Emerging Trends for Students Exiting the MD Curriculum at WSU School of Medicine

Laura Samuelson, M.Ed, Megan Klausing, Macc, Margit Chadwell, M.D., FAAFP
Wayne State University, School of Medicine, Undergraduate Medical Education

Introduction

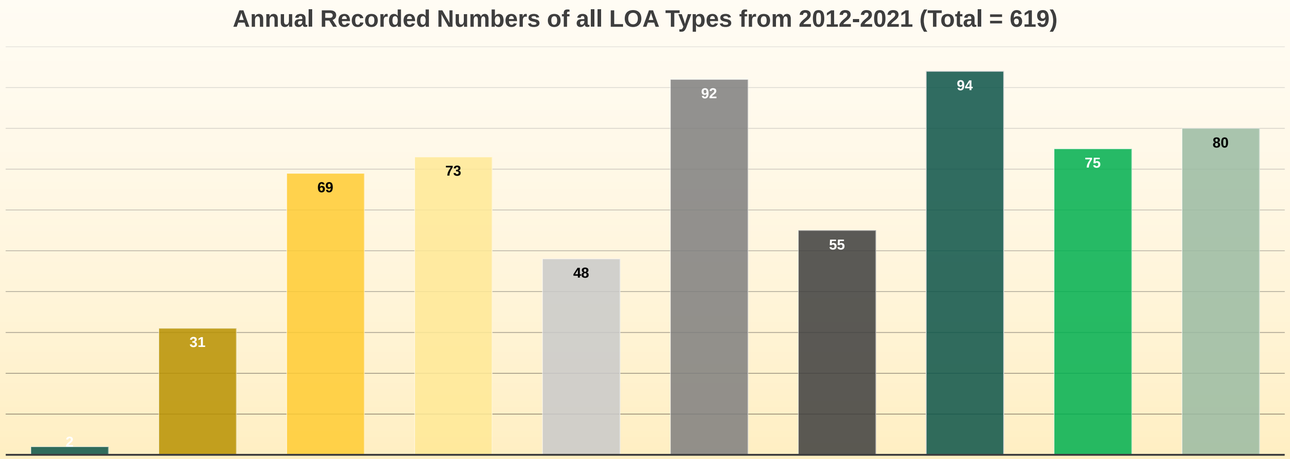
- **Project aim**: exploring emerging trends for WSU SoM students exiting the MD curriculum for a leave of absence over the course of a near decade.
- WSU, SoM defines a leave of absence as “a temporary interruption of enrollment status.”
- This project was developed to identify **influencing factors** that cause students to go on a leave.
- The findings provide a foundational understanding of which factors resulted in a school-mandated leave (Administrative) or motivated students to seek specific leave types as coded my the AAMC: Medical, Personal, Educational, Financial) and in what relative proportions.

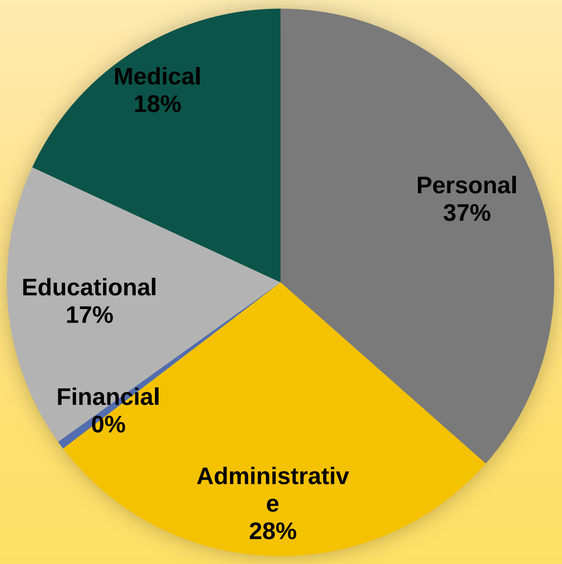
Methods

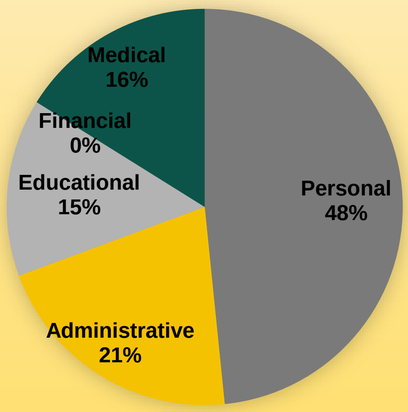
The data was gleaned utilizing the Enterprise Resource Planning and Student Information System, Banner 9 by Ellucian. Data points mined and exported for analysis from these systems included:

- Leave type
- Leave start and end dates
- Graduation Rates
- Standard academic markers including:
  - Course failures
  - Test scores: USMLE Step 1 & Step 2

Results







The spike in Personal LOAs during 2017 and 2019 represents, in part, a policy where students needing an extended Step 1 Prep period were afforded this option.

The more recent upward trajectory of LOAs is likely impacted by the historic COVID-19 pandemic and online learning and under further study.

Conclusion

Initial Emerging 10-year LOA Trends include:

- A general upward trajectory of students on LOA of any type, with an average of 5.7% of the student body on LOA at any given time. This is reflective of national trends for undergraduate medical education extending beyond the traditional 4-years, with approximately 6-7% of medical students taking a leave of absence for any reason.
- Personal factors are a significant driving force for students opting to take a break from the MD curriculum (36.5%). Administrative leaves accounted for almost 1/3rd of all LOAs. These trends underscore the need to explore academic, familial, and mental health supports for our students to maintain an uninterrupted educational course.
- An increase in numbers of medical students on LOA due to time out for augmented Step 1 preparation. This has triggered process improvement, policy change, and curricular development to more precisely identify factors associated with Step 1 preparation and optimal readiness.
- Singular or multiple Course Failures are strongly correlated with LOA, successful return to the MD program, and retention for eventual graduation. LOA students with any failed courses are more likely not to graduate with their Medical Doctorate as compared to their peers.

References

- Fallar R, Leikauf J, Dokun O, Anand S, Gliatto P, Mellman L, Autenrieth S, Katz C. Medical Students' Experiences of Unplanned Leaves of Absence. Med Sci Educ. 2019 Aug 7;29(4):1003-1011. doi: 10.1007/s40670-019-00792-4. PMID: 34457577; PMCID: PMC8368954.
- Nguyen M, Song SH, Ferritto A, Ata A, Mason HRC. Demographic Factors and Academic Outcomes Associated With Taking a Leave of Absence From Medical School. JAMA Netw Open. 2021;4(1):e2033570. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.33570
- Roy E. Strowd & Ann Lambros (2010) Impacting student anxiety for the USMLE Step 1 through process-oriented preparation, Medical Education Online, 15:1, DOI: 10.3402/meo.v15i0.4880
- Caulfield, M., Redden, G., & Sondheimer, H. (2014, May). *Graduation Rates and Attrition Factors for U.S. Medical School Students*. Analysis In Brief. Retrieved from https://www.aamc.org/media/7566/download