Introduction

Why did we develop writing accountability groups in an already successful faculty mentoring program?

The Rush Research Mentoring Program (RMP) facilitates the activities necessary for junior faculty to achieve independent, funded research careers (Fig. 1) through mentoring and resources (Fig. 2). The missing piece was support for performing these activities while juggling the other aspects of career and life.

Purpose

To describe the structure and process of the writing groups and their initial outcomes. Solution: A "bottom-up" approach to fill this gap; i.e., peer-mentoring based writing groups (Fig. 3).

Structure and Process

Writing group rules and procedures (Table 1) were proposed and then refined and established by the first set of mentee participants and continually reevaluated based on participants’ needs.

Table 1. Writing Accountability Group Structure, Rules, and Procedures

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure outside of the writing accountability group</th>
<th>Motivations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Open to mentees only</td>
<td>• Certain challenges are unique to early faculty career stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation from mentees representing all colleges</td>
<td>• No student is a mentor - safe space</td>
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<td>Ideal number per session ≤ 6</td>
<td>• Too few encourages chit-chat and loses the number of helpful voices</td>
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<td>10-week sessions NOT aligned with the academic calendar</td>
<td>• Too many makes discussion difficult</td>
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<td>Participants must commit to attend 7-10 sessions</td>
<td>• Participants could come and go throughout the year</td>
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<td>30 minutes discussion</td>
<td>• None are writing accountability groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 minutes timed writing</td>
<td>• Participants learn what a Brief Daily Spurt feels like</td>
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</table>

• Participants set an overall goal for the 10-week session and set weekly mini-goals.

• Participants encouraged to establish a daily writing habit or commit to scheduled writing sessions if daily writing was not possible.

• Initial discussion topics largely aligned with common myths and barriers:
  - Not enough time to write/need large blocks of time
  - Too few encourages chit-chat and loses the number of helpful voices

• Additional topics included:
  - How to be prolifically writing
  - How to manage time, exchange daily emails with a writing buddy, and creative ways to take advantage of unexpected time.

Results: Writing group in the context of the mentoring program

Participation, growth, and reach:

• To date, 11 sessions have been held since 2010 (15 mentees [23%]). A separate group devoted to grant writing was established midway through year 1.

• Participation rates across the colleges are uneven (Fig. 4a).

Challenges and recommendations:

1. Participation across colleges: College of Medicine faculty appear to participate at lower rates than mentees from other colleges. Is this format meeting their needs? Participants with significant clinical responsibilities reported benefit, but had difficulty participating in the required number of meetings.

2. Growth: The schedule cannot accommodate the number of mentees interested in joining. Increasing the number of peer-facilitators and number of sessions, and creating an online alternative may accommodate the additional demand and allow the writing groups to grow.

3. Reach: Writing groups likely attract already highly-engaged mentees. Outreach from chairs and mentors may be needed to identify others who could benefit.

Conclusion: Writing groups can have a unique role in faculty mentoring programs in an academic medical center setting. Our initial experiences suggest that peer-mentoring writing accountability groups may result in increased faculty productivity and engagement (formal survey results forthcoming).