

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Leadership Development of Student Pharmacists

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Redesigning the health system model(s) to provide improved access, coordination, and utilization of resources, and quality of care is an important step towards achieving better health for all. This will require the work of many creative and forward-thinking individuals who collaborate effectively with others and are capable of generating successful organizational change in complex, high pressure, and challenging environments. To ensure the continued expansion and success of these efforts, schools, colleges, and universities must develop and sustain high-impact learning environments and curricula that foster the ability to positively influence this process.

The AACP 2008-2009 Argus Commission examined issues related to building a sustainable system of leadership development for pharmacy, and student pharmacists were a focus in their report.¹ One of the proposed policy statements from that report, “curricular modifications should occur such that competencies for leading change in pharmacy and health care are developed in all student pharmacists, using a consistent thread of didactic, experiential and co-curricular learning opportunities,” clearly indicates the need for the curricula at all colleges and schools of pharmacy to have a focus on developing leadership skills. Many change leadership competencies can and should be reflected throughout the core curricular components, via lecture-based courses (required and elective), practice laboratories, small-group discussions and projects, case studies, and introductory and advanced pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs and APPEs). In addition, extracurricular activities, service learning, and other experiences provided to student pharmacists throughout their formal professional education can serve to instill and promote change leadership attributes. Continued study of the impact of PharmD curricula is also needed. Applying Kirkpatrick’s Model of Evaluation,^{2,3} programs appear to have made steady progress towards evaluating the *reaction* (satisfaction and perceived value

of training) and *learning* (development of knowledge, skills, abilities) of student pharmacists. It is the *behavior* (transfer of the learning to the practice or other settings) and *results* (the impact on individual patients, health care settings, population, and community health) that need further study through enhanced partnerships among academia, practice, and other organizations.

The editors of this issue also reconnected with several of the student pharmacists (now pharmacists) who participated in the Argus Commission Report and recent graduates from 4 pharmacy practice organizations. Their viewpoints, many of which reinforce the Argus Commission’s original recommendations, are summarized below:

- (1) Colleges and schools should strive to create an environment where leadership is not only recognized but valued. Faculty members who are actively involved in professional organizations, policy development, and everyday practice as change agents themselves send a strong message to students of the importance they place on these types of activities. In addition, encouraging and providing financial support for student pharmacists to attend professional meetings raises awareness of new and emerging pharmacy roles and networking opportunities.
- (2) Creating a supportive network of role models and mentors (faculty members, peers, and practitioners) is important to professional growth. Mentors are needed who encourage student pharmacists to see not only the challenges but also the possibilities, who spark curiosity, and in the words of one of the pharmacists interviewed, “not necessarily provide the right answer, but help frame the question.” Providing multiple levels of involvement and the encouragement of mentors who have achieved a healthy balance between their work (or school, if peer mentors) and their personal life has increased student engagement for those “on the fence” and prevented burnout for those already involved.
- (3) Providing multiple opportunities for learning outside of the classroom with multiple professions is essential. Applying previous learning to new,

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unscripted, and sometimes ambiguous situations creates the courage to test novel solutions, build team and coalitions, and challenge the status quo. Identifying needs and innovative approaches to addressing those needs (eg, coordinating health promotion/disease prevention and early detection activities in the community), capitalizing on the profession's strengths, and embracing new roles are examples of ways student pharmacists can promote better health as leaders and change agents. Embedding opportunities to expand pharmacy services, conduct research, and participate in policy development or advocacy in IPPEs and APPEs and intern experiences, allow student pharmacists to practice skills they can carry forward in their careers. Active involvement in professional organizations and co-curricular activities are strongly encouraged.

The critical issue of professional practice development in the AACP strategic plan addresses creating change agents and leaders in student pharmacists and graduates.⁴ The idea for a theme issue focused on student leadership development to be published in the *Journal* was developed by several faculty members who have worked and published in the area of student leadership and the AACP Director of Professional Alliance Development. The primary objectives for the issue were to promote awareness of the need for a focus on student leadership development, disseminate guidance documents for use by AACP member colleges and schools and the broader *Journal* readership, and facilitate implementation of educational programs to achieve competencies related to student leadership and change agent development. All AACP members were invited to submit manuscript proposals. Authors submitted an abstract and detailed outline within a predetermined set of themes: (1) research-focused work in areas of student leadership development; (2) the role of classroom, experiential, co-curricular, international/global, or interprofessional education in leadership development; (3) the role of student organizations in leadership development; (4) best practices in leadership instruction, including outcomes and quality indicators; and (5) the role of leadership abilities in the recruitment, selection, progression, and/or graduation of student pharmacists. Sixty-two proposals from 59 different colleges and schools of pharmacy were received. A committee of 17 members from the AACP Leadership Development Special Interest Group was formed to review the proposals. An evaluation rubric was developed based on the manuscript proposal's abstract and scholarly contribution. Six manuscripts were selected, and the non-

selected submissions were encouraged to seek publication in the future.

The articles contained within this theme issue represent a diverse collection of information on student leadership development. The report of a 2010 AACP Council of Faculties Task Force examines how colleges and schools of pharmacy are preparing pharmacy faculty and student pharmacists to be leaders and advocates for the profession.⁵ Using a modified Delphi process, Traynor, Janke, and Boyle provide the academy with valuable information in 2 articles regarding student pharmacist leadership competencies and guidelines regarding student leadership development in the curricula.^{6,7} Patterson and colleagues provide an innovative method to offer formal leadership instruction to second- and third-year PharmD students with the assistance of graduate students and faculty members.⁸ Sucher and colleagues provide another example of using an elective course for student pharmacist development.⁹ Using various mechanisms to encourage student reflection, this course exposes student pharmacists to multiple facets, techniques, and tools used to develop and assess leadership. Chesnut and Tran-Johnson describe a student leadership development series that uses a longitudinal, co-curricular approach to emphasize the application of leadership concepts.¹⁰ This series has been available for 6 years and provides student pharmacists the opportunity to participate in multiple leadership platforms and activities as well earn points that can lead to the award of travel funds to attend a conference or meeting to further enhance their leadership skills.

Developing effective leaders and change agents is an important step in addressing the current and emerging challenges of the US healthcare system. Colleges and schools of pharmacy have a responsibility to incorporate leadership development opportunities throughout their curriculum in order to provide future practitioners with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to implement positive change. The Leadership Development Special Interest Group formed in 2011 is creating a toolkit that can be shared among colleges and schools and other organizations based on a recommendation from the 2008-2009 Argus Commission Report. We hope that the articles in this theme issue will also provide helpful strategies in addressing academic pharmacy's important charge of leadership development.

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