

TOWARDS DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM An Initiative of an American Medical School in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT • Introduction and Objectives : The American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine (AUB-FM) strategy is to develop faculty members (fm) skills by sponsoring local and international scientific activities has been in place for over three decades, and remains dependent on individuals' efforts. In 2011-2012, Faculty Development Program (FDP) was introduced to develop faculty leadership, business skills in medicine, fulfill personal and professional goals, followed by a five-year plan to cover five themes: Management/Leadership, Marketing, Finance, Strategic Planning and Communications with the purpose of integrating these themes in medical practice. **Methods:** A survey was sent to all departments at AUB-FM in 2011 to assess needs and determine themes. Nine workshops were conducted, followed by post-workshop evaluation. **Results:** 117 fm responded to needs assessment surveys. Respondents had on average 15 years in clinical practice, 50% with extensive to moderate administrative experience; 71% assumed administrative responsibilities at least once, 56% in leadership positions. Faculty attendance dropped midway from 69 to 19, although workshops were rated very good to excellent. **Discussion:** Although faculty were interested in FDP, the drop in attendance might be attributed to: challenges to achieve personal and professional goals while struggling to fulfill their roles, satisfy promotion requirements and generate their income. **Recommendations:** FDP has to be aligned with FM strategic goals and faculty objectives, be complementary to a faculty mentoring program, provide rewards, and be supported by a faculty progression tool.

Keywords : faculty development, mentoring, career growth, faculty progression

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Developing academic physicians is one of the major challenges for healthcare centers and physicians at the same time. Healthcare centers are interested in developing academic healthcare professionals to improve quality care to patients and quality teaching and training to medical students and postgraduate trainees; whereas

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RÉSUMÉ • Introduction et objectifs : À l'Université américaine de Beyrouth la stratégie de la Faculté de médecine (AUB-FM) réside dans le développement des compétences des membres de la faculté (fm) en sponsorisant des activités scientifiques locales et internationales ; mise en place depuis plus de trois décennies, elle reste corrélée aux efforts individuels. En 2011-2012, le Programme de développement de la faculté (PDF) a été introduit pour développer le leadership de la faculté, les compétences relatives aux affaires en médecine et pour réaliser des objectifs personnels et professionnels. Le PDF a été suivi par un plan quinquennal englobant les thèmes suivants: gestion/leadership, commercialisation, finances, planification et communications stratégiques dans le but d'intégrer ces thèmes en médecine. **Méthodes :** Un questionnaire a été envoyé à tous les départements de la FM en 2011 pour évaluer les besoins et déterminer les thèmes. Neuf ateliers ont été organisés, puis évalués par les participants. **Résultats :** 117 fm ont répondu à des enquêtes d'évaluation des besoins. Les répondants ont en moyenne 15 années de pratique clinique, 50% avec une expérience comprise entre vaste et modérée en administration; 71% ont assumé des responsabilités administratives au moins une fois et 56% ont occupé des postes de leadership. La présence fm a chuté de 69 à 19, bien que les ateliers aient été jugés très bons ou excellents. **Discussion :** Bien que les professeurs aient été intéressés par le PDF, la chute de la présence pourrait être attribuée à des défis visant à atteindre des objectifs personnels et professionnels tout en s'efforçant d'assumer leurs rôles, de satisfaire aux exigences de promotion et de créer leurs revenus. **Recommandations :** Le PDF doit être en ligne avec les buts et les objectifs de la faculté de médecine, compléter le programme de mentorat en vigueur, offrir des récompenses et disposer d'un outil de progression de faculté.

academic physicians are required to fulfill multifaceted roles in teaching, research, clinical, and administrative services, and hence, it is essential for them to improve their skills in these four main areas. In this respect, it was suggested that it is important for academicians to keep their growth and productivity at all career levels, in spite of their challenges in maintaining a well-balanced role in research, teaching and service responsibilities [1]. On the other hand, it is argued that the three traditional roles of academic physicians are competing with each other, considering the dominant compensation structure that adds pressure on physicians to earn their own income,

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and whether they can still fulfill their traditional triple role successfully [2]. It was also stressed that mentoring was important in developing the career of future academic physicians. The latter argument was supported by a group of researchers who reported several disadvantages that academic physicians suffer for not having proper mentorship or “academic parenting,” such as lower salaries and scholarly productivity, and the time spent on learning things, compared to their peers who had mentors [3].

Physicians who opt to pursue career in academic medicine face obstacles in achieving their new goals, mainly because their training prepared them to be medical doctors, but not tutors or researchers [4]. This notion alludes to certain gaps and needs that could hinder the establishment of a successful academic career by the physicians, which might be bridged by proper mentorship. Successful mentoring depends however, on the skills of the mentors and mentees, as well as on the institutional supporting environment [5], and on finding a qualified mentor [6].

It is the strategy of the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine (AUB-FM) to develop faculty skills through continuing education by sponsoring local activities, and funding the attendance of an international meeting for all faculty members. Such initiative has been in place for over three decades and remains dependent on individuals’ efforts. To promote these initiatives further, and in an attempt to bridge the gaps of skills required by academic physicians to accomplish their multiple roles, AUB-FM introduced in 2011-2012 a year-round Faculty Development Program (FDP) [7], aiming

to develop the leadership and business skills in medicine, and to help them fulfilling their personal and professional goals at once.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the FDP initiative and its impact on the attendees, and to conclude a lesson from this experience as a step towards establishing a sustainable faculty development or mentorship program at AUB-FM.

METHODS

An online survey was sent to all faculty members in the 19 academic and clinical departments at AUB-FM in 2011 to assess needs and determine themes (See Annex).

Nine workshops were conducted covering business in medicine topics: • How to financially manage your practice • Selection and Appraisal of personnel • Type of corporation: What’s in it for you? • Leadership in Medicine • Financial Investments and Liability • How to position yourself in a competitive practice • Business Planning • Strategic Financial Management and • Conflict Management and Resolution. These workshops were also opened to senior administrators and residents. Post workshop evaluation survey was sent to the attendees. IRB approval is not required for this study.

RESULTS

Out of 296 faculty members, 117 responded to the first survey of needs assessment at the Faculty of Medicine. Distribution of respondents by department is shown in Table I.

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION of RESPONDENTS by DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT	Total Number of Faculty Members	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents by Department	% of Respondents by Department from Total Number of Respondents
Anesthesiology	16	7	44%	6%
Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics	4	2	50%	2%
Dermatology	10	7	70%	6%
Diagnostic Radiology	8	6	75%	5%
Emergency Medicine	4	4	100%	3%
Family Medicine	16	16	100%	14%
Anatomy, Cell Biology & Physiology	12	5	42%	4%
Internal Medicine	71	31	44%	26%
Experimental Pathology, Immunology & Microbiology	4	2	50%	2%
Obstetrics & Gynecology	17	7	41%	6%
Ophthalmology	13	7	54%	6%
Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Surgery	14	8	57%	7%
Pathology & Laboratory Medicine	16	3	19%	3%
Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine	28	1	4%	1%
Pharmacology & Therapeutics	4	0	0%	0%
Psychiatry	4	4	100%	3%
Radiation Oncology	5	2	40%	2%
Surgery	50	5	10%	4%
TOTAL	296	117	40%	100%

The respondents were characterized by having an average of 15 years in clinical practice, 50% had an extensive to moderate administrative experience, and 71% of them had assumed administrative responsibilities at least once, 56% of which in leadership positions. The distribution of respondents by rank is shown in Figure 1.

The results of the needs assessment survey revealed the interest and need of faculty members to developing skills in the following areas: leadership, strategic planning, marketing, financial management, recruitment & selection and conflict management. The topics of workshops were selected and conducted according to the results of the needs assessment.

Overall, the attendance per workshop ranged from 69

to a minimum of 19. On average, the faculty attendance was the highest compared to residents and administrators. However, the attendance of faculty dropped midway through almost after the sixth workshop out of nine, as shown in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

Developing faculty members and physicians is one of the main goals of medical centers, which provides a better career management and decrease physicians turnover [8]. It was reported that for healthcare centers to grow, academic physicians should be developed and retained [9].

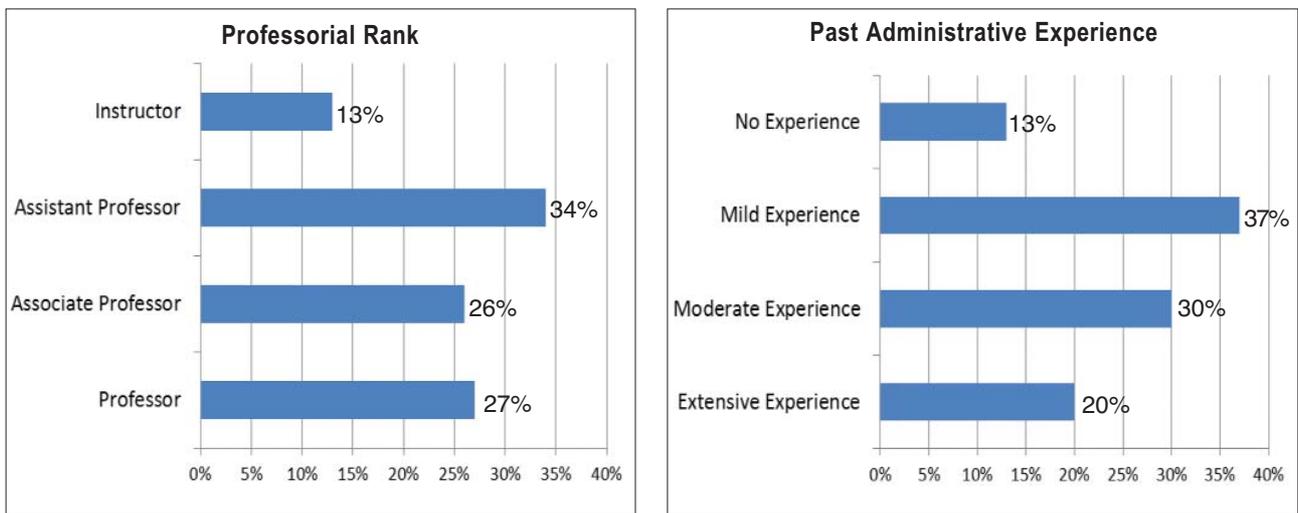


FIGURE 1. Percent distribution of respondents by academic rank.

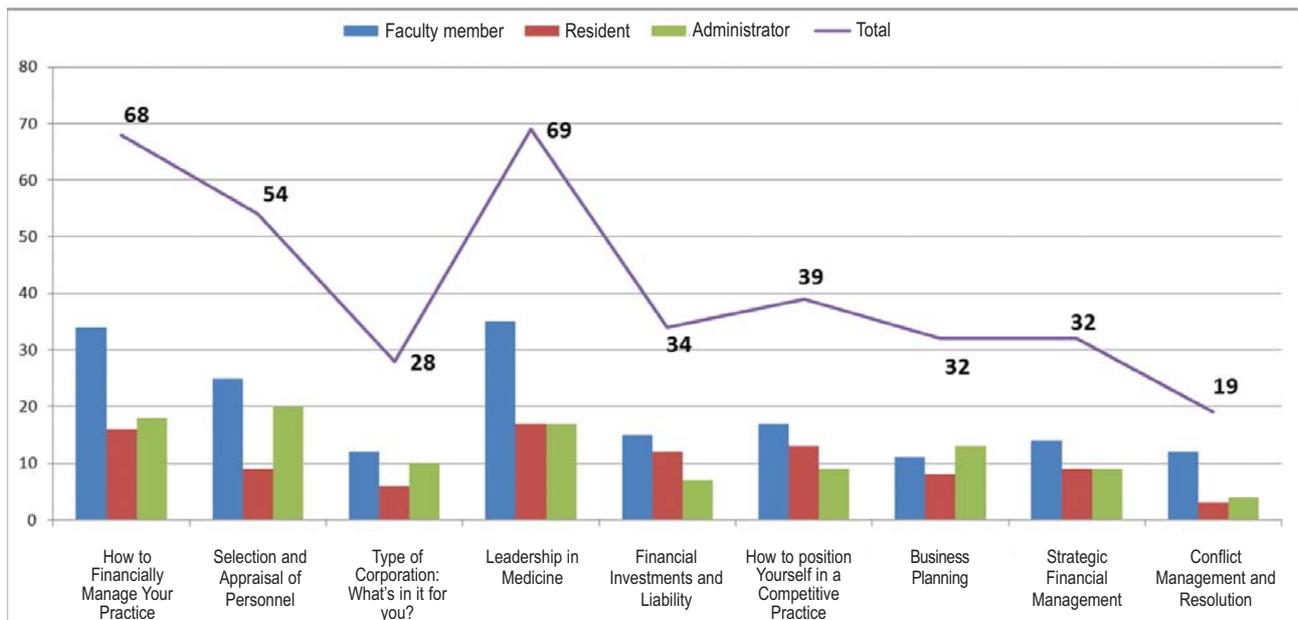


FIGURE 2. Attendants of the workshops by category of attendees.

The workshops conducted took into consideration the adult learning framework [10-11] that divides the gap and needs at both organizational and individual levels. The topics were selected according to the choice of faculty members themselves and their needs. However, the workshop attendance declined gradually mostly among junior faculty, while the topics and lecturers were rated “very good” to “excellent.”

Although faculty were genuinely interested in FDP, as verified by the needs assessment and program evaluation, this drop in attendance might be attributed to one or more of the factors highlighted below, to be further investigated:

- A. Academic physicians are expected to dedicate 80% of their time and effort in clinical care and teaching with the remaining 20% of their time to conduct research and be engaged in different administrative duties. This structure seems to be challenging for them to satisfy their multifaceted roles and expectations, and yet attend to their personal development and career progression.
- B. Promotion requirements are demanding and add another burden to academic physicians, which require excellence in two areas per academic track to be achieved within six years in rank: teaching, research, clinical and administrative services.
- C. Compensation structure is the major burden over and above the previous two challenges. Physicians are expected to generate two-third of their income through clinical practice, which confirms the conclusions of a group of researchers [2] that physicians are pressured to earn their own income and fulfill the expectations with limited resources and time. Therefore organizational support should be offered in terms of resources, information and individual [11].

Accordingly, these academic physicians are challenged to achieve personal and professional goals, while they are struggling to fulfill their roles. Our findings are in agreement with that highlighted by Garand *et al.* [1] that it is crucial for academicians to maintain their growth and productivity at all career levels, in spite of their challenges in maintaining a well-balanced academic and clinical role. Concurrently, Borges *et al.* [2], and Milner *et al.* [12] concluded that pursuing a career in academic medicine is challenging, mainly in the absence of institutional support, mentoring and development program. Moreover, the research findings of Kashiwagi *et al.* [13] and Gray *et al.* [14], support the importance of mentoring junior academic physicians and developing their skills, although the forms and goals of such programs vary from one academic center to another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure sustainability, commitment and success, we recommend that the Faculty Development Program has to be:

- Aligned with the institutional strategic goals as well

as the academic physicians’ objectives.

- Complimentary to a well-structured and institutionalized faculty mentoring program, specifically targeting junior academic physicians.
- Provide protected time and academic rewards and recognitions that would ensure continuous growth and development.
- Supported by a faculty progression tool for continuous monitoring of junior faculty academic progress [1].

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ANNEX

ONLINE SURVEY DISTRIBUTED TO ALL FACULTY MEMBERS AT AUB-FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Name:	Rank in Profession	Department	Number of years in Practice	Assumed an Administrative position: yes/no	Assumed a Leadership position: yes/no
Past administrative experience: — None; — Mild; — Moderate; — Extensive		Served on Committee: — Never; — 1-3 yrs; — > E2 3 yrs		What are the skills or knowledge that I can contribute the most to my colleagues or environment?	
How would you rate your micro-working environment (Department)? — Poor; — Average; — Good; — Very good			How would you rate your macro-environment (Medical Center)? — Poor; — Average; — Good; — Very good		
Whom would you like to include in your developmental Network?					
Faculty Members: yes/no	Medical Staff: yes/no	Outside the FM: yes/no	Family Members: — Wife — Husband — Brother/ Sister — Daughter/ Son		
If you were to rate your balance of personal vs professional life, you would rate it as: — Negative; — Neutral; — Positive		If you were to rate your balance of personal vs professional life, you would rate it as: — Negative; — Neutral; — Positive		What are the skills or knowledge that I can contribute the most to my colleagues or environment?	
I perform better as or in: — Leader; — Alone; — Under stress; — Small Group; — Subordinate; — As a team member; — In a predictable environment; — Large group				What are my strengths, best qualities?	What are my weaknesses, blind spots?
I would like to learn or improve the following skills:	— Leadership; — Management; — Behavioral skills; — Communication; — E-mailing; — Business writing; — Teaching in a busy practice; — Promotion Criteria and Procedure; — Mentoring; — Educational value Units; — Conflict management; — Negotiation; — Marketing management; — Basic decision making; — Operation management; — Economics in Medicine; — Finance; — Accounting; — Strategic planning and management				