

# ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAM DIRECTORS IN SURGERY

6400 Goldsboro Road, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20817-5846, (301) 320-1200, FAX (301) 263-9025

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## **APDS Position Statement:**

### **2020-2021 Medical Student Experience and Application Cycle**

The APDS represents more than 320 university, independent, and military general surgery programs in many geographic locations with diverse populations. The prevalence of COVID 19 has been remarkable in many areas and sparse in others. There are 4 primary issues that need to be addressed by Program Directors as we begin the 2020-2021 recruitment season:

1. ERAS and NRMP modifications to candidate application timing and the match process
2. Offering clinical ("away") rotations to 4<sup>th</sup> year students
3. Interview format options
4. Anticipated changes in the availability of some application portfolio items

We recognize the importance for medical students to rotate at institutions to gain clinical experience they may not obtain otherwise – and we also recognize the inappropriateness of requiring or providing clinical rotations that may put students' well-being at risk. In addition, we are concerned with medical students who rely solely on "away" rotations for their clinical experience during the final year of medical school and the potential that they will not obtain sufficient clinical experience without such rotations.

The upcoming interview season will be interesting. Virtual interviews afford both opportunities and challenges. Many programs have medical students present at all times enabling inherent opportunities for program and candidate assessment – others only have sub-internships and rely on those experiences to develop relationships. The importance of institutional and geographic familiarity when entertaining a 5-year commitment is a primary concern of our members.

Applicants may not be able to secure USMLE/COMLEX Step 2 testing appointments in time for release to programs in a typical fashion. The testing companies that administer these examinations have been closed for several weeks and are reopening according to local/state government mandates.

We have reviewed the recent Coalition for Physician Accountability's Work Group on Medical Students in the Class of 2021 Moving Across Institutions for Post Graduate Training report (see link below). We are also aware of other society statements regarding recommendations for associated GME programs. Our intention is to create the most equitable environment for medical student experiences, surgery residency recruitment, and a successful match outcome. We have considered many positions on these topics and recommend the following to our membership:

### **General Surgery Residency Program Directors:**

1. **Need to be aware of new ERAS program release dates and NRMP match date modifications. (Links below)**
2. **Should only offer "away" rotations if the opportunity provides students with an experience they cannot obtain at their home institution.**
3. **Consider development of "Virtual" rotations to include prospective students in curriculum meetings or lectures provided at your institution**
4. **Should not consider the participation of an applicant on an "away" rotation positively or negatively in assessment of the applicant for interview selection or ultimate match.**
5. **Need to be prepared for the contingency that applicants may not have completed all their licensing examinations by recruiting season through no fault of their own.**
6. **Should prepare to be capable of offering virtual interviews to all general surgery applicants**

We recognize that it is difficult to predict the prevalence of COVID-19 across the United States during the upcoming recruitment season. As the formal interview season approaches, we will release additional recommendations regarding interview formats.

Respectfully submitted,



Benjamin Jarman, MD

APDS President on behalf of the Executive Committee

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Coalition for Physician Accountability's Work Group on Medical Students in the Class of 2021 Moving Across Institutions for Post Graduate Training report:

[https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-05/covid19\\_Final\\_Recommendations\\_Executive%20Summary\\_Final\\_05112020.pdf](https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-05/covid19_Final_Recommendations_Executive%20Summary_Final_05112020.pdf)

AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) dates:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residency/article/eras-timeline-applicants/>

National Residency Match Program (NRMP): Calendar dates

<http://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2021-Main-Residency-Match-Detailed-Calendar.pdf>