

Healthcare Administrative Fellowship Alumni Panel Q & A

Spring 2016

What is the usual structure of a Fellowship?

- Each program is different and varies from 1-2 years.
- Every hospital has distinct cultures and programs. Students should pick a program that is fit for them. During the interview process, each program will want to know why the student specifically chose their program; be prepared with a strong answer.
- Some hospitals allow fellows to pick projects and/or executive mentors. Others require “rotations” through various departments. More specific programs in one particular field may have students work closely with one executive’s office the entire time.
- Regardless of the structure, fellows have unparalleled access to executives.
- Fellowships are training programs to become effective strong leaders. The nature of the fellowship program is to propel a student forward through the hospital administrative ladder. After completing a fellowship, alums have been known to jump 7+ years into their career, even ending up at the director level which usually requires at least 10 years of experience.

What skills are needed for the healthcare administrative Fellowship?

- Strong interpersonal skills and ability to ask intelligent questions are vital to make it through the interview process and through the fellowship as one interacts with a diversity of top-level executives and hospital staff.
- Industry knowledge and interest are necessary, especially because MBAs must compete with many MHA applicants, who are generally more familiar with the medical world. Prior healthcare experience is not a requirement, but an interest and desire to learn about healthcare must be evident.
- Relevant skillset to position. For example, be able to answer technical financial questions for a finance fellowship. Other tools such as project management, marketing, strategy are useful as well.

Are there specific pre-requisites in terms of GPA/Courses?

- It is recommended to complete relevant coursework based on the student's intended career path: marketing, finance, strategy, and human resources are all courses that could be applicable to the healthcare setting.
- Taking a variety of classes to build a strong and varied repertoire is also an advantage MBAs have over MHAs. Often times, programs may choose an MBA over MHA for a broader skillset. Students should use the variety of electives offered at JGSB to their advantage.
- There is a minimum GPA required by most programs, but the school's ranking is also taken into consideration.

What is the typical salary for an administrative fellow?

- The typical salary for a fellowship is lower than that expected after an MBA. A range of \$55-60K for a fellowship is reasonable. However, please keep in mind that it is an investment for the future as great opportunities with generous salaries come after completion of fellowship.

Advice for securing a fellowship?

- In preparation to secure a fellowship, the student should be familiar with the organization and the people. Often times, current fellows play a role in selecting candidates to be interviewed so it is an advantage if students reach out and network with current fellows.
- Students should also be prepared to answer questions about opportunities across healthcare. Interview questions are usually not case-based but can include questions about salient healthcare topics.
- Most interviews are behavioral-based (utilize the STAR template – Situation, Task, Action, Results). There will also be random questions included in the interview to assess responses to unpredictable situations.

What is the average workload and schedule like during Fellowship?

- The average workload is dependent on the program and department. It is important to be flexible but also reasonable. Working hard to impress the executives is definitely a wonderful attribute, but keep in mind to not overpromise deliverables.
- A fellow will spend a lot of time spent sitting in on high-level meetings. The goal of the fellowship is prepare fellows to become effective executive leaders.

What are some typical projects a fellow works on?

- There is a variety of the typical projects, as it is different for every organization.
- Most programs allow some time for fellows to familiarize themselves with executives and staff. After reaching a certain level of comfort, it is important to start volunteering for projects of interest. Flexibility is key and responsibility will increase throughout the fellowship.
- Sample projects include
 - Working with the CEO of a new campus to oversee construction, recruitment, picking interior furniture, etc.
 - Working and implementing a new EMR system
 - Analyzing physician productivity and assessing the implications for hiring more nurse practitioners from a finance and legal perspective
 - Developing branding initiatives with the marketing department

Advice for surviving the fellowship?

- During the fellowship, learn how to take initiative, embrace formal and informal leadership roles. Also note to learn how to leverage the influence of executives. For example, many people may not be willing to do favors for the new MBA-hire, but they will jump at the opportunity to do a favor for their C-level executive. Keep in mind that executives expect independence and respect individual responsibility.
- Effective communication throughout the fellowship is crucial.
- Most importantly, don't neglect personal and family life.

What after the fellowship?

- A fellowship is a year-long interview process. A fellow has the opportunity to identify executives he/she enjoys working with. After the fellowship, there may be opportunities to work for executives a fellow meets during the fellowship.
- Networking with important people in the medical center can open doors in the future.
- The "Fellow" brand is very valuable.

Attendees:

Sara Loewy – Houston Methodist Hospital

Liisa Price – Memorial Hermann Health System

Brian Murry – Texas Children's Hospital