

# The Association of Professors of Dermatology Program Directors Task Force and Residency Program Transparency Work Group Guidelines on Residency Program Transparency

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Socioeconomic and racial disparities continue to plague the house of medicine and importantly the current generation of trainees. One clear area in need of reform is the U.S. dermatology residency application process.<sup>1,2,3</sup> The charge of the Transparency Work Group, a subcommittee of the Association of Professors of Dermatology Program Program Directors Task Force, is to improve the dissemination of relevant program-specific information to applicants. Enhanced program transparency may improve the ability of applicants to make informed choices regarding the selection process and increase trainee and program satisfaction with the match. In light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic which has significantly impacted the opportunity for applicants to experience programs firsthand, the need for more transparent communication between programs and applicants has heightened exponentially.

The Work Group distributed a survey to medical students, residents and program directors to assess perceptions of

dermatology residency program transparency.<sup>4</sup> The survey found that the majority of both trainees and program directors feel there is currently inadequate transparency. The main barrier to transparency cited by program directors was lack of guidelines. To address this deficit, the Transparency Work Group has created the following recommendations for residency programs based on the data generated from the aforementioned survey (Table 1):

## 1. Maintain an up-to-date program website.

First and most importantly, residency programs should keep an up-to-date website as over 90% of trainees utilize this source for program-specific information.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the items listed in Table 1, changes to the selection and recruitment process due to the COVID-19 pandemic should be outlined on each program's website. It is preferable to have an updated website before applications can begin to be submitted.

**TABLE 1.**

Transparency Work Group Recommendations		
Category	Strongly Recommended	Encouraged
Method of information dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up-to-date website</li> </ul>	
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board score cut-off</li> <li>Letter of recommendation requirements</li> <li>Research requirements</li> <li>Other requirements and exclusion criteria</li> <li>Special consideration for certain applicant groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on specific elements of application (e.g. grades, advanced degrees)</li> </ul>
Interview process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview dates</li> <li>Number of interview spots and resident positions</li> <li>Interview format</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Etiquette for communication</li> <li>Resident involvement in selection</li> </ul>
Program priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current resident/faculty demographics and interests</li> <li>Mission statement</li> <li>Diversity initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resident life</li> <li>Psychosocial/wellness support</li> </ul>
Program requirements and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotation/call/didactic schedules</li> <li>Hospital locations and patient populations</li> <li>Subspecialty clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elective and research opportunities</li> <li>Psychosocial and/or wellness initiatives</li> </ul>

**2. Disclose any exclusion criteria for application review.**

Every program should disclose any exclusion criteria for application review. This includes but is not limited to USMLE scores, doctorate type (allopathic vs osteopathic) or location (US or foreign) of medical school, research or letter of recommendation requirements, and prior residencies.

**3. State program-specific interview information.**

Advanced planning can help to reduce both the psychosocial toll on applicants during the application process. Programs should clearly state interview dates and format, number of interview spots, resident positions available, and other expectations of the interviewee, including preferred etiquette for communication.

**4. Share program-specific priorities.**

Programs should share their mission statement, and special considerations for certain applicant groups such as scientific candidates, underrepresented minorities, or local/regional candidates. Diversity initiatives and current resident and faculty demographics and career interests can also help applicants better understand the priorities of the training program.

**5. Provide information about program requirements and opportunities.**

The Work Group encourages programs to disclose rotation/call/consult/didactic schedules, elective and research opportunities, psychosocial and/or wellness initiatives, and subspecialty clinics.

These guidelines have been designed to improve transparency in dermatology residency selection and are one of many steps that need to be taken to make the application and interview process more accessible and equitable for our future colleagues.

**DISCLOSURES**

Drs. Burkemper, Friedman, Huang, Murina, Nord, and Rosmarin are members of the Association of Professors of Dermatology Program Directors Task Force and Residency Program Transparency Work Group. Additionally, Dr. Burkemper serves as the dermatology residency program director at Saint Louis University; Dr. Friedman serves as the dermatology residency director at George Washington University, Dr. Huang serves as the dermatology residency program director at Harvard University; Dr. Murina serves as the dermatology residency associate program director at Tulane University; Dr. Nord serves as the dermatology residency program director at Stanford University; Dr. Rosmarin serves as the dermatology residency program director at Tufts Medical Center.

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