

Academies Collaborative Annual National Meeting 2017

Research Report

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1. Completed national study: *Fostering communities of practice in teaching and learning: A national survey of Academies of medical and health professions educators* (manuscript ready for submission)

In 2000, only five academies were noted to be in existence; by 2003, a national survey conducted by Dewey et al. identified academies in 21 medical schools. Five years later, a survey conducted by Searle et al. documented the presence of academies at 36 U.S. medical schools, with an additional 33 schools reporting plans for developing an academy at their institution. This rapid expansion calls for ongoing study to assess the status, growth, and effectiveness of the academy movement, describe challenges related to the developmental level of these organizations, and identify opportunities for sharing, evolving, and scaling up academy resources and innovations.

This national survey study addressed the questions: (1) What is the developmental distribution of academies nationally: what proportion are in formation, newly established, or well established? (2) What are the structures of academies in terms of membership and size? (4) What do academies and academies in formation perceive as their primary needs and challenges?

Results: Of the 52 identified organizations, 42 responded to the survey (81%). Of these, 67% (28/42) define their organizations as formal Academies, 14% (6/42) are other Academy-like organizations, and 19% (8/42) are Academies in formation.

Table 1. Characteristics of Academies and Academy-like organizations in the U.S.

Characteristic	n (%)
Years in existence	
<2 years	3 (8%)
2-5 years	12 (31%)
6-10 years	9 (23%)
10+ years	6 (15%)
Missing	2 (5%)
Number of members in organization	
< 50	47%
50-100	25%
101-200	13%
> 200	6%

Table 2. Important needs and interest in resources for academies, academy-like organizations, and academies in formation (n=42) [n (%)].

Most important needs	Extremely important	Very important
Increasing the value of teaching at my institution	13 (35.1)	14 (37.8)
Helping faculty career advancement in teaching	12 (32.4)	13 (35.1)
Information on how to obtain funding for Academy activities	14 (36.8)	9 (23.7)
Information about best practices at other Academies	13 (34.2)	12 (31.6)
Resources wanted	Extremely interested	Very interested
Evaluation instruments to demonstrate organization's impact	14 (37.8)	17 (45.9)
Train-the-trainer materials for peer observation of teaching	11 (28.9)	15 (39.5)

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Conclusions. Our findings describe an Academy movement that continues to reflect an enduring and widespread interest in raising the value and quality of teaching and education scholarship at medical schools and health sciences centers across the country. Leaders from existing Academy organizations share a strong interest in enhancing the culture for teaching and for supporting the activities and careers of their faculty, both in the immediate demands for skillful teaching practice and in the longer-term aims of supporting faculty career development and promotion as educators. Academies vary widely in membership size, amount of funding, and years in existence. They appear similar, however, in their primary areas of strengths and needs: core teaching skills in the classroom and clinic appear to be areas of strength for most Academies, with 57% and 50% of Academies, respectively, offering training to faculty “regularly” ($\geq 3x/year$); programs such as training in peer observation of teaching and education research are less prevalent, with fewer than one quarter of Academies offering these programs regularly.

The potential value of a strong Academy extends beyond faculty development and enhancing the institutional value of education. School accreditation depends upon empirical evidence supporting the education mission of schools of medicine and other health professions, and as such, Academies can play a central role in helping schools to meet the many requirements to gain or maintain accreditation status. For example, the Liaison Committee for Medical Education, the accrediting body for medical schools in the U.S., requires that each medical school under review “provides opportunities for professional development to each faculty member in the areas of discipline content, curricular design, program evaluation, student assessment methods, instructional methodology, and research to enhance his or her skills and leadership abilities in these areas.” In this regard, Academies in schools of medicine and other health professions could highlight their value by conducting systematic evaluation of Academy impact and, given the limited financial resources in many of these organizations, collaborative efforts across institutions in sharing instruments and analytic efforts could take advantage of economies of scale to achieve a common goal among Academies.

2. National Annual Survey in Progress: Focus on Wellness

Preliminary results ($n=20$) of this survey show similar areas of interest and need as the prior survey. There appears to be a small increase in the number of interprofessional academies. Wellness tends not to be a focus of programming; however, there is an interest in increasing activities in these areas for faculty and trainees.

Table 1.

In the last 1-2 years, how many programs or activities would you say your Academy or Academy-like organization provides in each of these areas?	No programs in this area	Approximately once/year	2-3 times/year	>3 times/year
Trainee burnout	56 3%	31 3%	12 5%	0 0%
Faculty burnout prevention	56 3%	25 0%	18 8%	0 0%
Strategies for faculty well-being	50 0%	25 0%	25 0%	0 0%
Community-building among faculty	25 0%	0 0%	18 8%	56 3%
Creating a positive learning environment	23 5%	23 5%	29 4%	23 5%

We will complete data collection in the next few weeks and we will post a full reporting of results on our academiescollaborative.com website.

3. Manuscript accepted: *"Defining curricular priorities for Student-as-Teacher programs: a national Delphi study"* has been accepted for publication in *Medical Teacher*. Lead author Jasmine Rana, MD, senior author Meredith Atkins, MD. Delphi working group included 28 directors of Academies recruited through the Academies Collaborative.