

Training Programs for Teacher-Leaders in Dental Education

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Abstract

While the basic skills necessary to become a successful clinical dentist remain fairly constant, the ways of teaching those skills are changing rapidly. Advances in technology in the 21st century have driven new pedagogical methods and changed the way students learn. Students are now inseparable from their personal electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, etc.) and have massive amounts of information at their disposal instantly. The increased availability of information has also led to an increase in the importance of evidence-based dental education; students must be able to think critically and determine whether the information they are receiving is accurate. Therefore, faculty must be able to demonstrate and teach critical thinking skills. Harvard School of Dental Medicine implemented two training programs to prepare students for academic careers upon graduation. The structured predoctoral program, Scholars in Dental Education, offered to predoctoral students can guide interested dental students along an integrated path to explore their potential as academic dentists by providing opportunities to engage in teaching, administration, leadership, and scholarship. Additionally, an academic program was established for the MMSc Program in Dental Education in 2017 which is based on related scientific evidence applied to educational quality, educational research, curriculum design and academic leadership. The objective of the Program in Dental Education was to enable highly motivated individuals with proven scholarship and excellence in research and leadership to become strong academic leaders in curriculum design and mentorship of students and faculty. Formal opportunities to engage students and awaken their interest in pursuing an academic career may serve as a solution to faculty recruitment and retention concerns. Dental schools should consider implementing structured programs to stimulate interest in academia at the predoctoral and at the post-doctoral level. Further development of the integrated training programs incorporated in dental schools can potentially carve career pathways for future academicians.

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Biography

Sang Park is the Associate Dean for Dental Education and Program Director of the MMSc in Dental Education at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. In addition to launching the MMSc in Dental Education program in 2017, she developed the patient-centered case completion curriculum for the predoctoral program in 2009 and pioneered the use of the flipped classroom in dental education at

Harvard in 2013. She is currently engaged in several projects on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on various aspects of dental education, as well as mentoring projects on interprofessional education for predoctoral dental students and on the effectiveness of faculty development and leadership training programs for dental faculty.