A PROGRAM DIRECTOR’S QUICK GUIDE TO VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING

Introduction

For the Academic year of 2021-2022, recruitment for, and selection of, candidates for all Saint Louis University (SLU) Graduate Medical Education (GME) Programs will be conducted virtually.

Virtual interview seasons will look different from one institution to another and even amongst programs at the same institution. Our goal is to help facilitate your development of your program-specific approach to the virtual interview season so that you match future physicians who are well-suited to your program.

In this guide, we identify several important decision points for you to consider as you develop your program-specific approach to the virtual interview season. There are a variety of resources available for you no matter which approach you choose; we will identify and link to these resources throughout this guide.
Screening

• Your program will likely be seeing an increased volume of applicants during virtual interview season. How will you fairly sort through all of them?
  o Consider utilizing additional faculty/trainees to read applications for interview invitations
  o Are the qualities you look for in an applicant clearly stated on your website and in promotional materials?
• Will you be considering Step 1 scores? How will you deal with applicants who do not have Step 2 CK and/or CS scores?
• Will you allow fewer letters of recommendation from applicants or from other specialties?

Virtual Recruitment Strategies

• How will you showcase your program’s educational content, trainee interaction, and/or facilities?
  • Keep an eye out for the video showcasing SLU GME (release date: August 15). Consider supplementing this with short video clips of trainees introducing themselves.
  • Consider inviting applicants to virtual conferences that already exist.
  • Consider arranging times for applicants to virtually meet up with other applicants.
  • Consider arranging times for applicants to virtually meet up with current trainees, e.g. virtual happy hour.
  • Consider hosting panel interviews, in which virtual interviews are recorded rather than live to reduce the burden of coordinating multiple people.
• Is your website up to date?
  • Make sure it is easy to navigate and that pertinent contact information is available.
  • Does it include?
    • An overview of the virtual interview process with as much clarity as you can provide
    • History of the program
    • Graduate Track Records- Advanced training, Job placements, Board pass rates
    • Unique Features- training sites, specialty experience/availability, research opportunities, notable graduates/faculty
    • Faculty information
    • Links to GME site re: benefits
• Consider using/creating social media to reach applicants
  • Many applicants are using social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to learn more about the culture of the program and to see how residents and faculty interact. It can take time to build a social media presence and to have a page that is impactful.
• If you do not already have accounts associated with the program, have discussions on what that would look like.
  • Who has access to it?
  • How will you monitor it for appropriateness?
• Consider encouraging residents to also utilize social media. Suggest establishing ground rules for appropriate content, HIPPA compliance, etc.

Interview Day Decisions: The goal of interviews is to obtain further information about candidates from interpersonal interactions. Typically this is done during one block time of several consecutive interviews.

• What is your budget for interview day?
• Do you plan to interview more, the same, or fewer applicants?
  • It is unknown how virtual interviewing will affect the number of programs applicants apply to, whether they decline excess interviews or whether the wait list will be as utilized. Depending on the historical norms of the program, you may need to consider adjusting the number of invitations that are given or adjust the expected number of interviews offered.
• What will the virtual interview “day” look like? Here are a few ideas of different structure:
  • SYNCHRONOUS: Consider having a typical day where applicants are shuffled virtually between meeting rooms, presentations, conferences, etc. during a block of time.
    • Remember applicants may be joining from different time zones and accommodate when possible.
    • Work with I.T. services to optimize virtual platforms and minimize hacks.
  • MIXED: Consider setting up scheduled interviews on a calendar like any other meeting and then have other portions of the virtual recruitment occur separate from that day. For instance, you may do a PD overview-type presentation on set days throughout the season and invited applicants can join one that is convenient for them. This allows you to only deliver the PD welcome speech a handful of times while still offering multiple interview dates.
  • ASYNCHRONOUS: Consider having applicants submit a video of their responses to a few question prompts.
• Who will interview?
  • While variety can be helpful, it may be more important than ever to have consistent messaging and ensure those interviewing know the most about the program to answer questions. Thus, limiting interviewers makes sense for some programs.
• Will you utilize similar faculty as in years past or limit who interviews?
• There may be less need for multiple interviewers on any one day thus not needing as large of a pool as needed in-person.
• Will you record the interviews for later review? By Missouri state law, recording is legal if one or more parties agree.
  • Will recording be optional for applicants? If you plan to utilize recordings, it will be important to discuss with the applicant ahead of time and to think through why the recording would help recruitment.
  • If you are going to record interviews, consider how the files will be stored and when they will be destroyed.
• What technology platform do you want to utilize?
  • Zoom is offered through the University and allows for a variety of individual and group sessions.
  • Other commonly available technology platforms include: Skype, Webex, GoToMeeting, and many more
• How will you provide applicant information to the interviewers?
  • Given that the information in ERAS is protected educational information, you need to be very careful how you share this data. It should be treated similar to patient health information. Additionally, the files can be very large and make sharing large volumes of applications difficult. Make sure you have considered the best/easiest way to share applicant information to interviewers, so they have it available at the time of the interview.
• How will you get back interview analyses from interviewers?
  • Additionally, how will you receive the feedback from the interviewers? If you use a standard interview evaluation form, consider converting it to electronic.

**Faculty Development:** Faculty will be taking on new roles during the virtual interview season and must be prepared well.

• Do you want to standardize the types of questions that are asked? Illicit specific behavioral attributes via virtual interviews?
  • There are several resources available to improve the standardization of interview questions to limit potential bias in interviews. If you plan to utilize this, faculty will need education and development on the best ways to utilize these questions and the associated scoring rubrics.
• How will you ensure that faculty are facile with the technology chosen for the virtual interviews?
  • It will be important that the technology is tested ahead of time to ensure all faculty who will be interviewing feel comfortable with how to use and how to troubleshoot in real time.
  • Not all faculty feel comfortable with the many features of zoom especially when using break out rooms or other waiting room features. Will you have one person coordinate these features or attempt to ensure all the interviewers know how?
• Perception is very important. There are ways to improve lighting, positioning, and sound to ensure the best interview experience for all (applicants and interviewers). Additionally, virtual interviewing will inherently remove some of the personal interactions that normally occur and trying to retain those as much as possible may lead to improved recruitment success.

• How will you assess applicants’ qualities which are normally assessed during group activities or role-play?
  • Consider including questions about teamwork, empathy, communication skills, or situational questions in which the applicant is asked to take on a specific role