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Journey Across State Lines: Transition to a Regional Campus

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Abstract

The University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine's SELECT program was developed to equip medical students with healthcare leadership skills as they progress through the medical curriculum by providing them with leadership and management training and a curriculum based on emotional intelligence. Medical students spend their pre-clerkship years in Tampa, Florida and then spend their clinical years at the Lehigh Valley Health Network regional campus in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The authors describe how faculty at the regional campus are involved with student and academic affairs on the main campus, and the process of helping students transition from the pre-clinical to clinical years and from Florida to Pennsylvania.

Key Words: Medical students, transitions, regional campus, USFMCOM SELECT

Conflict of Interest: None

Background

In 2011, the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine (USFMCOM) in Tampa, Florida, in partnership with the Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) in Allentown, PA, launched a new medical student curriculum titled SELECT, an acronym for Scholarly Excellence, Leadership Experiences and Collaborative Training. SELECT was developed by healthcare leaders from the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine and the Lehigh Valley Health Network. Leadership at both institutions agreed that both current and future healthcare landscapes required specially trained physicians who would thrive and serve as agents of change within a highly fluid, dynamic healthcare system. SELECT was designed to equip medical students with healthcare leadership skills as they progress through the medical curriculum by providing them with leadership and management training, and curriculum based on emotional intelligence.^{1,2}

Students in the SELECT program, in addition to their required medical coursework, take a Professional Development course that spans all 4 years of medical school and is led by course content experts and faculty coaches.³ Foundational SELECT courses focus on the domains of leadership, health systems and values-based patient-centered care. The program also includes a coaching component whereby students are assigned two faculty coaches, one each at the Tampa and LV

Campuses. The students spend pre-clerkship years one and two in Tampa and clerkship years three and four in Allentown. These professional development coaches work with the students throughout their medical school experience. The regional campus provides a comparable experience, including a student affairs office and student advisors to help with transitioning from second to third year and assist with the logistics of moving north to south to a regional campus that is 1,100 miles away.

At the program's inception, the planning team was aware of the unique situation and explicitly fostered a culture of relationship-building between campuses to establish a smooth transition for students and faculty. The curriculum team works closely across campuses to provide a longitudinal SELECT curriculum that spans four years.⁴

The first SELECT class matriculated in 2011 with a small cohort of 17 students, and the first transition occurred in 2013. The program infrastructure and faculty training occurred two years prior to the first class.

Here, we describe the transition of the students from the preclinical years in Florida on the USFMCOM Tampa Campus to the clinical years in Pennsylvania on the Lehigh Valley Campus. We will describe the communication and planning

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with faculty, staff and students on both campuses during the pre-launch, launch and landing phases of the transition.

Pre-Launch

We begin addressing the transition with potential students when they are applying to medical school. Applicants interview in either Tampa or Allentown. One component of the interview day is meeting leadership from the distant campus via videoconferencing. Applicants also hear from current students and faculty about steps that will be taken to ease the transition. In addition, the admissions office holds a Second Look event. Second Look is an opportunity for accepted applicants to meet with current students and talk about living in Tampa and Allentown.

Once students start school, they meet faculty, staff and leadership from both campuses. During their orientation to second year (Prologue 2), the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs on the LV Campus flies to Tampa and hosts a lunch session to discuss what to expect in regard to moving. Having the opportunity to reinforce the relationship in person helps students feel more comfortable with the expected change.

Launch

Approximately six months prior to the start of third year, Student Affairs at both campuses coordinate a mandatory informational class meeting. This meeting is held via videoconference from the regional campus to SELECT students at the main campus in Tampa and focuses on the transitioning process. The Deans, Director, Student Affairs Specialist and invited guests at the regional campus participate in providing pertinent information to the students. Prior to the meeting, Student Affairs at the regional campus collaborates with colleagues, vendors and current students to coordinate services and compile accurate resource documents for transitioning students.

Local realtors are contacted and a list of preferred realtors is developed to provide students with free rental or purchasing option assistance. Health insurance representatives at the regional campus provide an informational sheet for distribution and attend the class meeting to explain insurance products and coverage. Student Assistance colleagues also attend the meeting to answer questions and outline the free counseling, coaching and consultation services available to students. A panel of three to four current students at the regional campus share experiences and offer transitioning tips. Students are encouraged to contact any of the class meeting participants or presenters with questions or requests for more information. Several informational documents are created and emailed to students after the class meeting for reference:

- Transitions resources: information and website links provided in this document include:
 - Preferred realtors
 - Moving, housing and travel
 - Employment
 - Education (local school districts)
 - Daycares and preschools
 - Health and wellness
 - Fitness centers
 - Living in the Lehigh Valley
- Housing resources
 - Apartment complex information including maps, contact information, proximity to regional campus hospitals and pricing and discounts if available
- Health insurance options
- Student Assistance brochure

As the time of the move approaches, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (LV Campus) meets with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Tampa Campus) to review the list of students moving and exchange information about students who may require extra assistance when they arrive. This may include checking USMLE Step 1 Study progress, assisting with needs for health services and monitoring for academic issues. During the period of Step 1 Study, new students with such needs may be identified. Communication also occurs in regard to testing accommodations. The Tampa testing administrator communicates with clerkship directors about those students in preparation for their arrival.

Landing

Once students physically arrive at the LV Campus, they attend a comprehensive Introduction to Clerkship course, which incorporates orientation to the Lehigh Valley. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (LV Campus) re-engages with the class and presents a session on professionalism. The students are also assigned and required to meet with a new campus career advisor. We utilize a secure portal and the advisors have access to meetings and conversations held prior to arrival with the students' previous Tampa Campus career advisors.

The LV Campus students established a regional campus student council, and new students are introduced to the council's structure and can run for a position. The MS4 students mentor the elected MS3 students. In addition, there is a pre-clerkship position in the council whose duties include assisting students with the campus transition. An early off-campus student-only social wellness event for regional campus students in both classes is planned before starting clinical course work.

The students continue their SELECT specific curriculum on Thursday afternoons with LV Campus coaches who are physically present, while the Tampa Campus coaches videoconference into the sessions. The opportunity to continue working with both coaches in different ways helps allay some of the trepidations of transition.

The Student Affairs Office at the LV Campus continues to work in close coordination with the Tampa Campus, but not all functions are duplicated. Financial aid resources, registrar functions and centralized academic support are provided through the Tampa Campus. This provides students consistency through the transition.

LESSONS LEARNED

Since our inaugural class, class size has averaged 50 students per year. As we developed the curriculum, we were cognizant that all sessions and events would need to be adjustable and scalable to meet the larger class size. Coaches and students expressed concerns about the transition, such as where students would live, when and where they would study and take Step 1 and what social activities were available in Allentown. The students attend mandatory meetings to discuss the transition, and we learned that it is as important to meet and share the same information that the students receive with the coaches. Input from students who experienced the transition has been an integral part of modifying the transition process. Student concerns include the cost of the transition, time spent arranging housing once they arrive in Allentown, establishing bank accounts and acquiring driver licenses. We found that the key component to process improvement is to keep a running tally of concerns and provide specific answers to help allay any trepidation students may have about the transition.

As with all successful transitions, communication is essential. The Student Affairs Deans have regular meetings and impromptu discussions as student issues arise. There is a biweekly videoconference meeting between the campuses with the key stakeholders in student affairs that allows a forum for ongoing discussion. Collaboration and coordinated planning are key features in our process that make the transition to our regional campus successful.

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