

Partners Program Director Selection Process

Background

The Graduate Medical Education (GME) Program Director role is critical to the quality of resident and fellow education, the well-being of the trainees, and the overall success of the institution's education mission. Each program director, in conjunction with the Department Chair, is responsible for developing and implementing a vision for his/her program that involves recruiting top candidates, providing them with an optimal education and assessing/documenting the competency of each trainee.

Historically the role of residency or fellowship program director was almost exclusively departmental in scope: program directors were selected by the Department Chair, reported to the Chair, and generally had responsibilities limited to the department. Over the last decade, however, the role of GME Program Directors has assumed an institutional dimension based on external regulatory requirements and on the recognized benefits of collaboration across specialties in the area of education.

Currently, program directors are members of an education community that extends across departments, Partners institutions and HMS. In response to regulatory mandates and in order to improve collaboration, quality, efficiency and expertise in GME, Partners developed centralized support and oversight for graduate medical education. Over the past decade this has resulted in strengthened education committees, a vigorous process of internal program reviews, careful review and approval of new GME programs, an annual "core curriculum" program for residents, an annual Chief Resident course, and faculty development workshops for program directors. These activities provide support to program directors, capitalize on their complementary areas of expertise and rely on their participation and engagement.

Program director positions are generally defined as "part-time" and program directors thus balance this demanding administrative and teaching position with other professional commitments, including clinical practice +/- research. Some, but not all, ACGME specialty requirements specify a minimum percent effort that a program director must devote to the role.

Turnover in the program director role at Partners and nationally has been rapid, with a rate of roughly 20-30% annually. The Partners Education Committee has discussed ways to strengthen the program director role, while making it more appealing and rewarding. One of these involves reinvigorating the process of program director selection in a way that incorporates a role for the institution's education committee, as now required by ACGME.

Multifaceted Role of the GME Program Director

Departmental Role

ACGME Program Requirements specify numerous program director responsibilities including (but not limited to) curriculum design, evaluation and feedback, policy development and implementation, and monitoring duty hours and resident "stress". Some program requirements stipulate that "core" program directors must provide oversight of subspecialty program directors. In addition to maintaining compliance with ACGME standards, the program director must accommodate relevant JCAHO, BROM, ECFMG, NRMP and ACGME requirements.

Other aspects of the program director job description are defined by the Chair; these may vary substantially from one program/department to another.

Institutional/Partners Role

Program directors' responsibilities outside of the department include:

- Serving as the key contact and responsible person linking the institution's GME leadership and infrastructure with the training program;
- Attending meetings of the hospital education committee (and the Partners Education Committee [PEC], if elected);
- Attending program director workshops, which are designed as professional development opportunities for program directors;
- Responding to periodic data requests and surveys from the institution and external agencies (providing demographic information, documentation of compliance with various requirements, follow up to accreditation letters or internal review reports, etc);
- Participating in a detailed, periodic program review by an institutional internal review committee;
- Serving on internal review committees for other GME programs;
- Serving on task forces or subcommittees appointed from time to time by the hospital-based or Partners GME committee (e.g., duty hours task force, clinical education center planning group, etc).

National Role

Some program directors also play an active role in their specialty-based program director association.

Selection Process

Although responsibility and authority for appointing new program directors rest with the Chair, the ACGME now requires that the institution's graduate medical education committee approve the appointment of new program directors.

Suggestions for Chairs:

- **Where possible, plan transitions that allow time for a careful selection process and smooth transfer of responsibility.**
- **Prepare a detailed job description and tentatively define the specific package to be offered.** The job description should include requirements stipulated by the ACGME, either in the "Common Program Requirements" or as part of the individual (sub)specialty program requirements. These may include program director credentials, time commitment, and specific responsibilities. The job description should also specify the frequency and manner of evaluation of the program director, in order to ensure that periodic constructive feedback is provided.
- **Convene a Program Director Selection Committee to be advisory to the Chair.** Consider including one or more trainees from the program, one or more program faculty, the department's residency program director (if selecting a fellowship program director), a program director from another department, and a representative from Partners GME.
- **If no well-qualified internal candidate is available, the position should be advertised widely** so that outstanding candidates can be identified through a national search (e.g., NEJM, specialty journals, letters to other department chairs soliciting suggestions, etc.). In some cases it may be advisable to conduct a national search even where qualified internal candidates exist.

Criteria for Evaluating Candidates:

- Commitment to graduate medical education.
- Excellent administrative skills, management ability and leadership qualities.
- Outstanding interpersonal skills, including communication and collaboration.
- Keen understanding of and enthusiasm for the program director role and responsibilities.
- Excellence in teaching.
- Suitable clinical, research and/or administrative work to complement program director activities, if these are part-time.
- Prior experience as a program director or academic medical center faculty member.
- Fulfillment of specific program RRC requirements (e.g., minimum experience as faculty member).

Role of the Education Committee:

- **Before a candidate's selection is finalized**, a brief letter describing the selection process and requesting review of the proposed candidate should be sent by the appointing Department Chair to the Chair of the Education Committee. (Negotiations may be ongoing, contingent upon committee approval.)
- If the process of identifying the chosen candidate did **not** involve a selection committee as described above, the Chair of the Education Committee will arrange for the candidate to be interviewed by a member of the Education Committee.
- The Education Committee will review the Department Chair's proposal letter and the candidate's CV; the interviewer on behalf of the Education Committee will provide his/her comments, and the Committee will vote.
- If/when the Department Chair confirms the appointment, a letter is sent notifying the ACGME of the new Program Director as approved by the Education Committee.

Approved 11/17/05, Partners Education Committee