

# Guide for Peer Connections

The [Peer Connections Program](#) is a collaborative opportunity for faculty and staff to connect with colleagues from medical schools in and around Michigan.

*With special thanks to:*

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*Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine*

*For their contributions to the development of this program.*

## **Program Description**

The Peer Connections Program is a collaborative opportunity for faculty and staff to meet and collaborate with colleagues from various regional medical schools. The program hosts a variety of networking opportunities throughout the year for Peer Connections participants and the medical school community.

This program also matches colleagues annually from different institutions who have similar professional and/or personal interests. Participants complete a survey and select potential matches by reviewing goals and interests of other participants. Peer Connections enrollment renews every summer for new and existing Peer Connections groups. The Peer Connections Planning Committee will reach out to the coaching groups throughout the year to foster enriching group experiences.

Peer coaching is a process of helping others improve performance now and into the future (Friedman, 2010). Peer Connections groups are a reciprocal relationship that benefits both parties by helping them explore ideas, collaborate on projects, and support each other in their roles. By making discipline-specific connections, medical school faculty and staff can develop peer relationships that lead to mutual coaching and guidance throughout their careers.

## **How To Get Involved**

- Sign up for the Peer Connections Newsletter [here](#).
  - The monthly Peer Connections Newsletter has information on professional development opportunities, and information on when registration opens for the upcoming Peer Connections Cohort (July/August of each year).
- Select potential Peer Connections matches from the Selection Survey (September of each year)
- Encourage others at your institution to attend Peer Connections events and learn more about the program.
- Attend the events offered throughout the year, including *Meet Your Match* in the fall which allows you to meet the participant(s) who you are paired with for the cohort.

## **Potential Peer Coaching Group Outcomes**

- Build meaningful connections with colleagues from other medical schools
- Collaborate on teaching and administrative methodologies
- Accountability partner to help achieve [SMART goals](#)
- Build connections for promotion dossier references and/or career advancement goal setting
- Inter-school collaboration for scholarship
- Invitations to teach or present your work
- Insight into methodologies and solutions utilized by other medical schools

- Reflect on professional challenges and strengths
- Support in solving career related problems

## **Making the Commitment**

- Establish a meeting schedule with your peer connection for the rest of the academic year. You might schedule meetings monthly or more/less frequently, depending on the needs of each peer.
- Create a back-up plan for making up meetings when life gets in the way.
- Determine how you will communicate—Virtual meeting, phone, email, text, etc. You may decide to meet face-to-face once or twice during the year as well.
- Clearly communicate your needs from the peer connection relationship and note the needs of your peer(s).
- Agree to a level of confidentiality for your interactions.

Throughout the Peer Connections program, keep in mind that you have made a commitment to your peer. This commitment will require time on your part, whether this is time spent advising or receiving feedback. You may also decide to collaborate on projects or observe teaching sessions remotely or in person. Prepare to commit the necessary time to make this a successful, enduring relationship.

For subsequent meetings, it is important to do the following:

- Check in with each other to be sure that your peer is satisfied with the outcome of the meetings.
- Identify 2-3 goals for each meeting and communicate these to your peer connection prior to each meeting. This helps structure your time and allows peers to prepare for the discussion.
- Take necessary notes to accomplish tasks between meetings, if necessary.

Consider the multiple ways to help each other whether this is joint publications, presentations at regional campuses, guest lecturing, review of writing projects, input on teaching activities, or general career advice. Many opportunities to use your peer connection are available, and your faculty developer can help you line up technology or resources for these opportunities.

Finally, enjoy this opportunity to connect with a peer colleague, whether this relationship lasts for a year or the rest of your career!

## The Peer Connections Planning Committee

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## **Resources and Sources Consulted**

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