

Developing Physician Leaders

Mentorship and learning by doing are vital to engaging the next physician generation

By Susan Reynolds, MD, PhD

EVERY MEDICAL society is grappling with the question of how to identify and develop the next generation of leaders. Who are they? What new knowledge and additional skills do they need in order to be effective leaders of the association? How do you keep them engaged over a period of time so that they remain committed to the organization's goals and objectives?

Mentorship Programs

Having worked with several specialty societies that have successfully developed future leaders through formal one- or two-year training programs, I have noted three things that made these programs successful. First, each organization is aware that the next generation wants mentors, so they have developed effective mentoring programs. They took the time to match physicians in the early stages of their careers with mentors who are more senior physicians, but also share common interests, backgrounds, modes of practice, and, often, geographic proximity. These mentors have to be interested in mentoring and must be committed to the process of mentoring for at least one year. Also each mentor is assigned to only one or two mentees for best results.

Learning Projects

Second, interactive learning has to involve both mentees and mentors. Both want programs that include group discussions and problem solving more than straight didactic information. Some mentors want to participate actively on the faculty of programs, but most prefer more of a counseling role. Mentors may need some tips for what makes an effective mentoring relationship.

Third, it is very helpful to have mentors and their mentees do a project that is based on the association's strategic plan. By tying these projects

to the organizational objectives, the projects take on significant meaning, not just create busywork, and can move the organization forward.

These projects also keep young physicians engaged in the organization over a period of time. However, it is also important to find roles for them in the society after their mentoring relationship ends. Mentors can help with this by making introductions and opening doors for the mentees so that they get assigned to association committees that are of great interest to them. Some organizations successfully set the goal of advancing graduates from their future leaders' programs to committees and ultimately to board positions.

Core Knowledge and Skills

Each association no doubt wants their future leaders to have a certain amount of unique knowledge and skill. However, there is a core body of knowledge and key leadership skills that all future leaders will benefit from in any organization. All future leaders need to learn organizational structure, mission, vision, and values; duties of the board versus management; goals and objectives in the strategic plan; advocacy initiatives the organization has undertaken; advanced communication skills including conflict resolution, how to motivate volunteers, and emotional intelligence; parliamentary procedure; and basic finance so they can understand the organization's financial statements.

It takes time, money, and a great deal of planning to build a successful future leaders' program. However, if done right, the organization will receive a significant return on its investment, and the efforts of the future leaders will benefit the organization for many years to come.

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Meaningful Use Help for Medicaid Providers

DID YOU KNOW there is a free help desk available to take calls from Medicaid providers about attestation, registration, and Meaningful Use? Anyone eligible for the Illinois Medicaid EHR Incentive Payment Program (eMIPP) can take advantage of help desk expertise on all aspects of the program. The program is available because the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services contracted with the Chicago Health IT Regional Extension Center (CHITREC) and the Illinois Health IT Regional Extension Center (IL-HITREC) to provide education and outreach for eMIPP. As a result, CHITREC and IL-HITREC are staffing a help desk to assist providers with all types of questions about the program. The help desk was developed with support from the Illinois DHFS, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. You can call the help desk at 1-855-MU-HELP-1 (1-855-684-3571) Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and have your questions answered. If you do not reach an agent, simply leave a voice mail message and we will get back to you promptly!