Project Title: The Implementation of a Novel Executive On-Boarding Leadership Program

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Collaborators: Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D. (President and Dean) and Denise Britt, B.S. (VP of Human Resources)

Background, Challenge or Opportunity: At Morehouse School of Medicine, we saw an opportunity to better prepare our newly appointed department chairs and administrators for their new leadership positions. We previously noticed that newly appointed leaders faced challenges that could be overcome, if addressed within the first 8-weeks of their start date. Immediately addressing those challenges would result in our new leaders feeling more empowered in their new roles, developing more collaborative interactions with units outside of their own, and developing goals for their unit that align with the school’s mission and strategic plan.

Purpose/Objectives: The purpose of this project is to implement an effective on-boarding program for newly appointed executive leaders that will position them early in their tenure for success. We notice that there are two major obstacles for new executive leadership in academia: (1). A lack of familiarity with the administrative, research and clinical units of the institution, which impedes the ability to make immediate broad-based and collaborative decisions, and (2). A lack of mentorship to guide the leader in their new role. Our executive on-boarding process is designed to address both of these factors to ensure that the new leader is supplied at the very beginning of their position with the resources they need to execute well-informed decisions in both strategic and operational goals of their unit.

Methods/Approach: This program is a pilot initiative for Morehouse School of Medicine. It has been adapted from the publication, “Executive Onboarding: Ensuring the Success of the Newly Hired Department Chair”, Ross et al, Academic Medicine, Vol. 89, No. 5, May 2014. I have modified and enhanced the process to be applicable for all levels of senior leadership in academia. Our process includes:
- A 6-week orientation
- Assignment of 3 mentors: an Orientation Navigator, a Peer Mentor and a Transition Mentor
- Completion of a pre-, post- and retrospective (for new leaders who were hired internally) survey
- Quarterly mentorship progress reports and a more comprehensive report at the end of 12 months
- An abridged version of the orientation (for new leaders hired after completion of the last and prior to the start of the next session)

Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy: We are currently evaluating the project with a survey that assesses the participants’ comprehensive knowledge of the institution before and after completing the program. In addition, quarterly evaluations of the progress of the mentoring relationships are completed. The expected outcomes for the new leaders, which we also evaluate, are:
1. Greater familiarity with all units of the institution at the completion of the 6-week program
2. Increased collaborations with other units (internal and external to the institution)
3. Enhanced leadership skills developed through the mentoring relationships
4. Enhanced levels of cohesiveness and teamwork with other senior leaders
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Erika T. Brown, Ph.D., Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D., and Denise Britt, B.S.
Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA

Methods/Outcomes/Evaluation Strategy

1. Create the curriculum

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Approach
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2. Assign a 3 of mentors

Discussion/Conclusions
We completed our first cohort in October 2014 and started our second cohort in February 2015. To assess the effectiveness of the program, in addition to the pre-, post- and retrospective surveys and quarterly evaluations of the progress of the mentoring relationships, we also evaluate the following expected outcomes for the new leaders: (1) Greater familiarity with all units of the institution at the completion of the 6-week program, (2) Improved collaborations with other units (internal and external to the institution), (3) Enhanced leadership skills developed through the mentoring relationships, and (4) Enhanced levels of cohesion and teamwork with other senior leaders. In addition, we are currently preparing a manuscript for submission that documents the program.

Future Directions
As a result of the overwhelming interest in participation from veteran MSM employees, the on-boarding program has successfully laid the foundation for the development of a Leadership Academy that will include the following: (1)Additional leadership enhancement courses to the curriculum, (2) Development of a competitive application process that will admit 6-8 new employees per year, (3) Participants form groups to work on a project similar to an IAP, (4) Allowance of participation in selected modules, non-competitively, if full participation in the Leadership Academy is not possible, and (5) An institutional certification at completion. Our “found pilot” is the Woodruff Leadership Academy (WLA) at Emory University. It was established in 2002 and has received national recognition. I have partnered with the WLA directors for guidance in executing our program at MSM. Our on-boarding program has been phenomenal; therefore, I have immense expectations for the Leadership Academy to continue to transform MSM.

Presented at the 2015 ELAM® Leaders Forum