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Title: Reply to “Promoting Retention Through Belonging: A Path to Gender Equity in Oncologic Specialties”

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Acknowledgements: No funding was received for this work.

Conflict of interest: None

Word count: 385

This is the author manuscript accepted for publication and has undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: 10.1002/cncr.35948.

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We thank the authors for their interest in our manuscript and for emphasizing the critical importance of addressing the attrition of women from the fields of urologic, medical, and radiation oncology. Their letter highlights the vital importance of institutional and departmental strategies to promote a sense of belonging and the retention of women from onboarding and throughout their academic career.

The authors propose the use of an “onboarding buddy” during the initial transition period—a thoughtful strategy to support early integration. Similarly, some institutions have implemented launch committees as a structured approach to onboarding. For example, at the University of Michigan new faculty members are assigned a committee composed of two senior faculty (one internal and one external to their department), the department chair, and a senior faculty trained as a moderator, with ideally at least one member sharing the new faculty member’s gender or racial/ethnic background. These committees meet monthly during the first year to facilitate department integration and early career planning.[1] Descriptive studies of participants reported improved access to advice and institutional information and a sense of connection and support from the institution.[2] Notably, involved senior faculty also described the experience as enjoyable, suggesting that such efforts may foster a culture of engagement and mentorship across all career stages.

While onboarding efforts are important, long-term retention strategies are critical. Women remain significantly more likely than men to leave positions in academic medicine.[3] The authors provide practical, scalable examples of how departments can build a sustained culture of community and appreciation for all faculty, including recognition of career milestones and integration of faculty into committee work early in their careers. Beyond global improvements in department culture, gender-specific interventions, such as investment in career development programs for women faculty (e.g. Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine), have been shown to improve the retention of women faculty.[4]

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As the demand for cancer care continues to rise alongside an aging population, retaining a diverse and robust oncology workforce is imperative. Women represent an essential component of this workforce, and the implementation and evaluation of institutional efforts—both immediate and long-term—to increase retention of female faculty are needed to mitigate the leaky pipeline. We are grateful to the authors for their thoughtful contribution and for underscoring the importance of intentional strategies to support women in the oncology workforce.

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