



From Outreach to Interview: Recruitment Basics and Candidate Selection Strategies

KRISTEN YOUNG, MSPAS, PA-C

APP FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CONSULTANT - NORTON HEALTHCARE

SHANNON GAASCH, MS, CRNP

APP CRITICAL CARE FELLOWSHIP COORDINATOR

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND MEDICAL CENTER

Disclosures

Shannon Gaasch—
No financial
disclosures

Kristen Young –
No financial
disclosures for this
topic
(Stryker PV)

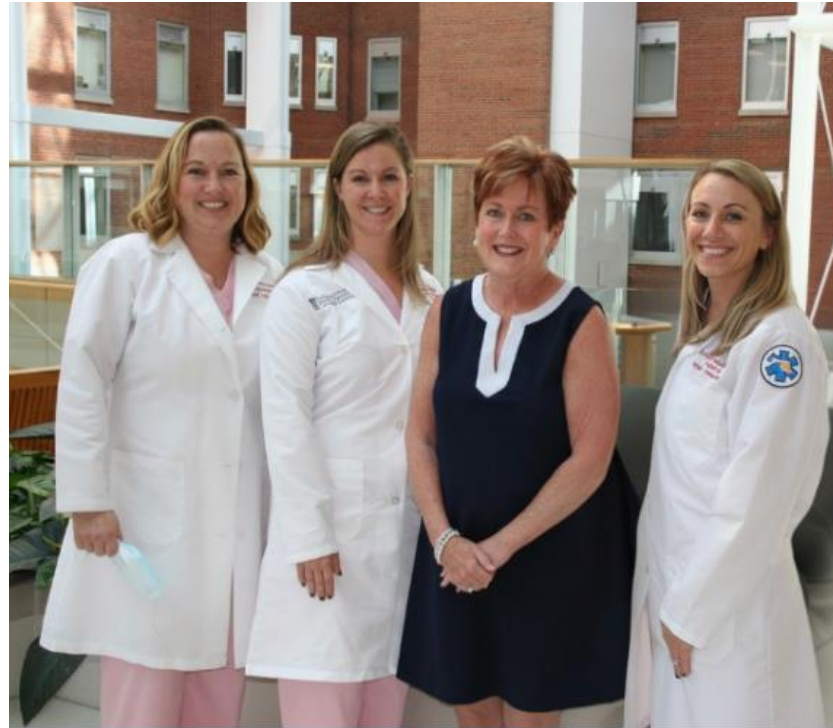
About Us: Kristen Young, MSPAS, PA-C

- ▶ Pulmonary / Critical Care PA
- ▶ Graduated A.T. Still University, Arizona School of Health Sciences, Mesa, AZ 2008
- ▶ APP Fellowship Program Founder & Consultant, Norton Healthcare; Louisville, KY
- ▶ Adjunct Professor, Sullivan University, Louisville, KY
- ▶ Medical Education Manager, Stryker PV
- ▶ APPAP At Large Board Member



About us: Shannon

- ▶ Trauma Critical Care NP
- ▶ Graduated from University of Maryland, Baltimore 2015
- ▶ Critical Care APP Fellowship Coordinator
- ▶ Program Manager of APP Education at University of Maryland Medical Center
- ▶ APGAP Membership Chair
- ▶ Breast Cancer Thriver



Objectives

- Develop a structured interview process
- Utilize behavioral and situational interviewing techniques
- Recognize key attributes of high-potential APP candidates
- Implement standardized evaluation tools and best practices
- Create a positive and engaging candidate experience

Interview Process

STRUCTURED ALIGNMENT

Why?

- ▶ Ensures fair, consistent, and objective candidate assessment
- ▶ Improves selection of fellows who will thrive in the program
- ▶ Reduces bias and variability across interviewers
- ▶ Strengthens alignment between recruitment and fellowship outcomes
- ▶ Enhances candidate experience and program reputation

Define What Success Looks Like



Align evaluation with program goals

Program Goal	Interview Focus Area
Clinical readiness	Clinical reasoning and decision-making
Leadership development	Initiative, influence, and accountability
Interprofessional collaboration	Teamwork and communication
Scholarly activity	Curiosity, research, and quality improvement
Organizational engagement	Mission, values, and culture fit

Best practice...

- ▶ Every interview question should assess at least one predefined competency linked to a program goal

Interview workflow

- Application review using standardized criteria
- Structured interviews with common question sets
- Independent scoring by interviewers
- Post-interview debrief using competency ratings
- Aggregate scores and holistic review
- Final ranking aligned with program priorities

Interview team calibration

Prior to Interview Season

- Review program competencies and goals
- Train interviewers on structured interviewing techniques
- Discuss scoring expectations and examples
- Address common sources of bias
- Conduct mock interviews and scoring exercises

Outcome

- Greater reliability and consistency across faculty interviewers.

Multi-round interviews

- HR screening
- Phone Interview
- Full day interview on didactic day

Advantages

- Evaluates different competencies at different stages of the interview process
- Reduces bias
- Standardizes the interview process for all candidates
- Conserves faculty time and resources



Behavior and Situational Based

TECHNIQUES DURING AN INTERVIEW

Why go beyond the resume...

- ▶ Resumes and applications provide information about:
 - ▶ Education and training
 - ▶ Certifications and clinical experiences
 - ▶ Research and leadership activities
- ▶ However, they often do not reveal:
 - ▶ How candidates think through complex clinical situations
 - ▶ How they communicate and collaborate with teams
 - ▶ How they respond to feedback, stress, or uncertainty
 - ▶ Whether they demonstrate professionalism and growth potential
- ▶ Structured interviewing helps identify candidates most likely to succeed in fellowship and within the organization.

Behavioral vs Situational Interviewing

Behavioral Interviewing	Situational Interviewing
Explores past experiences	Evaluates response to hypothetical scenarios
"Tell me about a time..."	"What would you do if..."
Assesses demonstrated behaviors	Assesses judgment and decision-making
Predicts future performance based on prior actions	Assesses reasoning in unfamiliar situations

Best Practice: Use a combination of both approaches to obtain a more complete assessment of each candidate.

Create competency-based interview questions

- ▶ Standardized questions asked of all candidates
- ▶ Behavioral and situational interview formats
- ▶ Questions mapped directly to fellowship competencies

Competency: Clinical Reasoning

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Tell us about a challenging patient case that required significant clinical judgment. How did you approach it?"

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "A patient's condition is worsening despite current treatment. How would you evaluate the situation and determine next steps?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Data gathering and prioritization
 - ▶ Clinical decision-making process
 - ▶ Recognition of limitations
 - ▶ Patient safety awareness
 - ▶ Collaboration and escalation when appropriate

Competency: Communication Skills

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Describe a time you had to navigate a difficult conversation with a patient, family member, or healthcare team member."

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "How would you address a disagreement with a physician regarding a patient's plan of care?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Clarity and organization
 - ▶ Active listening
 - ▶ Conflict resolution
 - ▶ Respectful collaboration
 - ▶ Patient-centered communication

Competency: Professionalism

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Tell us about a mistake, setback, or difficult feedback you received. How did you respond?"

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "What would you do if you observed a colleague engaging in behavior that could compromise patient safety?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Accountability
 - ▶ Integrity and ethical decision-making
 - ▶ Self-awareness
 - ▶ Openness to feedback
 - ▶ Commitment to continuous improvement

Competency: Resilience and Adaptability

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Describe a time when priorities changed unexpectedly during a clinical shift."

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "How would you manage multiple urgent patient needs while balancing competing responsibilities?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Flexibility
 - ▶ Prioritization skills
 - ▶ Emotional intelligence
 - ▶ Stress management
 - ▶ Ability to function in dynamic clinical environments

Competency: Leadership

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Tell me about a time you identified a problem and took initiative to solve it."

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "A patient begins to deteriorate, and several team members are waiting for someone else to act. What would you do?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Initiative
 - ▶ Accountability
 - ▶ Delegation
 - ▶ Prioritization
 - ▶ Emotional Intelligence

Competency: Commitment to learning & quality improvement

▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Tell me about a time you realized you lacked knowledge or experience in a clinical situation. What did you do?"

▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "Six months into fellowship you continue to struggle with a particular skill despite repeated practice. What would you do?"

▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Growth mindset
- ▶ Self-reflection
- ▶ Systems thinking
- ▶ Adaptability
- ▶ Receptiveness to feedback

Competency: Alignment with organization's mission and values

- ▶ **Behavioral Question**

- ▶ "Tell me about a patient interaction that changed how you practice medicine?"

- ▶ **Situational Question**

- ▶ "A patient's family requests treatment that you believe is not medically beneficial. How would you approach the conversation?"

- ▶ **Listen For:**

- ▶ Compassion
 - ▶ Integrity
 - ▶ Patient-centered care
 - ▶ Collaboration
 - ▶ Professionalism

MMI – Multiple Mini Interviews

- ▶ Series of mini interview stations 4-10
- ▶ Different short questions or scenarios at each station
- ▶ Rubric for consistency (same interviewer as well)
- ▶ Used by the AAMC (Association of Medical Colleges)

Challenging Situation Interviewer Form

Scenario:

You are the sole survivor of a small plane crash. Both the pilot and co-pilot were killed in the crash. It is mid-January, and you are in Northern Canada. The daily temperature is 25 below zero, and the night time temperature is 40 below zero. There is snow on the ground, and the countryside is wooded with several creeks crisscrossing the area. The nearest town is 20 miles away. You are dressed in city clothes appropriate for a business meeting.

You managed to salvage the following items, but you can only take 3 items with you.

A ball of steel wool

A loaded .45-caliber pistol

Newspapers (one per person)

Extra shirt and pants for each survivor

A sectional air map made of plastic

A compass

A small ax

Can of Crisco shortening

Cigarette lighter (without fluid)

20 x 20 ft. piece of heavy-duty canvas

One quart of 100-proof whiskey

Family-size chocolate bars (one per person)

What 3 items would you choose to take and why?

Additional Questions:

1. Describe a time in your life you have faced challenges and overcome them.

Emergent Situation Interviewer Form

Scenario:

You are in the hospital, starting your daily rounds on patients. You walk into a patient room. He is a 62 y/o male with lung cancer and hemoptysis. As you walk in, you see he is having difficulty breathing. His respiratory rate is 38 with an oxygen saturation of 82%. What are your next steps?

Additional Questions:

1. How would your coworkers describe you in crisis / emergent situations?
2. Give an example of how you handled yourself in a crisis / emergent situation.

Rubric for MMI: Emergent Situation				
Scale: 1 Unsatisfactory 2 Borderline 3 Satisfactory 4 Outstanding				
Candidate remains calm and objective in times of stress or uncertainty	1	2	3	4
Candidate is able to assess the situation and think creatively	1	2	3	4
Candidate demonstrates the ability to adapt to setbacks	1	2	3	4
Candidate is able to communicate clearly and logically	1	2	3	4
Is there anything about this candidate that concerns you?	Yes		No	
If you answered yes to the last question, please explain:				
	Total Score			

MMI - Example

Group Activities

- ▶ Team collaboration exercises or problem-solving scenarios.
- ▶ Lego Activity



Faculty Panel Interview Questions and Rubric 2024

Name of interviewee: _____ Name of interviewer: _____
 Program Interviewing For: _____ Date: _____

	Unsatisfactory	Borderline	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Tell me about yourself and why you are interested in this fellowship program.	1	2	3	4
What are your career goals, both short term (2-5 years) and long term (5-10 years)?	1	2	3	4
What are your strengths?	1	2	3	4
What areas of opportunity would you like to improve on during the fellowship?	1	2	3	4
Give an example of situation where you observed exceptional leadership being demonstrated. What did you take away from that situation?	1	2	3	4
Describe your ideal preceptor. Where do you see the preceptor fitting into your professional development and maturity?	1	2	3	4
Give an example of a time when you had multiple conflicting deadlines. What tools did you use to ensure you were successfully in completing your tasks?	1	2	3	4
How best do you receive feedback? Give an example of a time you received feedback and how you used it to improve.	1	2	3	4
Describe an experience where you were able to teach someone something new.	1	2	3	4
What else would you like us to know about you as a candidate for this program?	1	2	3	4
<i>Is there anything about this candidate that concerns you? (If 'yes' please explain below)</i>	YES	NO		

Total Score /40

Panel Interview

Rubric for Peer Application by current fellow

Scale: 1 Unsatisfactory 2 Borderline 3 Satisfactory 4 Outstanding

Engaged in conversation and seems interested.	1	2	3	4				
Speaks confidently and clearly.	1	2	3	4				
Presents themselves in a professional manner	1	2	3	4				
Overall impression.	1	2	3	4				
Is there anything about this candidate that concerns you?	Yes		No					
If you answered yes to the last question, please explain:								
	Total Score							
Additional Comments:								

Peer Interview



Dinner Interview

Attributes

OF CANDIDATES

Application Requirements

► Standardized requirements (e.g.; CV, letter of intent, references, specialty specific requirements)

► Bare minimum



Eligible Applicants:

- Any licensed ACNP/AGACNP or PA.
- Current ACNP/AGACNP or PA students enrolled in an accredited program.
- **Family NPs are not eligible to apply.**

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)

How to apply:

- Include the supporting documentation in your application as well as submit all documentation to [Eumekia Wright](#).
- Curriculum Vitae/Resume.
- One page Statement of Interest.
- Education Transcripts from the masters/doctorate nurse practitioner or physician assistant program. If you are a current student, send a transcript which reflects your most recent student status.
- Copy of BLS and ACLS cards (must be American Heart Association issued).
- Three reference letters written within the last 12 months:
 - Reference letters should address clinical experience, clinical knowledge, critical thinking, and professionalism.
 - If you have graduated within the past 2 years, submit one letter from your program director.
 - Preference for one letter submitted by a physician who has worked with you clinically.

The Emory Critical Care APP Fellowship values diversity in different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as age, gender identity, disability and years of experience in the health care field.

- Three letters of recommendation with contact information included: One from a physician assistant or nurse practitioner program; others must be from a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner
- Curriculum vitae
- Letter of intent (one to two pages)
- Active Basic Life Support/Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support certifications (critical care track only)

Fellow Selection

- ▶ A successful fellowship candidate is not necessarily the one with the strongest CV, but the one who demonstrates the mindset and adaptability to become an exceptional APP.

Look For Candidates Who...

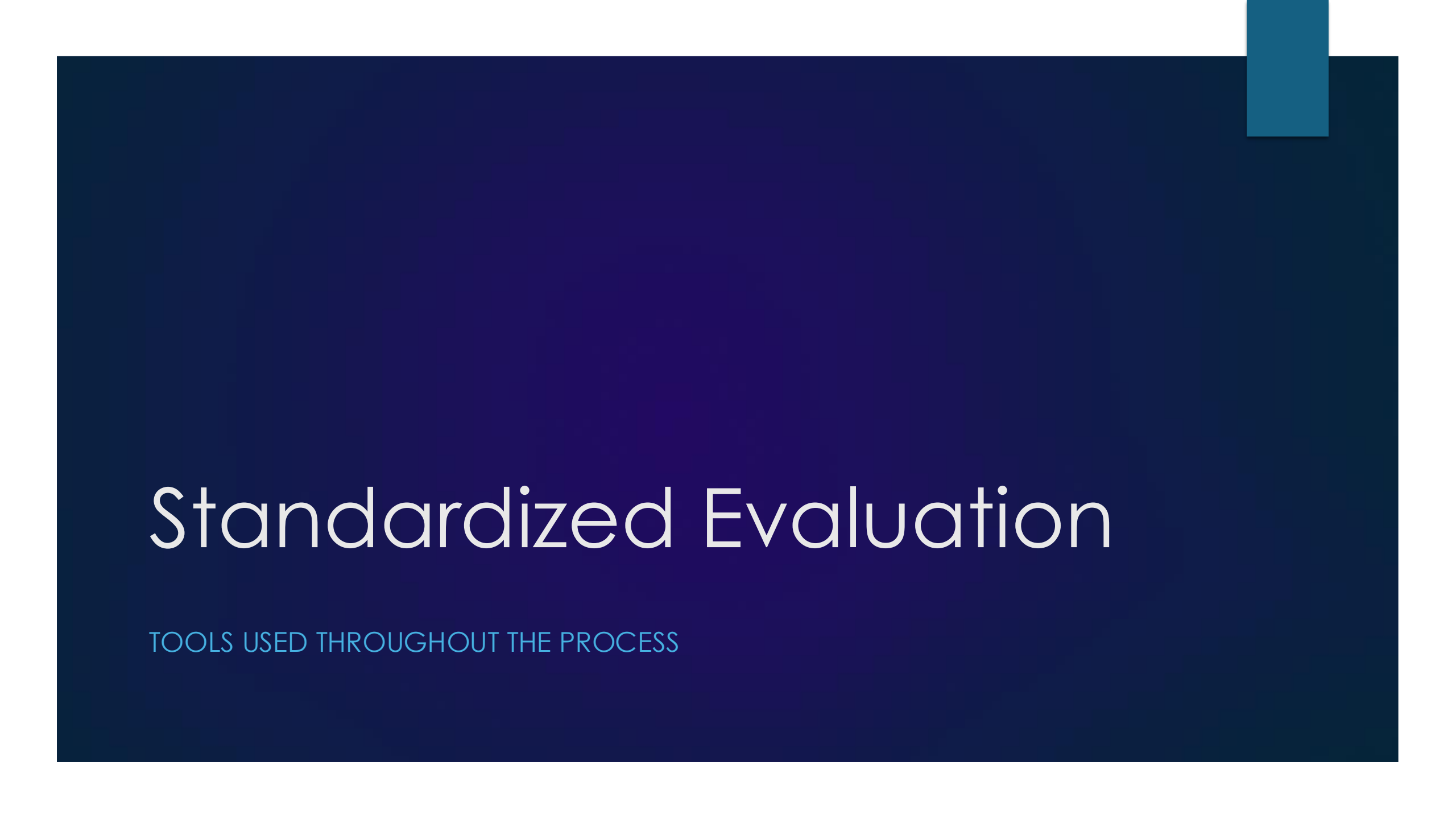
✓ Curious rather than complacent

✓ Collaborative rather than competitive

✓ Reflective rather than defensive

✓ Resilient rather than discouraged by challenges

✓ Committed to continuous growth and patient-centered care



Standardized Evaluation

TOOLS USED THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Standardized Scoring

- ▶ **Use Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (1–5)**
- ▶ **1 – Below Expectations**
 - ▶ Limited examples
 - ▶ Minimal self-awareness
 - ▶ Responses lack relevance
- ▶ **3 – Meets Expectations**
 - ▶ Demonstrates competency with relevant examples
 - ▶ Reflects appropriately on experiences
- ▶ **5 – Exceeds Expectations**
 - ▶ Strong examples with measurable impact
 - ▶ Demonstrates advanced insight, leadership, and growth

Benefits:

- Improves consistency among interviewers
- Facilitates objective comparison of candidates
- Supports defensible selection decisions

Rubric Examples

Round 1 Interview Score Card

Applicant Name: _____

Date: _____

Profession: PA or NP

Scoring System:

- ☐ Excellent (answered question, succinct, organized and gave example with their answer, not repetitive or too wordy) (3 points)
- ☐ Good (answered question, organized, well spoken, but no example) (2 points)
- ☐ Fair (1 points) (answered question, but repetitive, wordy)
- ☐ Needs improvement (0 point) (didn't answer question, went off on tangent, or evaded a question)

Interview Questions	Excellent(3)	Good(2)	Fair(1)	Needs improvement(0)
Can you share with us a pivotal moment in your life that inspired you to pursue a career as a nurse practitioner/physician assistant? And how did you become interested in pursuing a career in critical care medicine?				
Why are you interested in pursuing a fellowship rather than finding on the job training for a position?				
Critical care is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding, especially over a long period with alternating or inconsistent schedules. This can be exacerbated when going through a fellowship where you are working long hours but also spending time outside of work learning independently. How do you plan to prioritize your own well-being to combat burn out?				

Rubric for Application

Scale: 1 Unsatisfactory 2 Borderline 3 Satisfactory 4 Outstanding

Meets minimum requirements	1	2	3	4
References	1	2	3	4
Letter of intent	1	2	3	4
Overall application	1	2	3	4
Is there anything about this candidate that concerns you?	Yes		No	
If you answered yes to the last question, please explain:				
	Total Score			
Additional Comments:				

Candidate Experience

TECHNIQUES DURING AN INTERVIEW

Why It Matters

- ▶ The interview experience is often a candidate's **first impression of your program culture**. A positive, organized, and engaging process strengthens recruitment, increases acceptance rates, and enhances your program's reputation.

Remember, Candidates Are Interviewing You Too!

- ▶ Program Fit:
 - ▶ Not all candidates will be a good fit for every program, and vice versa.
 - ▶ It's crucial to ensure the candidate's goals, values, and career aspirations align with the fellowship's offerings and environment.
- ▶ Mutual Evaluation:
 - ▶ During the interview, candidates are assessing if your program matches what they are looking for in terms of professional growth, mentorship, and long-term career goals.
 - ▶ Be transparent about your program's culture, expectations, and opportunities to ensure a good match for both sides.

Before the Interview: Setting Up the Candidates for Success



Provide a clear interview agenda and timeline



Share logistics, parking, virtual links, and contact information



Introduce interviewers and program expectations

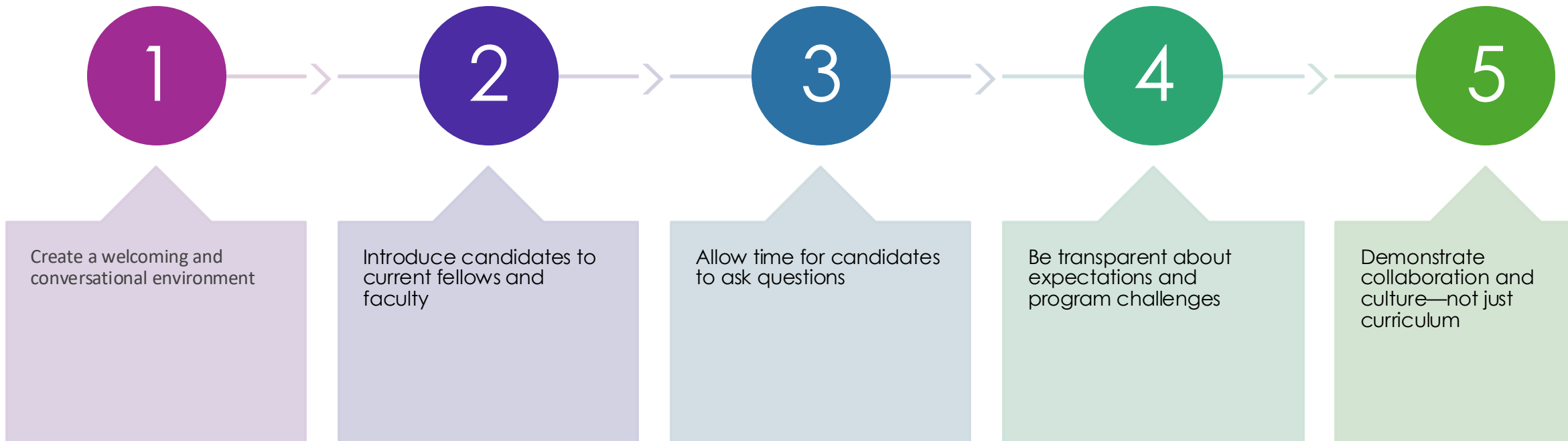


Communicate promptly and professionally



Minimize uncertainty with consistent messaging

During the Interview: Showcase Your Program



After the Interview: Don't Go Silent



Communicate next steps and expected timelines



Send timely follow-up communications



Notify candidates promptly of decisions



Provide constructive feedback when appropriate



Leave every candidate with a positive impression, regardless of outcome

A great candidate experience reflects a great fellowship program.

► Programs that communicate effectively, stay organized, and demonstrate authentic engagement are more likely to:

- Attract top APP candidates
- Improve match and acceptance rates
- Build a strong reputation within the APP community
- Foster long-term relationships with future colleagues and advocates

Summary

A structured interview process:



✓ Aligns recruitment with fellowship mission and goals



✓ Promotes fairness, consistency, and transparency



✓ Identifies candidates most likely to succeed and contribute



✓ Strengthens the long-term quality of the APP Fellowship Program

Interviewing Best Practices

- ▶  Ask all candidates the same core competency-based questions
- ▶  Use standardized scoring criteria
- ▶  Probe for specifics using follow-up questions
- ▶  Focus on behaviors and thought processes rather than outcomes alone
- ▶  Document evidence that supports ratings

- ▶ **Avoid**
 -  Leading questions
 -  Over-reliance on intuition or "fit"
 -  Inconsistent questioning across candidates
 -  Making decisions based solely on resumes or credentials

Standardization Summary

**Consistency creates equity.
Structure improves quality.**

The goal is not to hire candidates who are most similar to current team members—it is to identify individuals who demonstrate the competencies, values, and growth mindset needed to thrive in an APP fellowship.



The best APP Fellows are selected for potential, not Perfection



Technical knowledge can be taught. The qualities that predict long-term success are often demonstrated through behaviors, mindset, and interpersonal skills

Attribute Summary

Candidate Experience Best Practices

✓ Standardize interview schedules and questions for consistency

✓ Respect candidates' time by staying on schedule

✓ Eliminate unnecessary stressors and logistical barriers

✓ Keep communication frequent, clear, and personalized

✓ Treat every candidate as a future colleague and ambassador for your program

“

The goal is to identify APP fellows with the greatest potential for success, growth, and contribution to the program and institution.

”

KRISTEN.YOUNG@NORTONHEALTHCARE.ORG

SHANNON.GAASCH@UMM.EDU

Thank you! 