

## **"We Don't Know What We Don't Know" – A Qualitative Study of Medical Student Perceptions of Student Affairs**

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### **Background/Objective:**

As one of the largest medical schools in the U.S. with nine regional campuses, Indiana University School of Medicine Office of Student Affairs (OSA) is designed to address students' concerns and facilitate their personal and professional development (PPD). U.S. medical schools are evaluated on these areas using a nationally-normed graduation questionnaire of fourth-year students. This study used focus groups to better understand second-year students' expectations, experiences, and ideas related to PPD programming and relationships with the OSA.

### **Methods:**

All second-year medical students were invited to participate in a focus group in exchange for a modest meal and school-branded merchandise. The first and second author conducted seven, semi-structured focus groups (3-8 participants each) with a total of 39 students. Discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Three authors used NVivo™ qualitative analysis software to perform inductive thematic analysis according to established methods.

### **Results:**

Four themes were identified: 1. *"It's a Two-Way Street"*: students expect accessibility to faculty who can affect change, and ongoing responsiveness about inquiries that have been submitted. 2. *Proximally-Relevant Information*: information students define as pertinent and ideas about communicating more effectively. 3. *Guidance for the Future*: students desire mentorship from individuals who truly understand physicians career paths. 4. *In the Classroom and Beyond*: students want relevant topics and formats for PPD. Participants also provided insights into existing, valuable programming.

### **Conclusion/Impact:**

Second-year medical students have specific needs for their development, including clinical experience, discussion of current events, and mentorship. Students expressed concern that opportunities for development are not comparable across all campuses. In their relationships with OSA, students desire easy access to voice inquiries and robust responsiveness about resolution. Results of this study can be used at institutions with a regional campus model to shape future programming for PPD and improve channels of communication with all students.