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"If you light a lamp for someone it will also brighten your own path."

-Buddhist proverb

Growing Our Own: Developing Teachers through Educator Mentorship

Mentorship is defined as "a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person."¹ There are many ways in which to grow our faculty as expert educators and one well documented path of success is the educator mentorship model that pairs junior level educators with senior, well-seasoned teachers. There is a wealth of literature to demonstrate the positive effects of mentoring in medicine.²⁻⁴ Mentorship can have a positive impact on faculty members' career advancement by helping to create a meaningful community of support and promoting self-actualization. In the research realm, mentorship is documented as increasing academic outcome measures such as peer-reviewed publications and grant funding for junior faculty.⁵ Effective mentorship is an essential element for career development and retention of health professions educators.

Mentorship is a powerful tool within the educational environment, yet the prevalence and quality of training received by mentors is unknown. At this time there is no documented standard approach for mentors in health professions education leaving mentors responsible for formulating their own mentorship path and acquiring the necessary skills along the way. There are several different mentorship models (dyads, peer, group, etc.) and identifying characteristics for a successful mentor relationship can prove challenging. To help guide your current and future mentorship experiences, below is a list of key mentorship tips compiled from review of the literature and anecdotal feedback.

- Implement strategies for fostering independence and growth in the mentee.
- Establish a meaningful mentorship pairing based on common interests and goals.
- Ensure frequent communication between mentor and mentee.
- Develop clear purpose and goals.
- Take time for mentor and mentee reflection on the process and outcomes.
- Determine your approach to mentorship by identifying a mentorship style – hands off vs. directive
- Set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time Bound).
- Create an environment conducive to developing the mentorship relationship and meeting goals.

Within TEACH, the Teaching Mentorship Subcommittee has been working to facilitate and enhance the development of mentorship relationships within the Academy. These dyads are dynamic, reciprocal relationships between an advanced career incumbent and a mentee aimed at promoting advancement of the teaching careers of both parties. This subcommittee is in the process of improving the teaching mentorship program by establishing supportive guidelines and providing additional faculty development in this area. We believe that the potential for a practical mentorship system will be meaningful to our participants. We are currently working to identify the best ways to pair dyads and meet varied mentorship needs. We hope to soon develop online teaching mentorship resources and refine a process for entering teaching mentorship experience into Digital Measures to count toward the needed Faculty Development related to teaching hours requirements. Please feel free to contact us with your thoughts and suggestions!

-Mariah Rudd

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Dean's Corner

Cynda Johnson, MD, MBA

I could not be more pleased with our newest students—the VTCSOM Class of 2022—who started their first full week of classes earlier this month. Out of almost 4,000 applications, the admissions committee selected 43 individuals who are not only academically qualified but also have diverse backgrounds and experiences that lend well to our patient-centered, team-based curriculum.

Remarkably, members of the class average more than 2,000 hours of research experience. A great number of our students tell us our curriculum's strong research component was the thing that most attracted them to VTCSOM. In addition to research, members of our newest class have more than 1,600 hours of clinical experience per person.

Our admissions have become increasingly competitive, and the qualifications and experience of our entering classes are more and more impressive.

Other interesting facts about our newest class:

- Not only are they the first VTCSOM class to join the school since it became a college of Virginia Tech, but they are also members of the university's sesquicentennial class.
- The class represents 11 states and 32 undergraduate institutions.
- Twenty members of the 43-person class are Virginia residents.
- The Class of 2022 brings the total to 116 represented with 10 new schools, including Chapman University, Columbia University, Emory University, Emory & Henry University, Radford University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of New Mexico, University of North Carolina – Wilmington, University of Vermont, and Williams College.
- The most represented undergraduate institution is the University of Virginia with four students. Two students received their undergraduate degree from Virginia Tech.

Even though I will not be dean when these students graduate, I look forward to following their journeys. I will never be far away.

Cynda