

Gearing Up: Accelerating Your CV to Promotion and Tenure

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Abstract

The curriculum vitae (CV) is an important document for a faculty member and is one of the first documents reviewed by peers or evaluators when a faculty member is being considered for promotion. It catalogs the training history, accomplishments, awards, and productivity of a faculty member over time. Prior work has demonstrated how the CV should be organized and what content should be included. However, no contributions to the literature have discussed how reviewers and other academic leaders view CVs, how to structure CV entries to promote career advancement, and how CVs can become useful or limiting for faculty, regardless of whether a faculty member is actively going through the promotion process. We discuss how the CV can be seen by evaluators and concerns that can cause the CV to decelerate. We then make recommendations on how the CV can accelerate a faculty member toward academic career advancement and promotion.

Introduction

The curriculum vitae (CV) is one of the most important documents a faculty member can create. It catalogs the training history, accomplishments, awards, and productivity of a faculty member over time and is used by advancement, promotion, and tenure committees to determine whether a faculty member has earned promotion and tenure. Prior work has demonstrated how medical students and faculty should build their CVs,¹⁻⁴ but scant literature speaks to how CVs can become useful or limiting for faculty, regardless of whether a faculty member is actively going through the promotion process. On the Association of American Medical Colleges website, technical tips about organizing content on a CV are listed, but the site does not share how a CV is viewed or considered by peers or evaluators.^{5,6} Faculty may not recognize a powerful CV nor know how to create one. They also may have inadvertently created a CV that shows deceleration or slowed progress toward advancement, which can impact the ability to achieve promotion.

CV Deceleration

In working with early career family medicine faculty, we have reviewed many CVs and have noted many challenges. For example, some CVs are very thin, where the time in rank of a faculty member should have resulted in more entries across the domains of education, research, and clinical care. At times this is due to not recording accomplishments, but at other times it is due to increased focus on clinical care or other pursuits

consuming any time available for scholarly projects and CV building, especially for underrepresented minority faculty and women of all races.^{7,8} However, many faculty may not have had faculty development regarding the importance of CV entry and upkeep, and may not have been afforded opportunities for accomplishments to add to the CV. The major problem with decelerated or stagnant CVs is that they do not tell the story of faculty growth and progress. An example would be multiple entries of the same presentation at different locations on the CV, causing the CV to cease telling a narrative about career progress. Decelerated CVs are a problem that is not unique to family medicine faculty.⁶ While the literature offers structural and content-based tips on how to build CVs and on what to include on a CV, it lacks details on how a CV creates a narrative and the importance of narrative for career advancement.⁹

CV Acceleration

A CV requires careful planning; it is both a record of work and a narrative about a faculty member's career.⁶ It should be easily accessible and shareable with peers and colleagues.

This paper builds on the published literature on CVs and the available information on CV creation from multiple websites. We developed this manuscript to help faculty move beyond the CV being solely a record or data dump of career activities and create in their CV a narrative that leads to career advancement. An accelerated CV serves the faculty member; it tells the story of why the faculty member is qualified for advancement or other activities.

Tools to accelerate CVs are available from multiple sources: local mentors, recently promoted peers in other specialties, external mentors within family medicine professional organizations, national fellowships,^{10,11} Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) annual conferences, and the STFM Resource Library. We offer the suggestions in Table 1 to accelerate a CV toward academic promotion and tenure.

Conclusion

In this manuscript we have discussed the accelerators and decelerators toward promotion and tenure in academic medicine as evidenced in the CV. Specifically, the CV is a story, and faculty can use the table to ensure that their story is accurately reflected in their CV. Leaders who read CVs are looking for progression and for a cohesive thread throughout; faculty should have that in mind when modifying their CV. Key accelerators include transitioning presentations to publications, keeping the CV updated, and avoiding redundancies wherever possible. Mentorship can play a vital role in crafting a CV and in purposefully creating a cohesive narrative of teaching expertise, leadership, and scholarship. The information in this manuscript can serve to help increase the number of family medicine faculty who have CVs that are competitive for promotion as well as help grow faculty's scientific, education, and service contributions.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Recommendations to Show Acceleration on a CV

Decelerators	Accelerators
Multiple entries of the same presentation or activity at different locations or times	List an entry only one time. If given in multiple locations, include the other locations as a part of one entry. Something about the presentation must be new for it to get an additional entry (eg, change of audience from regional to national, adding a section).
Lack of progression from presentation to published work	Presentation abstracts (especially posters) should be considered abstracts for future manuscripts. Work with mentors, peers, leaders, and others to push poster presentations and other scholarship to the place of peer-reviewed publications. Presentations can be seen as unfinished work. Resubmit rejected articles because that is part of the publication experience. ¹²
Multiple publications in journals that are not peer reviewed or indexed	Build from your publications in nonindexed journals, taking the science to the next level, and seek publication in those journals indexed in the National Library of Medicine (PubMed) or the database for your discipline (eg, ERIC, PsychInfo) ⁶
Lack of entries due to limited faculty development on the importance of CV item entry and upkeep	Use your university CV management program to enter your activities; where possible, get help from departmental administrators.
Lack of entries due to faculty inactivity beyond clinical duties	Talk to productive members of your department and volunteer to help with existing writing projects. Remember to “say what you will do, and then do what you said.”
CV data dump where no story is identified and faculty growth in enduring products is not clear	Everything does not need to be on your CV, and some things should fall off your CV over time. Remember that a reader of your CV should be able to see a story; if that is not clear, change activities and entries to tell the story that you want readers to hear. Get help from your departmental or institutional advancement, promotion, and tenure committee to help determine what should stay and what should go.
Not including coauthored work	Presentations and publications where you are a coauthor need to be included on your CV.
A lack of understanding of author order and position and its relationship to faculty rank	As a general rule, assistant professors should be first authors (and rarely listed as last authors) because this position indicates seniority. Associate professors should transition from first authors to middle or senior authors, and full professors can be first authors, but are more commonly in a senior or corresponding author role. This practice may differ by institution, so consult your institution’s promotion guidelines.
A last updated date more than 3 months in the past	Set a reminder to look at your CV every month and add activities, being sure to update the date and documenting changes made.
Incomplete contact information	Include up-to-date email, social media, cell phone, and website in the contact information.
Collapsed categories and entries in the wrong categories	Editorials in newspapers, appearances on television, etc, are media appearances, not presentations or publications. Book chapters, letters to the editor, and journal articles should be in separate subheadings on your CV. Seek guidance from your institution on how to include this work on your CV.
Typographical errors and grammar mistakes	Use the word editor, spell check, as well as additional readers to ensure that your CV is free of grammar errors.

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