

Association of Women Surgeons: Career Development Resources

Professional development and leadership training opportunities for healthcare professionals

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Formal leadership training is a relatively recent addition to the educational armamentarium of the health care executive. Leadership training opportunities for physicians, surgeons, and scientists have gradually appeared over the past 15 to 20 years, but information about them has been scant, with few comprehensive reviews made available to the community at large. This article describes the major opportunities available to obtain formal and informal leadership training for careers in medical school administration. Programs that are specifically targeted to women are described in detail.

DATA SOURCES: Information was obtained from the author's direct knowledge, direct communication with the leadership of each program, and the Web site of each sponsoring organization, when available.

CONCLUSIONS: Many opportunities for leadership training are now available to surgeons, with several specifically designed for women. The author strongly encourages surgeons to avail themselves of these opportunities, as both anecdotal information and published data suggest that these programs are highly effective in enhancing leadership careers.

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Surgeons at varying stages of their careers may be considering leadership positions. There are a number of formal leadership courses available depending on an individual's needs and career stage. Many of the opportunities are stratified on the basis of career stage, while others target specific groups such as minorities and women or career paths such as medical school leadership. This career resource reviews professional development and leadership training opportunities for health care professionals.

Association of American Medical Colleges

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) offers several leadership courses and opportunities to enhance leadership skills: Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar, Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar, Minority Faculty Career Development Seminar, Executive Development Seminar for Associate Deans and Department Chairs, AAMC Council of Deans Fellowship Program, and the AAMC Annual Meeting.

The AAMC Group on Women in Medicine and Science offers the Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar and the Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar, which are 2 annual courses for women at different career stages. Both programs are extremely popular and therefore are usually completely

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filled. Because attendance is on a first-come, first-served basis, it is wise to apply as soon as the application process opens (usually a few months before the meeting).

The Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar is usually held in mid-July for junior faculty members. It is designed to be an introductory course to develop the necessary skills for a path to leadership. This is an excellent program that is extremely interactive. Participants are required to complete precourse assignments and attend the entire seminar. All materials are available to participants online, so that note taking may be minimized, allowing the time at the seminar to be devoted to the interactive participation. Participants learn how to create their own agendas for professional development and gain insight into the realities of building a career in the rapidly changing world of academic medicine. The seminar covers some of the skills required to navigate these changes, including financial skills, optimizing one's curriculum vitae, career planning, conflict management, negotiation skills, and grant writing. A major emphasis is on learning how to use and cultivate our professional networks. This program provides ample opportunity for networking, often resulting in long-term professional relationships and new professional opportunities. Detailed information is available on the AAMC Web site.¹

The Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar is a 3-day course usually held during the first 2 weeks of December. The focus of this program is acquiring tools and skills to lead and be an effective member of teams, developing knowledge about academic and organizational leadership, applying strategies for powerful and effective communication, and developing mentoring relationships. This program is targeted to women with aspirations of obtaining major administrative positions, such as division or department chief or associate dean. Numerous workshops are included in the seminar, and several half-day workshops are available as extra activities just before the seminar starts. In recent years, topics have included effective scientific writing, negotiation, conflict, personnel and time management, and improved knowledge of institutional finance and departmental budgeting processes.

The seminar is formatted to include general sessions with highly visible and experienced keynote speakers, interactive workshops, and small-group "career mapping" sessions. These small-group sessions, facilitated by experienced senior women, are usually among the most acclaimed portions of the seminar. The small groups meet several times over the course of the seminar and cover in detail elements that are key to gaining leadership skills and roles, such as proper curriculum vitae preparation and proactive future career planning. As with the Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar, valuable networking skills and opportunities are provided. Experience has shown that the small "career mapping" group members often remain in contact with one another long after the seminar. Detailed information is available on the AAMC Web site.²

The Minority Faculty Career Development Seminar is offered through the AAMC Group on Diversity and Inclusion and is usually held in the fall for junior faculty members aspiring to leadership positions in academic medicine. This 3-day seminar is designed to assist participants in understanding how the academic system functions relative to promotion and tenure, designing career paths, planning for advancement, developing personal and professional skills, developing mentoring relationships and professional networks, and understanding the grant process and funding priorities.³ These goals are approached in an environment that focuses on overcoming some of the challenges facing underrepresented faculty members. Small-group mentoring and career-planning sessions as well as precourse grant writing workshops are highlights. As with the Group on Women in Medicine and Science programs, this seminar gets excellent reviews from its participants.

The Executive Development Seminar for Associate Deans and Department Chairs is an intense 4-day program that is extremely valuable either for those about to enter senior leadership roles in the immediate future or for those who have recently undertaken such roles.⁴ It takes place in October each year. Most of the faculty members have many years of hands-on experience in academic medical centers and are able to pass their experience along to the participants. The interactive format provides time for both formal and informal communication between participants and faculty members and among themselves. Participants gain substantial and practical knowledge and skills in leadership and management practices that they can apply locally. The exchange of experiences is particularly valuable in avoiding common mistakes often made by new leaders. Topics that are usually covered include exploring the issues shaping academic medical center operations, legal issues, understanding the role of culture and values in an academic medical center, temperament and communication styles in team development, group effectiveness, and the management of scientists and professionals. Significant time is dedicated to technical financial management, physician and hospital reimbursement, and departmental budgeting, as well as communication, negotiation, and the art of leading teams. Past participants have uniformly been very pleased with the broad range of topics covered, which also allowed each to determine which areas they should investigate further.

The AAMC Council of Deans Fellowship Program was created to enhance the development of future senior leaders in academic medicine. It is designed for senior faculty members, including department chairs and assistant and associate deans, who are interested in being considered for deanships in the near future. The program is individualized and based on intense hands-on experience with a dean mentor, at the mentor's institution.⁵ The program is not intended for individuals currently under active consideration for appointment to deanships.

The AAMC Annual Meeting offers many leadership skill advancement opportunities. It is a very large meeting

(well over 3,000 individuals involved in all aspects of medical school administration attend every year), and therefore, the relevant opportunities are more dispersed throughout the meeting. The meeting's program booklet (available in advance online) should be carefully examined for the relevant and desired opportunities. These may include sessions sponsored by the Group on Women in Medicine and Science, the Group on Faculty Affairs, and the Group on Minority Affairs, to name just a few. There are other leadership services, programs and seminars offered by the AAMC that can be reviewed on its Web site.⁶

Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine program for women

The Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) program is an in depth, yearlong national fellowship program developed for female academic faculty members in medical, dental and public health schools who demonstrate the greatest potential for assuming executive leadership positions at academic health centers.⁷ The program, now in its 19th year, was created to provide women with the skills to be competitive in pursuing senior leadership roles in the academic environment. Specifically, the program aims to use executive mentoring partnerships to support individual leadership development within a community of female academic leaders with broad perspective and deep abilities to lead in a diverse and changing academic environment.

The ELAM program requires substantial time and financial commitments from attendees and their institutions. Acceptance to the program is very competitive, and the support of supervisors and deans is a must for successful admission and completion of the program. The application requires letters of support from the dean, a direct supervisor (usually the department chair), and a senior officer or colleague in the institution who can comment on the candidate's current responsibilities and future leadership potential. The application also includes a series of questions concerning leadership style and experience and career priorities. In most cases, the dean's office and/or department cover the substantial costs involved in participation in the ELAM program (approximately \$20,000, including tuition, travel, and lodging). Candidates must be at least a senior-level associate professor with existing leadership roles. The fellowship requires on-site presence in the Philadelphia area for 1 week in the fall, on-site presence at variable locations for 1 week in January, independent intersession assignments during the winter, and another week in the spring back in the Philadelphia area. The dean is expected to attend the final 1.5 days of the spring segment with his or her fellow, to participate in the Leaders Forum and the events surrounding graduation from the program.

The fellowship provides hands-on and in-depth experience in a broad range of topics, including financial skills (with a "mini-MBA"), negotiation, conflict resolution, strategic planning, stress management, emerging issues in

academic health care, and personal and professional development. Fellows are provided with executive coaching and tips on both personal and professional aspects of how to present themselves in the best light. Each fellow works closely with her dean or CEO throughout the program, and together, they develop an "institutional action project" on an issue of interest and importance to both the fellow and the institution. Before the beginning of the fall session, candidates undergo a 360° evaluation and a Myers-Briggs personality type assessment. It is important, and often revealing, for surgeons to understand how each personality type plays an important role in dealing with the daily activities required in the administrative world. There are ample opportunities to meet female leaders in academic medicine, and networking is an official component of the program. The curriculum is designed to address 3 essential competencies: personal, professional, and leadership effectiveness; strategic finance; and organizational dynamics.

The class consists of approximately 50 women from all disciplines, including MDs, PhDs, and dental and public health faculty members. Many of the participants go on to become associate deans, deans, or department chairs, and the success rate in obtaining advanced leadership roles after ELAM is very high. ELAM graduates (now more than 700) come from more than 180 academic health centers and include 21 current deans of medical, dental, public health, and graduate schools; 115 department chairs; 104 center or institute directors; and 147 senior dean's staff members throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.⁸

American College of Physician Executives Leadership Development Program

Health systems increasingly seek individuals with clinical experience to lead their organizations. The 4-step Leadership Development Program is divided into 4 main areas—assessment, program building, measurement, and executive coaching—and is geared toward helping physician leaders develop specific skills, including an understanding of finance, the ability to run a meeting, and the communication skills necessary to inspire employees and patients. The program strives to help develop competencies in areas such as health law, managing physician performance, ethics, financial decision making, marketing and strategic planning, negotiation, presentation skills, interpersonal skills, team dynamics, and conflict resolution, among others.⁹

Harvard Center for Continuing Professional Education

A variety of courses offer a range of leadership and management curricula for health care and physician executives.¹⁰ They are intense, 1-week to 2-week programs that address the critical issues facing health care today. Most popular among these are Leadership Development for

Physicians in Academic Health Centers,¹¹ the Program for Chiefs of Clinical Services,¹² and Leadership Strategies for Evolving Health Care Executives.¹³ Feedback on these programs is very positive. Participants report that the experience is extremely intense and that the knowledge is durable.

Center for Creative Leadership

Courses offered by Center for Creative Leadership are primarily directed toward industry, and although they are not specifically designed for the health care environment, many readily apply to physicians in (or pursuing) leadership positions.¹⁴ Most courses include learning how to develop introspective skills and the ability to avoid career-derailing mistakes. Two of their key programs are the Maximizing Your Leadership Potential¹⁵ and The Looking Glass Experience.¹⁶ Maximizing Your Leadership Potential is geared toward individuals who are just starting out in roles that require managerial skills (and is therefore an entry-level leadership course), and The Looking Glass Experience covers skills required at every stage of the leadership ladder, from entry-level managerial roles to the CEO level (which in medicine could be the head of a practice plan, the president of a hospital, the dean of a medical school, or the president of a university). These are week-long courses, very intense, but very informative.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers a variety of programs that vary depending on the needs of the health care community and financial resources. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars program is a well-established, funded program that offers a master's degree and graduate-level research at 1 of 4 participating universities.¹⁷ These future leaders receive 2 years of funding to address research related to the health and well-being of Americans. Ladder to Leadership: Developing the Next Generation of Community Health Leaders is a 16-month program in select communities in which emerging leaders work with local governments and nonprofits to develop expertise in community programs, collaboration, management skills, team skills, networking, and innovation.¹⁸

Executive coaching

Executive coaching is an individualized relationship between an individual and a trained executive coach. It represents a valuable "third opinion" from an impartial individual, not connected to the institution at which the client works, who can function as a sounding board and as counsel for strategy, planning, and preparation for important or politically loaded decisions and adjustment of personal style to work within the local culture. There is a growing belief that all individuals taking on new leadership roles in academic medicine should be provided with a period of executive

coaching, to hit the ground running and avoid mistakes that may prove costly in the long run. The scope of coaching spans the entire spectrum of academic medicine. Each individual should select a coach with experience in the area that he or she wishes to develop or improve further. Recommendations for experienced coaches may be obtained through professional organizations, including ELAM and similar leadership training programs.

Conclusion

Opportunities for leadership development and training are widely available. Some are specific for women, others are open to all. All require a true commitment on the part of the individual and her surrounding support system, including supervisor(s), co-workers and family members. They are often expensive and time consuming, but the rewards unquestionably justify the cost and time commitment, if one wishes to be successful in a leadership role in medicine.

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Resources

SkillPath seminars: <http://www.skillpath.com>
Women Executives in Science & Healthcare: <http://weshleadership.org>
American Council on Education fellowships: http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Fellows_Program1