

Society for Directors of Medical Education:

Tell Us Where It Hurts: Strategies for Addressing Common Challenges Experienced
by Directors of Medical Education Research Units
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SDRME members perform a variety of roles while advancing educational scholarship and/or implementing program design/evaluation initiatives at their institutions. Here are some challenges SDMRE members described when performing these roles.

Role	Commonly Encountered Challenges
Consultant	Balance across identities/roles Intake – How to triage requests (first come – first served?) Lack of early involvement; makes it difficult to overcome missteps Reconciling suboptimal practices Lack of academic approach/engagement Lack of other mentorship for those seeking assistance Timing of competing priorities People expect us to do the work for them rather than working with us collaboratively Unfunded mandate – Need to say “No”
Educator	Need to legitimize one’s roles (offer educational programs); do we offer faculty development or try to promote educational research? Helping faculty get better at playing the instrument Qualifiers – How is this role defined?
Evaluator	Academic vs. service continuum Clarifying credit Incorrect use of data; anecdotal stories trump data Clarifying what type of information is needed Stop the charade that evaluation is valued We are tired – enough already
Leader (Role added following discussion)	Maintaining clarity of role and expectations with colleagues Managing the MD – PhD divide
Manager	Challenging scope for large entities Balancing/legitimizing one’s role Lack of attention to detail in staff – need for staff development Lack of curiosity; failure to recognize importance of educational research Empowering others to generate products/take ownership
Mentor	Rank
Researcher	Low institutional priority Lack of colleagues at local/internal level Promoting the generation of scholarship Legitimizing the value of research/education science Limited time to engage in research due to volume of other work Others not contributing & expecting us to do all the work Identifying own piece of action – Determine what excites us (“find the pony”)

These are strategies SDRME members identified to overcome some common challenges.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges	Challenge: Too many hats for the Research Director
	Within an Institution: Separation Within a Program: Communicate vision With Individuals: Decide upon breadth vs depth
	Challenge: Managing expectations up and down
	Within an Institution: Clear promotions process Within a Program: Durable materials With Individuals: Face-to-face interactions; culture
	Challenge: Stop the Charade
	Within and Institution: Transparency Within a Program: Intense (NIH) vs less intense (hobby) With Individuals: % effort; career path

Strategies to Overcome Challenges	Challenge: Expect us to do the work
	Clarify expectations Use tools like timelines and worksheets
	Challenge: Others lack curiosity/importance of dissemination
	Provide staff development with focus on goal setting Educate regarding the importance of dissemination
	Challenge: Find time to pursue own research
	Give self permission to do own work that excites/invigorates Put ourselves first some times Make us more accountable for progress in own field

Strategies to Overcome Challenges	Challenge: Balancing roles
	Push back; say "No"
	Challenge: Maintaining clarity of role and expectations
	Use language to define and change expectations
	Challenge: Legitimize education science and role
Create and implement programs to teach education/promote education science	