

ABSTRACT: 2016 ELAM Institutional Action Project Symposium

Project Title: Merging Two Clinical Departments and the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center into a Department of Clinical Sciences at The Commonwealth Medical College

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Collaborators: The Vice-Dean, Associate Deans of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development, Curriculum and Student Affairs

Background, Challenge, Opportunity:

The Commonwealth Medical College (TCMC) is a new stand-alone community-based medical school which graduated its first class in 2013. Soon after its inception funding was significantly decreased because of the recession and instead of developing six clinical departments, two departments, Family Community and Rural Health and Clinical Sciences covering the 6 core specialties in undergraduate medical education, were formed. TCMC is dependent on volunteer clinical faculty and support from regional health systems to deliver its longitudinal integrated clerkship and other clinical teaching. Given this reality, the College decided against developing a clinical practice plan that would compete with volunteer faculty and local health systems. Given that the function of the two clinical departments was purely educational and they were competing for scarce resources, it was decided to streamline their function by forming one clinical educational department. This reorganization allowed for the identification and prioritization of those core educational functions the College believes are essential to the developmental competence and success of our students. As the role of the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center was also that of undergraduate medical education, it was further decided to incorporate that into the new department. These decisions were also supported by less than optimal student performance in clinical skills, epidemiology and biostatistics.

Methods/ Approach. These include:

1. Fostering the development of a new department identity and an understanding of its role within the larger institution through a series of retreats, small group discussions and one on one meetings
2. Engaging collaborators and key stakeholders in discussions about the optimal function of the department and how it could support the needs of other departments
3. Discussions with the Associate Deans of Curriculum and Student Affairs with regards to development of new curricula and how best faculty in the clinical department can support student career counseling
4. Collaboration with the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs to support faculty as they transition to new roles and support new needs for faculty development are identified

Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy.

1. Consensus on departmental core functions. (Retreat outcome)
2. Development of a new departmental identity aligned with the College's mission and supported by structure and function to ensure departmental core functions are achieved. (Evaluated by anonymous survey)
3. Improved faculty, staff and student satisfaction with department core functions. (Evaluated by anonymous surveys)
4. Improved student performance in clinical skills based on improved OSCE scores, preceptor feedback in 3rd and 4th years and improved Step 1 scores in epidemiology and biostatistics
5. Increased satisfaction from Student Affairs about support given to students by clinical faculty in career counseling. (Evaluated by feedback from Associate Dean of Student affairs)

Merging Two Clinical Departments and the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center into a Department of Clinical Sciences at The Commonwealth Medical College



Diana P E Callender, The Commonwealth Medical College

Collaborators: The Vice Dean, Associate Deans of Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development, Curriculum and Student Affairs



Background/ Challenge

The Commonwealth Medical College (TCMC) is a new community-based medical school. Because of limited funding only two clinical departments, Family Community and Rural Health and Clinical Sciences were formed. Because TCMC depends on volunteer clinical faculty and regional health systems to deliver its clinical teaching the College has intentionally not developed a clinical practice plan that would compete with them. Since the function of the two clinical departments was educational and because they competed for resources, one clinical educational department formed. The Clinical Skills and Simulation Center was also incorporated into the new department. This reorganization allowed for the identification and prioritization of educational functions the College believes are essential to the training and success of our students. The need for this reorganization was supported by substandard student performance in clinical skills, epidemiology and biostatistics and a lack of clear vision regarding outcomes of the four year medical degree granting program.

Purpose/Objectives



Presented at the 2016 ELAM® Leaders Forum

Methods

These include:

- Developing a new departmental identity and understanding its role within TCMC through a series of retreats, small group discussions and one on one meetings
- Engaging collaborators and key stakeholders in discussions about the function of the department and how it could support the needs of other departments
- Discussions with the Associate Deans of Curriculum and Student Affairs with regards to curriculum development supporting student career counseling
- Collaboration with the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs/Faculty Development to support faculty transitioning to new roles and new needs for faculty development



Outcomes/Evaluation Strategy

- Consensus on departmental core functions
- Improved student performance in clinical skills evidenced by OSCE scores, preceptor feedback and improved Step 1 scores in epidemiology and biostatistics
- Increased Student Affairs satisfaction regarding support given to students by clinical faculty in career counseling. - Feedback from Associate Dean of Student affairs
- Anonymous surveys to evaluate:
 - Development of a new departmental identity, structure and function aligned with the College's mission.
 - Improved faculty, staff and student satisfaction with department core functions



Discussion

The three departments were merged in December. Alignment of the new Department's mission with that of the School was started at a retreat in January and its core functions of education and training physicians in all specialties to meet the needs of North-Eastern Pennsylvania were reaffirmed. The name of the new department was discussed and Clinical Sciences was ultimately chosen. Some roles and responsibilities still need to be finalized.

Anxiety among administrative staff has resulted in one transferring to another department at TCMC and there is still concern among full and part-time faculty regarding roles and responsibilities.

More work also needs to be done with collaborators to clarify the Department's role vis-à-vis others in Academic and Clinical Affairs

Summary

Organizational change is a complex process and forming a new department generates significant anxiety.

Engaging key stakeholders and keeping faculty and staff informed via frequent communication is critical.

Next steps include further clarification of roles and responsibilities within the department and with other departments.