

Valuing faculty contributions to team science in the academic promotions process

Findings and Recommendations from the Team Science Program at UCSF's Clinical and Translational Science Institute

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What is Team Science?

- Team science is commonly thought of as any research that involves multidisciplinary teams, but it has evolved into subcategories, e.g.,
 - Broadly Engaged Team Science – which includes key stakeholders across the research spectrum throughout the research process, as part of the team, from research generating research questions to implementing findings into practice.
 - Translational Team Science – which may focus on the processes of constructing and operating research teams to optimize the translational research process

A Common Concern: Academic Promotions Processes Undervalue Team Science

- Academic promotions processes often do not acknowledge the creative effort that faculty invest in various types of team science
- Lack of recognition of team science in promotions processes may devalue or discourage translational research.

Is This True?

- Case study at the University of California, San Francisco
- Qualitative interviews with 20 UCSF leaders
 - Promotions chairs:
 - 8 – Medicine,
 - 2 – Dentistry,
 - 2 – Nursing, and
 - 2 - Pharmacy
 - All 4 Associate Deans of Faculty and Academic Affairs
 - Vice Provost of Academic Affairs

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Topics Covered during Interviews

- Definitions of team science
- Criteria used to evaluate excellence in team science
- Perceptions of institutional support for team science
- Perception of differential impact of team science participation for faculty at in different career stages or tracks, and with different demographic characteristics

Key Findings

- Multidisciplinary research is highly valued at UCSF
- The definitions of what constitutes team science varies across disciplines
- There is a lack of formal definitions about what constitutes excellence in team science
- There is lack of explicit communication about pathways for advancement for researchers engaging in team science that accounts for how it is different from other forms of academic research

Key Recommendations for UCSF

- Create definitions of excellence in team science that can be incorporated and given explicit value and consideration in the academic promotions process.
- Provide guidance and training for departmental promotions chairs, promotions committee members, faculty mentors, and junior faculty about metrics for excellence in team science, including unique creative contributions that can support academic advancement.

Some Additional Observations

- Interviews with junior faculty at UCSF (done by another group at CTSI) found that many feel discouraged from being role players on research teams or in organizing broadly engaged research teams.
- Failure to actively support team science in the promotions process may steer some junior faculty into more conventional career paths or lead other promising faculty to leave academia to pursue this type of work outside of academia.

Next Steps

- Change instructions on the academic CV to include more detailed and expansive definitions of team science, with metrics for evaluation
- Provide trainings for promotions chairs and committees
- Provide trainings for career mentors and junior faculty
- Develop an evaluation plan to assess outcomes

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