

Assessing the Skillset & Learning Needs of Administrators in an Academic Medicine (AM) Setting

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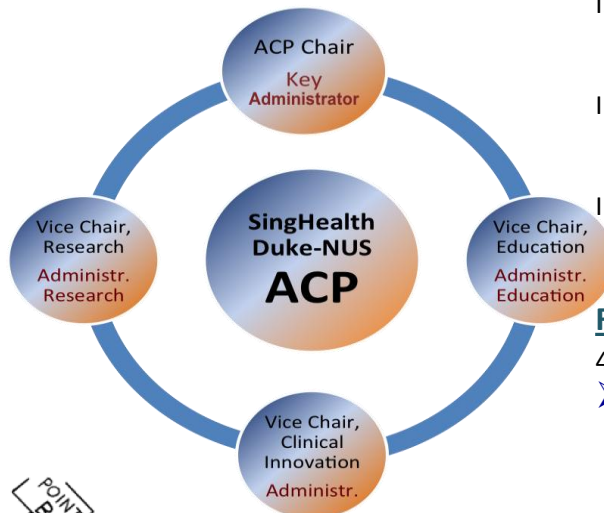
Introduction

The SingHealth and Duke-NUS Academic Medicine (AM) partnership reflects the relentless pursuit of care improvements through Research, Education and Innovation. To achieve this, joint Academic Clinical Programs (ACPs) have been formed to bring together specialists across various institutions to develop new initiatives to advance Academic Medicine.

Nucleus of an ACP

Each ACP is headed by clinician Key Appointment Holders - ACP Chair and various Vice Chairs - supported by the ACP Key Administrator and team of Administrators.

As ACPs straddle both clinical and academic priorities and cut across multiple institutions, the role of ACP Administrators requires a broader skillset that would differ from that of a typical healthcare Administrator.



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The ACP Administrators, along with ACP Key Appointment Holders, form the nucleus of an ACP to drive Academic Medicine transformation as Change Agents and catalysts.

It is thus essential to ensure that all ACP Administrators are equipped and empowered for their important role.

Aim

The Joint Office of Academic Medicine (JOAM) set out to bridge the gap between the role of ACP Administrators and the necessary skillsets and knowledge needed to fulfil their role in managing ACPs as well as support the advancement of AM.

Methodology

JOAM in partnership with Ms Patricia Joseph, a senior Academic Administrator from Duke Medicine, US, conducted Focus Groups with ACP Administrators and ACP Chairs to assess the ACPs' topmost concerns and areas of needs. JOAM also conducted interviews with new/senior ACP Administrators. For a better understanding of required equipping areas/topics, an AM/ACP Administrators' Forum Survey was done to determine areas of interest, usefulness and need.

(A) Qualitative Focus Groups: ACP Administrators / Acad Chairs

- What are the challenges in your ACP with regard to ACP Administration?
- What are the greatest area of need with regard to ACP Administration?

(B) Quantitative Survey: Administrators-Participants

An Inaugural AM/ACP Administrators' Forum was held on 19 Apr 2013 to a positive turnout of 86 Administrators from various ACPs, domains and institutions. It covered an Overview of Duke, Challenges and Best Practices in Administration Management. A Survey Form was given out to participants; utilizing a 5-point Likert scale to assess the 'Usefulness' of the Forum and Topics; with 1 being 'Not at all useful' and 5 being 'Extremely useful'. Additional 'Options selection'-based questions enabled Voting of Preferences with a possibility of more than one choice and comments to explain why the Topics are important to Administrators.

- Did you find the AM Administrators Forum useful?
- Which aspect of the AM Administrators Forum did you find most useful and why?
- What other topics would you like to see at future sessions?

Results

Results (A) – Focus Group with ACP Administrators/Chairs

The focus groups highlighted 3 broad areas of ACP Administrator learning needs: **Finance & Budgeting, Philanthropy & Understanding Processes, especially in Education and Research.** ACPs' challenges are:

- Need for more clarity in Funding & Budget:
"Processes and guidelines are evolving. Need more clarity and guidance when submitting budgets and other funding requests."
- Need for more Philanthropy Support:
"Adequate admin support is needed to develop engagement process with donors and facilitate understanding of endowment guidelines."
- Managing & Streamlining AM Processes:
"ACP Admin staff should be well-integrated in the system to handle Education & Research work."

Results (B) – Survey Findings

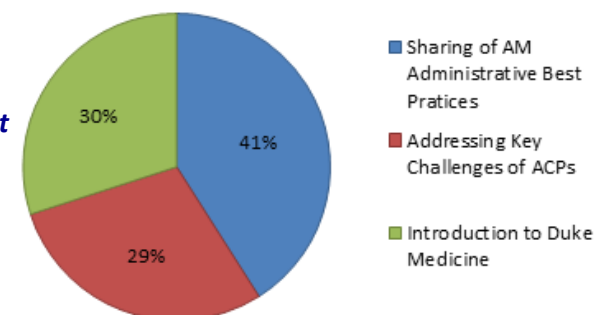
43 of participants took the survey at AM/ACP Administrator Forum 2013.

➤ **51%** of respondents rated the Forum **Useful/Very Useful**.

➤ **Voted Top 3 Topics for Future AM/ACP Administrator Equipping:**

- Understanding AM**
- People Management**
- AM Philanthropy**

➤ **Most Helpful Aspect of AM/ACP Administrator Forum 2013**



Conclusion

The results revealed the important skills/competencies for JOAM to focus its efforts as we address the learning needs of ACP Administrators. A key lesson learnt from the AM/ACP Administrator Forum is the need to segment participants to ensure greater usefulness of topics. Based on the areas of challenge and skills, a **Learning Needs Matrix** has been developed to map out an overview of learning needs:

Level of Difficulty	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing ACP Proposals & Paper Writing (Emerging need) Writing ACP Grants Understanding AM – ACP Strategy, Priorities & Plans Managing ACP Financials & Workplan/Budget Philanthropy Development Team/People Management
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Management Managing & Streamlining Processes in ACP Understanding Guidelines on Philanthropic Funds Usage & Disbursement Understanding Processes in Education, Research – Faculty Devt, Grant Calls, etc
		Level of Need
		Low High

In partnership with SingHealth, Duke-NUS and Duke Med, JOAM will kick off a **new AM/ACP Administrator Development framework**. Based on the **Learning Needs Matrix**, High Difficulty/Need skills require more focus while Low Difficulty/Need Skills can be delivered in short talks. Administrators will undergo Orientation/Foundation, Best Practices Masterclasses (Finance, HR, Philanthropy, etc), and ACP Administrator Management Program to pick up various core skills for their roles.