

Flexible Clinical Experiences: *Self-selected Learning Opportunities for Third Year Medical Students*

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INTRODUCTION

In an ever specializing and increasingly competitive environment, undergraduate medical education needs to be tailored to individual requirements. After many student requests, the University of Massachusetts is proud to announce the introduction of a program which allows students to fulfill this previously unmet need.

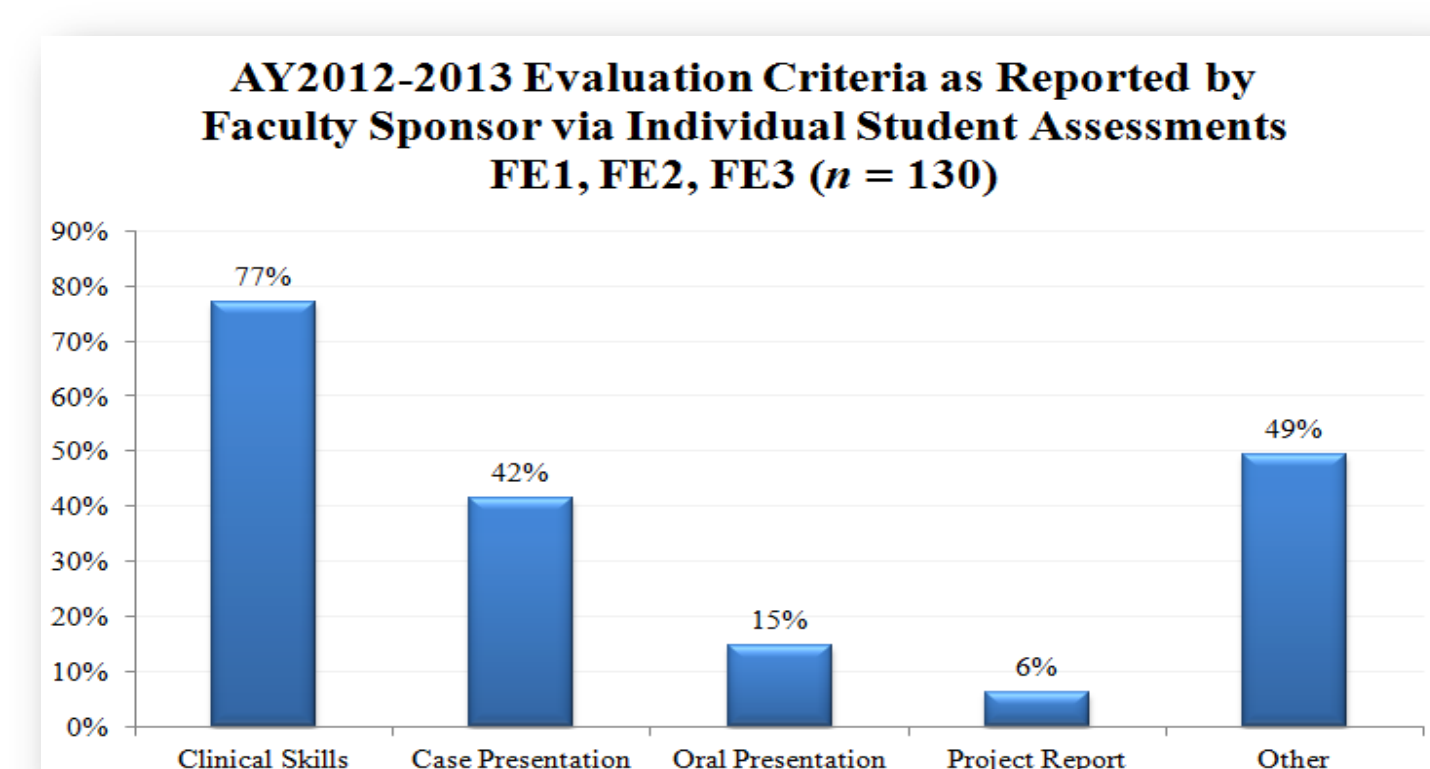
This year marked the inaugural year of the **Flexible Clinical Experience (FCE)** course at UMass. The FCE course is a **third year required course comprised of four 1-week electives**. MS3 students enroll in pre-designed electives or may design their own experiences. Experiences range from a clinical week on the wards, to international travel, to research collaboration, to exposure to holistic and alternative medicine.

We present the basic description of our FCE course here. We also performed a preliminary survey on the UMass student body for early feedback, as well as an early OSR survey to determine how many schools have similar curricula.

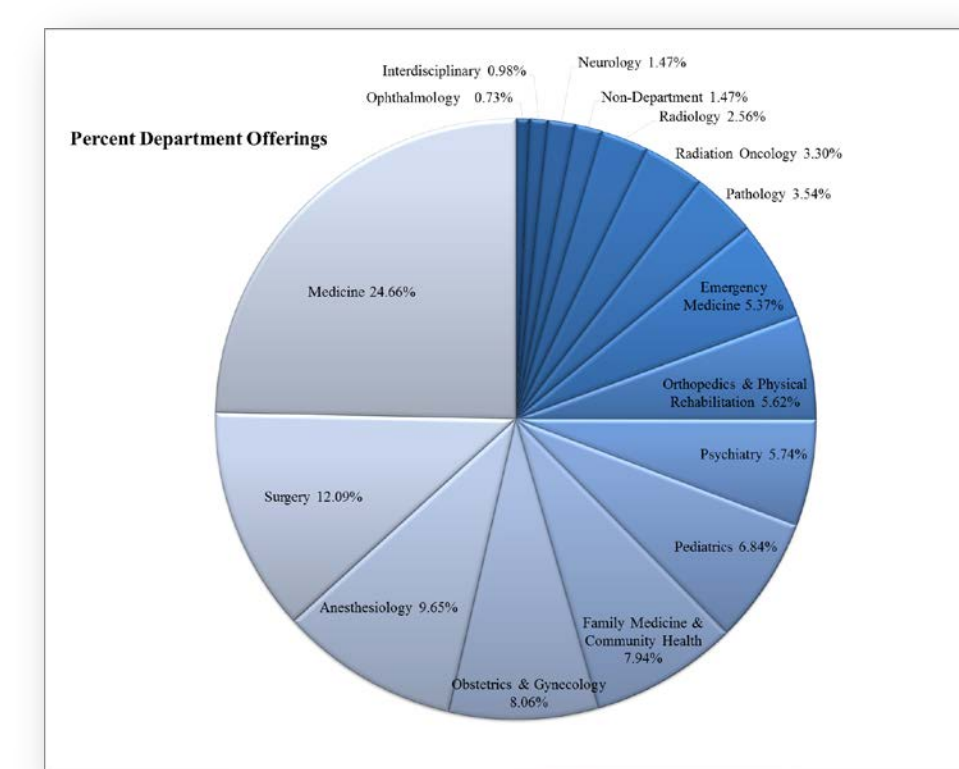
HYPOTHESES

- FCE model at UMMS is a unique program
- Students take advantage of the FCE curriculum to explore areas of medical specialization

FCE Core Curriculum



Family Medicine & Community Health
 370 Adventures in Prison Medicine*
 343 Care of the Older Adult in the Home
 300 Country doctoring - Rural Medicine
 326 Health Behavior Change
 301 Policy and the US Health Care System
 377 Tick Borne Illness
 302 Traditional Osteopathy
 323 DynaMed EBM
 381 Student Designed Family Health on the Vineyard!
 381 Student Designed Rural Emergency Medicine

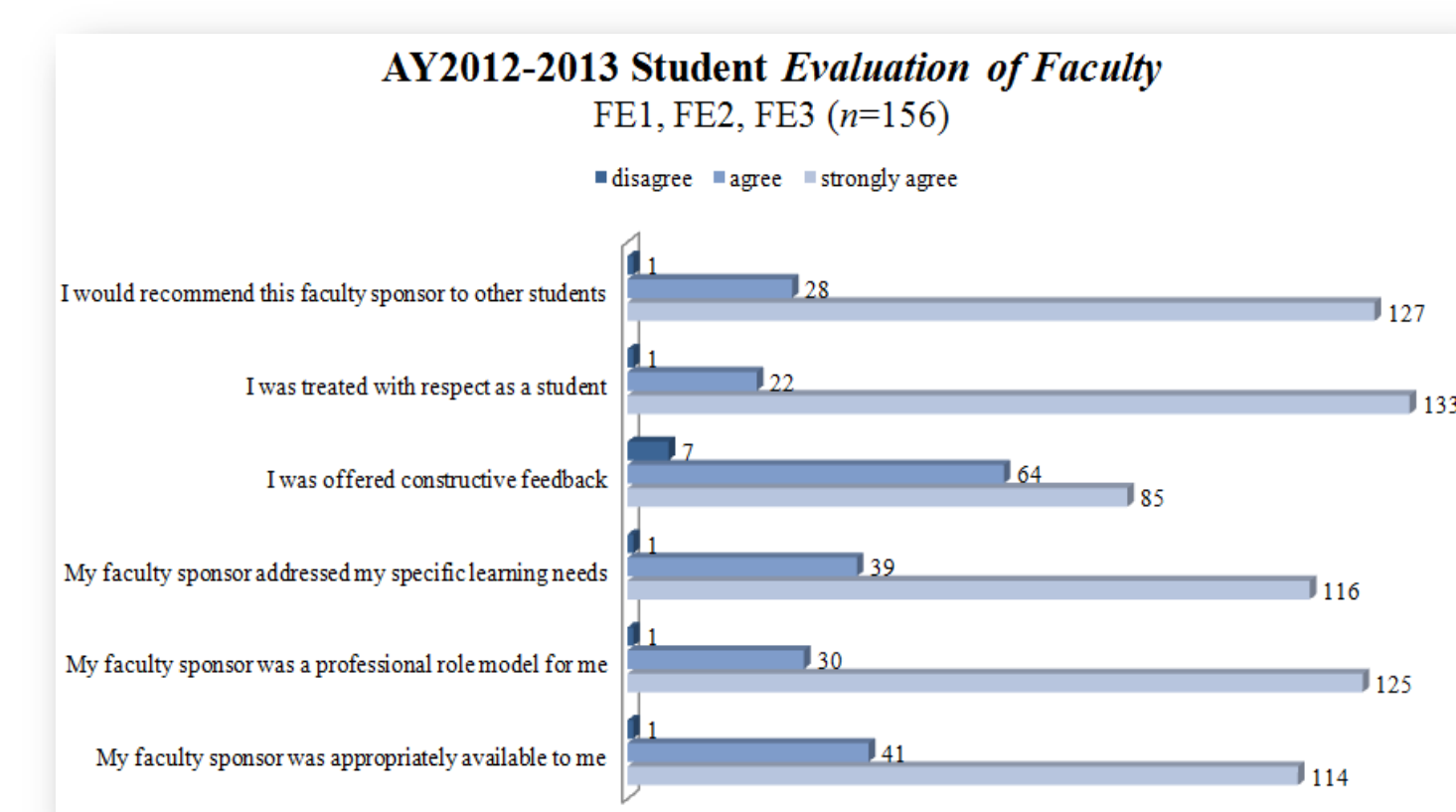


METHODS

A thorough description of the FCE program at UMass Medical School has been compiled. Formal, de-identified *course evaluations* were examined; a short survey created for the purpose of this study was distributed to all UMMS MS3 students regardless of FCE completion (response $n=29$), and members of the Organization of Students Representatives (OSR) were queried about their respective schools (response $n=44$).

The UMMS MS3 survey included the following open-ended questions

- As a whole what could we do to improve your FCE experience?
- What constitutes your ideal FCE?
- As a whole, did you feel that prerequisite affected your overall FCE experience?
- Did you feel your FCE sponsor was adequately prepared?
- Would you like more opportunities outside the institution?
- If you had to design your ideal FCE what would it be?



The OSR LISTSERV disseminated survey consisted of two "multiple choice" questions about the school curricula

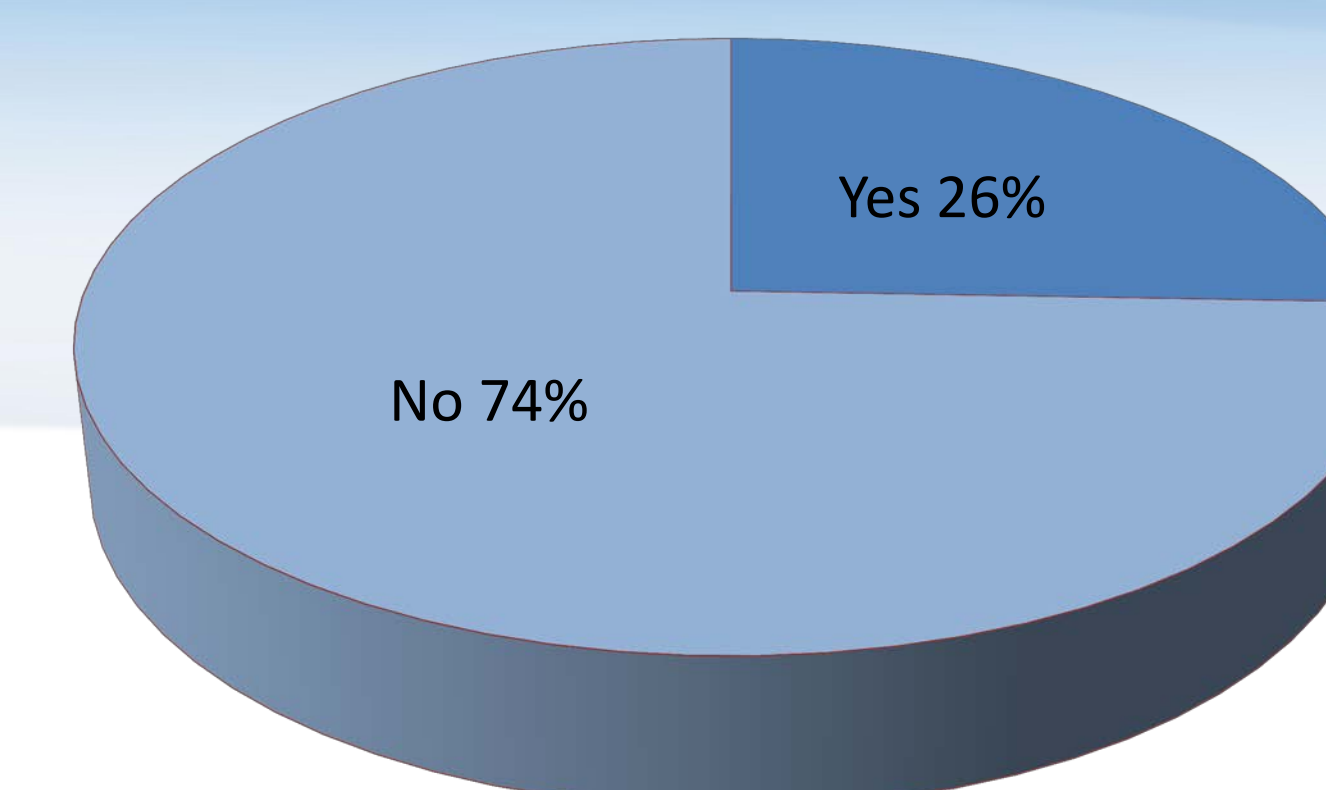
- short 1-2 week electives during third year
- if students were able to design their own electives.

Curricula were sorted into four general categories:

- do not offer third year electives
- offer electives >2 weeks
- offer electives within a clerkship (e.g. surgical subspecialties during a surgery rotation)
- offer short electives.

RESULTS

OSR Survey Results (n=44): Does your school offer short 1-2 week electives during third year?

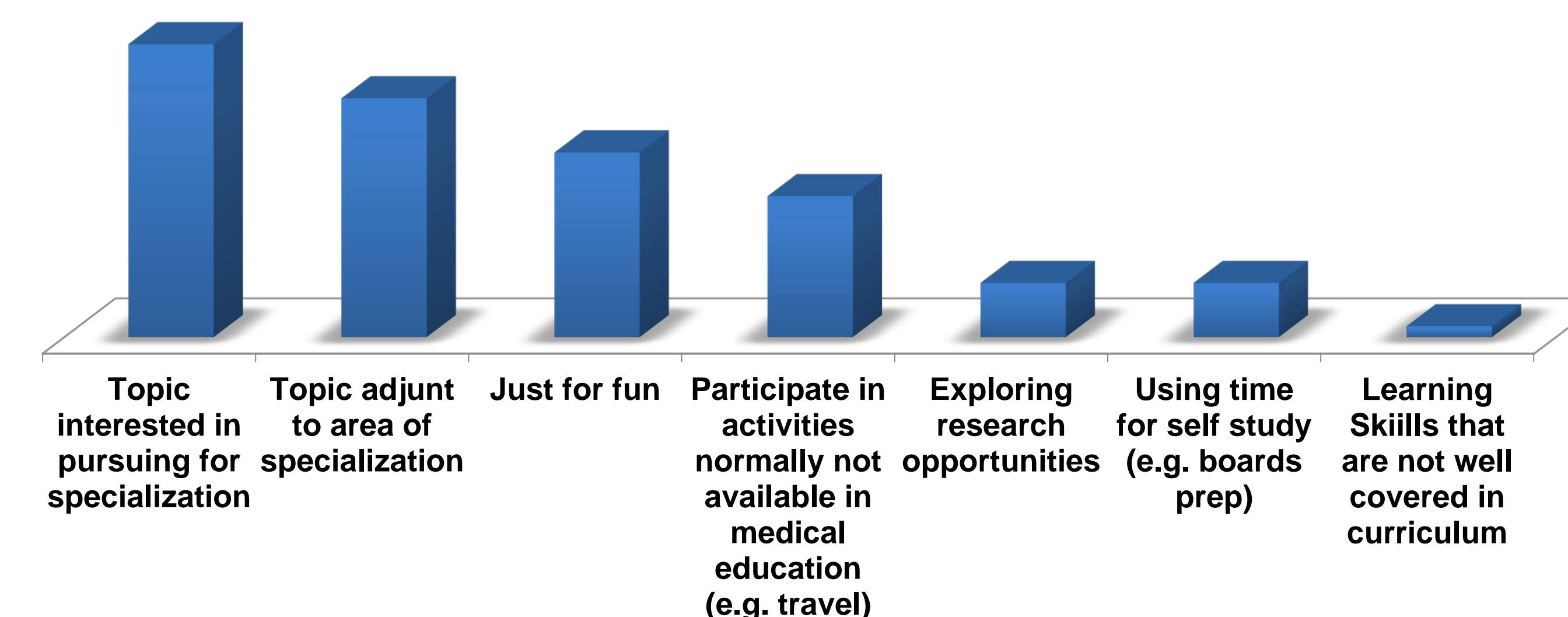


Breakdown of NO/YES Responses:

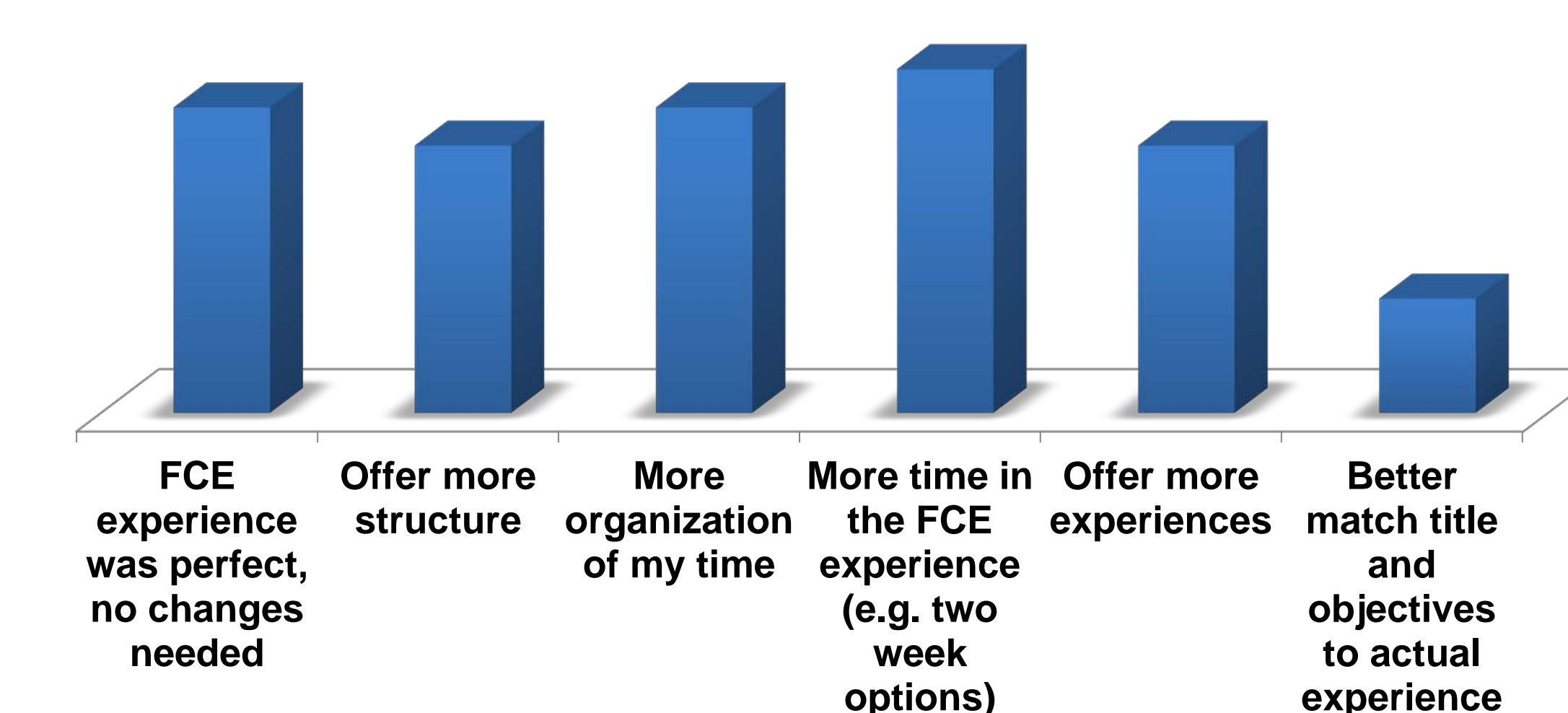


UMMS MS3 Student Survey Result (n=26)

What constitutes your ideal FCE experience?



As a whole, what could we do to improve your FCE experience?



Was your FCE sponsor adequately prepared?

Yes	93%
No	7%

Would you like opportunities offered outside UMass?

Yes, I would like pre-organized options	47%
Yes, I would like to design my own	41%
No, I would stay here	12%

Sample Student Suggestions for Future FCEs:

International opportunities
 Networking opportunities
 Skill-building/procedure learning

LIMITATIONS

At this point our program is in the pilot year. It is too early for us to gauge success in terms of student satisfaction, and the student utilization of the program in molding their medical education. Our primary survey of other schools is also limited by student response accuracy, as well as a low response rate.

CONCLUSIONS

The FCE model offered at UMass Medical School of short, 1-2 week electives within the third year is a relatively **unique model in preliminary national surveys**. We believe this curricula allows students to customize their medical education in previously unavailable ways.

At UMass, most students use the program to **explore potential areas of specialization or adjunct areas**. Other commonly listed include for fun, as well as to participate in activities not normally available in medical school. The inaugural year of the program had some technical difficulties but was overall successful. We plan on continuing this curricula and tweaking the FCEs as necessary to fulfill student needs.

The FCE program allows students to **explore and experience areas of interest early in their medical education**, to have experiences beyond the traditional medical curriculum, and to tailor their education such

