The Yale Medicine Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, and the Executive Director, Education Programs and Services, identified the need for programming that would support new faculty success and improve retention.

In collaboration with J3P Healthcare Solutions, they designed and deployed a one year “Pathfinder” program for thirty-three new faculty physicians. Program deployment was hampered by the COVID-19 Pandemic, but participant feedback was, universally positive. The key metric targeted by the program, “Physician Career Path Confidence,” improved dramatically.

The pilot confirmed the need for resources that could have a substantial impact on physician career success and satisfaction. These efforts also have the potential to increase a physician’s sense of connectedness to his or her institution, which could improve retention and engagement.

Physicians who are Confident or Very Confident they are on the career path to achieve their goals, increased from 52% to 86%

Physicians who are Confident or Very Confident that they have the resources and institutional support to achieve their goals, increased from 13% to 71%
Yale Medicine, like every organization, invests a great deal in the recruitment of new faculty. Do these organizations, though, invest enough, or wisely, in physician success? Some of this work should focus on creating a sense of connectedness to the institution.

Organizations are only recently realizing that physicians are a unique, and valuable workforce that will benefit from a structured “talent management” approach. Historically, physician career success is left, largely, to the individual physician.

J3P, and the team from Yale Medicine, collaborated on a program for new faculty - designed to achieve several goals:

- Provide physicians with an individual plan for success
- Help physicians to avoid potential career derailleurs
- Enhance specific behavioral knowledge and skills
- Help faculty make positive contributions to the Yale culture
- Give physicians greater confidence in their career path, which could improve faculty retention

This is not a traditional “on-boarding” program which tends to focus on administrative functions and knowledge about the institution. Rather, it targets the individual physician’s needs, goals and challenges, and the behavioral skills that are often the real barriers to early career fulfillment.

The Program was offered to all new faculty. The invitation focused on a few key points:

- Provide each physician with a plan for career success, built around individualized goals
- Help to develop effective physician leaders
- Improve physician engagement, and preventing potential career derailleurs
- Enhance physician wellness
- Enhance career success and satisfaction.
- The program would not be overly burdensome, and is sensitive to physician time commitments.

The pilot was limited to thirty (30) participants. The invitation seemed to touch upon concepts and concerns that were important new faculty, as the slots were filled within a week.

“We want physicians, early in their career, to feel that they have a plan, the support they need, and a path to success. While we measure all of the standard metrics for a program like this, the ultimate goal is for our faculty to feel confident in their career trajectory.”

Yon Sugiharto, CPTD
Executive Director,
Education Programs and Services
The Program

Curriculum: Topics included:
- Self-Awareness as the Foundation
- Communication and Influencing Skills
- Re-Connecting and Sharing Lessons Learned During the Pandemic
- Wellness Panel Discussion (including outside speakers)
- Time Management Skills
- Leadership and Developing Effective Teams
- Coaching and Mentoring
- Organizational Dynamics
- Taking Control of Your Career

Group Kick-Off - An interactive kick-off meeting provides participants the opportunity to meet each other, socialize, and share their goals, concerns and experiences.

J3P Physician Success Guide - This online tool explores personality traits and tendencies that impact success. It is built on validated content used for executive development, but customized to a physician audience.

Customized Survey - Exploring career interests, self-rating of behavioral skills, and interest in various program topics.

1:1 Coaching - This session with a J3P specialized physician coach focuses on career goals, current challenges and frustrations, and how the results of the assessment, including personality tendencies, might impact success. Several participants took advantage of a second session with their coach, to work through strategies for specific situations.

Interactive Learning Sessions - Quarterly, live, interactive sessions included small and large group discussions, panels, and exercises to master skills.

After the first two live, sessions, the COVID-19 Pandemic necessitated that sessions be delivered virtually, which was less than ideal. This, along with physician workload during and after the Pandemic, reduced attendance at events. A core group, however, attended nearly every session. Others joined as schedules allowed.
Initial Survey - Low Career Confidence

The most striking results from the initial survey were related to career path confidence:

- Only 52% of participants felt **Confident** or **Very Confident** that they **were on the correct career path to achieve their goals**.
- 87% reported they were **Not at All** or only **Somewhat Confident** that they **have the resources to achieve their goals**; and
- 87% reported they were **Not at All** or only **Somewhat Confident** that they have sufficient institutional support to achieve their goals.

The data indicates that new faculty are concerned about the direction of their career path, and whether they have the resources and support to succeed.

Participants reported **low confidence** in their own skills, specifically:

- Mentoring and coaching
- Change management
- Practice economics
- Work-life balance

Participants reported that they had the **greatest interest** in learning about the following topics:

- Leadership skills
- Organization structure/dynamics
- Negotiation skills
- Mentoring and coaching
- Project management
- Workflow management
- Enhanced self-awareness
Results - Marked Increase in Career Path Confidence, and Feelings of Institutional Support

The most striking gains were in the area of “Career Path Confidence,” which increased dramatically among respondents:

- 86% reported they are now Confident or Very Confident they are on the correct career path to achieve their goals (vs. 52% originally).
- 71% are Confident or Very Confident that they have the resources necessary to achieve their goals (vs. 13%, originally)
- 71% feel they have sufficient institutional support to achieve their goals. (vs. 13%, originally)

Participants reported the greatest gains in Self-Rated Skills/Knowledge in the areas of:

- Leveraging self-awareness
- Time management
- Effective leadership and team-building
- Effective communication
- Effective mentoring

Reaction to Program Design and Delivery

Participants found the following content, to be of the greatest value:

- Understanding personality tendencies to improve self-awareness
- One-on-one coaching sessions
- Networking with colleagues who are facing similar challenges
- Time management skills
- Being a more effective communicator and influencer
- Mentoring and Coaching

The vast majority had favorable views of:

- Frequency of sessions
- Adequate opportunities to practice new skills
- Time to reflect on new information and skills

(There was a less favorable view of the virtual meeting format, but 72% still agreed, or strongly agreed, that the format worked well.)
Many organizations provide new executives with an individual plan for their success and have robust resources and programs to develop and retain nurses; however, few take a comprehensive, holistic approach to physician success.

The Yale Medicine Pathfinder program participants reported that they’d never been provided an opportunity to understand the challenges to career success, and to pre-emptively develop strategies to overcome these challenges. While the cohort was relatively small, the data and feedback indicate that this type of program can have a substantial impact. Participants build a foundation for success and increase confidence in their career path. They see that the institution is investing in, and supporting, their success. They also develop a peer support group of colleagues facing the same early career challenges.

The program organizers would submit the following comments and recommendations regarding continuing this work in some fashion:

- Certainly, the Pandemic changed the trajectory of the program. The initial, live sessions were well-received. Any future program should include live sessions, if possible, to create a sense of community, mutual support and connectedness.
- Live or virtual group sessions could be augmented by interactive, online training content.
- It would be helpful to add more structure to the program, including possibly, on-going, required, project work.
- Take advantage of one-on-one coaching. Every new physician should have access to this resource to some degree.
- Given all that is invested in recruiting and developing faculty talent, this type of program would seem to be a small investment with a potentially large ROI.

This program has been formative to my growth as an early-stage academic, and I have learned innumerable lessons from both the J3P experts and other participants, which I will carry forward for the rest of my life. Should be considered essential for career development of any medical professional!

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