

Gateway Coaching Program

Medical school will challenge you academically, professionally, and personally. You shouldn't have to navigate that journey alone.

At WashU Medicine, every medical student is paired with a dedicated faculty coach from the very beginning of medical school through graduation. More than an advisor or mentor, your coach is a trusted partner who gets to know you as a person, helps you navigate the inevitable challenges of training, celebrates your successes, and supports you in becoming the physician you aspire to be.

The Gateway Coaching Program was built on a simple belief: **the strongest physicians are developed through meaningful relationships, thoughtful reflection, and personalized guidance.** Our mission is to cultivate longitudinal coaching relationships that foster lifelong learning, professional identity formation, leadership development, and personal growth throughout every stage of medical school.

A Relationship Built on Trust

One of the most distinctive features of our program is that **your coach is never part of your formal assessment team.**

Because your coach has no role in grading or evaluating you, your conversations can be honest, open, and focused entirely on your growth. Whether you're celebrating a success, navigating a difficult rotation, exploring specialties, struggling with self-doubt, or simply trying to find balance, your coach is there to help, not to judge.

During your educational journey, your coach comes to know far more than your academic performance. They learn your strengths, your values, your goals, your challenges, and the experiences that shape who you are becoming. That continuity transforms coaching from a series of meetings into a meaningful professional relationship.

Coaching Designed for Your Growth

Your coach serves several important roles throughout your medical school journey.

They help you maximize your performance through formal coaching, much like an athletic coach helps an athlete reach their full potential. Together, you'll review your competency dashboard, identify opportunities for growth, develop your Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), and create meaningful goals that evolve throughout medical school.

Just as importantly, your coach helps you develop as a person. Medical school is filled with moments that shape your identity as a physician. Through guided reflection and thoughtful conversation, coaches help students process those experiences, navigate uncertainty, build resilience, and intentionally grow into compassionate, reflective physicians.

Your coach also helps you build connections. From your coaching cohort to the broader WashU Medicine community, coaches foster belonging, encourage collaboration, and help students discover opportunities that align with their interests and aspirations.

A Community That Grows Together

Students are placed into small longitudinal coaching cohorts of eight to nine classmates. These groups become communities where students reflect together, learn from one another, celebrate milestones, and support each other through the shared experience of medical school.

Coaching sessions occur weekly during the opening months of Phase 1, providing students with a strong foundation and an immediate sense of community. As students become more independent, meetings transition to approximately every other week in Phase 1 and then every four weeks throughout Phases 2 and 3. Individual coaching meetings continue regularly across all four years, ensuring that every student receives personalized guidance throughout their medical education.

Guided by Relational Leadership

The Gateway Coaching Program is grounded in the principles of relational leadership, recognizing that exceptional physicians are defined not only by clinical excellence, but also by their ability to build trust, communicate effectively, lead teams, and cultivate meaningful relationships.

Our coaching philosophy emphasizes:

- Authentic, longitudinal relationships built on trust and psychological safety.
- Curiosity, active listening, and thoughtful dialogue.
- Individualized coaching tailored to each student's unique journey.
- Reflection that promotes continuous learning and lifelong growth.
- Leadership through connection, collaboration, and service.
- Courage and humility while exploring identity, health, illness, systems of care, and the privilege of caring for others.

Our faculty coaches are experienced clinician-educators who receive extensive onboarding and ongoing faculty development in coaching, learner development, the Gateway Curriculum, student support resources, and relational leadership. They are committed to walking alongside students from orientation through graduation, ensuring that every learner has someone who knows them, believes in them, and is invested in their success.

Because becoming an outstanding physician requires more than mastering medicine. It requires becoming the kind of person others trust in their most vulnerable moments. We believe that journey is best taken together.