

Faculty writing: A collaborative approach to producing manuscripts

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All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, development, writing, and revision of this manuscript.

Sources of funding: None.

Conflicts of interest: None.

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What problem was addressed?

Although scholarly publishing builds an evidence base and serves as a way to evaluate faculty and their institutions, more immediate duties often leave little time for writing, particularly for clinician educators. To help its faculty prioritize writing and disseminate their work via publication, an interprofessional healthcare practice and education center collaborated with two university writing consultants to develop a workable, replicable approach for busy faculty.

What was tried?

The writing consultants developed a yearlong program of monthly tasks intended to guide the manuscript writing process and make publishing less overwhelming for the 19 participating members of the center. Sample tasks included: determine co-authors and their individual roles in preparing the manuscript; meet with a librarian to conduct an updated literature search; select a target journal and review the author guidelines; develop the manuscript purpose statement; and draft a structured abstract. Monthly email reminders reinforced the program and encouraged faculty to complete the tasks and take advantage of existing resources (e.g., staff writing consultants and librarians). Center leadership and champions advocated for colleagues to engage in the writing program at regularly scheduled meetings.

The program's January, February, March, and April pre-writing tasks prepared faculty to draft a manuscript in May at a day-long writing retreat organized by center leadership. The retreat

provided dedicated writing time and built-in opportunities to collaborate and consult with the writing experts. In subsequent months, faculty received continued monthly encouragement to schedule time for writing on their calendars, engage in follow-up writing group meetings, ask for help from co-authors, and meet with a writing consultant for targeted support and feedback.

The program, piloted in 2019, has had a positive effect on scholarly activity. The members of the center submitted 50% more manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals in 2019-2020 compared to 2017-2018. They published 6 of 9 of these papers in 2019-2020, compared to 1 of 6 in 2017-2018. The success rate for peer-reviewed abstract submissions also improved (from 53% [27/51] to 91% [21/23]). Of the 12 participants who piloted the program in 2019 and completed a post-program survey, all but one reported that the program helped them with writing and publishing, and all completed at least one manuscript over the course of the year. Based on this success, the center asked the writing consultants to repeat the program in 2020 and 2021. The program continued despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and included two half-day writing retreats, held virtually via video conferencing.

What lessons were learned?

Participants reported that the program helped them prioritize their writing while also supporting peer collaboration, providing useful writing guidance, and holding them accountable to their writing goals. It also demonstrated the value of taking a step-wise approach to scholarly writing and scheduling time for writing and collaborating with co-authors. Furthermore, it

demonstrated that faculty writing and publishing benefit from active leadership support and from capitalizing on existing university resources. The program can serve as a model for faculty groups or departments aiming to increase scholarly output.