Meeting Minutes: August 23, 2021

Professionalism Task Force

NOTE FOR CLARITY/TRANSPARENCY: This is not a transcription. We are creating these minutes in order for there to be insight into the ongoing discussions of the Task Force. This summary is not intended to be, nor is it capable of being, exhaustive. The commentary described below is not intended to reflect direct quotes and may not comprehensively inclusive of all comments/questions/thoughts. Additionally, sensitive discussions/information may be omitted due to respect for the persons coming to speak with us.

Present:
Victoria Belancia, Fatima Warsamb, Javier Pineda, Josh Huddelston, Darren Cheng, Abby Chaffin, Theresia Sutherlin, Jeff Dumond, Ben Ogola, Kathryn Cox, Aimee Aysenne, Kendra Harris.

Invited: Keith C. Ferdinand, MD (KF)
Professor of Medicine
Gerald S. Berenson Chair in Preventative Cardiology

| Role: Founding Trio Member, Professionalism Program, Tulane School of Medicine |
| One of three faculty members that receives reports from the Professionalism Program |

Invited: Rhonda Coignet, MBA (RC)
Senior Director of Graduate Medical Education
Administrator for the Professionalism Trio

MUSIC: Sunpie Barnes https://www.lettersfromtheporch.com/
POEM: Osler, I have had three personal ideals

- Question: What is your sense about how the professionalism program was intended to function? How does it function from your perspective on the inside? What could be done, be changed, be modified to help the program work better?

- Professionalism Program at the Tulane School of Medicine (KF)
  ○ The program is not intended to be punitive
  ○ The idea is that we ought to be able to hash things out when misunderstandings occur.
  ○ A ‘cup of coffee’ is a meeting where a person with the same level of training and professional status communicates to a person about whom a report is made. The giver of the ‘cup of coffee’ describes the report/interaction that was received as
unprofessional and asks that receiver of the ‘cup of coffee’ reflect on the interaction.

○ The Trio does not deal with interactions which violate laws - racism, sexism, discrimination on the basis of identity or gender. Reports that come in are evaluate for violations of law and anything in that realm is forward to the OIE for review

○ What is left is often softer - unwelcome or disrespectful comments, upsetting interactions, micro-aggressions

○ The program begins with the idea that the person responsible for the interaction may not be fully aware of how the behavior/comment in question was receive. Thus, the Professionalism Program starts from a place of asking the person at the center of the report reflect upon it, as described by the peer messenger’s summary of the concern shared by the reporter.

○ Desire is to encourage community members to reflect on and modify their behavior

○ Build on Vanderbilt Program
  ▪ Substantial data exists that this type of peer feedback works to extinguish the vast majority of unwelcome behaviors
  ▪ One 'cup of coffee' versus many 'cups of coffee'
    ▪ There is an internal system that treats repetitive reports differently than on-offs. Multiple reports (typically 3+) trigger triaging of the person's reports to a higher level of awareness/intervention
    ▪ Before that point, idea is for a peer to provide feedback
    ▪ Goal: behavior change, faculty and community member growth
    ▪ Currently we have 50 'peer messengers,' trained to deliver this feedback by Dr. Gerald Hickson, Tulane SOM graduate and founder of the Vanderbilt Professionalism Program
    ▪ Part of the reason this program speaks to people is that it begins with the idea that most of the reported less egregious behavior is not intended to produce the effect that it has on peers, learners and trainees

○ What about improved oversight
  ▪ Who ought to do this? Should there be an internal set of more formalized 'bylaws' or guideline for how the program self-evaluates to make changes to its process? Should this be run by the Trio? Out of a separate entity?

- Administration of the program (RC)
  ○ There is opportunity to change/better the feedback that reporters get. Initially there was a marketing and educational plan as COVID exploded.
  ○ Dr. Mary Kilackey and others have worked to visit individual departments to do education, seeking to reach faculty and residents
  ○ Qualtrics is the IT solution currently used to receive and manage reports
    ▪ It has limitations
    ▪ Also true that the vast majority of the submitted concerns are submitted anonymously, which limits ability for feedback with current IT options
    ▪ Right now, there is ability to understand that a report 1) has been received, 2) is being reviewed, and 3) has been addressed
    ▪ “Addressed” in this context means that a “cup of coffee” has been delivered.

NEEDS:
• More staffing would be helpful. And, in fact, given my (RC) transition to a new role, a new administrator is needed. Sometimes there are multiple reports in a day. Other times, days or weeks go by without any reports submitted.

- The Administrator
  - Receives reports when they are submitted to the professionalism reporting system
  - Sends the reports to the Trio (Three SOM faculty members so-designated to review the reports)
    - The report is reviewed for seriousness – as mentioned above, racism, violations of policies related to sex, gender, identity, racial discrimination trigger forwarding on to the OIE.
    - The discussion among the trio is sometimes via email and often a brief huddle phone call to achieve consensus about how to proceed
    - Vast majority of reports do not meet a standard to trigger forwarding to OIE, then the trio reviews, decides what to do and selects a peer messenger from among the 50 trained within the SOM. In terms of selecting a peer messenger, desire is to select someone with the same status (i.e., assistant vs. associate vs. full professor) who is at an “arms length” that is, not within the same department or division
    - For reports that qualify for “cups of coffee” the peer messenger is charged with absolute confidentiality – that is, the reports do not get forward anywhere, including on to Department Chairs or Deans
    - If a faculty member receives multiple reported concerns, the Trio elevates the concern and engages additional, more senior faculty, typically involving the Department Chair +/- other leaders in the SOM

- Peer Messengers
  - Shortly planning to send out a call for Volunteers to go to Vanderbilt for Professionalism Program Training.

- Frustrations
  - Setting expectations is very important: understandable that people who make the report want to know ‘what happens’
  - However, the system takes the confidentiality of the reporter and the reportee quite seriously
    - This is not a punishment tool
    - This is not a human resources tool

○ Questions/Discussions
  - What can we do to better standardize the system to make it more transparent to reporters what is going to happen? What happens when there are multiple conversations about the same issue? Is Qualtrex the only source of reports designated for 'cups of coffee? Do the various reporting systems - and by this, mean the other systems available to submit reports filter into the
Professionalism System? Does the trio feel overwhelmed by the volume of reports?

- The process for submitting professionalism concerns and expectations for processes are explained on the professionalism website. As mentioned, most of the reports are submitted anonymously, which limits ability for feedback to reporters.
- There are limited ways that reports into other systems filter into the professionalism system
  - i.e., some mechanism whereby rotation/course evaluations can be forwarded on to the professionalism system
  - Could envision opportunities to automate interactions with OIE, outside institutions (UMC, Tulane, LSU, etc.,)
- No - not overwhelmed by the volume on the Trio side - but the timeliness part is challenging as the desire is for all reports to be reviewed by the Trio and be triaged to a peer messenger within 72 hours.
- A full time dedicated administrator would help
- Consider improved or different IT support - upgrade to current platform or support for new platform/website

○ What about reports about persons other than faculty? What happens? Lets get granular.

○ Medical student reporting system under discussion - what is the difference between reporting of unprofessional conduct and curricular issues? i.e., outdated language in slides, presentation within a framework that outdated?
  - When medical students are reported into the Professionalism Program:
    - All concerns go to the administrator as well as Dean Krane and Dean LeDoux. The reporter, at the time of the report, can elect to include Karen Weissbecker, who serves as a kind of ombudsman for medical students. As there are no medical students trained as peer messengers, Deans Krane and LeDoux +/- Karen Weissbecker triage the reported event.
  - When residents are reported into the Professionalism Program:
    - Typically, the DIO (Paul Gladden) is notified and the Chair of the Clinical Competency Committee (CCC) for the resident's department is notified. This varies among training programs, but often the Chair of the Clinical Competency Committee is statutorily not the Chair of the Clinical Department
      - A variety of triaging happens
        - Among the faculty members on the Professionalism Task force, generally noted that submitted concerns are often discussed by the CCC and a "cup of coffee" style discussion takes place between the resident and the CCC Chair or program director, depending on the nature of the submitted concern.
      - What is the role of GMEC? Should the processes among the GME programs be more standardized/transparent? Is
this desirable? Feasible?

- What other mechanisms are there to get concerns into the Professionalism System?
- Adding a link directly from course evals/reviews is in the works

- Concern: Pretty clear from review of medical student/resident submitted concerns and faculty submitted concerns that:
  - Student views of what constitute mistreatment does not align with faculty views of what constitutes mistreatment

- How has the program been received, in your view?
  - Vast majority of feedback from people reported, especially faculty, is 'thank you for giving me the feedback and letting me reflect on how my behavior was being received' Most common response from faculty is that they were unaware about how a particular action affected surrounding team members.

- Seems like there are redundancies in reporting systems with some systems overlapping with others and not all systems feeding together.

- Value of Change "Expert' versus Change/Programmatic Champions at every level
  - Is it reasonable that Dr. Killackey does all the education for the whole school? Or Professionalism Trio or administrator be responsible for all educational outreach?
  - Medical student Champion
  - Resident Champion
  - Faculty Champion
  - Staff Champion
  - Advertising versus funding more educational activities? Speakers? Training

- Seems like awareness of the Professionalism Program varies substantially

- There are additional design options for Professionalism setup
  - Awareness of other systems wherein rather than a faculty trio, there is an office with a designated person that handles all professionalism concerns.