

Reaching Out While Staying In: Underrepresented in Medicine Recruitment at the University of Washington Family Medicine Residency

We were pleased to see the recent article “Mitigating Bias in the Era of Virtual Residency and Fellowship Interviews.”¹

It is important for programs to critically examine their application process to eliminate racism and bias.

At our program, the University of the Washington Family Medicine Residency, we made several changes noted in the article. We modified our standardized applicant screening rubric to deemphasize metrics such as USMLE scores, clerkship grades, and class rank. We increased emphasis on lived experience, commitment to family medicine, and special interests that aligned with our program strengths. We created a standardized interview format with a scoring rubric where all applicants were asked the same questions. We required that all reviewers complete implicit bias training either by attending a 90-minute webinar or reading an article² coupled with an implicit bias training module. All reviewers also received training on how to use our standardized rubric with case examples.

We adapted several other existing experiences to support underrepresented in medicine (UiM) students interested in our program. Beyond the formal interview day, we hosted virtual theme town halls that highlighted work from our residency Health Equity and Anti-Racism (HEAR) committee. We also participated in virtual meetups sponsored by the University of Washington Network of Underrepresented Residents & Fellows. Finally, we expanded the capacity of our UiM Sub-Internship. Historically, this

was restricted to 2 medical students, but because we translated it to a virtual experience, we were able to support 7 students. This virtual Sub-Internship included virtual shadowing of inpatient and outpatient experiences, residency didactics, resident happy hours, faculty mentoring, and meeting members of the HEAR committee (residents and faculty).

Through these efforts, we have seen measurable changes in our interview pool. Compared to last year, we reviewed more UiM applications, increasing from 12% to 21% of our total applicants. We offered more interviews to UiM applicants, increasing from 18% to 31% of our total interview pool. We are encouraged by these changes and will be continually evaluating and improving our processes each year.

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