Six ways to get a grip on recruiting "Occasional Faculty Developers"

L Hazelton,[1] J Lazor,[2] H Buckley,[3] J Hamilton[4]

[1]Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada; [2]Department of Family and Community Medicine, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada; [3]Department of Family Practice, University of British Columbia, British Columbia, Canada; [4]Department of Family Medicine and Office of Innovation and Scholarship in Medical Education, University of Manitoba, Manitoba, Canada
Correspondence to:

Abstract

Faculty development involves activities that prepare faculty members to fulfill academic roles as teachers, educators, and leaders. In addition to personnel with specialized expertise in faculty development, most medical schools rely upon the contributions of occasional faculty developers for whom faculty development is not their primary responsibility or area of training. Recruiting occasional faculty developers, many of whom are also clinicians, to support faculty development programming can be challenging. In this article, we provide suggestions for how to successfully recruit and retain occasional faculty developers to provide education to medical faculty on teaching and other academic topics.

Résumé

Résumé français à venir.

Introduction

Faculty development involves the cultivation of skills and expertise in academic activities such as teaching, research, and leadership. In Canada, medical schools each have an office that is responsible for offering faculty development to support their educational programs. This helps fulfill accreditation standards for undergraduate and postgraduate medical education programs, which require support for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills.[1,2] For example, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons CanERA institution level standards state that the medical school must have a "dedicated accessible faculty development program" that is based on learning needs, and that supports the "implementation of innovations effectively."[1(p.14)]

In addition to full-time faculty and staff with educational expertise, medical schools rely upon the contributions of occasional faculty developers, defined as "medical school faculty members who periodically conduct faculty development workshops, but for whom faculty development is not their primary responsibility and area of training."[3(p.1467–1468)] Despite the institutional importance of faculty development, recruiting occasional faculty developers to support programming can be challenging. Physician shortages and increasing demands on the health system may limit clinicians' availability. Training may be required on how to use new technology to deliver the FD

sessions. There may be a lack of local presenters with expertise on important topics that have been recently added to the curriculum (such as anti-oppression). There are also structural and organizational factors which may influence how occasional faculty developers are recognized for their contributions, which may include financial compensation.[4]

There are many ways in which contributing to occasional faculty development can benefit presenters. A qualitative study of 30 occasional faculty developers found that their motivations included a desire to learn and develop professionally, satisfaction from collaborating and learning from others, an impetus to give back to the academic community by improving teaching (and ultimately patient care), as well as elements such as fun, satisfaction and enjoyment.[5] Occasional faculty developers have also identified professional benefits such as networking, opportunities for collaboration, enhanced reputation and greater credibility.[4] However, those responsible for recruiting and retaining occasional faculty developers may not always consider how to leverage these advantages while mitigating the factors that may deter them from participation.

We are faculty development leads at Canadian medical schools who between us have extensive experience offering education programs to medical faculty. In 2024, we presented to our colleagues at the annual meeting of the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada (AFMC) Faculty Development Committee on the topic of recruiting and retaining occasional faculty developers. We share these suggestions here in the hope that readers will find them applicable to their own settings.

Six ways to get a grip on recruiting occasional faculty developers

Recruiting

1. ***Identify speakers, facilitators and workshop leaders who have something to gain by helping with your faculty development programming.[5]*** Presenters often value the opportunity to raise awareness of their area of focus and enhance the knowledge and skills of others. Those in formal education leadership positions might want to present on topics that align with their needs or responsibilities. For example, a faculty lead tasked with addressing learning environment issues may welcome an opportunity to speak to faculty on

how to deal with learner mistreatment. Additionally, presenters may appreciate having a reason to set aside time to delve more deeply into a topic themselves.

2. ***Look for speakers both inside and outside your faculty or school.*** There are experts from other specialties or professions within your university who will have relevant messages and concepts to convey. When attending a conference, be on the lookout for speakers who can capture an audience and bring new perspectives to your faculty.

Reducing Friction

3. ***Make the ask clear with transparent expectations.*** Consider the energy exchange required with each request and use the opportunity to demonstrate care and respect. Provide details up front including date, estimated time required for preparation, renumeration (if any) and supports available. Presenters shouldn't have to guess or ask those awkward questions. Listen carefully to their responses or hesitations and be open to negotiation around the task.[6] Explain why you are reaching out to them: if they were recommended by a colleague, let them know! Whether they accept or not, an invitation is a compliment that can encourage them in their ongoing educational work.

4. ***Make it easy for the speaker.*** Be organized on your end, and work to find a time that fits their schedule. Try to off-load as many of the extra jobs as possible so you can direct the instructor's time into providing content and facilitating the session. If available, consider offering an administrator or instructional designer to help a faculty put together slides or other educational materials. Offer a co-facilitator model involving a more seasoned facilitator. This can help develop the confidence of more junior faculty while providing a more experienced faculty member the chance to mentor someone to take over some of their teaching duties. This also helps build relationships which help make the experience more positive.[5] You can offer a dry-run or "talk-through" of the session with them and provide a moderator who will be present for virtual sessions.

Retaining

5. ***Retain, retain, retain!*** Show appreciation to keep those good speakers coming back. Connect with them as individuals. Ask what is important to them; don't assume you know what the potential presenter might

value. Ensure that speakers have a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment when they conduct workshops by showing them strategies that will connect them with participants.[5] When you share participant feedback with the presenter after a session, include a personal comment expressing your gratitude for their contribution. Cultivate relationships, have some fun, and follow up periodically. Foster a community of practice for faculty developers. Share stories of how being a faculty developer can enhance skills, improve learning institutional culture, broaden networks, and build professional confidence. This can assist with the development of a faculty developer identity and sense of belonging.

6. ***Elevate the recognition of peer education (faculty development) as a legitimate form of medical education.*** Encourage departments to recognize the value of occasional faculty developers through mechanisms such as academic deliverables for units and individuals. Remind the faculty member to include these activities in their CV or teaching dossier.

Conclusion

While it may seem at times that organizing faculty development is a never-ending cycle of asking people to do things with little means of rewarding them, remind yourself that there are benefits on both sides. By becoming engaged in faculty development, individuals gain not only satisfaction but credibility which can lead to new opportunities and career advancement.[3] Your perspective may shift, and you might realize that there is a whole world of people out there who are occasional faculty developers just waiting to be asked.

References

1. Canadian Residency Accreditation Consortium (CanRAC). *General standards of accreditation for institutions with residency programs*. 2021. Available from https://www.royalcollege.ca/content/dam/documents/accreditation/competence-by-design/non-resource-documents/canera/general-standards-accreditation-for-institutions-with-residency-programs-e.html. [Accessed on Dec 2, 2024].

2. Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools. *CACMS STANDARDS AND ELEMENTS Standards for Accreditation of medical education programs leading to the M.D. degree.* 2024. Available from https://cacms-cafmc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CACMS-Standards-and-Elements-AY-2024-2025.pdf. [Accessed Dec 2, 2024].

3. O'Sullivan PS, Irby DM. Identity formation of occasional faculty developers in medical education: a qualitative study. *Acad Med*. 2014;89(11):1467-73. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000374

4. Kolomitro K, Hamilton J, Leslie K, et al. Viewing faculty development through an organizational lens: sharing lessons learned. *Med Teach.* 2021;43(8):894-9. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2021.1931078

5. O'Sullivan PS, Irby DM. What motivates occasional faculty developers to lead faculty development workshops? A qualitative study. *Acad Med*. 2015 Nov 1;90(11):1536-40. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000767.

6. Baker L, Leslie K, Panisko D, et al. Exploring faculty developers' experiences to inform our understanding of competence in faculty development. *Acad Med*. 2018 Feb 1;93(2):265–73. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000001821.