual career planning, e.g. combined residency with other degree programs or training
<b>Research/ Scholarship</b>	wrap up projects	publish/present
<b>Electives/ Extracurricular</b>	guidance for changing schedule and electives to meet career goals	n/a
<b>Personal/ Social/ Professional Balance</b>	debt planning, loan repayment, consideration of NHSC, USPH service etc... attention to rotations and school during NRMP process & interviews	Preparation for internship, residency, moving plans, finding housing, debt planning, loan repayment; addressing partner separation if necessary forward thinking to residency transition

## Web Resources

UTRGV Careers in Medicine

<http://www.utrgv.edu/som/careers-in-medicine/>

Residency Explorer

<https://www.residencyexplorer.org/>

AMA Residency Fellowship Training Program Database (FREIDA)

<https://freida.ama-assn.org/>

Careers in Medicine, CiM

<https://www.aamc.org/cim/>

Charting Outcomes in the Match

<http://www.nrmp.org/>

## Career Advisement General Schedule

### SECOND YEAR

#### Second Semester

- Planning 3rd year schedule

### THIRD YEAR

#### First Semester

- Planning 4rd year schedule
- Away Electives (VSLO)
- Career Day Sessions

#### Second Semester

- Ongoing specialty advising
- Post-match forum

### FOURTH YEAR

#### End of 3rd year/Early 4th year

- ERAS
- MSPE
- Interviews

#### Late 4th Yr

- The ROL
- The Match and post-match forum

## Career Advisement 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Year in Detail

### Year 3 (January-July)

- Explore CiM Assessment tools
- Meet with specialty advisors
- Decide on 4th yr schedule
- Schedule Away electives
- Schedule MSPE Appointment
- Begin contacting faculty for LOR
- Sign up for USMLE Step 2
- Post-match forum

### Year 4 (July-September)

- Write and finalize personal statement
- Complete ERAS application ([www.aamc.org/eras](http://www.aamc.org/eras))
- Register for the NRMP ([www.nrmp.org](http://www.nrmp.org))
- Take USMLE Step 2

### Year 4 (September)

- Meet with DOS for MSPE review
- Apply to programs
- Take USMLE Step 2

### Year 4 (October-February)

- MSPE is released on Oct 1st
- Interviews
- ROL opens in mid-January
- ROL closes towards the end of February

### Year 4 (March)

- The Match! (Held on Friday of the third week of March)
- Post- match forum

## Early Match Specifics

### Urology

- Register on AUA website in June ([www.auanet.org](http://www.auanet.org))
- Apply to programs from July-Sept
- Interview from Sept-Dec
- Submit ROL by early January
- Match in January

### Ophthalmology

- Register through SF Matching Service ([www.sfmatch.org](http://www.sfmatch.org))
- Apply to programs from July-Sept
- Interview from Sept-Dec
- Submit ROL by early January
- Match in January

### OB GYN

- Register through Residency CAS (Centralized Application Service)

## Away Rotations

There are several reasons that students might chose to do away rotations. They may be looking to experience a different practice environment or even check out a specific program. What they should be warned about is that although they might go to a program with the intent of impressing them, that can also backfire, and they might disappoint the program. For most specialties, it is not necessary to do an away rotation. However, if specialty of interest is not represented by UTRGV School of Medicine, Student must find a rotation. The exceptions are dermatology, ophthalmology, orthopedics, plastic surgery, urology and vascular surgery. See the specific specialty information for more detail on this topic. The bottom-line, if students do decide to do away rotations, they should treat it like a month-long interview.

## ERAS (Electronic Residency Application Service)

ERAS is the service which transmits applications, letters of recommendation, the MSPE, transcripts, and USMLE transcripts. It opens July 1<sup>st</sup> and that is when students can start completing it and uploading their documents. They receive a password (“token”) from the Dean’s Office ahead of time. It begins transmitting applications to the programs they designate through the NRMP on Sept 15<sup>th</sup> (this is before the MSPE gets sent out, which is on October 1<sup>st</sup>).

### Program Signals

Program signals offer you the opportunity to express interest in individual residency programs at the time of application. Program signals are intended to be used by residency programs as one of many data points in deciding whom to invite to interview.

You can send program signals for each specialty to which you intend to apply. The number of available signals varies by specialty. Specialties determine the number of signals based on their goals for signaling, their number of programs, and the average number of applications submitted per program in their specialty.

***For more information about Program Signals, provide this link:***

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residencies-eras/publication-chapters/program-signals-overview-residency-applicants>

## The CV

Once students have opened ERAS, they should begin with their CV and personal statement. The basic format for the CV includes. . .

- Home and School Address
- Education
- Honors and Awards
- Work Experience
- Research Experience
- Publications and Abstracts
- Teaching Experience
- Institutional Service
- Community Service
- Hobbies and Interests

ERAS has its own format for the CV, so students will cut and paste this information into the ERAS format. They cannot simply upload their document.

The office of CiM offers CV workshops and personalized reviews, please remind students that this service is free and at their disposal.

### **The Personal Statement**

The personal statement should express one's personal attributes and/or experiences that make them a unique individual. Students should write about why they have chosen a specialty and what their future goals are. Personal statements should be well written, limited to one page and have no grammatical errors or spelling mistakes.

Students should have someone who is good at writing and their advisor review their personal statement. It is recommended for students to send a different personal statement to each program. They should just tailor it to their residency choice. They will need different personal statements for preliminary and advanced programs and if they are applying to more than one residency. The following advice can be helpful. . .

- 1 page, 4 paragraphs
- First, introduce the reader to you
- Second, let the reader know how you arrived at your choice of the specialty
- Third, confirm why you think the choice is right for you (research, extracurricular or clinical experience)

Fourth, long-term goals (if not clear okay to state as such)

The office of CiM offers personalized statement reviews as well, so please refer them to our office.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Students are required to obtain three letters of recommendation for their residency application. They can obtain more, but programs can only receive up to four letters. Students might decide to send separate letters to different programs or they might send all letters to all programs. Students will need separate letters for preliminary and advanced programs. If the student is offered a letter, we highly advise they take it. The best letters tend to come from clinical faculty who know the student well and have worked with them closely. Some fields also highly value letters from prominent people (ie. Dermatology, Vascular, and General Surgery). Most specialties desire at least 1-2 letters from within the specialty. Many specialties will require a chair's or departmental letter (ie. Chair's letter Anesthesia, OB/GYN, Ortho, Peds, Plastic and Urology; Departmental letter – EM; IM provides a departmental letter that some programs will require). To obtain a chair's letter, students should arrange a meeting with the chair. To arrange for a departmental letter, students should alert the department and follow their process. Students should have their letters on ERAS by mid-September and they should give their writers 4-6 weeks to complete the letters. Students should waive the right to read the letter (get waivers from ERAS). The student then decides which programs to which they get sent.



## The MSPE

The MSPE is a letter of evaluation describing the students' performance in medical school. It is not a letter of recommendation. It is intended to be supportive, yet accurate. It typically does not discuss the student's specialty choice and it is meant to be generic. A student might be applying to more than 1 field or they might change their mind after the letter has been sent. The students are prompted to provide info for the background information before they meet with the deans. During the months of May through August, the deans will write and review the letter with the student. Then, in September the students have the opportunity to review the draft of the letter and make suggestions prior to its final form. It gets uploaded by the Dean's Office onto ERAS and it gets sent out to all programs the student applied to on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## The Application Process

### Where should students apply?

This question is quite specialty specific, and more detail can be seen under the individual specialty pages. However, in general, students should apply to a range of programs. They should "shoot for the stars" but also select "safe" programs and have a parallel plan. Very competitive programs or couple matches need more.

### *What are the more competitive specialty choices?*

- Plastic Surgery
- Orthopedics
- Dermatology
- Ophthalmology
- Urology
- Neurosurgery
- Otolaryngology
- Radiology

## Student and Career Advisor Resources

### Mental Health Counseling Services

The mission of the SOM is to provide mental health services for UTRGV students and to promote positive mental health and wellness on our campuses through education and training. Mental health counseling is provided within the school, and referral for psychiatric services is also available. These services are free for all enrolled students. The SOM clinical social worker who is specialized to provide counseling for medical students. To schedule an appointment please email: **[vianey.gonzalez03@utrgv.edu](mailto:vianey.gonzalez03@utrgv.edu)** or **[jessica.martinez19@utrgv.edu](mailto:jessica.martinez19@utrgv.edu)**

### Timely Care

The school of medicine also provides unlimited teleconsulting for our students at no cost via the TimelyCare app. Please have our students visit: **<https://timelycare.com/utrgv/>**

### Collegiate Recovery Program

The purpose of the CRP is to provide an environment in which students seeking and wanting to sustain recovery from addictions can find support and better manage the challenges of this journey. It seeks to help students make positive decisions about healthy relationships while improving the way they see and think about themselves.

The program also enables students to learn affirmative methods to identify and to cope with various life stressors. Participating in the program contributes to a network of mutual support for the development of lifelong commitments to individual recovery and understanding of life in recovery.

For more information, visit **<http://www.utrgv.edu/recovery>**

### Vaqueros Crisis Line

The **Vaqueros Crisis Line (665-5555)** is a 24/7 confidential helpline for enrolled UTRGV students experiencing an emotional crisis that may include suicidal thinking, thoughts of harming self or other, confusion, panic, or otherwise feeling distressed. A trained counselor will be available on the line to provide assistance.

### Student Health Services

The mission of Student Health Services is to meet the health care needs of students so they can focus on their studies. All students are required to pay a medical service fee that allows them to be seen at clinics on both campuses (Brownsville and Edinburg) as often as necessary. The office visits are free of charge, although there are low-cost charges for medicines, supplies, and lab tests.

The Health Services Clinics offer services of a family doctor, including general medical care, women's wellness, skin care, sexually transmitted diseases screening and treatment, routine immunizations, and the tuberculosis testing required by many educational programs. Health Services also has a Class D pharmacy that carries a selection of over-the-counter items and can fill most prescriptions written in the clinic. For more information, visit <http://www.utrgv.edu/health-services/>

### **Dean on Call**

After hours, at night, on weekends and during holidays, students can reach a dean in the Office of Student Affairs for urgent matters and guidance by calling 956-296-2502.

### **Tuition and Financial Aid**

The OSA includes staff who assist students with meeting the cost of their medical education, offer guidance in navigating the financial aid process, and provide resources on how to manage expenses associated with the pursuit of a medical degree.

The Associate Director of Financial Aid for the SOM is dedicated to assisting students with the financial aid application process and providing one-to-one counseling regarding the availability of federal, private, and institutional funds.

### **Student Organizations**

Medical student organizations and specialty interest groups provide students with opportunities to attend educational meetings and conferences sponsored by local, regional, national, and sometimes even international professional associations of that specialty. Through their participation, medical students become knowledgeable about, and may consider becoming an active medical student member of one or more professional associations of that specialty. The OSA supports extracurricular student organizations as another means for students to explore career interests, as well as encourage participation in the American Association of Medical Colleges Careers in Medicine workshops at the national level.

### **Student Travel**

SOM students are encouraged to pursue scholarly and community activities and present their work at conferences and professional organizations. They also are

encouraged to represent the school in leadership capacities. Students who are conducting research should ask their research mentors to provide support and guidance to attend meetings and presentations.

## Academic Houses



The SOM supports the academic and professional success of medical students through Academic Houses, which are small-group learning communities that help medical students develop supportive relationships with faculty and other students that span their course of study and beyond.

### **Benefits**

Each student across all four years of medical school is assigned to one of four Academic Houses specified below. Faculty advisors and students within each Academic House work as a team to plan academic, professional, community service, wellness, and social events for their Academic House members. Students receive frequent individual advising from their Academic House faculty advisor, and students and faculty develop a sense of community that fosters friendship, guidance, support, and academic and professional success. (Only one in 10 medical schools in the United States have a program like this, which supports students during their medical school years.)

### **Current SOM Academic Houses:**

- Galen
- Blackwell
- Maimon
- Osler