

Torpedoes in the Water: Getting Sunk by a SLOEpedo

Session Track: CDEM and Best Practices

Session Date/Time: 4/1/2019, 9:20:00 AM - 10:15 AM

Session Objectives: *Those who attend this session will be able to....*

- Understand the impact of a “Bottom Third” SLOE on an applicant’s chances of matching
- Write SLOEs that openly and fairly address an applicant’s areas for improvement and identify training program attributes under which they will thrive.
- Identify “Red Flag” rankings, assessments, and written comments in a SLOE
- Understand the ethical dilemmas in advising students recognized to have a harmful letter in their application

The SLOE was created to provide a standardized evaluative tool to compare applicants apples to apples, to the greatest degree possible. The SLOE is consistently shown to be an important factor in deciding who to interview. According to CORD, the bottom 1/3rd global assessment (GA) rating category should represent students who are competitive and likely to match. Current studies on the SLOE, specifically the “global assessment” rating, demonstrate:

- Although trends are shifting, the majority of programs are still not evenly distributing students GA rating into 1/3rds.
- SLOE GA ratings do not reliably correlate with where the SLOE-writing program places the student on their rank list (more often over-estimated).

Key Take-Home Points and Tips

Act 1: How to not accidentally sink your students:

- Global assessment distribution is meaningless without explanation and context.
- The letter reader will search for information to “fill in the gaps” or address lower marks in a category and will often assume the worst if that info is not readily available. Clearly addressing these concerns avoids letting readers make-up/fill in a detrimental, untrue “story”
- Tips for not accidentally sinking your students:
 - Give context, especially if using terminology that is more easily misinterpreted.
 - Explain outlier radio-buttons and lower third ratings.

Act 2: The good, bad letter: diverting the SLOEpedo

- Get to know your students well, beyond just clinical performance. Be open with them about strengths and weaknesses.
- Learn how difficult it is for programs to remediate various deficiencies (ex: medical knowledge versus professionalism issues).
- Tips for Diverting the SLOEpedo:
 - Avoid being vague
 - Be honest (but don’t be a jerk)- where will s/he need guidance?
 - Highlighting strengths helps programs decide if a deficit is worth the risk in the match. What will s/he bring to the table? Under what circumstances will s/he succeed?

Act 3: The ship is sinking, ethical dilemmas for the SLOEpedoed

- An author of a waived letter *may* share information about the letter that they authored with the applicant.
- A waived LOR cannot be shared with an applicant before, during, or after the application period.
- Tips for Advising a Sinking Ship:
 - Know the rules.
 - Not your letter? Ask advisees to self-reflect on how their rotation went, then give honest feedback.
 - Your letter? Be honest and upfront (the earlier the better)
 - Guide them in applying to programs you know might be a good fit and explicitly advocate for them at specific programs.
 - Be HONEST. If you really feel they won't match in EM, tell them this. Ask them what they love about EM and explore how they might find those things in another field. Counsel them on a parallel plan