

MEET RUSM'S STUDENT ADVOCATE

Paula Wales, EdD, leads the charge in improving the student experience.

From a new clinical advising model to updated curriculum options, the improved student experience at Ross University School of Medicine (RUSM) can be largely attributed to the expertise and passion of Paula Wales, EdD, Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Thanks to her leadership, faculty and staff at the university have joined together with one goal in mind: to enhance student services.

PROVIDING SERVICES THAT MATTER

Dr. Wales admits that pure curiosity first sparked her interest in RUSM: She wanted to know what attracted one of the leading medical educators in the US, Joseph Flaherty, MD, to leave his post as dean of the University of Illinois College of Medicine to accept a new role as executive dean and chancellor at RUSM. So in 2012, she decided to put her 20 years of experience at the Indiana University School of Medicine (IUSM) to work at RUSM.

"The combination of my background in curriculum development and student services allows me to make changes that are meaningful—less arduous," said Dr. Wales. "Let the students focus on medicine, not figuring out what paperwork to fill out."

She first set her sights on enhancing the clinical experience through the launch of the ROSS Model, an acronym for Rely On Student Service. This new clinical advisory model ensures that students who are dispersed throughout the country keep connected to RUSM, stay on track with their clinical timelines, and receive the career and match advising they need to succeed.

"We are not done with students when they graduate," she says. "We want to help them get jobs, and we want to help them match."

And thanks to Dr. Wales' leadership, clinical students have more opportunities than ever to prepare for the National Resident Matching Program®. For example, the Office of Student and Professional Development (OSPD) conducts mock interviews—either in-person at the administrative office in Miramar, FL or via Skype™—to help students prepare for meetings with residency directors.

"RUSM isn't afraid to try new strategies," says Dr. Wales. Some of the new approaches on the horizon include:

- Increasing academic advising and ensuring continuity of guidance by incorporating the Center for Teaching and Learning into the new ROSS Model;
- Pairing OSPD advisors with every RUSM student to discuss career plans; and
- Providing subject examinations for each discipline to help prepare students for the United States Medical Licensing Examination®.



KEEPING STUDENTS THE PRIORITY

Recent surveys indicate that students are noticing and responding favorably to these changes, and perhaps this is because Dr. Wales has her finger on the pulse of student issues. She engages with students daily, particularly with those who are trying to overcome challenges.

"Half my time is spent directly with students. I speak with them every day," says Dr. Wales. "Our students are really smart and capable, but sometimes life gets in the way. It's fulfilling to help them through it."

According to Dr. Wales, producing caring doctors begins with showing that very same care in medical school. "RUSM is not a machine that churns out physicians," she says. "RUSM works with students to help them throughout their medical education journey." ■