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Protecting the future of academic discovery: a pro-active approach to early career faculty development of biomedical researchers

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Keywords

Educational research findings, Research/lab mentoring, Skill-building

Abstract

Note: Some key stats will be updated with current numbers.

Proactive mentorship and professional development are fundamental to the success of early career faculty. The Early Career Advancement Program (ECAP) within the OHSU School of Medicine (SOM) is designed to facilitate and optimize faculty productivity, promotion, and career satisfaction. ECAP originated within the Department of Cell, Developmental and Cancer Biology in 2014, and is currently in its third year of being broadly available to all new investigators within the SOM. Overseen by mid-career and senior OHSU scientists, ECAP delivers up to six interactive workshops annually, facilitated by guest speakers from within the OHSU research community and external experts. These workshops are specifically designed to provide participants with practical experience and real-time feedback. Since its inception, ECAP has served over 150 OHSU faculty across 30 OHSU departments. Of the initial cohort (2015-2016) of faculty who joined ECAP as newly recruited SoM early career faculty, all have gone on to successfully compete for their first NIH R01 awards, and to advance to Associate Professor.

There are four pillars of early career advancement training: (1) Formal Mentoring; (2) Leadership workshops; (3) The Business of Science workshops; and (4) Sponsorship. To support the four pillars, ECAP offers programmatic workshops covering topics such as time management, establishing lab/workplace culture, lab economics, people management, scientific writing, public speaking, conflict resolution, team science, building a mentorship team, and navigating the promotion and tenure process.

As a dynamic program that strives to adapt to support the needs of OHSU faculty, ECAP surveys participants annually to identify their priorities and needs. For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic ECAP developed several new workshops focusing on finding joy and satisfaction in work, assessing the impact of the pandemic on promotion and tenure timelines, and identifying lessons learned from the pandemic that could be applied to improve lab culture and productivity.

Embedded within ECAP is a “train-the-trainer” component designed to build the next generation of OHSU leaders, with demonstrated success. In 2020, ECAP faculty graduate Dr. Sud Anand initiated an analogous Postdoctoral Advancement Program within the Knight Cancer Institute, as well an additional resource in career training through the monthly Knight Walks seminar series. Knight Walks provides information, interviews, conversations and activities to highlight and assist in the navigation of key decisions and actions to further the careers of Ph.D. scientists presently in trainee roles. Other ECAP “graduates” provide education content within ECAP itself, and/or serve as Steering Committee members throughout the SOM.

To date, ECAP is recognized as a powerful tool to aid early career faculty develop essential skills necessary for academic success and career satisfaction.

Learning Objectives

1. Increase visibility for the Early Career Advancement Program and the opportunities it provides.
2. Demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the Early Career Advancement Program
3. Illustrate outcomes of the ECAP Program