A Practical Application of the GSA Performance Framework

Katherine Alonso, Jessica Lewis, MA, Christina Covoletski, and Amy Salinas

Introduction

Student affairs officers are frequently presented with opportunities to design and implement programs and services that support the personal and professional development of medical students as they progress toward graduation. The success of these programs is typically based on measurements of student participation and satisfaction; what is not usually assessed is the impact on the professional development of student affairs officers.

The Panther Learning Communities (PLCs) at Florida International University’s Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) demonstrated a practical application of the “GSA Performance Framework” (from the Association of American Medical Colleges-Group on Student Affairs) in measuring the professional development of student affairs officers. As part of this mission, the team adapted the framework to the institution’s needs and identified learning opportunities, within challenges, for staff professional development. Overall, the adapted version of the “GSA Performance Framework” allowed the team to more specifically measure the professional development of student affairs officers within the learning communities.

Methods

In creating the adapted version of the “GSA Performance Framework,” the PLC team used a student-led program which is managed by the learning communities. The PLC Peer Training program provides medical students with opportunities to enhance their skills of leadership, teaching, and mentorship; it overall aligns with the mission of the PLCs to support the professional development of HWCOM medical students. Staff’s roles in the program include strategic planning, supporting student leadership, ensuring student compliance, facilitating student trainings, and constantly assessing all stakeholders’ opinions on the program.

The PLCs employed a four-step approach to adapt the framework in order to assess staff’s professional development. First, pre- and post-self-assessments were completed where staff evaluated themselves on all the critical behaviors listed under “Common Areas” (learning communities are unique in that they are not represented as an “Area of Expertise” on the framework). Each staff member evaluated themselves on leadership, organizational acumen, relationships, and service at two periods of time (before and after the program’s implementation) using a specifically designed rating scale. Scores were tallied and averaged by a designee staff member.

For the second step, the PLC team reflected on their averages and realized that many of the behaviors they were being evaluated on were not performed or developed as a result of their work on the program. Therefore, for the next step, critical behaviors across the four common areas of the framework were identified that matched the overall mission and goals of the PLC Peer Training program and staff’s roles and responsibilities. From these selected critical behaviors, an adapted version of the “GSA Performance Framework” was created.

The adapted version of the GSA Performance Framework served as a template for peer assessments which were created for each staff member in order to evaluate each of their colleagues’ work on the program. A similar format to the pre and post self-assessments was adopted, including the same rating scale; one exception was that staff members were now evaluating another one at just one point in time (as of when they completed the survey). Once all evaluations were submitted, one designated staff member averaged all results and provided each employee with a comprehensive report of their individual scores. These reports were used for subsequent one-on-one meetings with the supervisor to discuss both performance and progression towards staff’s professional development goals.

The GSA Performance Framework sets the benchmark of performance excellence and distinguishes the importance of student affairs in medical education as a profession. It outlines critical behaviors essential for successful performance and career progression, inclusive of all roles and functions across the GSA community, in alignment with the LCME standards.

The Framework consists of four components:

- GSA Core Values and Guiding Principles
- Common Areas (4)
- Areas of Expertise (8)

The PLC’s Peer Training program used the “GSA Performance Framework” to ensure continuous improvement of both individuals and the program, used a benchmark of excellence across the GSA community.

Results

In conclusion, the PLC team’s adaptation of the “GSA Performance Framework” allowed the staff members to identify critical behaviors which are important for them to focus on for their own professional development. The PLC team also allowed staff members to expose themselves to current trends, literature, and issues within medical education, and thus, they were able to identify professional mentors and opportunities for growth as they each continue towards their educational and long-term career goals.

Acknowledgments

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