



# EFFECTIVE STUDENT ADVISING SERIES

## What Makes a Student a Good Fit for Ob-Gyn?

### Introduction

Choosing a medical specialty is one of the most important decisions that a medical student will make in his or her career. With an overabundance of information and resources available, students may feel overwhelmed and struggle to identify the most helpful information.

Faculty advisors (FAs) play a unique role in directing students throughout this important process. They should be available to review the student’s career goals and skill sets, and to best advise them into an appropriate specialty. This should include allowing for student self-reflection, as well as an independent assessment by the FA. Being aware of the resources and information available to both students and faculty, advisors can help students determine if obstetrics and gynecology (ob-gyn) is the right fit for them.

### Start Early

Working with a student to decide if ob-gyn is the right fit is not an overnight process. The earlier a student starts, the better they can prepare to make a decision. This may include FAs becoming involved in activities outside the clinical environment, such as participation in student interest group activities, mentoring students in scholarly projects and research, and teaching in the basic science courses. This serves a dual role: faculty can identify early on students interested in the specialty, while students have an opportunity to establish early relationships

with FAs. Maintaining high visibility and an open door policy will allow students to present earlier in the process.

### Know Your Resources

Once a student identifies ob-gyn as a potential specialty choice, the next step is to determine how well their goals and skills align with the specialty. The number of online resources may seem overwhelming to students working independently. FAs can direct students to accurate and appropriate sites, which are listed in the Table. Early on in the decision-making process, students can visit the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) Careers in Medicine website for self-reflection exercises and resources to match personality traits, interests and values with specialties. Another early resource is the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) website. Data found here can be used to assess the competitiveness of a candidate to match and can help students assess whether a back-up or parallel plan is necessary. Once decided on a career in ob-gyn, the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) and the American Medical Association (AMA) Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA) websites can identify programs that fit the student’s desired program profile regarding location, size, competitiveness, etc. These resources are more helpful as the student progresses toward the Match. (See Table 1 below.)

**Table 1: Ob-Gyn Career Resources**

American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) Website - Careers in Medicine	Self-assessment exercise with strategies for specialty selection and the Match process
Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) - Residency Directory	Compares and assesses residency programs, answering frequently asked questions
American Medical Association (AMA) Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA)	Information on accredited residency programs across specialties
National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)	Recent residency match data and Program Director surveys



### Aligning Characteristics

FAs should work with students to investigate their overall characteristics and determine how they align with the specialty. Faculty need to evaluate a student's clinical and technical skills, interpersonal skills, and professional attributes. When meeting with prospective students, advisors can determine the types of patient encounters they enjoy, the passion they have regarding women's health, the problems they enjoy solving and the types of people they work with best.

Students selecting ob-gyn will be entering a career involving women's health and human reproduction. FAs should highlight the opportunities students will have for advocacy, leadership, quality improvement and patient safety during their careers. Students should also be aware of the ethical issues facing human reproduction and be comfortable addressing and discussing them with both patients and peers.

FAs should also be aware of the current characteristics of the specialty, including lifestyle, length of training, compensation, and work-life integration. Ob-gyn has a mixture of work environments, ranging from low-acuity ambulatory patients to high-acuity, critically ill inpatients. Students should understand that ob-gyn is a surgical specialty. It is important that students recognize that while they can potentially tailor their individual practice in the future or pursue a fellowship, their residency training will encompass all aspects of the field.

### Students with Special Circumstances

When meeting with prospective students, faculty may identify circumstances that require additional management. The list of circumstances can vary greatly. Faculty may identify challenges within the academic portfolio, including test scores, course grades, or overall class rank. In addition, students may experience challenges with their interprofessional skills or professional attributes. Students may also present with accessibility issues which may require accommodations with clinical and technical skills.

When special circumstances are identified, it provides the FA an opportunity to address concerns directly with the student. It is likely that students with special circumstances will require individualized advising and career planning, which may include parallel career planning or an alternative specialty choice. The local Office of Student Affairs can aid in advising and provide additional support throughout the process.

### Summary

One of the many roles of the FA is to help students find the right career fit for them. There are several resources available for the FA to utilize when guiding the student on their future career. It is important for the FA to review accurate information with the student and assure that the student has access to the appropriate resources. In addition, it is critical for the FA to be open, honest and give guidance based on factual information while promoting a realistic picture of a career in ob-gyn.



**The Effective Student Advising Series is a project of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) Undergraduate Medical Education Committee (UMEC) 2018-2020:**

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The Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) promotes excellence in women's health care by providing optimal resources and support to educators who inspire, instruct, develop, and empower women's health care providers to improve the quality of life for all women.

This publication is part of the APGO Effective Student Advising Series. Advising medical students on a career in women's health can be one of the most fulfilling things that a medical educator does. Many physicians find themselves in the role of faculty advisor without any formal background or training in advising. The APGO Effective Student Advising Series pamphlets are intended to educate medical educators and learners about best practices for advising medical students on a career in women's health.



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