



# Symposium on Educational Excellence 2025

## Ensuring the future of academic discovery: a proactive approach to early-career faculty development of biomedical researchers

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### Keywords

Faculty; Research; Education; faculty development

### Abstract

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 fifth year of being broadly available to all new investigators within the SOM. Overseen by mid-career and senior OHSU scientists, ECAP delivers up to seven 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.

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.

Several ECAP participants have gone on to earn prestigious national awards. 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. In 2024, Ramon Barajas, Associate Professor in Diagnostic Radiology, and Haijiao Zhang, Assistant in Oncological Sciences joined the prestigious Cancer Moonshot Scholars by successfully competing for R37 MERIT awards. Amy Moran received an R01 upgrade to R37. Cirila Estela Vasquez Guzman Assistant Professor in Family medicine, has received wide recognition for her research grants.

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