



# ADAPTING LAUNCH TEAMS TO FACILITATE EARLY CAREER FACULTY RETENTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Cynthia D. Downard, MD, MMSc

Hiram C. Polk, Jr, MD Department of Surgery  
University of Louisville School of Medicine



## Introduction

The Department of Surgery at the University of Louisville embraces gender, racial, and ethnic diversity, however the representation of women and underrepresented minorities in medicine (URM) faculty in the Department of Surgery is currently below national averages. This project is aimed at improving junior faculty retention such that after successful recruitment of new surgeons, they are more likely to enjoy a prosperous academic career at the University of Louisville. While this process will not be directed specifically at women or URM recruits, with broad backing for all new faculty, recruitment and retention efforts will be supported.

Nationally, 40% of General Surgery residents are women and 25% of faculty in Departments of Surgery are women\*. At the University of Louisville, there are opportunities to improve gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in the Department of Surgery as currently only 31% of General Surgery residents 16% of the faculty of the Department of Surgery are women. Intentional recruitment and retention programs should improve this representation.

\*ACGME and AAMC Data, 2019/2020

## Methods

We assembled data from national sources and compared this to local information regarding gender and race representation in the Department of Surgery at UofL. Recognizing a need for improved junior faculty retention in our Department, we then investigated programs across institutions to facilitate recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. Ultimately, we adapted information from the University of Michigan Launch program to our Department and implemented this with recent faculty hires. A multidisciplinary team was assembled for the new faculty members including experts in the clinical, academic, and research missions, as well as the Division Chief of the new faculty member.

## Launch Team Creation

The agenda for the Multidisciplinary Launch Team meetings are outlined below and have been adapted from the University of Michigan "Michigan Promise" plan. Meetings were held in person when possible, and virtually as local guidance mandated. Clinical / Research / Academic missions were discussed by the entire group, led first by the mentor and in later meetings led by the junior faculty member; feedback was elicited. As the meetings progressed, the junior faculty member created and distributed the agenda and directed the conversation, allowing for more customized support.

1

### First Session:

- Introduction of the mentee
- Introduction of the mentors
- Overview of the processes of the launch team
  - Team lead (can rotate during the academic year depending on schedules)
  - Agenda
  - Tasks and deliverables for mentors and mentee
- Clinical
  - Scope of clinical practice
  - First complication
  - Weekly schedule: number of operative and clinical days, location of clinical sites, number of call days
- Academic / Research
  - Goals and interests for the upcoming year
  - Location of academic space, support available (research assistants, research coordinators, lab managers, administrative)
- Academic / Professional
  - Societal involvement
  - Professional development
  - Promotion and tenure criteria
  - CV management
- Review of launch team schedule, meeting locations and timing
- Set the agenda for next time and assign tasks and deliverables to mentors and mentees

2

### Subsequent Sessions:

- Review of prior agenda – report on tasks and deliverables (mentor and mentee)
- Review weekly schedule: number of operative and clinical days, location of clinical sites, number of call days
- Clinical
  - Scope of clinical practice, complications, clinical support/mentorship, surgical educator
  - Board certification
- Academic / Research
  - Ongoing projects: major hurdles or obstacles; plans for publications
  - Meeting deadlines for abstracts – which to target for the upcoming year
  - Funding support and planning
- Academic / Professional
  - Societal involvement
  - Professional development
  - Promotion and tenure criteria
  - CV management
- Educator/Mentorship
  - Current mentees, projects, time commitments
- Confirm next meeting date if not already set and who will serve as the team lead
- Set the agenda for next time and assign tasks and deliverables to mentors and mentees

3

### Final Session:

- Review of prior agenda – report on tasks and deliverables (mentor and mentee)
- Review of first year
  - Clinical
    - Scope of clinical practice, areas for growth
    - Opportunities to refine and restructure schedule if needed
    - Transition as a surgical educator
  - Academic / Research
    - Goals and needs for the upcoming year
  - Academic / Professional
    - Goals and needs for the upcoming year
    - Leadership development planning / opportunities
- Review of the launch team process:
  - What worked, what needs to be changed
  - New mentors to be added
- Promotion planning checklist
- Set the agenda for any additional time and assign tasks and deliverables to mentors and mentees

4

Business plan development

Mentorship Training

5

LIAM  
Leadership and Innovation in Academic Medicine

6

Increase gender and URM minority recruitment and retention in the Department of Surgery and School of Medicine

## Next Steps

Next steps for the program include developing infrastructure to make this an automatic assignment for new faculty members in the Department of Surgery, eliciting guidance from retired faculty, and continuing meetings past the first year. This can be further disseminated through the Department of Surgery with a goal of engaging faculty through the Office of Faculty Affairs, and broadening Departmental participation. Ultimate goals include linking participation with enrollment in a leadership / mentorship program at the University such as the Leadership and Innovation in Academic Medicine (LIAM) program and other Health Professions Education offerings through the Office of Faculty Affairs, and providing mentor training for those serving on Launch Teams in a mentor capacity.

## Short Term Objectives

Development of Launch Teams for junior faculty members in the Department of Surgery at UofL can facilitate faculty retention and may serve to improve the gender and race diversity of the Department. Having an identified mentorship team allows direct contact with senior members of the Department and can help with cross-departmental relations with non-clinical faculty. Partnering with existing leadership programs for junior faculty (such as LIAM) will continue institutional commitment to the success of newly-affiliated Louisville recruits.

## Long Term Goals

Long term goals of this project include:

- Improved junior faculty retention
- Increased percentage of women and under-represented in Medicine minority faculty in the Department of Surgery and other Departments in the School of Medicine
- Creation of a team of mentoring experts
- Capitalizing on existing faculty development programs for junior / mid / senior faculty in the UofL School of Medicine
- Embedding mentorship discussions in the faculty recruitment process
- Enhancing emeritus faculty involvement in current faculty affairs
- Continuing promotion and tenure support through various stages of academics.

## Acknowledgements

Dr. Downard's participation in the ELAM Program was jointly sponsored by the University of Louisville School of Medicine and the Hiram C. Polk, Jr, MD Department of Surgery.

Special thanks to Dr. Erika Newman for her guidance and education regarding the University of Michigan "Michigan Promise" program.

Development of this project has been supported by Dean Toni Ganzel, MD, Vice Chair of Faculty Affairs - Ron Paul, MD, and Chair of the Department of Surgery - Kelly McMasters, MD, PhD.

Great appreciation to our first Launch Team members: David Foley, MD (Clinical), Robert Mitchell, PhD (Basic Science), J David Richardson, MD (Academic) and Stewart Carter, MD (New Faculty Member).