OnlineMedEd

Backcasting Exercise Overview

Backcasting is a thought exercise in which the project team works backwards from a positive future. We imagine a future, ideal state - that we've already achieved our goal - and then look back to assess what would be required to get there.

The goal is to identify all of the reasons, events, and decisions (variables) that led to a desirable outcome. In doing so, it will enable the team to better identify strategies, tactics, and actions that need to be implemented to reach our goal.

Exercise Results

Scenario: Imagine the Step 1 exam is an overwhelming success for the students at your institution - 100% pass rate

Instructions: Groups were assigned a timeframe (a quarter) leading up to the Step 1 exam and asked to brainstorm ideas as to why they were overwhelmingly successful – during this quarter, what events, decisions, internal/external factors, etc. led to an optimal outcome?

Q1 Responses:

- Peer mentor groups were established early for students to get some extra help and insight
- Students were very well informed regarding the expectations and checkpoints
- Identify before matriculation first-year students who may need more support to succeed academically
- The very best instructors were in place to help students develop learning
- Supplemental instructors were identified and trained early on
- PBL's and TBL's were integrated early to help students collaborate on learning
- Good early indicator/ warning signs in place
- Provide a menu to students of external resources that may benefit them with "reviews" from near peers
- Better or more explicitly integrate board prep into curriculum so students don't feel like they have to focus on one or the other
- Wellness activities were incorporated in a meaningful way throughout the quarter to reduce stress and anxiety
- Annually survey all students on how they prepared for Step/Level 1 - hope to correlate approaches with success
- All students offered opportunity to work with academic coach
- Students stayed off Reddit
- Peer leaders in 3rd year provided guidance to 2nd years
- Be explicit about role of test prep resources
- Exam questions tied basic science concepts to clinical presentation
- Students were given guidance on timelines for preparation by academic affairs
- Early clinical integration/intro to clerkships
- Step 1 was moved to middle of 3rd year
- Exams in MS2 year focused on clinical reasoning- short answer format).
- Recognize role of Q-banks for test-prep, but not learning phase
- MCQ's in year 1-2 were used for formative evaluation, not high stakes exams

Q2 Responses

- Emphasize growth mindset
- Fully disposition student cohort for needs for learning styles and support
- Assess for calibration (aptitude / strengths and weaknesses)
- Continually teaching and reinforcing wellness
- Positive emotional towards preparation
- Continuous marketing to students on success
- Dedication to successful learning schedules
- Wellness schedule first then fill with knowledge topics/questions
- Peer-2-peer mentoring (upper class messages)