

Surgical Speed Dating: A Faculty and Resident Networking Event for Pre-Clinical Students

Sarah Adkins, M.Ed.¹, Jalee Birney, MS-4¹, Dylan Vance, MS-4¹, Mary Wallace, MS-2¹, Kennedy Morey, MS-3¹, Michael Bartkoski, MS-1¹, German Berbel, D.O.², Lyndsey Kilgore, M.D.²

¹The University of Kansas School of Medicine-Kansas City, Kansas City, Kansas

²The University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas, Department of General Surgery

³The University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas, Department of Neurosurgery

Received Aug. 28, 2025; Accepted for publication Sept. 10, 2025; Published online Sept. 11, 2025

<https://doi.org/10.17161/kjm.vol18.24428>

Introduction. Impactful mentorship early in medical school is paramount to sparking student interest in surgical subspecialties. With Step I now pass/fail, students are driven to find ways to distinguish themselves and establish meaningful mentorship earlier in their careers. We sought to evaluate how providing low-risk engagement with residents, faculty, and upperclassmen influenced medical student perception of surgical careers and mentorship.

Methods. First and second-year students were invited to an after-hours event at an academic institution in 2022 and 2023. Students spent 12 minutes with nine different surgical subspecialties. Each subspecialty provided a brief overview of their specialty and answered student questions. Pre- and post-surveys were administered to assess student confidence in seeking mentorship and perception of surgical careers.

Results. One event was hosted each academic year for a total of 120 students. Following the event, 70% of students answered ‘slightly’ to ‘strongly confident’ about pursuing a surgical career ($p < 0.016$). Eighty percent reported successfully identifying an upperclassman student mentor ($p < 0.005$). Although confidence in developing relationships with residents and faculty increased to 77% from 58% and 52%, these were not statistically significant ($p < 0.09$ and $p < 0.19$, respectively).

Conclusions. Low-stress, low-cost events such as ‘Surgical Speed Dating’ allow students to gain confidence in pursuing a surgical career and identifying early mentorship. With improved confidence, we predict future success distinguishing oneself among surgical residency applicants. Future studies on sustainability of these mentorships and outcome of shadowing and research opportunities culminating in application to surgical subspecialties are needed.