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## **Pre-Med Mentorship Program Proposal**

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### Author Note

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## Abstract

This service-learning project surveyed undergraduate students as well as Boise State alumni about a prospective Pre-Med mentorship program being implemented at Boise State University. Aspiring medical school students at Boise State University lack the connections and relationships with upperclassmen and alumni to help prepare them to be competitive applicants. My project proposes a Pre-Med mentorship program to be implemented at Boise State University in the fall semester of the 2024 school year.

*Keywords:* Pre-med mentorship, Boise State University, Competitive applicants, Medical school application.

## **Introduction**

I was inspired to begin this project from my own experiences as an aspiring medical student at Boise State University. During my undergraduate years, I sometimes felt lost and alone in the journey that is applying to medical school. The resources that I was given, while beneficial in many ways, felt overwhelming. Feeling unsure of where to start is something most aspiring medical students feel at some point in the process. Having a peer/mentor to ask questions and get an example of a path to take can make the overwhelming information become more manageable and guide students out of a state of stagnation.

With this project I proposed a Pre-Med mentorship program that is specific to the undergraduate Pre-Med students at Boise State University. I began the project by researching various mentoring programs that are available to Boise State students. This included the Idaho WWAMI Pre-Med mentoring program, Prescribe it Forward, American Medical Student Association (AMSA) Pre-Med Mentorship Program and Student National Medical Association Mentor Program. I then looked at mentoring programs other schools offered to their students. An example of one of these programs included the Medical Admissions Preparatory Program (MAPP) at the University of Utah. After gathering information about other university specific mentorship programs, I then interviewed undergraduate Pre-Med students at Boise State as well as alumni. This bolstered my research by including various perspectives about the focus and format of the program. I compiled the information, put together a mock schedule for the fall 2023 semester and created resources and talking points for the mentors and mentees. Finally, I created a google form that could be sent to Pre-Med students to help match prospective mentees and mentors as well as provide an avenue for advertisement for the program. The deliverables

were then sent to the pre-health advisor at Boise State University for changes and implementation next fall.

### **Elements coming together**

With this Project, I brought in the perspectives of the various stakeholders, undergraduate Pre-Med students at Boise State University, recent alumni attending medical school, as well as the pre-health advisors. Bringing in these different perspectives allowed me to create a program that can cater to the issues current and former Boise State students have faced. In talking to the undergraduate students I discovered that they feel somewhat lost when it comes to the application process. They are unsure of what needs to be on their application to make them a strong candidate and expressed concern about the personal statement and interviews (A. Hefflinger, Personal Communication, April 5, 2023). Most of the undergraduate students that were interviewed were sophomores and juniors, and had not yet had any experience with research. The alumni were very supportive of this project, in that the best advice they had received during their time at Boise State was from a close peer or mentor. They were also supportive of the schedules and semester checklists I had created in order to keep the mentees on track to obtain the required volunteer hours, clinical experience and research to become competitive applicants. The pre-health advisor at Boise State University voiced their support for the program, and has provided feedback to make the program better equipped to serve Boise State and become more easily implemented next fall. Including these different perspectives has led to the creation of a program that caters to the differing needs of the stakeholders.

I chose to create this project because of the experience that I have had as an aspiring medical student. The struggles and hardships that I have faced along this journey are not specific to me, but are struggles that the students at Boise State and other undergraduate programs face. I

wanted to reflect on the experiences I had in order to help those that come after me. The most effective way was creating a mentorship program at Boise State University that was more specific to the needs of our aspiring medical students. I utilized interviewing as a means of understanding the struggles that undergraduate students face and have molded my program around those struggles. In talking to alumni I learned more about the experiences they had as undergraduates and how they overcame them, became competitive applicants and were admitted to medical school.

Becoming a strong, competitive applicant to medical school is not an easy task. It includes maintaining a cumulative GPA of at least 3.7, achieving a score of 511 or higher on the MCAT, volunteering, getting clinical experience, participating in research and writing a personal statement that will capture the attention of the admissions committee. These are only a few aspects of the medical school application, with many others that require hard work, dedication and creativity. Most mentorship programs are only offered to undergraduate students with a standing of sophomore or higher (Idaho WWAMI, 2023; Student National, 2023). With so many difficult aspects of the application process, I wanted to create a program that would begin preparing students at the beginning of their college career. Starting as a freshman is a unique approach to a mentorship program, as many students who declare pre-medical studies as a freshman may not decide to go to medical school. However, by beginning at this early stage, it will not only begin preparing the aspiring medical students to become competitive applicants, but also ensure students have a solid understanding of the medical field and if it is the right path for them and help them make their decision early on.

The mentorship program that I have created brings together the various perspectives of stakeholders and provides aspiring medical students with the opportunity to have a mentor to rely

on for advice, support and as a role model. Beginning as freshmen, they will have more time to create deeper connections with their mentors that will create a comfortable environment to ask questions and get the guidance they need. Starting early also means they will be getting the involvement required for the application such as: volunteering, clinical experience and research early on. This will leave them more time to focus on the MCAT, personal statement, and other aspects of the application in their junior and senior years. The mentors will be two years ahead of their mentees. This gap is ideal because there is enough separation that they have experience with what their mentee is facing, while also keeping the experience fresh enough for them to recall it easily. For the juniors and seniors that have been involved in the mentorship program, they will have already established relationships with their mentors that are just getting into medical school who can utilize their recent experiences to help the mentees with the application process. I have compiled resources for the mentees to utilize, created a tentative schedule for the 2023-2024 school year, and created talking points the mentor can utilize during their meetings. I have also created a google form to be sent out to all the pre-med students at Boise State University as a means of advertisement, and matching mentors and mentees together.

## **Results**

The impact will be measured by the comparison of Pre-Med students that get into medical school in the following years after the implementation of the program to the years prior. It will also be important to survey the attitudes and mental well being of both the undergraduates and alumni. There was a Texas-wide Pre-Medical Mentoring Program that was implemented during COVID-19 as a result of limited support and resources for undergraduate students that reported better preparedness for the application as well as a positive influence on the mental health of both the mentee and mentors (Alexander, 2021). The benefits to the stakeholders will

include this increase in preparedness of undergraduate students and confidence in their application. The mentors will feel more fulfilled providing a service for those that are coming after them. This program also provides the opportunity and support for the pre-health advisors to implement a Pre-Med mentorship program that has been discussed in past years.

After review of this proposal by the pre-health advisor at Boise State University, I was given suggestions about how to improve the program as well as oversights on my part that needed to be added to the program. One suggestion that was given was to reduce the weekly check-ins to bi-weekly check-ins. The amount of meeting time that I had suggested initially is a larger commitment than would be reasonable to ask of hardworking undergraduate students to maintain, while also maintaining the rest of their studies and extracurriculars. Another suggestion was additional resources to be added to the lists of possible volunteering, research, and clinical experience opportunities that were all added to the program. Finally, the oversight was the absence of a mentorship agreement document to ensure security and privacy for the students. This document was then created using a template from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Mentorship Agreement, 2016). It encompasses goals between mentor and mentee, frequency of meetings, and steps to accomplish the goals set. As well as privacy/confidentiality, topics to refrain from, and a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentorship. Finally it will also include a termination clause that states “In the event that either party finds the mentoring relationship unproductive and requests that it be terminated, we agree to honor that individual’s decision without question or blame” (Mentorship Agreement, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

The result that I expected for the proposal of this mentoring program was support from the undergraduate and graduate students. They agreed with the need for this program at Boise



State University, and how the relationships with a mentor could provide the best support and advice for the aspiring medical students. I expected my pre-health advisor to show enthusiasm about my project, however I was surprised by the support and confidence to implement the program next fall. It was motivating to hear that there had been discussions of a Pre-Med mentorship program in the past, and that having student support and a proposal of a program would help expedite the initiative further.

After having given my proposal to my pre-health advisor and reflecting on the project, I would have discussed the program with my pre-health advisor earlier than I did, so more time could have been spent collaborating. More collaboration time would have allowed me to make more corrections to the program so it would better suit the advisors and faculty at Boise State University. It would have also allowed me better access to students to whom I could reach out, to get more information about the thoughts of the program and build a more exhaustive pool of mentors and mentees. Overall, I would consider this Pre-Med Mentorship proposal to be a successful project. Having started the conversation and created a plan that could be built on for a program to be started next year, Boise State University will have the tools needed to implement a Pre-Med mentorship program that will prepare the students to become competitive medical school applicants.

## **Appendix**

Website: [Pre-Med Mentorship Proposal](#)

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