

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

9 TIPS to engage faculty in learning activities during COVID-19

Depending on the situation at your institution and in your program, you may find that your colleagues are more or less engaged, based on their clinical and other roles, and their relation to the pandemic. Due to the nature of your work, the pandemic affects different disciplines in different ways. Leading at the edge of crisis means understanding the many ways humans interact with chaos, and a deep understanding of human responses. These tips will help you to communicate clearly, empathetically and to listen deeply to what's going on for others during COVID-19.

1. Accept that there will be resistance

Humans are wired to resist change. When we are trying to change in unprecedented times, this is even more true as people only have so much capacity for change and disruption. These are especially trying times, so normal levels of resistance are likely to be even higher.

2. Keep it simple

This is of vital importance now given the levels of threat and anxiety that COVID-19 is activating. Identify what needs to be covered now and what can wait. Prioritize work so that your expectations are realistic and fair. Use the SCARF model to motivate faculty while reducing threat.

3. Emphasize the “why”

While the reasons for continuing faculty development and residency education during COVID-19 may seem obvious to you, it's helpful to communicate concrete reasons why this matters and what the rewards and benefits will be. Faculty are more likely to engage if given a compelling reason(s).

4. Recruit influencers

Use influencers from your program to endorse certain resources and educational activities, and to serve as a subject matter experts and champions on specific topics (e.g. coaching). In turn, these influencers can enlist others, and might be able to use existing platforms, such as other meetings to reach a broader audience.

5. Involve your faculty in decisions

People are more likely to resist change when they are being told how to change. Involving faculty encourages a sense of agency and ownership (“by me” vs. “to me”). Ask them what type of support they need. Work to understand how COVID-19 is impacting them and their work. Their input will provide important insights into managing the COVID-19 pandemic, and understanding their concerns and will put you in a better position to address them.

6. Provide options and variety

Suggest resources people can use for their own self-learning, and highlight which are quick reads and which require a bit more time. If you are holding synchronous virtual sessions, poll the group to see what time is most convenient for most and record the sessions for those who are unable to attend.

7. Use a just-in-time approach

Make sure the fac dev resources you're offering are relevant to the immediate situation. For example, if you your faculty are switching to teaching virtually, you might want to focus on sending out [resources and best practices for teaching in the virtual environment](#). There are many “off the shelf” resources available (e.g. [CBD Resource Directory](#)) that can make this easier for you. Be selective about what you send and to whom; some content may not be relevant to all audiences.

8. Be specific and concrete

Craft your messages so that faculty are clear about what it is they need to do (see below for some tips). Eliminate ambiguity and outline clear behaviours/actions (e.g., ask a resident to run a telemedicine consult twice a week; develop a set of questions for residents that probe for physical exam assessment). Focus on 2-3 behaviours/actions at a time to avoid overwhelming people.

9. Share success stories

Provide updates about faculty who are using innovative ways to continue to teach residents and participate in fac dev throughout the pandemic. Sharing stories is a great way to inspire and motivate faculty and to make it doable.

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8 TIPS to engage faculty by email

It's a good idea to check in with your program's faculty and residents to see how they prefer to communicate. If email is the chosen method for delivering key educational material during COVID-19, you need people to open and read your emails! Here are some tips, from your med ed colleagues, on how to be successful.

1. Target your messages

It can be tempting to send one email to different audiences, but that can irritate your busy readers. Segment your audience and send customized messages that add value. Be sure that this "targeted" approach is clear to them in the first paragraph of your email.

2. Write short, clear and purposeful subject lines

Use a call to action (e.g., Take advantage of new teaching opportunities during COVID-19) or pose a question to create curiosity (e.g., How can you continue to teach your residents during COVID-19?).

3. Send the email from your own address

When trying to establish rapport with a group, you need to be visible and accessible to them. Do not send important emails from an assistant or a generic email address.

4. Emails should be short with 2 to 3 main points

Some may only read the first sentence or two, so make sure your key message/ask comes first. If your email does include an ask, set a realistic timeline for the task, including clear expectations for when you will send a reminder. When you are known for consistently sending short emails, faculty are more likely to open them.

5. Keep the tone positive and personal

Write as if you are speaking directly to the person reading the email and show understanding of this extraordinary situation (e.g., I understand that the pandemic makes it challenging for you to meet, teach, and support residents as usual.)

6. Make your content compelling and easy to read

The body of the email should be concise, direct, and well-written. There should be a clear call-to-action, outlining the benefits of taking action. Emphasize key words and points to draw the eye (e.g., bulleted lists, bolding, underline, etc.). If practical, consider cutting and pasting what would normally be in an attachment, into the body of the email, such that the reader does not have to download and open another document.

7. Be savvy about timing

Use a just-in-time approach and send info/resources to faculty when you know they need it most. For example, if you know some faculty are preparing to teach online, send some resources for virtual teaching and learning. Think about when your faculty are most likely to receive and read emails (e.g. first thing in the morning? Evening?)

8. Spread out your emails

Try to limit your communications to once per week and be consistent with the day of the week, if possible.

Resources

[Made to Stick SUCCESs Model](#)

[Collaboration and Influencing Using the SCARF® Model](#)