

EXCEL (Excellence through Coaching, Evaluation, and Learning) Program for WCM Faculty

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Introduction:

Optimal performance and mastery of skills require deliberate practice, with iterative goal setting and feedback. Yet academic faculty typically have limited access to feedback and support to drive continuous performance improvement. Coaching is a highly effective strategy routinely used in business, sports, and music to help individuals reach their potential. It offers a trusted peer to support faculty in accomplishing their goals through fostering self-reflection, review of feedback, and development of strategies to achieve their goals.

Weill Cornell Hospital Medicine has implemented a peer coaching model since 2021, providing coaching to help faculty wishing to improve their skills in clinical care, teaching, leadership, communication, organization, and efficiency to over sixty faculty. The intervention is provided by a trained coach through the Weill Cornell Master Coach Program and typically includes 10-20 hours over the course of 3-6 months. Faculty have found the program to be a supportive and effective way in rapidly improving skills and has led to faculty achieving and sustaining gains in performance goals. Given its success, this program is now available to all faculty at WCM through the Office of Professionalism.

Program Objectives:

1. **Enhance Clinical and Teaching skills:** Help physicians strategize ways to grow their clinical knowledge or skills, documentation, workflows, and skills as educators teaching learners.
2. **Bolster Leadership Skills and Professionalism:** Support physicians as team leaders, honing skills in effective communication, negotiation, conflict management, and team engagement.
3. **Foster Professional Growth:** Encourage physicians to engage in self-reflection, discuss feedback, and develop strategies to drive continuous improvement.
4. **Support Retention:** Help physicians successfully meet performance expectations and goals, to thrive in their roles, avoiding formal disciplinary action or termination.

Eligibility: Faculty referred to the Office of Professionalism who have a clinical or professional performance gap which has been identified by supervisors, peers, interprofessional team members, trainees, patients, or the individual faculty member.

Program Structure:

Initiation

- The Office of Professionalism reviews case with Departmental/Divisional leadership to determine if appropriate for coaching through the EXCEL program
- If appropriate for the EXCEL program, a select list of skilled coaches trained through the Master Coach Program will be offered to the faculty member as a peer coach, based on their skills and expertise as a coach.
- The faculty member and coach meet to determine ‘fit.’ If both parties choose to proceed, a coaching plan will be drafted by the EXCEL program leadership and coach, outlining the performance gaps, goals for coaching, and timing and duration of coaching

- The EXCEL program will provide the number of coaching hours agreed upon by Departmental/Divisional leadership based on budget and availability of referred faculty.

Peer Coaching

- Coaching sessions will be conducted on a regular basis, based on the schedule and availability of the peer coach and faculty member. Sessions will be flexible and can include shadowing, direct observation, case discussions, simulation, and reflection exercises.
- Coaches will share feedback, aid in development of SMART goals and action plans, and provide a safe and supportive environment for reflection.
- Content of the coaching sessions will be **confidential**, and coaches will **not** be involved in making any decisions about the faculty's employment.

Monitoring Progress

- Periodic follow-up assessments will track the faculty's progress, using other external data sources such as patient care outcomes, feedback from peers, or chart audit.
- A progress report detailing hours spent and progress attained will be submitted by coaches at regular intervals (every 10 hours of coaching). This content can be shared with the faculty to review ahead of time and will only be shared with relevant stakeholders (e.g., Departmental/Divisional leadership, Office of Professionalism, EXCEL program leaders) to aid in planning and determining if further support is needed.
- Any information shared in progress reports will be agreed upon together by the coach and faculty member (unless there is an imminent harm to individual, patients, staff, or others).
- Adjustments to the coaching plan will be made as needed to ensure continuous improvement.

Program Duration: The EXCEL coaching program will be tailored to each faculty's goal for up to 6-12 months depending on the performance gap.

Expected Outcomes:

- **Improved performance:** Faculty will gain targeted skills and knowledge to improve care delivery.
- **Increased job satisfaction, confidence, and resilience:** Faculty will feel supported in their professional development.
- **Stronger teamwork and culture:** Faculty who participate in the program will contribute to a collaborative work environment, improving their collaboration with peers, interdisciplinary teams, and trainees.
- **Reduced turnover:** Successful coaching will enhance faculty retention by providing a clear path to greater success and improvement.

Financial Model:

- Faculty who are referred for coaching through the EXCEL program will receive an agreed-upon number of coaching hours based on discussions with Departmental/Divisional leadership and EXCEL program leadership, compensated at a rate of \$400/hour for time spent on coaching-related activities by the EXCEL coach.
- Payment will be made monthly in arrears via joint-budget internal transfer through Weill Business Gateway (WBG), using the Department/Division's designated funding source.