

UCSF

UC San Francisco Previously Published Works

Title

Is it time to recognize excellence in faculty development programs?

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1k0838j2>

Journal

Medical Teacher, 37(8)

ISSN

0142-159X

Authors

Irby, David M
O'sullivan, Patricia S
Steinert, Yvonne

Publication Date

2015-08-03

DOI

10.3109/0142159x.2015.1044954

Peer reviewed



Is it time to recognize excellence in faculty development programs?

David M. Irby, Patricia S. O'sullivan & Yvonne Steinert

To cite this article: David M. Irby, Patricia S. O'sullivan & Yvonne Steinert (2015) Is it time to recognize excellence in faculty development programs?, *Medical Teacher*, 37:8, 705-706, DOI: [10.3109/0142159X.2015.1044954](https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2015.1044954)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2015.1044954>



Published online: 29 May 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 161



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

COMMENTARY

Is it time to recognize excellence in faculty development programs?

DAVID M. IRBY¹, PATRICIA S. O'SULLIVAN¹ & YVONNE STEINERT²

¹University of California, USA, ²McGill University, Canada

Faculty development is an indispensable and often undervalued institutional resource. Yet, it is essential for the advancement of faculty competence and organizational vitality. Therefore, faculty development should be appropriately recognized for its contribution to the success of schools of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. Faculty development refers to all activities health professionals pursue to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviors as teachers and educators, leaders and managers, and researchers and scholars (Steinert 2014). The goal of faculty development is to empower faculty members to excel in their varying academic roles, and to create organizations characterized by vitality and excellence (Wilkerson & Irby 1998; McLean et al. 2008). Guidance for the development of criteria of excellence in faculty development can be found in several BEME reviews (Steinert et al. 2006, 2013), a framework for research on faculty development (O'Sullivan & Irby 2011) and extensive literature reviews outside of medical education (Webster-Wright 2009; Stes et al. 2010; Amundsen & Wilson 2012; Hill et al. 2013).

Recently, AMEE established the ASPIRE awards program to recognize excellence in selected areas of education and to create an alternative to research rankings of universities (<http://www.aspire-to-excellence.org/>). Schools of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine may apply for international recognition in three areas: assessment of students, student engagement in the curriculum and school, and social accountability of the school. Panels of international experts have established criteria for excellence and have reviewed applications for demonstrated achievement of excellence in each area. By creating such standards, the ASPIRE program defines what excellence means in each area of education, provides a benchmark against which local programs can assess their conformance to international standards, and offers a forum for recognizing excellence in education.

Now is the time for faculty development to join these other areas of recognition. Work on the creation of criteria for excellence in faculty development began at the Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference, which was held in conjunction with the Third Annual International Conference on Faculty Development in the Health Professions, in Singapore in

February 2015. Twenty-three faculty developers from around the world participated in a small group process generating six general criteria for excellence in faculty development. At a symposium on faculty development the following day, an audience of approximately 100 conference participants commented on the six general criteria, which are as follows:

- (1) The faculty development program takes place in an accredited professional school, is aligned with organizational mission and goals, and receives the support needed to achieve its mission.
- (2) The faculty development program is systematically designed, evidence-based, and focused on improving educational practice, leadership and scholarship.
- (3) The faculty development program offers breadth, depth, diversity of approaches, and longitudinal progression of learning opportunities.
- (4) The faculty development program is conducted by faculty members with expertise in faculty development and builds capacity by expanding the number of individuals skilled in offering faculty development.
- (5) The faculty development program engages in ongoing program evaluation and examines impact on individuals, organization and where possible the community.
- (6) The faculty development program promotes innovation and scholarship in faculty development, and teaching and learning.

A panel of a dozen distinguished faculty developers from around the world is working to establish the specific criteria and evidence required to demonstrate achievement of the standards. This is an intellectually challenging task yet critical to advancing best practice. These criteria offer benchmarks for excellence, which programs can strive to attain. By using these criteria, new programs can be better designed and existing programs can be evaluated and improved.

The panel is working through the spring and will submit its recommendations to the ASPIRE Board in August 2015 for review and approval at the AMEE meeting in Glasgow Scotland. A symposium at AMEE will highlight the work of the panel in establishing the general and specific criteria for

faculty development. Applications will be requested in the fall of 2015 with a closing date of 31st January. Awards will be presented at the 2016 AMEE conference.

In developing the criteria, we are well aware of the cultural, social, fiscal and other issues that may influence how faculty development is provided, which may vary from school to school and country to country. Excellence may be found in institutions with limited access to resources just as much as in resource rich institutions. Context will be taken into account by the panel when reviewing individual submissions.

An outstanding program of faculty development that meets this new international standard of excellence will demonstrate breadth and systematic design of programs, alignment with and support of the organization, program evaluation and documentation of impact, plus innovation and scholarship in faculty development. We believe that programs meeting these rigorous standards for faculty development are essential to the organizational excellence of their medical, dental and veterinary schools. Thus, we are pleased that faculty development is receiving international recognition as part of the ASPIRE Program.

Declaration of interest: The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the article.

References

- Amundsen C, Wilson M. 2012. Are we asking the right questions?: A conceptual review of the educational development literature in higher education. *Rev Educ Res* 82(1):90–126.
- Hill HC, Beisiegel M, Jacob R. 2013. Professional development research: Consensus, crossroads, and challenges. *Educ Res* 42(9):476–487.
- McLean M, Cilliers F, Van Wyk JM. 2008. Faculty development: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. *Med Teach* 30(6):555–584.
- O'Sullivan PS, Irby DM. 2011. Reframing research on faculty development. *Acad Med* 86(4):421–428.
- Steinert Y. 2014. *Faculty development in the health professions: A focus on research and practice*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Steinert Y, Mann K, Centeno A, Domans D, Spencer J, Gelula D, Prideaux D. 2006. A systematic review of faculty development initiatives designed to improve teaching effectiveness in medical education: BME Guide No. 8. *Med Teach* 28:497–526.
- Steinert Y, Naismith L, Mann K. 2013. Faculty development initiatives designed to promote leadership in medical education. A BEME systematic review: BEME Guide No. 19. *Med Teach* 34(6):483–503.
- Stes A, Min-Leliveld M, Gijbels D, Van Petegem P. 2010. The impact of instructional development in higher education: The state-of-the-art of the research. *Educ Res Rev* 5(1):25–49.
- Webster-Wright A. 2009. Reframing professional development through understanding authentic professional learning. *Rev Educ Res* 79(2):702–739.
- Wilkerson L, Irby DM. 1998. Strategies for effective change in teaching practices: A comprehensive approach to faculty development. *Acad Med* 73:387–396.