

POG's Personal Perspectives

The impact of great leadership

Like many before me, I came to medical school looking for a way to make a difference. While working in research prior to matriculating, I often found myself watching the physician primary investigator and thinking, 'I want her job.' She was the person who got to reassure patients, to provide facts and treatment information, to complete procedures and to report results. She was the person with the right options and the right information at the right time, and patients were comforted by her expertise.

The early part of medical school can be tough for those of us who came from this background. Hours of class time followed by hours of study time forced me to find new motivators. My belief that I would find a group of people who cared about the same things I did and who fostered my desire to really improve patients' lives helped me through that time.

Although I'd worked in ob-gyn research and shadowed in ob-gyn offices as a premed student, I did not plan a career in obstetrics and gynecology. Something

changed, however, when I began to not just interact with the UIHC providers clinically, but when they invited me to work with them on research, quality improvement and policy change. It was almost immediately evident that these were my people, and this was my tribe. Not just in the clinic but out in the world, the faculty I worked with cared about having the right information and all of the options for their patients – exactly what had appealed to me about medicine. They challenged me to share in that responsibility. They helped me by sharing their own motivations and insights. And, most significantly, they supported my own ideas and interests. With strong mentors, I was able to create my own research and quality improvement initiatives, facilitate work groups on social determinants of health and build a coalition of students committed to similar issues.

The mentorship I've enjoyed from some UIHC Ob-Gyn faculty has influenced not only my decision to enter this field, but also shaped the way I will practice in the future and given me reason to teach and mentor others. Finding faculty who really

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pushed me to be not just a better student but a more engaged health care provider, teacher, citizen and leader has cemented my career trajectory. I hope it will lead to richer experiences for the others that I work with along the way. Beyond what I have experienced in other departments, Ob-Gyn faculty at UIHC are doing the after-hours work of inspiring the next generation of women's health providers. The value of this is incalculable, indescribable, and irreplaceable.

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