

The Leadership Forum

Mentoring and Creating Sustainable Faculty Jobs

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How can chiefs ensure that their most valuable resource—faculty—have sustainable careers? Encourage faculty to use proven methods to prevent burnout and develop good (protective) skills early in a career. Many of these strategies are outlined in our recent Comment in JGIM.¹ Here, we adapt them to the crucial mentoring roles in which division chiefs and leaders may serve.

To avoid over-commitment, faculty should consider subtracting something when they add a new task (“if you add something, subtract something”). Encourage faculty to speak up when

their plate is full. Communication is a key factor in preventing stress buildup, which leads to burnout.

Think about instituting policies to protect faculty. A float pool is a great way to prepare for life events such as births or illness. A float staff will benefit by getting to practice without being tied to a schedule, thus offering more flexibility. Establish an email policy that allows faculty to “unplug” when away from the office, especially on nights and weekends. Set up listening meetings with faculty to discuss their work-life balance, work roles, and future goals.

Keep in mind each burned-out provider equals lost revenue and disjointed patient care. These outcomes support the business case for burnout prevention.

Finally, try to practice these habits yourself. Set an example for a healthy, *sustainable* career.

1. Linzer M, Levine R, Meltzer D, Poplau S, Warde C, West CP. 10 bold steps to prevent burnout in general internal medicine. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2013;28 (9): on line at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s1606-013-2597-8/fulltext.html>