

Portfolio Structure for Fellows and Faculty in the Academic Geriatrics Research Track



at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

SUMMARY

Target Audience

Fellows and junior faculty from various health professions who are pursuing an academic geriatrics research track

Purpose

To create a portfolio of an individualized, structured career plan that will enable junior investigators to implement, evaluate, and document their career goals and achievements

Program

Trainees develop and maintain a structured career plan, which is reviewed by mentors and program staff every six months

History

The structured portfolio began in 2003

Operating Costs

Program coordinator (~5% FTE);
administrative coordinator (~5% FTE)

Outcomes

15 trainees have participated since 2003; success is measured through fellow and junior faculty publications and grants, and through trainee satisfaction

Available Materials

Clinical Research Appraisal Inventory;
Research Portfolio Outline; Trainee Evaluation Form

For More Information

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Program Overview

This activity provides a structure for fellows and junior faculty who are pursuing academic geriatrics research careers to plan, implement, and evaluate their career goals, with the advice of mentors and a program coordinator.

Given the short supply of researchers in various aging-related fields, this activity aims to ensure the academic success of health professional trainees who are pursuing careers as researchers in these fields. Because these junior investigators need to have a diverse skill set and knowledge base, the structured portfolio was created to help trainees break out of the traditional mindset in which research careers start with a PhD, followed by years spent in a lab under one mentor, learning a predetermined set of skills.

Trainees develop a clear career and research plan that is an individualized roadmap to what they want to learn, and who and what will help them achieve success along the way. As they progress through their career, trainees add evidence—including abstracts and papers, and feedback from their biannual progress report—that goals are being met and progress is being made. These and other materials can subsequently assist each trainee in job searches, applying for research grants, and receiving academic promotions.

Program Operations

Trainees undergo an initial assessment of their research competencies using a format developed at the University of Wisconsin (see Clinical Research Appraisal Inventory in *Available Materials*). Trainees then follow a defined format for establishing and monitoring career goals, tracking mentor meetings, and reporting their progress. The trainee sets his or her own goals and markers of



success, with advice from a panel of program leaders and mentors from various health professions and divisions.

Every six months, the trainee presents his or her progress to the panel. During this session, the panel and trainee analyze the trainee's progress, and the trainee is able to give feedback on the panel's and department's roles in advancing her or his career plan. Goals and plans are then modified as needed.

The portfolio structure is completely up to the trainee. Most trainees prefer to use a three-hole binder, but some have opted to use a digital format. The portfolio is mandatory only for the first year of full-time research, but many trainees maintain their portfolios long after the required period.

Staffing Requirements

A faculty member of the division of geriatrics serves as the program coordinator, and an administrative coordinator's time is needed for sending out reminders for submission of biannual progress reports, scheduling portfolio review meetings, etc.

Program Costs and Funding Sources

The program coordinator and administrative coordinator require approximately 5% FTE each. The mentors' time is a part of their teaching responsibilities.

The program is funded by the Hartford Center of Excellence, the Pepper Center, and a National Institutes of Health T32 research training grant.

Process and Outcomes Data

Since 2003, 15 trainees have maintained their portfolio as part of the mandatory research training program, but many—including one alumnus who is now an Associate Professor—continue to utilize the structure throughout their careers.

Implementation Lessons

- One of the values of the portfolio approach is that everyone involved—trainees, teachers, mentors—agrees on the trainee's goals and plans for meeting them.
- This shared plan facilitates collaboration between the entire team and helps to ensure that the trainees' educational, research, and career objectives are met.

Available Materials

Tools/Resources

- Clinical Research Appraisal Inventory
- Research Portfolio Outline
- Trainee Evaluation Form

For More Information

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