

Identifying opportunities for improving the promotions process

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Collaborators: The Medical Faculty Executive Committee Promotions subcommittee.

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Background: National and regional data demonstrate inequities in promotions. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central values to the mission of the Alpert Medical School (AMS). The structure of our institution consists of 3 healthcare system major affiliates that function independently of AMS in some key aspects.

Goal: Examine the promotions process across healthcare systems and identify opportunities for improvement for both faculty and departmental leadership.

Methods: Analyze track and rank data by gender/race/ethnicity. Survey faculty about barriers and facilitators to the promotions process. Survey department chairs and promotions committee chairs about their departmental process to identify best practices. Hold a townhall panel of chairs to discuss best practices and discuss opportunities for dissemination.

Outcomes to date:

- 1- Gender/race/ethnicity distribution of faculty across tracks: There is a clear difference in men / women ratio in higher ranks in 4/5 tracks. Faculty racial and ethnic data do not match state level data, with significant underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic faculty at the professor level.
- 2- Faculty survey: Quantitative data identified three important and modifiable barriers to promotion: Lack of understanding of the process, lack of mentorship, and access to promotions decision-makers. Qualitative data characterized division chiefs / department chairs as gatekeepers. Gender differences were identified in perception of merit (lack of merit perceived more often in women) and bias, and in lack of mentorship (W>M).
- 3- Chairs survey: The main areas for improvement included: funding for mentors, training for division directors in the promotions process, and assistance with centralized resources through the medical school. Best practices were identified in various areas of the process.
- 4- Townhall meeting with department chairs and Dean and Dean's office leadership: Agenda was centered around data collected in #1, #2, and #3 above. Chairs agreed that creative mentoring and funding for mentors are key, and that official mentoring training for educators is needed. Training for division directors could occur through periodic workshops and should incorporate implicit bias, DEI and anti-racism training. Mandating implicit bias training to promotions committee members is necessary. Cross-pollination of promotion committees may help disseminate best practices. Report identifying short term, medium term and long- term opportunities is being prepared for the Dean's office.
- 5- Implementation of change to date: Mandating unconscious bias training for promotions committee started. Working with AMS leadership regarding the standardization of training of division directors in the promotions process and unconscious bias. Faculty development office working on educator-focused mentoring training. Identified "pockets" of mentorship across institution including peer mentoring and team mentoring that could be propagated across departments.

Discussion / Summary – Numerous opportunities for improvement of the promotions process around education, mentorship, and access to promotions have been identified. Many of these opportunities are expected to 1) improve faculty satisfaction, 2) streamline the promotions process, 3) standardize training of "gatekeepers", 4) systematize the timing of review of readiness for promotion, 5) minimize bias and 6) improve faculty representation by gender, race and ethnicity.

Work continues to create a funding pool for creative mentoring that spans across departments and improve available opportunities for training to reduce unconscious bias.