The Academic Advising Program:  
A circle of advising

The mentoring/advising relationship between a faculty advisor and a medical student can be fulfilling and valued by both. The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) created the concept an “Advisory Circle” to recognize the variety of skills that are available at JABSOM and the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) to all JABSOM students. The point of entry into the “Advisory Circle” is the Primary Academic Advisor who can direct an advisee to one or more services, such as Learning Specialist, Career Advisor, OSA counselor or Administrative Advisor.

This handbook reviews the responsibilities of the advisor and advisee, and what an enthusiastic and effective advisor-advisee relationship can accomplish.

The curriculum at JABSOM is based on student-centered, self-directed learning. It is therefore up to the student to formulate individual learning strategies; reflection on these strategies and their success leads to growth. The success of a student’s efforts is closely tied to the his or her aspirations and personal goals and skills in balancing life. A competent advisor will challenge the student to think through and justify her/his study plans, career choices, life balance choices and the use of available resources.

The advisor serves as a vital link in the student's access to appropriate and stimulating educational opportunities. Advisors play an essential role at JABSOM to give continuity to this educational experience which can be periodically bewildering and at times threatening or anxiety-producing. As students overcome such barriers to learning, JABSOM presents unique opportunities for achievement of goals and personal fulfillment.

The ideal student and advisor relationship is personal, supportive, yet critical bond; this will be achieved through integrity, honesty and confidentiality on the part of both student and advisor.
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THE ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

The primary role of an advisor is to be a mentor and facilitator of self-and improvement. To accomplish this, the advisor must meet regularly with his/her advisee to review progress and help advise an appropriate plan to augment the basic curriculum with elective experiences, involvement in research, student and community activities, and when needed seek enrichment and/or remediation.

The advisor is NOT expected to “be all and know all” for a student. Advisors aid professional development of students by encouraging reflective self assessment and problem solving, defining and analyzing difficulties, study problems and resources. The advisor helps the advisee develop and apply skills for their own “PBL” case – i.e. her or his own education at JABSOM.

EXPECTATIONS

Advisor/Advisee Meetings

An initial "get acquainted" meeting should be arranged by the student as soon as advisor assignments are made. At this meeting, the student should share background, special interests and career goals (as undeveloped as they may be) of the student. The student may wish to share her or his Educational Mission Statement created during orientation, perhaps even a copy of the essays written for the application process for JABSOM. This is also a good time to review the contents of this handbook. A suggested agenda ("contractual items") for this first meeting is attached (See Appendix 1).

Subsequent meetings should focus on mid- and end-course evaluations (see section on Evaluations). Scheduling meetings should primarily be the responsibility of the student, but the advisor may initiate the contact. A successful advisor must facilitate regular meetings.

The advisor should avoid common pitfalls:

- do not give the student the impression that "my advisor is so busy I hate to bother him/her",
- if I don't hear from my student, everything must be going well.

Remember, the advisor is a coach and serves as checkpoint on student well being and progress, both in the personal and intellectual challenges of being a medical student.

In addition to reviewing advisee performance, advisors will be asked to discuss plans for electives in the first and second year courses. Electives may be designed to enhance personal perspectives, research possibilities, or enhancing specific curricular topics.

All courses have mid and end course assessments; mid course assessment are usually devised to provide feedback, and not for grading purposes. Mid course feedback and plans for continued success, as we as end-course assessment should be reviewed with advisors. Other meetings may be arranged to deal with student difficulties, concerns, career plans, etc.

An advisor may choose to keep a confidential file for the advisee for notes in summary of meetings, making it less likely that things may “fall through the cracks”.

If his/her student is called to appear before the Student Standing and Promotion Committee, the student should promptly review the reasons and plans; the student may ask the advisor to appear with her or him for support.

Advisors are registered with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Careers in Medicine (CiM) website so that they may access the various resources, many of which are career related, although there are some good general self-assessment exercises. Look for an e-mail with your sign in information! http://www.aamc.org/programs/cim/
SUMMARY OF ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A general summary of advisor responsibilities over the student’s four (or more) years are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*First Meeting</td>
<td>Get acquainted, ascertain background, special interests and needs; career goals, review expectations of both advisor and advisee. Discuss ‘Personal Mission Statement’ written by the student during Orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Course Meetings</td>
<td>Review mid-course progress, arrange additional help if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*End-Course Meetings</td>
<td>Review student progress at the end of each course/clerkship, discuss strengths and weaknesses with student, suggest/ review remedial or enrichment experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss and select electives according to student's needs and Interests and sign Elective Forms (in MD 2-5; USMLE preparation plans at the end of MD 7; third year or fourth year electives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Clerkship Meeting</td>
<td>Prior to starting clinical year, review performance in medical school, discuss career plans and special needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Unsatisfactory Evals</td>
<td>Counsel students early, monitor as necessary and support further assessments and or remedial help for any less-than-satisfactory evaluations; represent/support student as necessary at Student Standing and Promotion Committee if requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At all times</td>
<td>Provide support, resources and guidance to serve as student advocate and mentor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Required meetings/responsibilities

RESOURCES

In order to provide appropriate (and accurate!) guidance, an advisor needs to be familiar with available options and resources. Advisors are not expected to know everything. Recall that an essential role of advisors is to model professional behavior and self directed learning, and when necessary, help the student recognize difficulties or need for learning enrichments, and encourage the student to identify appropriate resources. The following list, while not comprehensive, provides a good start:

**Academic Information**

**General Guide to the MD Program**: Distributed to each student during Orientation, it is available from the Office of Medical Education, and contains general information about the MD Program and the curriculum, including objectives, learning methods, learning resources and the student evaluation system.

**Course Handbooks**: Each course has a Handbook which covers the general structure and more specific objectives than those in the General Guide, grading paradigms and other requirements. Course handbooks help the student define his/her learning objectives. Students should be strongly encouraged to be thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Handbook prior to beginning each course. In addition, each Third Year Clerkship Handbook contains important and essential information about the individual course, and there is a Fourth Year Handbook that outlines the 4th year curriculum and elective choices.

**Office of Medical Education (OME)**: Specific information regarding the curriculum and schedules can be obtained from OME, which is directed by Dr. Richard Kasuya, who is responsible for the overall coordination of the curriculum. Appropriate numbers are available at the end of this Handbook.
Curriculum: The curriculum of JABSOM is student centered, small group learning employing Problem-Based Learning for the first two years, and either traditional clerkships or Longitudinal clerkships (6 months ambulatory experiences in the community, 6 months of shortened traditional clerkships). The fourth year is comprised of three required courses (Emergency Medicine, Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, Senior Seminars) and 24 weeks of electives. A recent change in the sequence of preclinical courses changed names from “units” to MD series of blocks.

School of Medicine Policies

A number of policies have been formally adopted in order to provide consistency and structure to certain situations. The Office of Student Affairs is charged with administering all student policies. Copies of all Policies are kept in the Office of Student Affairs, the PBL Library, and in each department, and are available on the JABSOM website (currently at http://jabsom.hawaii.edu/JABSOM/admissions/policies.php). Current policies include affecting current JABSOM students are: Academic Appeals Policy, Policy for the Assessment of Medical Student Performance, Essential Functions, Leave of Absence Policy, and UHM Student Conduct Code.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Student Well Being Handbook: Originated by the Committee on Well-Being of Medical Students and updated annually by the Office of Student Affairs, each student is given a copy during Orientation. It contains a number of helpful survival tips, brief descriptions of programs and resources available to students, and is available from the Office of Student Affairs. A copy will be sent to advisors and will soon be available on-line.

Office of Student Affairs: Charged with all except curricular matters related to medical students, including learning and counseling support, this Office serves as the liaison between the school and students. The staff endeavors to help provide information and coordination for and regarding students. Call 692-1000 to reach the Director or others in OSA.

Graduation Objectives: This statement of what skills, knowledge and attitudes a JABSOM graduate is expected to achieve will be shared with advisors. Look for the reference to the online version of the updated Graduation Objectives soon!!

THE COMPETENT ADVISOR

Resources on Advising

The AAMC Careers in Medicine Program has published an “Advising Manual” for career advisors; you will find the topics in the section on “Counseling Skills and Strategies” pages 13ff, to be a very helpful review for general advising, not just for career advising; see: http://www.aamc.org/programs/cim/advisormanual.pdf

Successful Advisor Characteristics

Characteristics of a good advisor include availability, interest, enthusiasm for and knowledge of the philosophy of JABSOM, and the ability to facilitate and question student decisions while being supportive.

Advisor/advisee Relationship

It is important for advisors to be open, understanding, thoughtful and friendly (though not necessarily a best friend) to the student. Therefore, it is very important for the advisor to know about the educational system and be able, as much as possible, to encourage the student to seek the resources of the medical school and community. The Office of Student Affairs is available to all advisors for information.

It is essential that the advisor not encourage a relationship with a student in which the student makes contact “only if there is a problem.” As an advisor and mentor, reinforcement of new, transitional and positive experiences should also be a focus.

It is important that it not be directive. The advisor should assist with navigation, but the student must retain the responsibility for his/her own course taken through JABSOM.
**Reviewing Evaluations**

The advisor's task in evaluation is not to evaluate the student directly, but to help him/her understand the evaluations. The advisor should not hesitate to raise questions to the student concerning an evaluation if it is unclear, inadequate or if conflicting data is provided, but it is not the advisor's role to question the validity of an evaluation. Students have the opportunity as outlined in the Academic Appeals process to challenge an evaluation.

**Confidentiality**

Advisors must model confidentiality. While it may be desirable for the advisor to discuss a student's problems with his or her teacher, for example, this should only be done with the knowledge and permission of the student. The student's “right” to a fresh start at the beginning of a new unit may outweigh any potential advantage from having the teacher be aware of the student's past record. Permission may be obtained verbally, but it should be made clear to what the student is agreeing to, and should be documented in your records. Please safeguard evaluations sent to you as an advisor, since they are protected from release to other than faculty 'with a need to know' and the individual student by federal regulation ("FERPA").

The advisor/student relationship should be mutually rewarding and enjoyable. If it is not, the situation should be discussed between advisor and advisee, or with the Director of Student Affairs. Only when necessary, new advisee arrangements may be considered.

**EVALUATIONS**

**Student Evaluation**

The advisor must discuss evaluations from course and electives with the student. The student should already have seen (and signed) the evaluation; the advisor should discuss areas of strengths and weakness, the need for any remedial activity, progress through JABSOM, and performance in the context of the student's personal and career goals. It is very important that this review not be confined only to problems and difficulties. While a plan for addressing sub-optimal performance should be devised, satisfactory or excellent performance should also lead to planning for enrichment activities, either informally or formally. Enrichment may be accomplished through the electives program, or by referral to the Learning Specialist in OSA or the Director of Student Affairs.

1. **Less than fully Satisfactory Performance**

The evaluation system encourages feedback during the course from the tutor to the advisor. The crucial function of this feedback is to provide early warning for potential problems, as when a ‘borderline’ performance is reported. The advisor should contact the student immediately and assist in identifying and discussing remedying the problem. The advisor may act as a resource person for the student at this time, or encourage seeking other resources. He/she must respond quickly to the signal in order to help the student set up and implement plans for improving performance.

2. **Unsatisfactory Evaluation**

If the student's performance is judged unsatisfactory at the end of a course or elective, the case is brought to the Evaluation Remediation and Review Committee, whose charge is to monitor student performance and determine appropriate remediation when appropriate. The advisor's may asked to assist in designing a remedial program. The advisor is vital in this process because he/she should have a good overview of the student and of his/her performance to date. The advisor has a responsibility to both the student and the school to also ensure that due process is served. However, it is not up to the advisor either to evaluate the student's performance, to provide remedial help, or to act as an unconditional advocate for the student.

3. **Two or more Unsatisfactory Evaluations**

A second and any subsequent Unsatisfactory evaluation will require appearance before the Student Standing and Promotion Committee, which is charged with the responsibility of making a decision regarding a student's progress in medical school. (see Medical School Policies, above).
Evaluation of Advisors
By seeking direct feedback from the student, the advisors model self-directed learning and evaluation, so a review of the value and scope of the relationship should be part of student-advisor interactions. In addition, students may periodically be asked to complete a questionnaire/evaluation regarding their advisors and the advising system.

ELECTIVES PROGRAM

A significant proportion of a student's time (40+ weeks of the curriculum) is devoted to block (full time) electives – 8-10 weeks at the end of Second year curriculum, two weeks during Third Year (clinical clerkships), plus 28 weeks in the Senior Year. In addition, some students may take horizontal or concurrent electives at any time during the curriculum.

Examples of the purpose of electives in the curriculum include: exploration of issues of particular interest, remedial study of an area of deficit, study to facilitate decisions about career selection or exposure to potential post-graduate residency or research programs.

Students are responsible for organizing their own electives. They need to identify their own needs, identify objectives that are to be achieved, and make the necessary arrangements for the experience. To do so, they can sign up for existing electives, or propose their own elective programs with specific faculty. Sign-up forms and deadlines are advertised well in advance to all students and are strictly enforced. Student-proposed electives require a long lead-time and therefore more advanced planning.

The advisor must review and discuss all prospective electives and endorse them by signing the Elective Form prior to the posted deadlines. It is the advisor's responsibility to assist the student in the above activities; to challenge the student to make an appropriate decision by reviewing and sharpening the objectives of the elective experience; and to ensure the selection is realistic and meets with the student's academic performance and personal career goals.

Unfortunately, at times, this responsibility has been reduced to a mechanical act - "dropping off the form for signature" - without the expected advisory discussion. Although face-to-face advising is ideal, electronic communication (e-mail) telephone meetings can fulfill the needs of the advisor and student when the relationship is well-established.

CAREER ADVISORS

Students must identify and select a "career advisor" in the Spring of the Third Year to assist in the Fourth Year elective choices, and to help with the more discipline-specific task of organizing plans for a residency applications. Career advisors will not have the perspective of the Academic Advisors, and the academic/student advisor relationship is encouraged throughout a student's time at JABSOM.

ASSIGNMENT OF ADVISORS

"Matching" and "Unmatching"

Matches between advisors and students are done at random; thus far, the majority have worked out satisfactorily. Typical problems, when they do occur, include such things as scheduling conflicts, difficulty with transportation and, occasionally, personality clashes. With an open discussion, many of these can be resolved.

However, if 'unmatching’ or a change in advisors is requested, it should be done early, preferably before the end of September of the first year. The following steps must be followed:

1. The student and advisor should discuss and try to resolve the conflict.
2. If the decision to change still stands, the Director of Student Affairs should be notified by the student of the reasons for the change, and the student's preference for a new advisor.
3. Communication between the two advisors may be done with the student's knowledge and consent.

Absence/Leave of an Advisor
The steps outlined above should occur if an advisor is absent for a period of more than three months. The change may be temporary or permanent. In these situations, OSA can assign a substitute advisor when made aware of the need by student or advisor.

**MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION/STUDENT SERVICES**

**Contacting Students**

Information and messages for students can be left in the Office of Student Affairs at 692-1000. E-mail is an efficient means to contact students. Additionally, students have mailboxes in MEB 3rd floor which most check regularly; fourth year students may not check their boxes regularly, and e-mail may be most efficient for them.

**Counseling Services**

Confidential personal counseling services are available through Student Health Services, Counseling Center at Manoa Campus, the Department of Psychiatry (coordinated through the Chief Resident), or through the Office of Student Affairs. Students may self-refer or may be referred by any student or faculty member. Students have access to a list of community psychiatrists who are not involved in student evaluation.

The Gender Equity Counselor (Phone: 956-9977; Email: RoseJenn@hawaii.edu) and Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office (808-956-7077; email: eeo@hawaii.edu) are also resources for students.

Concerns about substance abuse or other impairment should be referred confidentially to the Director, Office of Student Affairs, 692-1000.

**Financial Aid**

All applications for financial aid are processed through the UH Manoa Financial Aids Office. Students must submit a completed application by the specified deadline for review (usually March 1 for continuing students, or as soon as they are accepted for incoming students). JABSOM has a primary Financial Aid Specialist (Ms. Gail Koki) in the Office of Student Affairs so students who need help may contact her (call 692-1000) regarding concerns related to loans, planning, etc. A Financial Aid Counselor form FAO is available at JABSOM; confirm times with OSA (692-1000).

For emergencies, the Office of Student Affairs has an Emergency Loan Fund which can lend out small amounts of money (~$500) for short periods (3 months) without interest (if repaid on time). Long-term special loans for up to $1500 can be requested from the Financial Aid Committee (see Ms. Koki). Financial aid may be in the form of loans, although a significant number of students may receive need-based or “merit service” tuition waivers; other scholarship and loan resources are listed in the School of Medicine Financial Aid/Scholarship Guide which is available in the Office of Student Affairs and made available to each student.

**Health Insurance/Disability Insurance**

All medical students are required to have medical insurance; they must have had a pre-matriculation physical exam, and yearly TB tests. Students are expected to have a regular primary care physician, but services also are available through the University Health Service. Each student, additionally, must have disability insurance, and a policy is made available to all students yearly.

**Study/Exam Skills Assessment**

Diagnostic and remedial services for medical students are available through the Office of Student Affairs. Ms. Karen Sakamoto, Learning Specialist, can be reached at OSA for any questions regarding individual or group help with study and exam skills. Her office is located at OSA, MEB 3rd floor.
CONTACT INFORMATION AND ELECTRONIC SITES

Office of Student Affairs  808 692-1000/ FAX 808 692-1251
Mary Ann Antonelli MD, Director
Marilyn Nishiki, Registrar
Gail Koki, Support MS 1 & 2’s, Financial Aid Counselor
Mary Lau, Support MS 3 & 4’s, ERAS, Match, graduation
Karen Sakamoto, Learning Specialist
Nicole Sodetani, Office support for admissions, and fiscal accounts

Office of Medical Education  808 692-0920 /FAX 808 692-1252
Richard Kasuya, MD, Director
Suzanne Pang, Student Schedules/General Guide

JABSOM Website:  http://jabsom.hawaii.edu/jabsom/

Policy for the Assessment of Student Performance:  http://jabsom.hawaii.edu/JABSOM/admissions/assessmed.pdf


JABSOM Graduation Objectives:  http://jabsom.hawaii.edu/JABSOM/admissions/objectives.php

Careers in Medicine (CiM) for Advisors:  http://www.aamc.org/programs/cim/

APPENDIX 1
Advisor Program
Suggested Contract Items

1. Availability
- Method of contact, i.e. through secretary, pager, appropriate phone numbers, etc.
- Types of meetings, e.g. emergencies, routine

2. Confidentiality
- Confidentiality is the standard between advisor and advisee
- Completely honest and open communication
- Obtain permission to contact others for further information
- Use of evaluation forms

3. Expectations
   A. Role of advisor
      1) Support
         - Serve as a resource for student to reach self-directed goals in medical school
         - Be available
         - Be critical and supportive for the benefit of the student and the medical profession
         - Provide direction and referral as needed
      2) Review Progress
         - Discuss evaluations provided by advisee
         - Discuss how to maximize progress
         - Encourage self-reflection
         - Encourage evaluation as feedback and as a guide for remedial/enrichment
      3) Enrichment
         - Help student reflect on effectiveness of remediation or enrichment efforts
         - Act as facilitator (not prescriber) of remedial and enrichment needs
      4) “Dean's Letter” (Medical Student Performance Evaluation, MSPE)
         - Discuss use of evaluative information (objective summary, not a letter of recommendation) in Dean's Letter, and discuss how to elicit good performance evaluations

   B. Role of advisee (student)
      1) Making contact
         - Initiate first meeting
         - Meet with advisor AT LEAST once each course
         - Keep advisor apprised of activities/performance
         - Seek help/additional feedback when desired, needed
      2) Self assessment/performance responsibility
         - Primary responsibility for performance in JABSOM (to be reflected ultimately in Dean's Letter)
         - Identify areas of concern/problems and initiating contact as needed
         - Provide necessary information to advisor in order to develop rational program for remediation/enrichment (i.e., student's Learning Agenda (see Unit I Handbook), mid-clerkship evals, etc.)
      3) Electives Program
         - Planner of own program, prepare to justify choices