



First Year Medical Student Early Professional Identity Formation

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Introduction

Through service learning activities, students can identify and acknowledge their own feelings as well as those of others (Kalet et al, 2018). First-year medical students participated in reflective expression mask projects to depict their outward and inward identities. Students then responded to a survey to determine the impact of self-reflection on professional identity formation.



Inner Identity

Methods

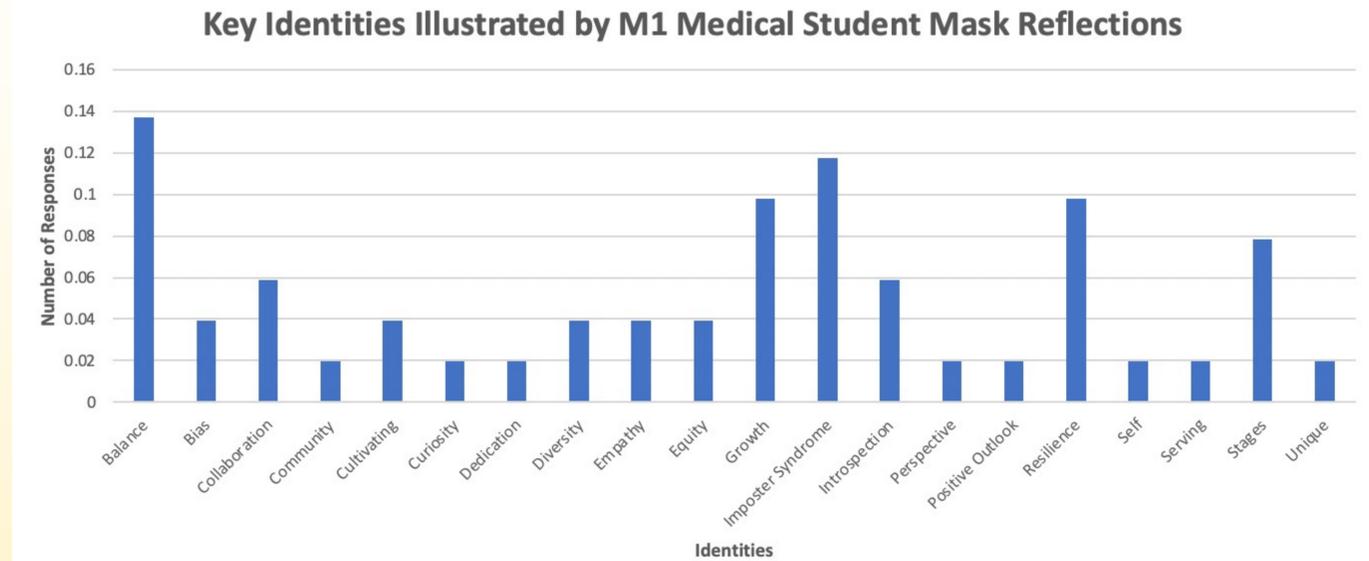
- 307 students from the class of 2026 attended a professional identity growth mindset lecture.
- All students participated as teams in the mask project and post-assignment reflections.
- 101 students responded to a Service Learning Professional Development Growth Survey designed to evaluate students' self-assessed proficiency of professional development skills based on 7 open-ended questions (Caldwell et al, 2021).
- Survey responses were analyzed and themes of reflective expressions were determined by two independent researchers.



Outer Identity

Results

- Reflections were gathered from all 51 groups.
- 20 themes were determined, revealing 5 common identities: most common were balance at 13%, followed by imposter syndrome (11%), growth (9%), resilience (9%), and stages (7%).
- Out of 307 students, 1/3 responded to the survey.
- Results from a 5-point scale of proficiency showed that students rated their ability to work with people from different backgrounds an average of 3.91 and their ability to seek advice from mentors 3.19.



Conclusion

The study was limited to optional participation in the survey and number of overall responses. However, formation of professional identity is a major factor impacting the medical education of first-year medical students. Common reflection themes were balance, imposter syndrome, growth, resilience, and stages. With uncertainty in professional development skills, there are potential opportunities for additional support and resources to address these aspects in medical education. Further involvement in service learning activities could help to improve uncertain professional identities and skill proficiencies of first-year medical students.

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References

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