

# AAMC GSA PDI: GSA Performance Framework Overview



## Background

The intent of this document is to provide an overview of the GSA performance framework as part of the GSA Professional Development Initiative. For further information on the Initiative and available support, go to [www.aamc.org/gsapdi](http://www.aamc.org/gsapdi) and/or send a message to [GSApro-develop@aamc.org](mailto:GSApro-develop@aamc.org). Contact the Initiative sponsor for more immediate needs – Geoffrey Young, AAMC Senior Director, GSA Student Affairs and Programs, [gyoung@aamc.org](mailto:gyoung@aamc.org).

## Acknowledgments

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For more information about this publication, please email [GSApro-develop@aamc.org](mailto:GSApro-develop@aamc.org).

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## The GSA Performance Framework

The GSA Performance Framework sets the benchmark of performance excellence and distinguishes the importance of student affairs in medical education as a profession. It outlines critical behaviors essential for successful performance and career progression, inclusive of all roles and functions across the GSA community, in alignment with the LCME standards.

The Framework was developed under the guidance of a dedicated constituent-led Advisory Group and sponsorship of the AAMC and GSA Steering Committee. It was validated through an extensive process, engaging over 200 subject matter experts in the GSA community plus experts throughout the AAMC.

As a professional within the GSA community, we are confident the Framework will serve as a valuable compass in your active pursuit to fulfill your professional development goals and engage you on a compelling, and fulfilling career. Following you will find an overview of the Framework and it's elements, as you begin to explore how it can complement your current professional development practices and support the achievement of the personal and professional goals you desire.

### GSA Core Values and Guiding Principles

At the core of the Framework are the GSA core values and guiding principles. These elements set the criteria for identifying the most important critical behaviors that distinguish and define excellence for student affairs in medical education.

#### GSA Core Values

Define what is most important, driving how GSA professionals strive to perform their work.

Adaptability
Advocacy
Diversity and Inclusion
Excellence
Professionalism
Service



#### GSA Guiding Principles

Guideposts for how GSA professionals should demonstrate the core values as they perform their work.

Champion wellness, justice, and respect for all.
Serve our students, institutions, and profession with unwavering compassion, integrity, and commitment.
Promote student success in pursuit of a career in medicine.
Engage as an advocate and responsible steward in the development of future physicians.
Collaborate to advance learning and maintain relevance in the dynamic education and societal environments.

## Competencies – Common Areas and Areas of Expertise

Competencies provide a meaningful organization of critical behaviors essential for successful performance. They consist of specific technical and non-technical related behaviors, representing a synthesis of necessary underlying knowledge, skills, and abilities.

A competency-driven framework, such as the GSA Performance Framework, aims to provide a clear benchmark of performance excellence, enabling effective professional development discussions, decisions, and outcomes. The competencies included in the GSA Performance Framework are outlined below – differentiated by Common Areas (non-technical competencies) and Areas of Expertise (technical competencies).

### Common Areas (non-technical)

**Four** areas of critical behaviors essential for successful performance **for all** student affairs professionals; regardless of specific titles, roles, and services provided.

- Leadership
- Organizational Acumen
- Relationships
- Service

### Areas of Expertise (technical)

**Eight** areas of more technical critical behaviors essential for successful performance **unique** to specific roles, functions, and services within student affairs.

- Medical School Recruitment & Admission
- Student Records Management
- Student Financial Assistance
- Student Wellness & Mental Health
- Student Academic Progression
- Student Diversity & Inclusion
- Student Professional & Career Development
- Unit Operations Management



## Competency Area Structure

Each Area was structured in a consistent way to facilitate effective professional development discussions, identify specific development opportunities, and provide a roadmap for supporting a GSA professional's career in student affairs – vertically and horizontally. The structure consists of the following elements:

### Competency Title and Definition

Provide a title and description to communicate the distinction and general understanding of the critical behaviors represented in the competency area.

### Critical Behavior Summary

Provide an overall summary of the critical behaviors represented in the competency area across all benchmarks.

### Benchmarks 1, 2, and 3

To accommodate the diversity of position descriptions, titles, and roles across the GSA community, three performance benchmarks were developed and validated. Each benchmark represents a grouping of critical behaviors, ranging from tactical to strategic, that align with typical roles present across student affairs areas in medical education.

Note: It is inherent in the Framework that the three benchmarks are related and progressive. Each provides the foundational building blocks to progress to the next benchmark.

See the examples of a Common Area and Area of Expertise competencies are below.

#### Common Area – Service

Title and Definition →

Critical Behavior Summary →

Critical Behaviors by Benchmarks

<p>Provide guidance and resources to enable effective support of students in their pursuit of a career in medicine. Promote and capitalize on the application of products/resources, services, and capabilities across the academic health center to increase the value and impact of student affairs and student success.</p>			
<p><b>Service</b></p>			
<p><b>Critical Behaviors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach and advise others (i.e., student, staff and other stakeholders) with care and an appreciation for diversity and inclusion, while providing the appropriate plan/approach and necessary support to achieve student affairs needs and goals. (Service Orientation)</li> <li>Implement a logical and comprehensive approach to accurately define a problem (i.e., challenge, situation, or issue) and identify, recommend, and conclude with solutions that best meet targeted needs. (Problem Solving)</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Benchmark 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate others clearly and accurately on student affairs mission, programs, and services.</li> <li>Remain fluent in core student affairs-related topics (e.g., academic rules, financial aid).</li> <li>Establish positive rapport with others by expressing a genuine interest in learning about their unique circumstances, needs and goals.</li> <li>Provide others relevant resources and information to address their specific needs.</li> <li>Explain and manage expectations for addressing specific needs and concerns</li> <li>Initiate appropriate follow up to ensure needs were met.</li> <li>Maintain and share appropriate documentation and information within student affairs to support the ongoing needs of others.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Benchmark 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote student affairs mission, programs, and services to respective internal/external stakeholders.</li> <li>Build faculty awareness of and capabilities to manage student affairs issues.</li> <li>Work with others to develop a clear, tailored plan to achieve specific goals and needs.</li> <li>Monitor and follow up with others to confirm satisfaction with progress and identify/recommend additional support needs.</li> <li>Work effectively within student affairs and across medical school resources and services to address the needs of others.</li> <li>Serve others with compassion, while remaining objective and focused.</li> <li>Monitor, promote, and ensure student affairs systems and processes are accessible, fair, and culturally sensitive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Benchmark 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate work of student affairs across the academic health center to advance educational excellence and school mission and goals.</li> <li>Seek opportunities across the academic health center to enhance program and service effectiveness, promote a climate of inclusion, and improve medical school experience for all.</li> <li>Establish and implement measures that define service standards.</li> <li>Advise and support others in achieving more complex goals and needs.</li> <li>Gather and analyze data to improve, advance, and identify new programs and services.</li> <li>Implement and reinforce mechanisms to provide seamless service across student affairs and related functions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Problem Solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in active listening and open dialog to accurately understand problem, issue, and/or situation.</li> <li>Ask broad and deeper clarifying questions to collect relevant data.</li> <li>Assess relevant data objectively to identify root causes.</li> <li>Conduct a review of potential standard solutions to address problem and/or improve situation.</li> <li>Build and communicate sound rationale for proposed solutions.</li> </ul>			

Note: For Common Areas only sub-categories were identified to ease Framework application

#### Area of Expertise – Student Wellness & Mental Health

Title and Definition →

Critical Behavior Summary →

Critical Behaviors by Benchmarks

<p>Build, promote, and manage programs, policies and interventions to enable student wellness and mental health. Collaborate across the academic health center and broader community to recognize and counsel students as necessary to sustain optimal health, wellness, and performance.</p>			
<p><b>Student Wellness &amp; Mental Health</b></p>			
<p><b>Critical Behaviors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustain an environment of trust, respect, and confidentiality where all students feel comfortable accessing services without stigma or fear of reprisal.</li> <li>Recognize and counsel students who are at risk or in need of assistance to sustain optimal student performance and wellness.</li> <li>Build and maintain student wellness programs and interventions to support students and others across the institution in the identification, mitigation, and resolution of prevalent student stressors.</li> <li>Educate those who work in the academic health center on how to anticipate, recognize and support students in maintaining and addressing their wellness needs.</li> <li>Promote a network of available resources and referrals to help address common and unique stressors that impact physical health, mental health and other wellness needs of students.</li> <li>Encourage and empower students to succeed while assisting them in recognizing what is realistic, reasonable, and possible.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Benchmark 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain an approachable demeanor and promote an open door policy, setting aside distractions while interacting with students.</li> <li>Provide students available information, resources and referrals to help meet their specific needs.</li> <li>Identify and respond appropriately to student requests, needs and issues, maintaining confidentiality.</li> <li>Identify academic performance and behavioral patterns that may indicate physical health, mental health or concerns that negatively impact student wellness.</li> <li>Educate others in the learning environment on how to proactively recognize students in distress.</li> <li>Help students resolve and mitigate distress by normalizing reactions to stressors, focusing on how to best meet their needs.</li> <li>Recognize the need to assume various support roles (e.g., coach, advisor, listener, facilitator) when interacting with students, faculty, and staff and adapt approach accordingly.</li> <li>Model effective wellness behaviors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Benchmark 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interact with and engage students proactively to build trusting relationships.</li> <li>Create opportunities to educate and equip students with resources to address common wellness and mental health issues.</li> <li>Assess student situations and provide effective guidance in alignment with established protocols.</li> <li>Educate and develop faculty and staff awareness and capability to recognize and help address/support student wellness needs, appropriately maintaining confidentiality and making notifications.</li> <li>Be attuned and appropriately respond to common and distinct cues associated with unique stressors of student populations (e.g., first generation college, non-traditional, LGBT).</li> <li>Assume various support roles seamlessly in interactions with student, faculty, and staff.</li> <li>Establish and maintain a network of collegial relationships across the academic health center and broader community to enable student wellness.</li> <li>Maintain appropriate boundaries between student affairs role and clinician/provider role in all interactions with and about students.</li> <li>Help others identify and practice effective wellness strategies and behaviors to successfully perform professional and personal responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Benchmark 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote, influence, and encourage others to maintain a student focused orientation in their approach to work.</li> <li>Build a solid reputation as a trusted advocate for students across the academic health center and larger community.</li> <li>Take early action to enable and maintain student wellness across and specific to student populations, engaging the support of faculty, staff, and family.</li> <li>Develop and implement institutional recommended policies and protocols to address and mitigate stressors impacting student health and wellness, including but not limited to when and how to make appropriate referrals and maintaining confidentiality.</li> <li>Develop and implement strategies for sustaining student wellness in anticipation of medical school milestones and stressors.</li> <li>Collaborate with others to collect and conduct an in-depth analysis of data trends necessary to build out and align wellness programs and interventions.</li> <li>Capitalize on internal and external inquires and opportunities to reinforce and build deeper capacity for addressing student wellness.</li> <li>Anticipate and lead efforts to work across departments to minimize systematic conflicts that negatively impact student wellness.</li> <li>Network and collaborate with strategic alliances across the academic health center and broader community to benefit student wellness.</li> <li>Navigate and leverage networks to facilitate connections between students and appropriate resources to address student needs.</li> <li>Champion others to take personal actions to support their welfare and the wellness of those around them.</li> </ul>	

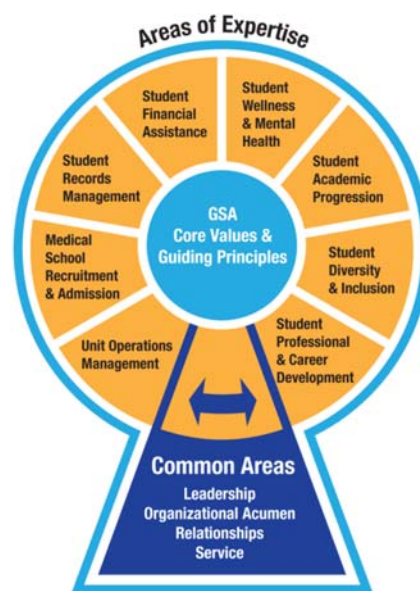
To gain a greater understanding of the Framework structure and content, review **Appendix A** for titles and definitions for all areas, **Appendix B** for benchmark definitions, and **Appendix C** for other key Framework terms and definitions.

### Framework Application – Making it Relevant to You

The Framework is aimed to complement and enhance your school’s professional development practices and enable excellence across the GSA community. It will help you and your supervisor, mentor, and/or other alliances collaboratively confirm your responsibilities in your current roles and assess your capabilities. You can then also identify key opportunities to facilitate ongoing success, both in current and aspirational roles.

To put the Framework into practice, we suggest you begin by answering four specific questions below to aid in the identification of meaningful, development goals:

- 1. What are my roles and responsibilities of interest?** Confirm your current or future aspirational roles and responsibilities you want to explore.
- 2. What areas are most relevant to my roles and responsibilities?** Review the Areas of expertise and identify one-three areas most relevant to your roles. Remember, the Common Areas are relevant to all roles.
- 3. What critical behaviors are most essential to my roles and responsibilities?** Review behaviors across all Common Areas and relevant Areas of Expertise, and then select the appropriate Performance Benchmark for each Area (1, 2, or 3). You may identify different Benchmarks among the different Areas and/or identify a few behaviors from two different Benchmarks within one area. You may also add critical behaviors specific to your school. All of the above are appropriate if applicable to you.
- 4. What are my current capabilities in comparison to the benchmarks (critical behaviors) I identified?** Reflect on your current capabilities and performance against the critical behaviors within the specific benchmarks you identified. Take note of your strengths, where you are on-target, and where you identified a gap or deficit in comparison to the specific benchmarks you selected.



Document your insights gained and collaborate with your supervisor, mentor, and/or trusted colleague for further insights and validation. This in-depth self-reflection will enable more productive professional development discussions and identification of meaningful, targeted development goals.\*

*\*Keep in mind the importance of discussing relevant essential critical behaviors in the context of your school’s specific environment and work parameters. There may be qualifiers that further clarify behavioral expectations specific to your role at your school.*

For further information on the GSA Performance Framework and available support resources to facilitate your professional development, go to [www.aamc.org/gsapdi](http://www.aamc.org/gsapdi) and/or send a message to [GSAPro-develop@aamc.org](mailto:GSAPro-develop@aamc.org) for more specific inquiries and needs.

APPENDIX A – Common Area and Areas of Expertise Definitions

This Appendix outlines the competency area titles and definitions for all competencies, Common Areas and Areas of Expertise, within the validated GSA Performance Framework.

Common Areas
<b>Leadership</b>
Position self and others to successfully maximize their potential and achieve targeted results while exhibiting the highest ethical and professional standards of performance. Sustain a supportive and inclusive climate, engaging others through role modeling, meaningful work, accountability and targeted professional development.
<b>Organizational Acumen</b>
Apply essential business practices to plan, manage and execute work priorities to navigate effectively in a dynamic environment. Contribute to the achievement of targeted, strategic results in compliance with relevant institutional and external requirements and standards.
<b>Relationships</b>
Cultivate and sustain mutually beneficial and collaborative alliances through effective communication practices. Engage self and others by understanding and capitalizing on personal strengths, perspectives and preferences to promote inclusion and shared commitment for achieving desired results.
<b>Service</b>
Provide guidance and resources to enable effective support of students in their pursuit of a career in medicine. Promote and capitalize on the application of products/resources, services and capabilities across the academic health center to increase the value and impact of student affairs and student success.

Areas of Expertise
<b>Medical School Recruitment &amp; Admission</b>
Develop and execute effective, data-driven pipeline programs and admission policies, processes, and practices to ensure a broadly diverse and well-rounded student body that advances the mission of the medical school.
<b>Student Records Management</b>
Interpret, communicate, and act in accordance with the laws, regulations, and school standards for maintaining the academic records of students. Establish and oversee processes to ensure the ongoing integrity, security, and fulfillment of information needs.
<b>Student Financial Assistance</b>
Provide medical students, applicants, and graduates with sufficient financial aid and effective debt management counseling, education, and resources. Establish mechanisms and recognize opportunities to enable students to minimize medical education debt.
<b>Student Wellness &amp; Mental Health</b>
Build, promote, and manage programs, policies and interventions to enable student wellness and mental health. Collaborate across the academic health center and broader community to recognize and counsel students as necessary to sustain optimal health, wellness, and performance.

APPENDIX A – Common Area and Areas of Expertise Definitions

<b>Areas of Expertise (continued)</b>
<b>Student Academic Progression</b>
Build, promote, and leverage resources, policies, programs, and interventions to enable successful academic progression for all students. Collaborate across the academic health center and broader community to help students proactively address and mitigate risks and issues necessary to optimize their educational experience and growth.
<b>Student Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b>
Position diversity as a key driver of educational excellence, a diverse physician workforce, and ultimately equitable health care for all. Advocate for and foster an inclusive, engaging environment to optimize student performance and experience.
<b>Student Professional &amp; Career Development</b>
Empower and guide students in setting and advancing their achievement of effective, individual-driven career and professional goals. Provide students resources and a supportive community of advisors, mentors, and staff to promote their development and transition from medical school to residency training.
<b>Unit Operations Management</b>
Establish, execute, and allocate resources necessary to support strategic and programmatic goals and priorities and overall direction of student affairs. Lead efforts to maintain ongoing alignment of services and programs with the dynamic needs of students and the mission of the school.



APPENDIX B – Benchmark Definitions

This Appendix provides a detailed description of the benchmarks to facilitate understanding and application.

<b>Performance Benchmark</b>		
<p>To accommodate the diversity of position descriptions, titles, and roles across the GSA community, three performance benchmarks were developed and validated to support the professional development and talent management practices of all GSA professionals. Each benchmark represents a grouping of critical behaviors, ranging from tactical to strategic, that align with typical roles present across student affairs functions in medical education.</p> <p>The critical behaviors within each benchmark set a common standard of performance excellence against which professionals can confirm their responsibilities in their current roles and assess their capabilities. The benchmarks can also be used to identify development opportunities to facilitate ongoing success, both in current and aspirational roles.</p> <p>Note: It is inherent in the Framework that the three benchmarks are related and progressive. Each provides the foundational building blocks to progress to the next benchmark.</p>		
<b>Benchmark 1</b>	<b>Benchmark 2</b>	<b>Benchmark 3</b>
<p><b>Typical roles:</b> Support Staff Recognized as an individual contributor and primary student interface, with periodic support from more experienced colleagues.</p> <p>Responsibilities consist of tactical work with an emphasis on recurring tasks and common situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on daily execution of tasks and troubleshoots related issues</li> <li>• Explains and applies related terminology, concepts, principles, and issues</li> <li>• Utilizes the full range of reference and resource materials</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical roles:</b> Supervisors, Program Managers, Directors Recognized as a key escalation resource and collaborator with more senior colleagues to ensure results are achieved.</p> <p>Responsibilities consist of more complex, less common situations, including day-to-day management of staff and/or facets of their function.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on broad organizational and professional issues.</li> <li>• Discusses implications of change and provides insights and ideas to guide improvements to processes, practices, and policies</li> <li>• Supports development of reference and resource materials</li> <li>• Coaches and supports others informally and formally to execute work and achieve goals</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical roles:</b> Directors, Assistant/Associate Deans, Deans Recognized as an expert and leader in this area; considered the “go to” person for decision making and advisement.</p> <p>Responsibilities consist of highly complex and strategic work, including leadership and decision making for one or more areas across student affairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines, leads, and guides others in strategic direction</li> <li>• Performs and makes decisions in highly complex, new situations</li> <li>• Focuses on strategic initiatives and issues that serve to progress and sustain expected levels of performance, improve results for the department, and support the mission of the larger organization</li> <li>• Explains the implications of processes, practices, and policies, as they relate to organizational issues and trends to foster clarity and decision making</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C – Other Key Framework Definitions and Terms

This Appendix provides key terms and definitions to facilitate your understanding of the Framework structure and content.

Common Terms	Definitions
<b>Academic Health Center</b>	The combination of a medical school; any affiliated hospitals and/or healthcare delivery centers; and, for our purposes, any community entities, partnerships, or collaborations in service of the medical school and students.
<b>Academic Support Staff</b>	The broad spectrum of individuals across the academic health center who actively support the education and career development of medical students (e.g., faculty, staff, learning/career advisors, mentors, residency program directors, house staff, etc.).
<b>Area of Expertise (AoE)</b>	A designation given to competencies that represent unique, specific technical competencies necessary in the performance of specific functions, roles, or responsibilities.
<b>Common Area</b>	A designation given to competencies that represent non-technical competencies relevant and necessary across all positions, roles, and services in an organization.
<b>Competency</b>	A meaningful organization of critical behaviors essential for successful performance. Consist of specific technical and non-technical related behaviors, representing a synthesis of necessary underlying knowledge, skills, and abilities.
<b>Department</b>	A grouping of multiple related units, offices or functions.
<b>Goals</b>	The priorities and measures which define success, in alignment with a larger mission.
<b>Leadership</b>	One’s ability to lead and/or influence others to take action or move in a purposeful direction, regardless of position level or title.
<b>Management</b>	One’s ability to supervise people and/or organize, coordinate and execute activities in support of specific goals, projects and in accordance with the authority associated with one’s position or assigned responsibility.
<b>Mission</b>	A declaration of an individual’s, group’s or larger entity’s core purpose and focus that drive the achievement of specific targeted outcomes.
<b>Professional Development</b>	The continuous goal-driven process targeted to increase performance effectiveness, engagement and positive impact on organizational priorities and on one’s professional growth. Development requires ongoing commitment, collaboration, and support to achieve goals and realize career aspirations. It also occurs informally and formally in alignment with organizational performance expectations.
<b>Student affairs</b>	The wide range of services, resources and academic support provided across the academic health center in service of medical students (e.g., recruitment and admissions, financial aid, student records management, wellness and mental health, academic progress, diversity and inclusion, professional and career development, etc.)
<b>Unit</b>	A sub-set or group with a shared purpose or function which operates within a larger functional area (e.g., Records Management, Financial Aid). (e.g., The Office of Records Management is a unit within the Student Affairs Department).