



# EFFECTIVE STUDENT ADVISING SERIES

## Advising 4th-Year Students for a Successful Ob-Gyn Match

The final year of medical school provides medical students with the opportunity to plan their electives and experiences based on their individualized needs and areas of development. Thoughtful consideration should be paid to planning this final year to improve the student's transition into residency, and to optimizing their chances for a successful match.

It is essential to personalize advising to the individualized needs of each student. Students who have already demonstrated excellence in clinical care and medical knowledge (with strong clerkship grades and high USMLE step scores) can use the flexibility of this time to pursue research and advocacy interests. For other students, the fourth year is an opportunity to shine, to fill in gaps, to study for USMLE 2 CK and CS, and to demonstrate commitment to the specialty of obstetrics and gynecology (ob-gyn). The following recommendations are based on a review of ob-gyn medical education literature, the NRMP ob-gyn program director survey and expert opinion.

### Commitment to Specialty

Fourth year experiences are an opportunity to demonstrate a student's commitment to the specialty of ob-gyn. This is an especially important consideration if a student decides later during his/her medical school experience to enter the specialty. There are many ways to demonstrate this commitment including:

- Women's health advocacy and volunteering
- ACOG has many resources available for advocacy at both the local and national level
- Research or scholarly work on women's health topics, or with ob-gyn faculty
- Ob-gyn interest group participation and leadership

Course electives are also an opportunity to demonstrate interest, commitment and ability to thrive. Sub-specialty electives to strongly consider include Gynecology Oncology or Maternal Fetal Medicine, especially if the student is unsure about career choice. Ideally, these electives should be taken within the first few months of the fourth year to "boost" the application as well as to obtain letter(s) of recommendation from faculty.

### Exhibit Clinical Care Excellence

Sub-internships or acting internships are an opportunity for a student to shine, and strong evaluations and grades on these electives are an important aspect of the residency application package. This is especially significant if the student underperformed on the ob-gyn clerkship. It is important to note that for many medical schools, the majority of students earn an A or honors on fourth year electives, so a grade other than an A or honors can be a red flag for residency programs.

### Tips for Success:

- The student should know that they need to be the "first there, and last to leave" during their sub-internships or acting internships. Students should be aware that they will be evaluated from a different lens than the residents or third-year students, so even if the residents are decompressing and chatting together during the workday, it will be important that the student make sure that all of his/her responsibilities are complete, and that they remain professional in their interactions with all students, residents and faculty. In addition, the student needs to make sure to come in early enough to ensure that any pre-rounding responsibilities are taken care of so that the student is ready and on time.
- Another pitfall that a student should avoid is to decline a clinical learning opportunity "because they have already seen it."
- It should go without saying that the student should engage in professional and respectful interactions with everyone they come into contact with, including whichever staff coordinates the fourth year elective.
- Do not schedule these courses during the time when interview requests are being transmitted, or during interview months. The student does not want to be distracted, or appear to be distracted by electronic communications during these high-stakes electives.

### Demonstrate Interest in a Specific Program

Away (a.k.a. audition) electives should be considered if the student has a pressing need to demonstrate interest in a specific residency



program. These may include geographic restrictions, couples match or if the student's "in person" presence may strengthen the application package. Quieter or more introverted students may benefit from targeted coaching before this type of elective.

### **Goal: 4th Year Prepares the Student to be an Excellent Ob-gyn Physician**

Although matching into the ob-gyn residency program of the student's choice is one aspect of curricular planning, the overarching guiding principle should be to ensure that the student will be optimally prepared to become a resident physician and ob-gyn intern.

A new APGO publication highlights course electives that were recommended by ob-gyn program directors, chairs and clerkship directors in a 2016 survey (Forstein et al). In addition to one to two electives in ob-gyn, electives in critical care, emergency medicine, anesthesia, radiology, transition to residency courses (a.k.a. bootcamps), general surgery and general internal medicine were recommended.

### **Timing Considerations**

- Step 2 CK: Ideally the student's score should be available at the time that their ERAS application is uploaded in mid-September. This will be especially important for students who may have been disappointed with their USMLE Step 1 score.
- Step 2 CS: An increasing number of ob-gyn residency programs are requiring students to have passed Step 2 CS before rank lists are made. Given that a larger number of

US medical students are failing Step 2 CS after the August 2017 modification of the passing cut-points, it is important for students to prepare for, and pass Step 2 CS before December.

- Interview timing: In general, ob-gyn interviews occur from mid-October through mid-January.

### **Additional Resources and References**

- ACOG Legislative days
- [www.acog.org/Advocacy](http://www.acog.org/Advocacy)
- Walton LA, Fenner DE, Seltzer VL, Wilbanks GD, Laube DW, Crenshaw MC, Messer RH, Hale RH. The fourth-year medical school curriculum: recommendations of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics and the Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*, 1993;169(1):13-6.
- Forstein DA, Buery-Joyner SD, Abbott JF, Craig LB, Dalrymple JL, Graziano S, Hampton BS, Hopkins L, Page-Ramsey SM, Pradhan AP, Wolf A, McKenzie ML, "A Curriculum for the Fourth Year of Medical School: a survey of Obstetrics and Gynecology Educators," accepted for publication, *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*, April 2019.
- National Resident Matching Program, Data Release and Research Committee: Results of the 2018 NRMP Program Director Survey. National Resident Matching Program, Washington, DC. 2018.



**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:**

B. Star Hampton, MD, Chair  
Susan M. Cox, MD  
LaTasha B. Craig, MD  
Elise N. Everett, MD, MSc  
Angela Fleming, DO  
Scott C. Graziano, MD, MS  
Laura Hopkins, MD, MSc  
Margaret L. McKenzie, MD, MS  
Helen K. Morgan, MD  
Christopher Morosky, MD, MS  
Celeste Royce, MD  
Shireen Madani Sims, MD

**Copyright © 2020 by Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO)**

All APGO printed and electronic resources are copyrighted, including, but not limited to:

- Monographs and modules in the APGO Educational Series on Women's Health Issues
- APGO Medical Student Educational Objectives
- Career Development in Academic Medicine: Your Journey to Success
- APGO Basic Skills Clinical Curriculum
- APGO Undergraduate Web-Based Interactive Self-Evaluation (uWISE) and PrepforRes online testing programs
- APGO Effective Preceptor Series and Companion Videos
- APGO Effective Student Advising Series
- APGO Case Based Curriculum for Milestone 1
- APGO Basic Science Videos and Teaching Scripts

APGO resources may be purchased individually and used for teaching/learning purposes, but may not be retyped, altered or otherwise manipulated in any way.

APGO's copyright policy does not allow for the posting of any of our online resources on outside web sites. The reason for this is that we need to maintain control of the content of these documents, and the only way to make certain that they are kept current and not altered in anyway is for them to be housed only on the APGO website. We also track the usage of these materials through the statistics that are produced when individuals access our resources online. Students have free access to these documents through the APGO website so you may direct students at your institution to the APGO website for the use of these materials.

Before beginning any projects and papers using APGO copyrighted materials and resources, please contact the APGO office in advance for permission. APGO must be acknowledged in the project/paper.

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.



Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO)  
2130 Priest Bridge Drive, Suite #7  
Crofton, MD 21114  
Phone: (410) 451-9560  
www.apgo.org