

Guide for Peer Coaches

The Peer Coaching Program is a collaborative opportunity for faculty and staff to connect with colleagues from all seven medical schools in Michigan.

*A Joint Venture with
Central Michigan University College of Medicine,
Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine*

Revised Peer Coaching Booklet created by Katie Weyand (Oct. 2021)

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for their contributions to the development of this program.

History of the Program

The Peer Coaching Program was developed by Jean Bailey and Ann Voorheis-Sargent. Bailey and Voorheis-Sargent were the founding faculty development directors at their new medical schools. They found that their medical schools each employed a large amount of junior faculty and limited senior faculty. So, the Peer Coaching Program was designed to build connections with other junior faculty, so they could provide each other with research guidance, teaching and learning advice, and scholarship collaboration options. After the first year, Western Michigan Stryker School of Medicine joined the collaboration. Due to the success of the program and the desire to connect with other medical educators, the Peer Coaching Program expanded the invitation of participation to all seven Michigan medical schools. Since then, the peer coaching program has developed into a more robust opportunity to connect with peers and provide development opportunities.

Program Description

The Peer Coaching Program is a collaborative opportunity for faculty and staff to connect with colleagues from all seven medical schools in Michigan. The program hosts a variety of networking opportunities throughout the year for peer coaching participants and the medical school community.

This Peer Coaching Program annually matches colleagues from different institutions who have similar interests in research and/or teaching. Participants complete a survey and select potential matches by reviewing goals and interests of other participants. Peer Coaching enrollment renews every summer for new and existing peer coaching groups. The Peer Coaching 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). It's 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. Peer-to-peer coaching or peer coaching offers faculty and staff the support they need to succeed and thrive as teachers, researchers, and scholars.

Using a Community of Practice model (Cambridge, Kaplan, and Suter, 2005), CMED and OUWB propose developing a peer connections program to serve faculty and staff at all seven Michigan medical schools. A peer connections community of practice will explore ways for medical school faculty and staff develop coaching relationships that will enable them to survive and thrive in their roles.

Objectives

At the end of the peer connections program, participants will be able to:

1. Describe benefits and challenges of a peer coaching partnership
2. Access peer coaches for assistance and/or collaboration on faculty and practices such as teaching and learning methods, research projects, grant writing, and more
3. Apply peer coach suggestions and assistance to faculty practices
4. Report on the effectiveness of the peer coaching relationship including long-term impact on faculty and staff practices

How to connect with a peer coach

Peer Coaching Collaborative Members at all seven Michigan medical school campuses can connect you with a peer coach. This connection is a four-step process:

1. Complete the Peer Coaching Information Registration. This will put you on a list for the upcoming Peer Coaching cohort and will register you for the monthly Peer Coaching Newsletter (open year-round)
2. Read the monthly Peer Coaching Newsletter for information on professional development opportunities, and information on when the upcoming Peer Coaching Cohort will begin recruiting new group members (August of each year)
3. Select potential peer coach matches from the Selection Survey (September of each year)
4. Attend the annual virtual event, Meet Your Match, where you will meet and begin planning goals with your new group (November of each year)

Potential peer coaching group outcomes

- Build meaningful connections with colleagues from other medical schools
- Collaborate on teaching methodologies
- Accountability partner to help achieve SMART goals
- Build connections for promotion dossier references
- 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—the coaching process

- Establish a meeting schedule for rest of the academic year. You might schedule meetings monthly or more/less frequently, depending on the needs of each peer.
- Make sure each person has a copy of this meeting schedule or get these meetings on your calendars using a meeting invite.
- 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 coaching relationship and note the needs of your peer(s).
- Agree to a level of confidentiality for your interactions.

Throughout the coaching process, 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 peer coaching session and communicate these to your peer coach 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!

Faculty developers will occasionally solicit feedback on the coaching process. Please provide any suggestions you may have to improve this activity.

The Peer Coaching Planning Committee

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The Peer Coaching Collaborative Committee

This committee was formed with the purpose of advising and bettering the Peer Coaching Program. This committee serves as the first point of contact for the faculty they serve.

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