

A New Approach Cuts Interview Dinner Costs by 60%

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Learner Audience: Applicants and current residents of our residency program.

Background: Applicants to our residency program, like many others, are given the opportunity to attend a dinner the evening prior to their interviews. Current residents are invited as well to provide the applicants with time to have many of their most basic questions about the program answered. Applicant's initial impressions about the program are formed at these dinners, thus it is desirable to provide an enjoyable experience with access to multiple residents at various stages of their training.

Needs Assessment: Given the current budgetary situation many residency programs are facing, the high cost of interview dinners is becoming increasingly difficult to justify. A plan for continuing to offer a value-added dinner to the applicant's experience with our program, while controlling the costs, was sought.

Hypothesis: We hypothesized that the interview dinners could be restructured to a more casual event, where applicants would be offered buffet-style heavy appetizers and beverages and given time to mingle with all of the residents in attendance. This event would reduce costs from the traditional "sit-down" dinners but actually increase the applicant's access to current residents.

Curriculum Design: The Chief Resident and Junior Chief Residents contacted several restaurants to identify those that could provide a buffet area, beverages, and space for mingling that could accommodate 20 -30 attendees. Once identified, the Chiefs solicited volunteers from all of the residents in our program for each interview dinner at least one week in advance. A resident guest list was then established for each event to ensure that multiple representatives from each class (CBY, CA-1, CA-2, and CA-3) were present. Spouse volunteers were also invited when an applicant indicated that their spouse/significant other was also attending.

Outcome: The costs for the current interview season (2009-2010) were compared to those of the 2007-2008 year. The overall cost of the dinners decreased by 60%, while the total number of attendees at the events only decreased by 5%. This brought the cost per attendee down to \$25.74 from \$60.48, equating to a savings of 57% per attendee. Informal polling of the applicants during the interviews elicited an overwhelmingly positive response, with the ability to converse with multiple residents being the most commonly cited benefit. The results of a formalized polling, to be included with post-match follow-up communications, is pending.