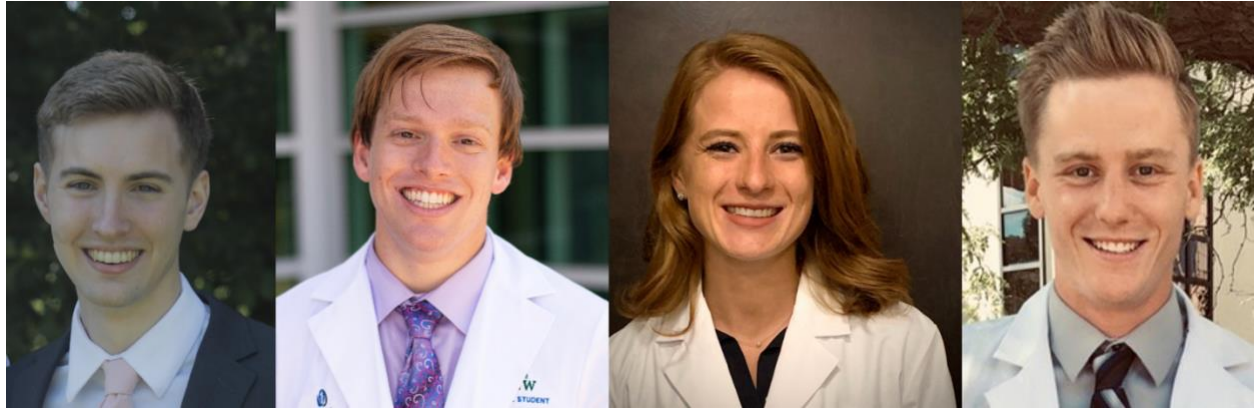


Questions for the 4C Students



By Trevor de Sibour, rising M2; Radek Buss, rising M3; Julia Bosco, rising M2; and Ryan Power, rising M3

In August 2019, the Kern Institute launched **the Coaching for Character, Caring and Competence (4C) Program**. This optional four-year longitudinal program pairs students with faculty coaches who will help to foster the student's professional growth. The students and coaches have individual student-led meetings, as well as small group meetings to discuss topics such as character, professional identity formation and other topics that will help them through medical school and beyond.

We wanted to hear from students about why they chose to participate in the 4C program and the impact that this program has had on them. 4 M1s, Trevor de Sibour, Radek Buss, Julia Bosco and Ryan Powers, submitted their responses to us on 4 questions about their experience with the 4C Coaching Program.

What made you sign up for the 4C program?

Trevor: I signed up for the 4C program because of the mentorship opportunities it provides. I had attended a large university for college where I struggled to find mentorship, particularly pertaining to character and professional development. Moreover, I was concerned about connecting with faculty and potentially peer mentors due to the ways in which COVID-19 has altered our everyday interactions. As such, when I learned of 4C, I immediately decided to apply. I felt it was well structured and an excellent way to quickly connect with a faculty member, peer mentor, and other students in a casual setting.

Radek: As an international, first-generation college graduate, I was faced with a lot of stressful unknowns when beginning medical school. Therefore, when given the opportunity to apply for the 4C program, I did not hesitate at all. I have always been very fond of the mentors I have had as a student, and I realize that I would not be where I am today without their guidance and support. The 4C program was the perfect opportunity to meet new mentors in medicine and form lasting professional relationships along the way.

Julia: Following a year of medical school applications, April 30th finally arrived, and I began the matriculation process at MCW. Little did I know that the certifications, requirements, and deadlines would not stop coming once they started. As I navigated this process amidst the COVID pandemic, I felt overwhelmed and isolated. As deadlines grew closer and questions accumulated, these feelings of isolation persisted. As the pandemic dragged on, our matriculation process and education became increasingly virtual. First, our Second Look Day was canceled. Then, my CPR class was delayed, then canceled, then moved online. Coming from a small liberal arts college, I was intimidated by the prospect of what was looking like Zoom School of Medicine. With my higher education being entirely in-person (at my college class attendance was mandatory), I knew, in this virtual world, I needed mentorship ASAP, and on a whim and blindly seeking support, replied to Dr. Pfeifer's call for participants in the 4C program.

Ryan: At the beginning of medical school, there are suddenly a lot of questions and a lot of options you didn't have time to consider before. Throughout undergrad and the application process, your only real question is "Can I get in?" Then, suddenly, you start medical school and you have so many extra questions like what you'll do for research, how will you study, what information is truly important, how will you function in a healthcare team, what specialties should you pursue, and the list never ends. When I saw an opportunity for a coach and a mentor, I saw an opportunity to meet with someone who had those questions before, too. Not only that, I knew that anyone who signed up to be a mentor for the program obviously had an interest and a passion in helping me find those answers.

What has been the most beneficial part of the program?

Trevor: The most beneficial part of the program is the insight I have gained from each group member. I have an excellent coach whose perspective on medicine I find enlightening, a fantastic peer mentor whose medical school advice has been invaluable, and three incredible peers whose distinct viewpoints have helped shape my understanding of what it means to be a medical student.

Radek: The 4C program has been source of a very different type of education, more closely resembling the one I was accustomed to as a student at a small liberal arts college. Whether one on one with my coach, or during our group meetings, the discussions are focused on topics such as well-being, emotional agility, or personal

strengths. While those may not pertain to pathophysiology or pharmacology, they are undeniably an important aspect of medical education as a whole. We must be able to take care of ourselves in order to properly, and to the best of our ability, treat others. The 4C program has filled this gap in my medical education, for which I am grateful.

Julia: Structured mentorship. As I discussed above, my entire education was in a small and exclusively in-person environment, which I found critical to finding mentorship. Looking back on my first year of medical school, if not for the 4C program, I would not have had the same opportunity to have such a positive mentorship experience early in my medical education. I have been able to connect with peers, mentors, and develop a feeling of belonging at MCW, despite this virtual age. From day one, I was accountable to other people, and they invested in my development. This structured mentorship has facilitated my growth as a student doctor and professional. I have the privilege of receiving one-on-one mentorship from Dr. Ankur Segon, our group Coach, where we spend the entire hour developing strategies to overcome obstacles I am currently facing. Additionally, Miranda Brown, our group's near-peer mentor, invests in my practical clinical skills. For example, last semester, she generously read and provided feedback on my clinical notes. Their input and feedback have been invaluable. I cannot imagine my first year of medical school without their mentorship and the support of my peers in my 4C group.

Ryan: Medical school can be a bubble sometimes. You're focused on your next exam, or STEP, or rumors you hear from classmates or social media about what's important and what you need to do to be a good student. Having a mentor who has two feet firmly planted in the practicing world of medicine is a really great way to get the unequivocal truth. How are my grades actually viewed by residency directors? How can I grow in personal and professional ways, rather than just academically? There were plenty of things I never considered that were brought up by my mentor, and they've been invaluable both in class and in personal growth.

How has your Coach impacted you?

Trevor: I greatly appreciate the guidance my Coach has provided me in regard to my professional development. During our most recent one-on-one meeting, I went in unsure and somewhat cynical of what I wanted the next steps of my professional development to be. Ultimately, we had a really productive and candid conversation that helped me create goals that I found to be meaningful and personally satisfying. Having a mentor who I can be honest with, without having to worry about any repercussions, is invaluable.

Radek: My coach has significantly impacted my career as a medical student. From the first day of this program, she has been open to my questions, no matter how trivial, and supported/guided me through my first two years of medical school. The opportunity to

meet with her regularly allows me to continually monitor my progress and compels me to stay on track in accomplishing my goals; it's as though she is there to both support me, but also keep me accountable.

Julia: Dr. Ankur Segon has been an excellent individual and group mentor. In the group setting, he is engaged, provides individual and generalized feedback, and always asks us directly if we are keeping our minds and bodies healthy. For me, this investment and concern keep me accountable to and help me prioritize my health, which is easy to abandon in the chaos of M1. In the individual setting, Dr. Segon has provided support, helped me navigate professional and personal decisions, and provided his insight on the matter. Additionally, he continually demonstrates what it means to be a good mentor, which is a skill I hope to cultivate in medical school. I look forward to my dedicated 4C meetings. Because of the supportive environment Dr. Segon fosters, I know I can bring any stress or concerns to these meetings, and when I need to, I know that my 4C Coach, near peer mentor, and peers are willing to help or to help me get the help I need.

Ryan: My coach has made MCW an incredibly positive place. I always have someone I can message or email with questions, and she is always willing to celebrate successes with the rest of the group and me. It's invaluable to have a trustworthy resource to dispel any confusion or doubts through such an arduous process.

Why would you recommend the program to incoming students?

Trevor: There are multiple reasons I would recommend the program to incoming students. For students who find seeking out mentorship daunting, 4C is invaluable, as it pairs you with a faculty member who is clearly committed to providing quality guidance. Moreover, the topics discussed at group meetings are not found elsewhere in medical school curriculum, yet have the potential to make students well rounded future physicians. How much students will benefit from 4C is associated with how much they invest. So for those who are ready to invest in the program, I highly recommend it. And who knows? Perhaps along the way, they too will meet one of their best friends through the program.

Radek: I would highly recommend the program to incoming students because it connects you with a coach whom you meet with regularly, and therefore are able to develop a professional relationship. As a coach who is often heavily involved in medical education, they provide support, share ideas, and guide you through your time at MCW. Medical school can be quite stressful and hectic, especially the beginning, and having a coach who helps you navigate your student life is priceless.

Julia: I highly recommend the 4C program to incoming students. I have found this program to be genuine and critical in my growth as a professional. Although similar opportunities for growth and support exist in the M1 curriculum, I think that since this program is elective and outside medical education proper, participants want to invest in

and learn from each other, and so, this does not feel like just another obligation taking time away from my studies. To incoming students, I would say: you get out of this program what you put into it. 4C could become like other programs if its participants do not commit, so invest in it. As someone who came to medical school looking for accountability and quality mentorship, I found what I was looking for in the 4C program.

Ryan: The Big Sib program (which is also hugely helpful) is a really great start to get advice and direction on the academics and requirements of your coursework, but throughout your first two years at MCW you likely won't have regular contact with many mentors who are actively practicing and navigating medicine. This is a great way to get paired up with a faculty member who cares enough about helping and developing students that they've volunteered time out of their incredibly busy schedules to do just that.

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