

Vertically Integrated Program (VIP): A Grassroots Program Supporting Physician Scientists at Each Career Stage

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Abstract

Objective: Physician scientists carry unique and critical perspectives for translating research discoveries into clinical interventions. However, the numbers of physician-scientists (PS) have declined for decades. Limited time available during training to develop relevant expertise and obtain necessary funding means many PSs are lost due to lack of adequate support and mentorship. Conversely, many senior PSs who may serve as excellent mentors do not have the opportunity to encounter interested trainees given their need to spend most of their time doing research rather than teaching.

To address these issues, UT Southwestern faculty and trainees developed the Vertically Integrated Program (VIP), a novel program aimed at integrating every stage of the PS career path from medical students to tenured faculty. The VIP program facilitates longitudinal mentorship through interactive talks, Q&A sessions, and panels paired with networking opportunities. The goal of the VIP is to support our PS training pipeline by opening new channels for collaboration where students and faculty can obtain necessary mentorship and engage in a partnership toward success.

Methods: VIP-Cancer (VIP-C), specifically targeted toward faculty and trainees interested in cancer research, was initiated summer 2022 as a pilot. Delegates representing medical students, internal medicine and general surgery residents/fellows, junior faculty, and senior faculty were appointed to organize the program.

The core of the early implementation of VIP-C focused on three initiatives:

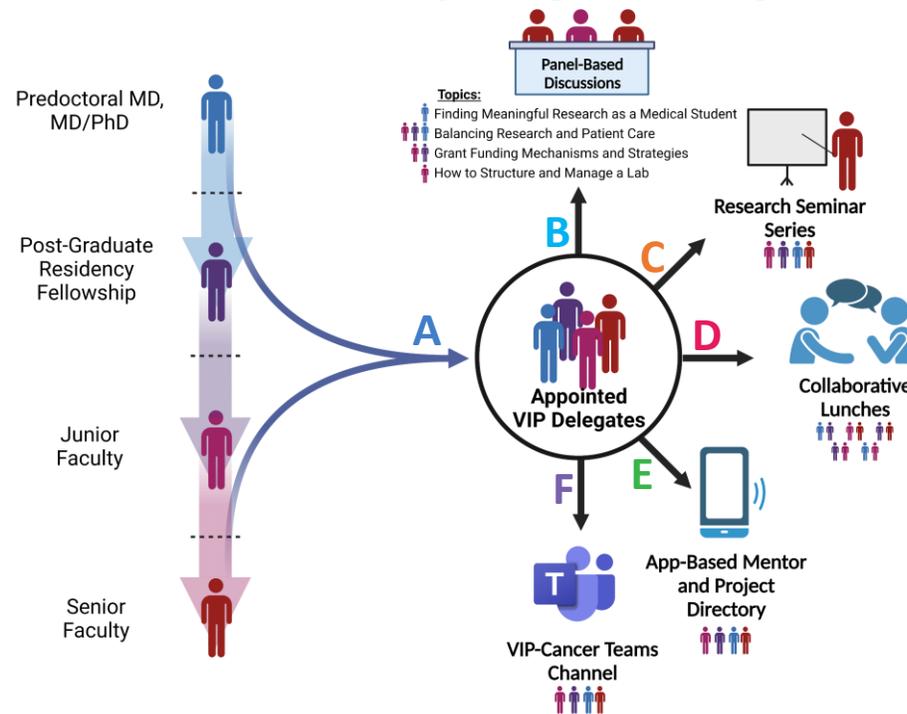
1. Monthly faculty panels and talks with paired networking opportunities.
2. Development of a Microsoft Teams channel.
3. Design of an app for mentors to communicate ongoing projects, open clinic dates, and lab meetings available for interested trainees to attend.

Conclusions: VIP offers a unique and adaptable framework for supporting PSs. Delegates representing various stages along the PS career path cooperatively plan monthly events, tailoring the structure and topics of each to meet their needs. Paired networking lunches continue the discussion afterwards, fostering mentorship opportunities. We believe this model can support PSs across all career stages by encouraging collaboration and by increasing exposure of trainees and young faculty to willing mentors

Primary Goals for VIP:

- Promote longitudinal mentorship opportunities
- Increase junior faculty exposure to mentees
- Consolidate career progression information and advice

Vertically Integrated Program

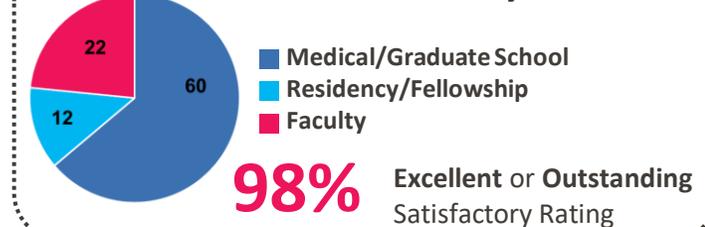


- (A) Delegates representing each career stage are appointed to organize the program, deciding discussion and seminar topics
- (B) Panel-based discussions on topics voted on by delegates addresses topics most relevant to the needs of their constituents
- (C) Research seminar series highlights work of junior faculty and is a forum for them to receive meaningful feedback
- (D) Lunches following events provide opportunities for further networking and collaboration across departments and roles
- (E) The VIP App allows faculty to display open projects, clinic and lab meeting times, and availability for mentorship for students and trainees
- (F) The Microsoft Teams channel is a central location to disseminate information and for discussion to continue beyond lecture halls

6 Month Review of VIP-Cancer Pioneer Program

- 12 Events Organized
- 3 Discussion Panels
- 3 Research Seminars
- 6 Networking Lunches

Panel Attendance By Role



208 Teams Members

9 Research Projects Highlighted on the App

