Title: Excellence for All: Improving Student Well-being, Perceptions of the Learning Environment and Learning Outcomes

Abstract:
United States’ medical schools face significant and growing concerns about physician well-being, diversity, and preparation of new graduates. The first concern is a growing awareness of high levels of burnout and psychological distress among medical students and practicing physicians, and research linking such distress to medical errors and workforce reductions. A second is the knowledge that diversity among U.S. physicians does not match that of the rapidly changing demographics of the U.S. population. Finally, multiple studies show that the historic time-based apprentice medical education model results in large gaps between the actual and expected skills of new graduates. In light of these concerns, the Feinberg School of Medicine (FSM) developed several programs to improve academic and student support, build more inclusive and healthier learning environments, expand mentorship, promote constructive and regular feedback from faculty, and celebrate student success. Specific interventions leading to a dramatic change in student survey results (as compared to internal and national benchmarks) will be discussed including: a) new relationships between FSM admissions and student academic deans; b) enhanced pre-matriculation programs and access to tutoring; c) new wellness and mentoring programs; d) development of dashboards to monitor progress; and e) broad implementation of the mastery learning model, allowing additional time to complete required coursework without negative academic consequences. A priority of the session will be to describe how these initiatives can be disseminated to other Northwestern schools, programs, and departments.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Review wellness initiatives that have reduced student burnout and distress at FSM.
2. Identify strategies to improve and monitor perceptions of the learning environment and academic achievement among underrepresented students.
3. Describe opportunities for additional use of mastery learning in undergraduate and graduate education at Northwestern University.