

Talking Shop: A Novel and Tasty Approach to Mentoring

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Medical students often find themselves searching for mentors, and at the University of California Irvine, there is no lack of willing faculty to take them under their wing. However, some students find themselves intimidated when talking to mentors in a clinical environment. At UC Irvine we have come up with a solution to this dilemma that works for both students and mentors....dinner.

Our Emergency Medicine Interest Group (EMIG) has started monthly "Shop Talk" dinners for students to meet with faculty mentors in a non-clinical environment where they can feel comfortable bringing up any question they have about emergency medicine. Once a month, an emergency medicine (EM) attending hosts a dinner for a group of 8-10 medical students. Some of these dinners are graciously hosted in the attending's home, and others at local restaurants. By keeping these dinners capped with 8-10 students, it allows for a group intimacy and forum during which students can feel comfortable asking questions, both about the profession and life outside of medicine. Allowing for these informal and social gatherings, our medical students are provided the opportunity to gather more information about the field of emergency medicine, as well as be able to make a more educated opinion about their ultimate residency decision.

Dr. Robert Katzer, one of UC Irvine's hosting faculty members, remarked about the dinner, "It is great to have the opportunity to sit down in a social atmosphere and discuss not only life as an emergency physician, but also the challenges of balancing family with work in a two-professional household. I do not remember having the opportunity to hear perspectives on these issues from faculty as a medical student."

These "Shop Talk" dinners have proven to be popular and many students who are not interested in emergency medicine have attended. Informal feedback has shown us that students value these dinners because they feel that they can bring up their questions and concerns in a less formal setting. For students who are not interested in matching in EM these dinners are even more beneficial, and they can ask for advice from attendings, whom they would otherwise never get to know, and gain a fresh perspective on medicine. We are fortunate to have an incredibly involved faculty that not only tirelessly works to help EM-interested students, but also is very involved in university student affairs.

No matter what a student's interest is, or what their motivation is, there is one thing that can bring students and mentors together without a second thought: a delicious dinner.