

## Title

Secrets to successful residency placement: A faculty's experience

## Author

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## Background

In today's competitive era of residency placements, medical students need all the help they can get from their medical schools, their advisors and clinical preceptors. This is even more relevant for osteopathic medical students, as the residency matching process becomes complicated due to the following reasons:

1. **Single accreditation** - DO students have to compete for the same residencies that are offered to allopathic medical students. When it comes to highly competitive ACGME residencies osteopathic students have to present formidable resumes as they are competing with allopathic medical student.
2. **Cuts in residency spots** – With diminishing residency spots, students have to present resumes with high USMLE scores, leadership roles, research activities, etc. in order to be competitive.
3. **Help needed** - Our osteopathic students need to be well informed and guided along this tough journey, in order to be successfully placed in their choice of residency. Medical students are realizing that residency placements are competitive and that they have to start early on to determine their top choices for residency and then proceed to strengthen their resumes to reflect their interest. Our students have to go the extra length in order to be competitive. They need help and guidance from faculty, advisors and mentors.
4. **Additional weight on overwhelmed faculty** - This can be daunting to academically overwhelmed faculty. As faculty, as advisors and mentors and practicing physicians we need go the extra mile to help our students be successful. We have to share our experiences, encourage students to shadow us, work with them on papers, etc. to get them interested in our specialty. This may entail more work on our part but this may be mitigated

with some careful thought and planning. As a faculty with a successful record over the past 3 years, I would like to share my experiences.

### **Hypothesis**

My hypotheses was that when students had early exposure to different specialties they would have an early start on strengthening their resumes and would therefore be more competitive. I wished to engage students early in medical school curriculum, providing them with early exposure to clinical specialties. I hoped to spark interest in clinical specialties as possible residency options.

### **My Approach:**

An average 1-2 students per medical school enter the specialty of pathology. Students do not understand pathology during the preclinical years and are eager to put it behind them. They rarely undertake pathology rotations and have no exposure to laboratory medicine, an area that is critical to all specialties. In an attempt to change these deficiencies I attempted the following:

1. Gave presentations to OMS 1 and 2 students about the pros and cons of pathology as a career option.
2. Offered shadowing opportunity in preclinical years
3. Started a pathology interest group that offered leadership positions
4. Offered research projects to OMS 1 and 2 students
5. Offered the opportunity to write up case reports
6. Offered clinical laboratory rotation to OMS 3 and 4 students, with a mandatory, graded, laboratory research proposal.
7. **ABOVE ALL** I have learned to get familiar with social media, in order to better communicate with my students. We have Microsoft Team, Skype and Zoom meetings, discussions are captured on google docs, and information is posted on Facebook. We poll using QR codes, we use 3D imaging, virtual pathology, ....

### **Results:**

- a. At our school zero students matched into pathology in 2016, 3 in 2017 and 7 in 2018.
- b. My pathology students have had between 25-40 interviews each
- c. They have matched to their first choice residencies

- d. Over the past 3 years all students have matched into top notch ACGME residencies.

Examples of the successful matches include:

1. University of California, LA (UCLA)
2. University of Southern California (USC)
3. Cedar Sinai, LA
4. UC San Francisco
5. St Louis, Missouri
6. Louisiana State University SOM-New Orleans
7. Loma Linda University Medical Center, California
8. New York University Medical Center
9. University Texas, Houston
10. University Illinois, Chicago
11. University Arkansas

From 2016 to the present time I have used several measures to engage students early on in the game. My goal was as follows:

1. Engage students early, in the pre-clinical years
2. Educate them about pathology and laboratory medicine - highlight the role of a pathologist in clinical medicine
3. Increase awareness of pathology as a viable career option - I cover the pros and cons of pathology as a career option. Students sit up when they hear about the salary ranges and the fact that that our jobs are basically 9-5
4. Help students, regardless of their specialty interests, strengthen their resumes, by offering research projects.
5. Provide leadership opportunities by starting a Pathology Interest Group. I have a leadership team with a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Research coordinator, social liaison officer.

### **Summary of results**

1. I have had up to 8 students a year take up the clinical rotation. All students complete a research proposal at the end of the rotation, which they take with them on interviews. Interviewers are impressed by the rotation and

the proposal. Students who embarked on non-pathology tracks therefore benefitted from the rotations.

2. I have had over 40 students enrolled in the Pathology Interest Group
3. Over 20 students are involved in research projects
4. I have 4 groups of students working currently on research projects
5. 8 students have given presentations and workshops with me at national conferences.

**6. Presentations at National conferences**

**a. Prevalence, Attitudes, and Effects of Sexual Assault and Harassment in Osteopathic Medical Schools, a Pilot Study**

Jordan Johnstone<sup>1</sup> , OMS-II, OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Kali Chiriboga<sup>1</sup> , OMS-II, OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Matthew Zeller <sup>1</sup> , OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Matthew LaPlante <sup>1</sup> , OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Cameron Hadley <sup>1</sup> , OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Chaya Prasad <sup>2</sup> , MD, MBA, Associate Professor, Western U/COMP

**b. 3D Models of Pathology Specimens Enhance Teaching and Learning: A Study by Students**

Chaya Prasad, MD, MBA, Associate Professor, Western U/COMP

Katherine A. Scribner, OMS-IV, Western U/COMP

**c. Implementing Student Run Interest Groups with a Collaborative Multi-Tiered approach**

Chaya Prasad, MD, Associate Professor, Western U/COMP

Matthew W. Gomory, OMS-II, Western U/COMP

Breanna Tetreault, OMS-II, Western U/COMP

Chang Liu, OMS-II, Western U/COMP-NW

Katherine Scribner, OMS-IV, Western U/COMP

**d. You Had Me at 3D: An Innovative, Low Budget Project by Medical Students and Their Preceptor**

Mohammad Khan, Western U/COMP

Melissa Russell, Western U/COMP

Victoria Lee, Western U/COMP

Dylan Denault, Western U/COMP

Chaya Prasad, Western U/COMP

**Conclusion**

My strategy has been successful. This strategy is easily applicable to all specialties. It involves active faculty participation. This may be daunting given our heavy academic demands. However I have demonstrated several possible approaches that faculty may utilize. The additional burden on faculty outweighs the outcome. Students and medical schools benefit tremendously. Message to faculty is to fearlessly embrace social media and current software apps. That is the only way to communicate with the millennials! I have also learned that encouraging students to participate in research projects is better if they do it as a team rather than as individuals. This has many advantages, including:

- a. Learning to work in groups (after all practice of medicine is a team effort)
- b. Honing in on the strengths of the team members to get the work completed
- c. Gets the project done quickly without too much time constraint on the students.

### **Take home pearls**

1. Critical role of faculty in successful residency placements
2. Varied measures faculty can take to help their students
3. Faculty need to embrace social media.

### **Feedback:**

Please log on to QR code on your cell phone and scan the symbol below. The short questionnaire will take just a few minutes. I would love to hear from you.



### **References**

1. Match masters: Students who landed their No. 1 residencies share tips; The DO, by Carolyn Schierhorn, March 5, 2015

