Medical schools have missions addressing education, research, and clinical service. While many of these mission-centered activities are related to daily activities of faculty, students, and staff within the institution, a significant number of initiatives are commonly based in the community in which the medical school resides. Medical schools as centers of learning and care may be viewed by those outside the institution as large employers in the community with a locus of educated individuals who perform jobs that require a high level of expertise. However, medical schools provide far more to their communities than access to medical care and employment. Collectively across the institution, outreach into the community through varied community-based programs can be an important contributor to the quality of life for individuals who reside there.

The concept of community engagement is increasingly being recognized as the visible manifestation of the mission of medical schools and their affiliated teaching hospitals. Through building relationships that work to the benefit of both the institution and the community, partnerships are fostered that enhance the health status of citizens locally, regionally, and nationally through education, research and clinical service.

Unfortunately, however, the number and scope of community outreach projects that members of the faculty, staff, and students engage in is rarely tabulated, monitored, and communicated. Information about varied programming is often ‘siloed’ in departments, programs, or centers where programs are based. As a result, community members including legislators and government officials may not be aware of the range of activities that members of the medical school workforce and student body organize and implement over the course of any given year. In an era of declining federal and state support for the operations of medical schools, finding advocates for the missions of academic medicine is important. Thus medical schools should take a careful census of their efforts in community engagement and should find ways to enhance communication regarding services they regularly provide.

Medical educators are often the designers, implementers, and evaluators of community engagement activities. Although they may not often consider their role in developing and extending the image of their institution in their community, it is nevertheless an important part of what they do. That said, crafting communication about the outreach programs and accomplishments of the individuals employed by the academic health center is central to the work of offices of institutional advancement and marketing. It is not uncommon, however, for individuals who work in the offices of medical education and institutional advancement to have little to no contact with each other within their settings. The purpose of this session is to provide attendees with tools to track and demonstrate community engagement activities and strategies to develop partnerships with institutional advancement and marketing colleagues to develop appropriate outlets for messaging.

Conceptual Viewpoints/Objectives
Identify reasons why community engagement is a critical component in achieving and communicating the educational, research, and clinical service missions of our medical schools and teaching hospitals.
Consider a needs assessment approach to help ascertain contributions made by departments, programs, and centers across the institution led by faculty, students and staff that demonstrate community partnerships.
Explore development of a communications strategy to ensure that faculty, staff, students, as well as community members and other stakeholders are aware of the community engagement efforts of the medical school and teaching hospital.

Session Plan
Introduction of session. (10 minutes)
Presenters will define community engagement. Using two institutions as case exemplars, the institutional mission statements will be parsed to outline strategic goals. Examples of how interaction with community partners reinforces and contributes to the accomplishment of institutional missions will be highlighted. (20 minutes)
Presenters will suggest strategies for drafting a needs assessment to determine the scope of community engagement activities in the medical school setting. (10 minutes)
Cases will be distributed that describe institutional missions of two medical schools. Working in small groups, session participants will write survey questions that elicit information regarding activities currently in place that demonstrate community engagement. They will also identify constituencies that should be sent the needs assessment survey. (20 minutes)

Participants will craft a compelling message in support of the community engagement activities related to one institutional mission/strategic goal of the case exemplars. The message should be powerful enough to define and describe partnership efforts and focus communication. (15 minutes)

Discuss and debrief the experience. Consider how we deliver our messages. Are we successful? How do we know? How can we better partner with staff from offices of institutional advancement to improve our communications? (15 minutes)

Outcome

Session presenters will draft a manuscript for journal submission that addresses the definition of community engagement and makes a case for why promoting the mission-centered activities of our institutions is good for the health of our communities and important in enhancing our institutional image.

Abstract: Medical educators are often the designers, implementers, and evaluators of community engagement activities. Although they may not often consider their role in developing and extending the image of their institution in their community, it is nevertheless an important part of what they do. Crafting communication about the outreach programs of the academic health center is central to the work of institutional advancement and marketing. The purpose of this session is to provide attendees with tools to track and demonstrate community engagement activities and strategies to develop partnerships with institutional advancement and marketing colleagues to develop appropriate outlets for messaging.

Level of Audience: Mid-career

Focus of Presentation: Continuum


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