

SGIM Disparities Task Force

Mentoring Session

September 7, 2011 – 1 p.m. ET

Mentors: Drs. Monica Lybson and Donna Washington

I would like some information on how to set myself up well for applications to general medicine fellowships this fall. For example, should one of my letters of recommendation definitely be from a research mentor? What programs are good to apply to if interested in a career researching disparities and also with a clinical focus in disparities? Should I find a possible research mentor at specific institutions prior to applying?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Lybson's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important to consider programs that are right for you.• Consider institutions that have HRSA grants for RWJ Scholars program.• Talk to you Program Director about the application process to get advice.• Two to three letters of recommendation, ideally from mentors who can talk about your research and clinical skills. <p>Dr. Washington's Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map out both the research skills expertise you need in a fellowship and the content expertise you may need (ex. Disparities).
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How valuable is a position/title as Dean of Minority Affairs for academic success vs. focusing on research and traditional teaching interests?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Lybson's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are focusing your career on diversity initiatives and URM's, then that title is valuable.• If your interests are broader, wait until later in your career and develop a broad base skill set in education, research, administration, or another area. Once established, consider narrow focus.• Getting into these positions too early in your career, you can be pigeonholed and thought of as someone with few other skills.• This career has limited upward mobility into other domains. Although not impossible, it is something that should be considered. <p>Dr. Washington's Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start broad and then hone in on more specific areas.
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I want to be good citizen in my department and get involved. But how do I not to take on too much too fast?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Lybson's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to think about it before you say yes.• Determine if it's a good use of time and if there is a return on investment.• Talk to your mentors about it before saying yes. <p>Dr. Washington's Recommendation:</p>
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- Have a multi-year plan in place to help you choose what you should take on.
- Talk to mentors about opportunities before saying yes.

Often it is stated that mentoring is not one of the standard criteria for promotion and tenure (P&T), however, it seems an unwritten rule exists on the clinician-researcher track that mentoring is expected as a measure of success. If a junior faculty member (now 3-5 years into their position) is faced with the prospect of serving in a mentoring role, what advice can you give about walking the line of doing a sufficient amount of mentoring and not allowing that unprotected time to interfere with the time needed to fulfill the criteria for P&T? More simply stated, how much mentoring becomes too much mentoring?

- Discussion:
- Dr. Lypson’s Recommendations:
- Consider the timing of becoming a mentor and your future promotion plans.
 - It is advantageous to expand breadth of scholarship.
 - Good to cultivate relationships.
 - Note: Document your mentoring activities and be explicit about your mentoring with your mentees.
- Dr. Washington’s Recommendation:
- When thinking about mentoring, consider if your career is far enough along that you can put your stuff aside to help your mentee.
 - If you are early along in your Assistant Professorship and working to build portfolio, you may not have a lot of time.
 - Consider different types of mentoring relationships, including those in which you are not the primary mentor.
 - Make sure you are on track for promotion.
 - List any mentorship on your CV.
 - In any mentorship relationship, you don’t want to be in a position to compete with your mentee.
 - Writing papers: Be comfortable with the mentee taking the lead and you assuming a secondary role.

What is the best way to prepare for a career in research in addition to clinic work?

- Discussion:
- Dr. Lypson’s Recommendations:
- Aim for a research/clinical balance of 70/30 or 80/20.
 - Take on less than that while junior because you are still developing your clinical skills.
 - Need 3-5 years to become proficient at clinical work.
 - Make sure clinical work does not encroach on research time.
- Dr. Washington’s Recommendation:
- Health services research fellowship.
 - To be a successful researcher, you need a good skill set, practice writing grants, and protected time and mentoring time.
 - Consider a longer fellowship if possible.
 - Identify a mentor who can help lay out the steps and a timeline for you and help identify the grants you should be applying for.
 - Try and find a mentor that can transition with you to junior faculty.

	<p><i>Another point to consider (mentee suggestion):</i> A third year of fellowship may not be necessary, depending on the candidate. If the person has presented at a national meeting, has a paper out, and a strong mentor, it may not be necessary. There is a downside to another year in fellowship – lower salary and mounting student loan debt.</p>
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I would like some general advice on transitioning from being a research fellow to new faculty. Setting priorities, finding Sr. faculty mentors, how to choose the best funding opportunities, structuring my time to meet goals for reaching tenure (i.e., being sure I'm spending enough time developing an area of excellence such as research, but still doing enough clinical/teaching/service).

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Washington's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a position during fellowship where you will have the right balance of clinical time (70/30 or 80/20) to do enough research. • As you will have already identified your research focus or interest, identify possible mentors who have similar research interests or expertise and who want to help develop your skills. • Many faculty positions will offer protected time for up to 3 years – you will want to identify positions where junior faculty have been successful getting career development awards and moving up the faculty ladder.
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How do you keep funding priorities in mind? Should I let my niche be methodology to have access to a lot of different funding opportunities instead of picking a certain disease focus track?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Washington's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those without a clinical focus have a more challenging time. • If you have depth in one clinical area, you can cultivate a relationship with the Institute that is funding. • For broad focus, you will need to be creative in your funding opportunities. • Narrow focus, potentially more money.
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How can I make the strongest K-award application possible and what I should have (besides publications) to increase my chances for a K?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Washington's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The difference between a K-award and a RO1 is the K-award (career development) is more about you than the research. • The key is to have strong mentoring relationships. • Publishing with your mentor demonstrates that. • Time applications so you apply for the K-award first. Or, apply for smaller foundation grants before the K, and the RO1 after you get the K.
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I'm new to my institution and haven't built up relationships yet? Am I starting back on square one for applying for Research Proposals? Would my time be better spent collaborating with others, papers, etc? Or should I move forward with research proposals?

Discussion:	<p>Dr. Washington's Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to write for a large grant when you are new at an institution. • Find a senior faculty person to work with to help you develop the proposal. • Focus on cultivating relationships and identifying a mentor.
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish in the meantime.• Meet with your Division Chief or Department Chair for suggestions on mentors with similar or useful research skills. |
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