

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: AVOIDING PITFALLS IN CURRICULUM REVISION

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Medical education continues to evolve to reflect changes and advancements in science, medicine, technology, and society. Regular curriculum review is key to ensuring students are prepared to learn and practice in the ever-changing landscapes of education and health care.

Numerous models, such as Kern's Six-Step Approach,¹ guide physician educators and administrators through the often-arduous curriculum revision process. However, curriculum development models are largely focused on the development of curricula rather than how to facilitate the adoption of new curricula. Effective curriculum implementation requires effective change management; without the buy-in of administrators, faculty, and students, even the most carefully designed curriculum is unlikely to succeed. This FM Focus highlights tips for revising your curriculum.

Lessons Learned



Identify needs. Review the current curriculum and identify gaps or needs. Consider the needs of targeted learners first, then those of faculty, programs, and the university.



Bring in the right voices. Inviting diverse voices into the process ensures buy-in and identifies problems. Rather than hearing only from administrators, listen to faculty, staff, and learners. Be sure to include traditionally underrepresented voices. Town halls are commonly used for discussion; however, anonymous feedback is essential for inclusive stakeholder engagement, capturing candid critique and ensuring participation beyond the most vocal contributors.



Secure resources. Ensure resources are in place before implementing any curricular changes. This includes technologies, faculty development, funding, new hires (if needed), and promotional materials. Time is a necessary resource for both developing and introducing a new curriculum.



Communicate effectively. Learning about curricular changes from a trusted advisor or mentor is important to students. Ensure faculty and student representatives communicate accurately and often to students and provide opportunities for questions.



Evaluate and correct. Evaluating a revised curriculum is essential. It is important to review national metrics, internal surveys, attitudinal instruments, attrition and retention rates, and wellness measures, among others.² Identify what is working well and where improvements can be made.

Evidence-Based Implementation Strategies



Anchor to your why.

Identify a clear purpose for the curriculum revision, inform stakeholders of that purpose, and ensure each change serves that purpose.³



Have a plan.

Develop and disseminate a clear roadmap of changes to faculty, staff, and students. Be particularly mindful of the unique needs of multi-site campuses. A central communication office can help ensure consistent communication.⁴



Build community.

Change is hard. Both professional and interprofessional development require a community of practice. Community facilitates peer support and improves wellness.⁵

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