

Promoting Equal Opportunity for Medical Students: Initial Impact of a Debt-free Initiative

Presented at the 2020 ELAM® Leaders Forum

Yoon Kang, MD, Weill Cornell Medicine

Collaborators: Linda M. Gerber, PhD; Sibel Klimstra, MD; Peter M. Marzuk, MD; Michael B. Slade, MBA

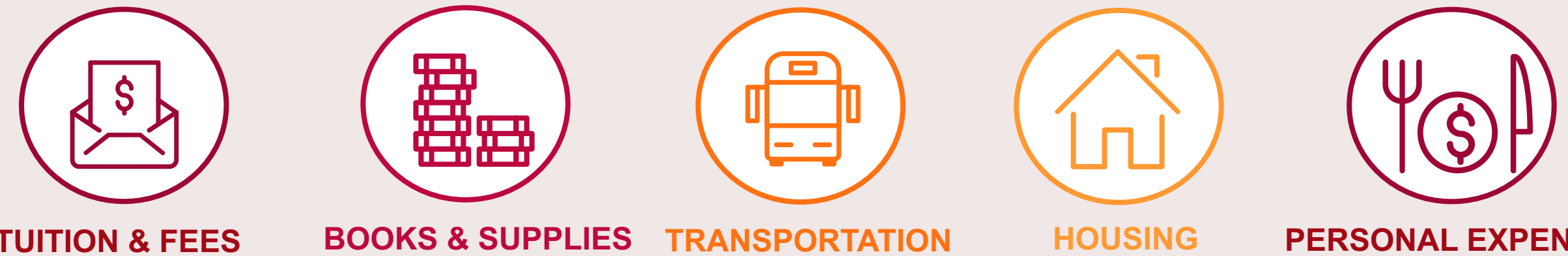
Mentor: Augustine M.K. Choi, MD

Special Acknowledgement: Susan Vuong, Dillon Kuiava, Rachel Han from the Office of Institutional Reporting

Background

- Financial inequity that arises from costs of medical school may impact admissions, student academic performance, academic choices during medical school and final career choices.
- Beginning with AY 2019-20, all Weill Cornell students with financial need, as defined by standardized institutional calculations, will graduate debt-free based on the annual cost of attendance

Cost of Attendance

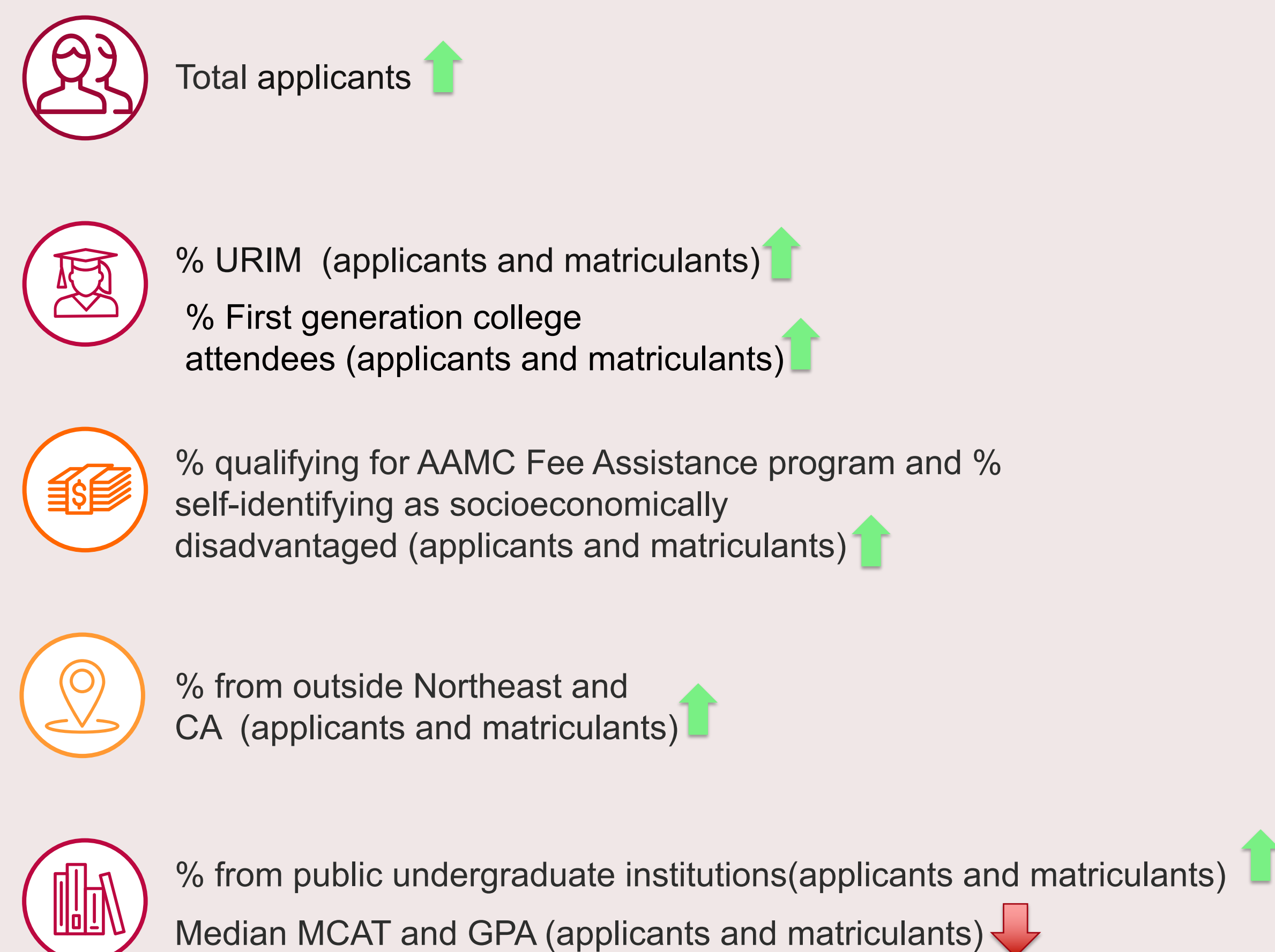


Purpose

- To identify metrics to evaluate the initial impact of the debt-free initiative on our 2020 applicants and matriculants (incoming Class 2024).

Approach & Hypothesis

- Admissions data from 2020 Weill Cornell applicant pool and matriculants (Class 2024) compared with applicant pools and matriculants from 2016-2019, controlling for national trends when these data were available.
- We hypothesized the following impact of the debt-free initiative:



Results

Applicants

- Statistically significant increase in applicant pool, controlling for national trends as reported by the AAMC, based on mean of applicant pools from 2016-2019 vs applicant pool in 2020
- Statistically significant increases in the % of URIM students, % who qualified for the FAP, % who self-identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, and % from public institutions outside the northeast and CA.
- Statistically significant decrease in the % who self-identified as first-generation college attendees
- Statistically significant increase in both median MCAT scores and GPAs

Matriculants

- The total N of matriculants used in the analysis from 2016-2019 was 424 and in 2020 was 106.
- Statistically significant increases in the % of URIM students, % who qualified for the FAP, and % from public institutions.
- Both median MCAT scores and GPAs were similar.

Comparison of 2016-19 and 2020 Applicants and Matriculants
Statistically significant changes highlighted (p<0.05), increases in green and decreases in red

	Applicants			Matriculants		
	2016-2019	2020	P-value	2016-19	2020	P-value
Total numbers	24,820 (total) 6205 (mean),	6882	0.004	424	106	N/A
URIM	3957 (16%)	1246 (18%)	<0.001	84 (20%)	31 (29%)	0.048
First Generation College	3196 (13%)	805 (12%)	0.01	59 (14%)	21 (20%)	0.172
AAMC Fee Assistance Program	2365 (10%)	739 (11%)	0.003	53 (13%)	25 (24%)	0.006
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	3471 (14%)	1047 (15%)	0.01	72 (17%)	20 (19%)	0.752
Public Undergraduate Institution	9706 (39%)	2857 (42%)	<0.001	101 (24%)	37 (35%)	0.028
Outside of Northeast and CA	8235 (33%)	2431 (35%)	<0.001	134 (32%)	31 (29%)	0.725
MCAT (Inter-quartile range)	514 (509, 518)	516 (511, 519)	<0.001	518 (515, 520)	518 (515, 520)	0.95
GPA (Inter-quartile range)	3.76 (3.57, 3.89)	3.8 (3.61, 3.92)	<0.001	3.86 (3.76, 3.93)	3.84 (3.74, 3.93)	0.49

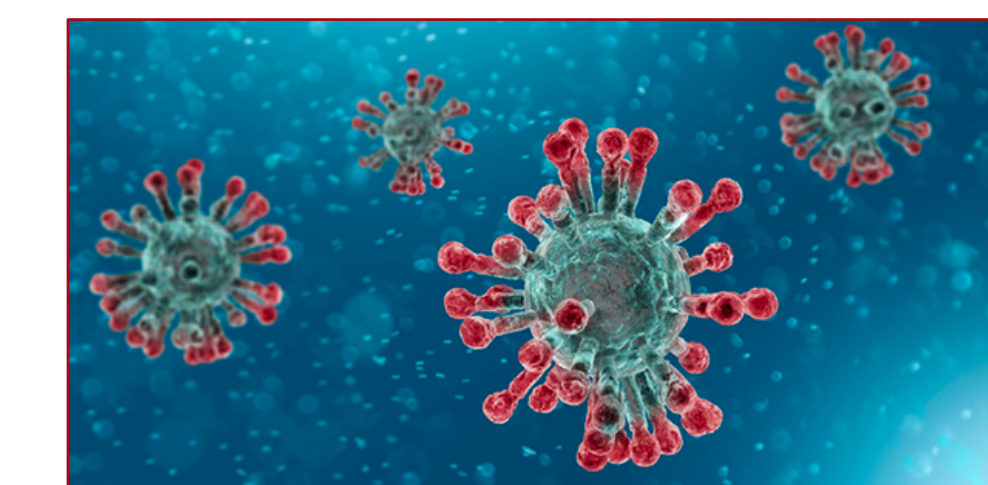
Discussion

Our intent was that our debt-free program would diversify the pool of students who would consider a career in medicine and who would consider our medical school, located in a high cost urban area, for their training.

Data indicate that there has been diversification of the incoming class.

Limitations:

- Debt-free initiative announcement fell in the middle of the admissions cycle
- The effect of COVID-19 on matriculants is unclear



Conclusion and Next Steps

- Identified metrics to assess the impact of the debt initiative on the applicant pool and matriculants as an initial step in understanding the impact of our debt-free initiative.
- Future steps
 - -Determine how student financial support and academic and non-academic support needs evolve as the class composition evolves.
 - -Understand impact on student academic choices during medical school and final specialty career choices.
 - -Develop a targeted strategy to identify and address key "hidden costs"

