Beginning With the End in Mind: Pathways to Securing Fellowships

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Introduction

There has been an effort by the Master of Health Administration program at UCF to enhance participation and interest in national fellowships for graduates over the past five years. In return, these efforts have developed an increase in the number of graduates who have successfully obtained these fellowships. We have seen a significant increase in the number of students that are interested and that are successfully securing Administrative Fellowships over the past three years. Over the last 5 years, since the start of our strategies UCF MHA alums have secured fellowships at places such as:
• Duke
• Geisinger
• HCA
• Oschner Health System
• Presence Health
• Rochester Regional Health

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Strategy and Implementation

• Incoming MHA Student Orientation
  • Fellowship prep starts at the mandatory MHA incoming student orientation
  • Fellowships are discussed briefly by 2 UCF MHA program alumni who completed fellowships to the group during the formal orientation to pique interest
  • The former fellows then have a chance to speak to students one on one at the mixer and mingle session following immediately following the formal orientation to gather more info and ask specific questions
  • The fellows have also developed a PowerPoint presentation that we share with students upon request that details the steps in the process and how to navigate each successfully

• Voluntary Mentor Pod
  • Mentor pods meet monthly on a Friday evening from 6-8PM
  • Topics covered by the pod are student driven but at least 1 monthly meeting each academic year is dedicated to fellowship prep
  • Speakers vary from the program director to former program alumni who have completed fellowships to discuss the process
  • Students are exposed in greater to detail of how to navigate the following fellowship milestones:
    • Pre-application networking
    • Initial application
    • Phone interviews
    • In person Interviews
    • Offer acceptance
    • Preparations to start the fellowship

• Case Team Participation
  • UCF currently participates annually in the NAHSE and UAB case competitions
  • Historically, case team members have secured fellowships more often than their non-case team participating counterparts
  • We have found that those who participate on the case teams tend to want to take advantage of the opportunity more and are on a “self-designated” fellowship track
  • Case team participants have pointed to the immeasurable skills they learned while participating, as well as the networking opportunities they get as a result of case team participation

• Leveraging Alumni Connections
  • UCF MHA program alumni have been eager to give back to the current MHA students
  • Many serve as guest speakers at UCF sponsored events such as the Graduate Health Network, orientations, and mentor pods
  • Many also make themselves available to speak to students about their fellowship journeys and assist them with the application process
  • Others offer resume and goals statement reviews to give helpful hints before students officially apply

• Strategy and Implementation (cont.)

Outcomes

There has been an increase in individuals who have applied and been accepted to fellowships over the past four years based on the strategies outlined for the program.

May 2020 4 Fellowships secured
May 2019 5 Fellowships secured
May 2018 4 Fellowships secured
May 2017 4 Fellowships secured
Prior to May 2017 for previous six years total number secured 6.

Implications

Introducing students to the fellowship process at the start of the program has led to an increased excitement amongst MHA students about the possibility of securing a fellowship upon graduation. In addition, students are beginning the process that first semester by tweaking resumes, crafting an early version of a personal statement, and beginning to pare down their list of potential fellowship application sites. This proactive approach has led to more successful applications when the student is ready to apply.

In addition, the development of these students has created an alumni network of post administrative fellows who are encouraging and helping current students develop their own strategy to successfully secure a fellowship. This will enhance both the program and success of our alumni in the healthcare sector as more UCF MHA students earn and complete these nationally competitive administrative fellowships.