

COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES

# The Essential Role of Educator Development

## 10 Years of the ACC Emerging Faculty Program

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### ABSTRACT

The American College of Cardiology Emerging Faculty program was developed in 2005 to promote a systematic approach to “educate the educators” through training and mentorship. A primary focus of the program is the biennial Teaching Skills Workshop, which has had 130 participants since its inception and is focused on the concepts of effective adult learning, curriculum design, and optimization of presentation skills. A survey of participants (80 respondents of 130 total participants) found that the majority stated that participation in the program had a large impact on their ability to apply instructional design principles (49%) and present in face-to-face settings (47%), and it had a moderately large to large positive impact on their personal careers. Thus, the Emerging Faculty program combines several elements of the College’s strategic plan in a single program that provides member value to early career professionals and sustained benefit for the cardiovascular community and patients. (J Am Coll Cardiol 2016;67:2177–82) © 2016 by the American College of Cardiology Foundation.

Educational initiatives are at the center of the mission of the American College of Cardiology (ACC). Founded in 1949 with the purpose of improving education for practicing cardiologists, the College has grown to nearly 50,000 members worldwide. The College’s educational endeavors consist of its annual scientific sessions (which draw nearly 20,000 attendees per year), live courses, journals, self-assessment programs, website activities (the ACC website receives more than 300,000 visits

monthly), and other directly or jointly sponsored continuing medical education activities (1). All these efforts rely on a combination of dedicated ACC staff members and physician or advanced-practice health professional volunteers. Specific roles require an extensive portfolio of abilities to ensure successful educational meetings (faculty, panel discussant, small group leader, course chair), a high-value Internet presence (online content creator, editor), and adherence of operations to the mission and



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**ACC** = American College of  
Cardiology

**EF** = Emerging Faculty

strategic plan of the College (education committee members and chairs, program planning committees and chairs, task forces, educational activity evaluators, board members and president). Such activities reflect a continually expanding need for a roster of talented educators with vetted communication skills. Such skills are also fundamental in other facets of professional life in medicine beyond organizational involvement. In parallel with participation in the College, cardiologists, surgeons, and other cardiovascular team members serve as educators as they routinely interact with one another to develop new strategies of care, spend time with patients and their families discussing treatment options and prognosis, and disseminate new information about heart disease to local and international audiences.

For early career academic cardiologists in particular, growth as teachers and communicators is necessary for future success, regardless of whether they are physician scientists or clinician educators (2-4). Residents in internal medicine spend substantial time educating medical students, yet they have inconsistent exposure to curricula detailing educational design and assessment concepts during their training (5). No data exist to describe similar efforts within cardiology

fellowship programs, but it is likely that this phase of training, which is traditionally less structured than residency, places less formal emphasis on providing instruction to advance fellows as clinical educators. The result, not just in cardiology but across all areas of medicine, is that most faculty members experience a patchwork of educational training and experiential learning, even if they are promoted to educational leadership positions (6).

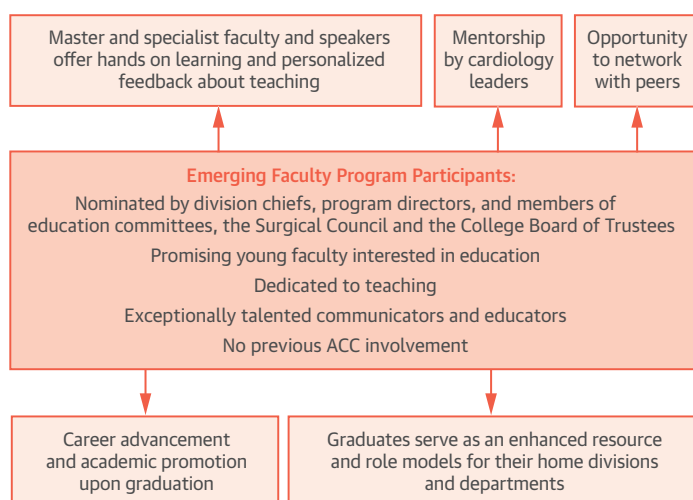
The ACC recognized the need for a systematic approach to “educate the educators” through training and mentorship, and that recognition resulted in the formation of the Emerging Faculty (EF) program, which commemorated its 10-year anniversary in 2015. This paper details the origins and structure of the program, describes its outcomes using demographic and survey data, and raises awareness among academic cardiology leaders in an effort to foster development of the next generation of ACC faculty.

## ORIGINS OF THE EMERGING FACULTY PROGRAM

For much of the life of the ACC, cardiologists and cardiology team members were selected to participate in educational activities through a less-structured network of colleagues within the College on the basis of their expertise, experience, and reputation. This approach was successful, and it produced a deserved international reputation for excellence in education and for attracting cardiologists from all over the world to attend College-sponsored meetings. However, limitations remained: the best teachers were frequently asked to do the most work, and there was no clear structure to replace more senior faculty, mentor junior faculty, or highlight up-and-coming leaders on a national or international stage. This meant that talented junior educators outside the network could be overlooked without a clear path to involvement in College activities.

To invest in the sustainability of the ACC’s educational mission, a group of recognized teachers within the College constructed a biennial conference, with financial support from the Michael Wolk Heart Foundation, that focused on the development of early career members nominated and selected through an open, competitive process. The Teaching Skills Workshop for EF program was first held in 2005, with 19 participants. A request for applications letter was sent to all chiefs of cardiology divisions throughout the United States. The letter asked these chiefs to nominate their most promising young faculty members who were interested in education. The candidates for the program were fellows or associate fellows of

### CENTRAL ILLUSTRATION ACC Emerging Faculty Program: Teaching Skills for Emerging Faculty



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A major focus of the American College of Cardiology (ACC) Emerging Faculty program is the biennial Teaching Skills Workshop for emerging faculty that promotes the personal career growth of participants and core values of the College, as well as benefiting the participants’ institutions through more effective education and increased awareness of College programs and opportunities for involvement.

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