

Summary of Discussion 2007 APPD Workshop The Role of the Associate Program Director

We would like to thank all of you who participated in this workshop. This is an exciting time to be involved in pediatric resident education and we look forward to working with all of you in the years to come.

Please accept our apologies for the delay in disseminating this information. It was our intent to send out this summary shortly after the meeting, and truly apologize for the delay.

The workshop discussion revolved around three main ideas:

- 1) Defining the role of the Associate Program Director
- 2) Obtaining an academic mentor
- 3) Defining a path for academic success

Below is a summary of the discussion.

I. Defining the role of the Associate Program Director

The discussion surrounding the role of the Associate Program Director revolved around two main ideas, defining roles and negotiating.

Job descriptions serve several purposes. They can:

- 1) Validate what we do
- 2) Summarize what we do
- 3) Define specific interests
- 4) Provide a roadmap

We feel the need to define our jobs for many reasons, but practically we are all asked to undertake many opportunities during our careers. A job description can help in many practical ways:

- 1) Serve as a benchmark to minimize administrative overload
- 2) Help us recognize that certain opportunities may move us away from our career goals
- 3) Provide opportunities due to defining specific interests
- 4) Be a starting point for the development of a career plan/individualized portfolio

We all felt, however, that a job description should serve as a personal, professional, and institutional guide rather than an inflexible doctrine. Within this guide, we discussed the importance of differentiating opportunities that were career building and personally fulfilling from opportunities that were a distraction from professional and personal goals.

This led to a discussion on negotiation. The following points were made regarding successful negotiation:

- 1) Know exactly what you are negotiating for
- 2) Negotiate with a plan
- 3) Know what your chair is interested in and use that to your advantage
- 4) Negotiate with others in mind (e.g. more time spent on a new task is less time with your family)
- 5) Link your goals to expected outcomes
- 6) If you are unable to undertake a new role, facilitate accomplishing the goal by involving others (this may be a great career building opportunity for someone else)
- 7) Know and be true to your interests

II. Obtaining an academic mentor

There are many benefits to obtaining a mentor. These are often divided into ‘Advice’ and ‘Opportunity’.

Mentors have the ability to provide advice regarding goal-oriented activities such as promotion, career development, leadership, and clinical decision making. They can also provide advice about performance, such as providing constructive criticism, positive feedback, and guidance on achieving autonomy. Other times, mentors can help “ground me in reality” during times of uncertainty.

Mentors also have a role in promoting your career in ways that interest you. This can occur through promoting an activity (research, education, etc.) that you are involved in to the administration, helping you network at regional and national meetings, or providing you with opportunities such as co-authorship, local committee participation, editorial board nominations, or national exposure through presentations and committee appointments.

There are several potential hurdles that are associated with mentoring relationships that everyone should be aware of. These include the following:

- a. Many less professors than young faculty
- b. Sense of obligation
- c. Disparate goals
- d. Conflicts of interest
- e. Power and Generational Issues
- f. Creating ‘clones’
- g. Unrealistic expectations

We then discussed that, in the right relationship, the benefits absolutely outweigh the potential problems. Ways to ensure the best possible mentor relationship include using informal mentors, long-distance mentors, peer mentors, and multiple mentors. Informal mentoring relationships are often successful because there is natural buy-in from both

parties. Mutual support and respect, combined with a natural compatibility, form the basis for strong relationship. Distance mentors are helpful for many reasons. They are already committed to the individual simply through maintaining a long-distance relationship. This commitment often comes without the natural bias and potential conflicts that can come from a mentor within the same institution. Peer mentoring relationships are also helpful and remove the generational and power issues that can occur with other forms of mentoring.

The best option may be identify the strengths of the different mentoring relationships and seek out multiple mentors that can provide advice and opportunities in all of the different facets of your careers.

III. Defining a path for academic success

We spent a majority of the time on the first two sections and had less time for defining this path to academic success. However, some very important points were discussed. Each institution has different criteria and a different system for academic promotion. It is extremely important to define those criteria in your home institution. After identifying the criteria for promotion, it is important to keep track of what you do on a daily basis. We all take for granted that developing curricula, teaching modules, and competency assessment tools are part of our job. However, many institutions will give you 'academic credit' for these endeavors. Keeping track of them, along with awards, teaching evaluations, and clinical evaluations, in an individual portfolio will be very helpful for identifying your specific criteria for promotion.

Just as important is identifying your individual time frame for promotion. Most academic institutions have a minimum time between academic ranks. However your personal time frame for academic advancement may be different. Defining that time frame can make the process seem less overwhelming.

Lastly, take advantage of opportunities that coincide with your professional and personal interests. We discussed mentors above and the role they can play in providing career building opportunities. Taking advantage of these opportunities by accepting them and committing to them fully will open more doors down the road. It is amazing how one small opportunity, if taken advantage of, can lead to further career growth.

Again, thank you for coming to the workshop, participating, and sharing your ideas with the group. We look forward to seeing all of you at the upcoming meetings and working collaboratively in the future.

Keith, Nancy, and Monica