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Engaging Community Faculty to Meet Educational Objectives and Medical School Missions

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Topic:

Community faculty (e.g. volunteer, adjunct, clinical) are one of the most vital assets in medical education. In many medical schools they are crucial to meeting educational missions as there are not enough full-time, academic faculty to address the needs of our ever growing pool of learners. Despite this critical importance, engaging this group is not always as easy because community faculty face many individual pressures such as being more “productive” in terms of increased patient loads and responsibilities, increasing demands for their time in terms of the electronic health record, administrative burdens, and regulatory paperwork. Considering the larger educational mission and how it relates to engagement, development, and retention of community faculty is relevant when determining how to meet the needs of this vital group. In 2015, the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine created an Office for Community Faculty to expand and support this vital resource. The University of New Mexico School of Medicine opened its own Office for Community Faculty soon thereafter. Meanwhile, the University of Colorado maintains an Office of Community Based Medical Education. These efforts have helped their institutions meet recruitment goals for their learners and develop an engaged group of community faculty who continue to educate and mentor the healthcare providers of the future. Each of these offices engages these educators through faculty professional development, appreciation and awards events, incentives, and benefits. Other outreach methods include community faculty advisory boards, communication tools and publications, periodic needs assessment surveys to provide continuous quality improvement, information sharing with student affairs units, and more. By considering engagement, development, and retention of community faculty, educational missions can be met and learners can receive the training they require for success.

Short Description:

Community faculty provide medical schools with critical resources to support education and other academic missions. However, recruiting, developing and retaining community faculty can be challenging because these volunteers often maintain busy and demanding clinical practices. Schools around the country are establishing Offices for Community Faculty to address these challenges by focusing on three main initiatives: engagement, development, retention. These efforts have not only helped their institutions meet recruitment goals for their learners but have developed an engaged group of community faculty who continue to educate and mentor the healthcare providers of the future.

Four questions that were posed to/considered by session participants

- 1) *How are your community faculty related to your educational and academic missions?*
- 2) *What have been the most successful techniques you have used to engage community faculty?*
- 3) *How have you incorporated professional development opportunities into community faculty benefits and requirements?*
- 4) *How does your School of Medicine retain community faculty given increased productivity pressures?*

Three take home points from our session:

- 1) *Review your academic and educational missions and how community faculty play a role in contributing to your School of Medicine.*
- 2) *Examine the needs you have related to community faculty engagement, development, and retention and determine how to best meet the needs and requests of community faculty through each of these focus areas.*
- 3) *Participate in community forums such as the Community Faculty Consortium to continue sharing ideas and strategies to enhance the way your institution engages, empowers, and promotes community faculty*

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