

AACP REPORTS

AACP Strategy for Addressing the Professional Development Needs of Department Chairs

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Objectives. Characterize the skills and abilities required for department chairs, identify development needs, and then create AACP professional development programs for chairs.

Methods. A 30-question electronic survey was sent to AACP member department chairs related to aspects of chairing an academic department.

Results. The survey identified development needs in the leadership, management, and personal abilities required for effective performance as department chair. The information was used to prioritize topics for subsequent AACP development programs. Subsequent programs conducted at AACP Interim and Annual Meetings were well attended and generally received favorable reviews from participants. A list of development resources was placed on the AACP website.

Conclusions. This ongoing initiative is part of an AACP strategy to identify and address the professional development needs of department chairs. Survey results may also inform faculty members and other academic leaders about the roles and responsibilities of department chairs.

Keywords: department chair, leadership, administration, professional development, colleges of pharmacy

INTRODUCTION

The development of leaders in academic pharmacy is among the key priorities of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP). Issue 1.2 of the AACP Strategic Plan is: "Expand the range of programs in leadership development and professionalism of students, administrators, and faculty."¹ The AACP signature faculty development initiative is the Academic Leadership Fellows Program (ALFP), which is designed to develop promising faculty members for roles as future leaders in academic pharmacy and higher education.² Several other pharmacy organizations also offer leadership development programs (eg, the ASHP Pharmacy Leadership Academy, the ACCP Leadership and Management Certificate Program).^{3,4} However, no pharmacy organization programs focus specifically on leadership skills for department chairs, who play vital administrative roles within their institutions. A variety of development programs for department chairs and other campus leaders are offered at national

and regional levels in higher education,⁵ such as the Kansas State Academic Chairpersons Conference,⁶ but they generally do not address unique issues related to teaching in the health professions. The Chairs and Academic Administrators Management Program (CAAMP) offered by the Academy for Academic Leadership is a 3.5-day workshop designed specifically for individuals within colleges and schools of the health professions.⁷ While potentially quite valuable for development purposes, intensive workshops spanning several days at distant locations require a substantial commitment of time and financial resources on the part of individuals and institutions.

In 2010, AACP Council of Faculties (COF) Chair John Bosso identified department chair development as a priority for the COF agenda. He charged the 2010-11 Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) with three specific objectives related to this priority: 1) "survey" available resources for chair development and make recommendations regarding preferred tools/methods to develop chairs in academic pharmacy; 2) work with COF leadership and AACP staff to create chair development programming for the 2011 interim and annual meetings; and 3) recommend appropriate chair development resources to place on the AACP website as enduring resources.

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At its first meeting in July 2010, the FAC decided that a survey of department chairs was a necessary first step in addressing these charges. AACP staff and the FAC collaborated with the Academy for Academic Leadership (AAL) to create a comprehensive, qualitative survey of department chairs in academic pharmacy. The focus of the survey was to characterize the knowledge and skills chairs consider to be important for success and to identify their perceived development needs. This report describes the survey process, provides its results, relates the findings to previous literature, and summarizes how the data are being used to create professional development programs for department chairs to help position them for success.

METHODS

A 30-question survey was created by AAL based on previous studies conducted to develop a profile of deans at dental,⁸ veterinary,⁹ and osteopathic medical schools (Haden et al, unpublished data) in the United States and Europe. The initial draft was reviewed and revised by AACP staff and the FAC chair and vice chair for accuracy, clarity, completeness, and potential to yield useful information. The project and final survey were reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of West Virginia University and deemed Exempt. The survey was distributed via an online assessment tool (SurveyMonkey™) with a descriptive email message to 357 AACP members who were identified in the online AACP Roster as department chairs, heads, or directors. The survey was distributed in October 2010 and remained open for four weeks. A follow-up request was sent in March 2011 to all individuals who were surveyed initially. In addition to obtaining demographic and other background information, the survey sought member opinions about these topics:

- Reasons for desiring to be a chair;
- Extent of formal orientation received before assuming the position;
- How the realities of being a chair compare to pre-chair expectations;
- Amount of time consumed by various activities;
- The importance of various management skills, leadership abilities, and personal characteristics;
- The single greatest challenge faced as department chair;
- Factors contributing to high levels of job satisfaction;
- How performance as chair is evaluated;
- Past participation in formal leadership development activities or programs; and
- Books or other resources deemed useful in preparing for the position and while serving as chair.

RESULTS

Completed surveys were received from 166 (46.5%) of the 357 individuals in the AACP roster. There was at least one respondent from 89 (75.4%) of 118 different U.S. academic institutions in the AACP roster. Two international schools were also represented (Kuwait University, Lebanese American University). There were 48 public and 41 private schools represented in the responses from US schools. Some respondents did not answer all of the questions, leading to variability in the number of responses reported for each item. Responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed for common themes and grouped accordingly.

Profile of Responding Department Chairs

Respondents identified their departmental title primarily as chair (79%), head (7%), or director (5%). The scientific disciplines contained within single departments included pharmacy practice/clinical (50%); one or more basic or pharmaceutical sciences (41%); social/behavioral/administrative sciences (4.5%); or a combination of basic science, clinical, and/or administrative disciplines (4.5%). Within the US schools, 91 (57%) of respondents were affiliated with public and 69 (43%) were with private institutions. Academic degrees held by the chairs included PharmD (44.5%), PhD (47%), PharmD or PhD with another master's and/or doctoral degree (4.8%), master's degree (2.4%), MD (0.6%), or BS Pharmacy (0.6%). Seventy-two percent of respondents were men, 26.8% were women, and 1.2% provided no response to this question. Non-Hispanic Caucasians accounted for 82.7% of respondents; 9.3% were Asian/Pacific Islanders, 4.3% were Black, and 0.6% were Native American/Alaskan, and 3.1% categorized themselves as "Other."

Most respondents (71.5%) had been in the chair position for six years or less, and almost half (49.7%) had been chair for 3 years or less. The median age of chairs was 49 years (range 32 to 67 years) based on 157 responses to this question; 40% were between the ages of 40 and 49 years. Most individuals were either professors or associate professors (48% and 43%, respectively) when appointed as chairs; 9% were either assistant professors or had no prior academic rank because they had entered the position from outside academia. About two-thirds (69%) had been faculty members at the same institution prior to becoming chair; 31% were recruited to the chair position from outside the school.

When asked about the reasons why respondents wanted to become chairs, the desire to help lead the department or advance its programs, to develop personal leadership skills, and to prepare for higher leadership

positions were rated as “very relevant.” Reasons rated as “not relevant” by at least half of respondents included a desire to increase either salary or retirement pay, “no one else would do it,” and “it was my turn in the faculty rotation.”

Preparedness to be Chair

Only 30% of chairs had received any formal orientation to prepare them for the job before assuming their administrative duties. About half of those (15% overall) received only 1 to 5 hours; only about 10% of respondents had received 10 or more hours of training. The remaining 71% of chairs had no formal orientation and learned solely by “on the job” training.

The survey asked individuals how the actual position of chair differs from their pre-chair expectations. Features of the position that turned out to be “more or much more than expected” for the majority of respondents included the amount of time needed to respond to various communications, the amount of time the job takes, the number of meetings they were required to attend, and the amount of paperwork. A substantial number of respondents indicated a variety of other mismatches between their initial expectations and the ultimately reality of the position (Table 1). Regarding areas of reward, 39% of respondents reported that there were more opportunities to make an impact than they had expected, and many reported receiving more support from the faculty (28%) and Dean (38%) than expected.

Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs

Respondents reported working a median of 55 hours per week (range 35 to 75 hours), based on 150 usable responses. Forty-four percent reported working between 51 and 60 hours per week. Activities requiring considerable time by the majority of chairs were personnel management/development and dealing with e-mails/memos. Respondents also agreed that teaching, writing reports, budgetary planning, program planning, representing the department at meetings, leading department meetings, reading administrative materials, and public relations efforts required “at least some” of their time. Most chairs reported spending little to no time on facilities management, fundraising, and scheduling classes and rooms.

Fifty-six percent of chairs reported being responsible for managing their department’s budget; 32% reported that the dean manages the budget, and 11% reported that some other process was in place (eg, business manager). Similarly, 48% of chairs replied that they manage the laboratory space, faculty offices, and classrooms for their departments; 25% stated that the dean manages departmental space. An associate dean or other individual is

Table 1. Aspects of the Position That Were Ultimately More Than Anticipated Before Becoming Chair

Position Requirement or Outcome	Percent ^a
The amount of time needed to respond to e-mails, memos, phone calls, and other communications	81
The amount of time the job takes	62
The number of meetings	56
The amount of paperwork	54
Opportunities to make a positive impact	39
The support I receive from my dean	38
How rewarding the job is	32
The amount of time after the routine work is done to undertake projects or creative activities	32
The strain that being chair puts on my relationship with faculty	30
The support I expected from the faculty	28
The support I receive from University administration	19

Items are listed from highest to lowest percentage.

^a Percent of respondents marking either “more than expected” or “much more than expected” to the question: “How does the position of chair differ now from the expectations you held before you became chair?”

responsible for space management in the remaining 27% of departments.

Management, Leadership, and Personal Abilities Required

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various management, leadership, and personal abilities for fulfilling their administrative roles successfully (Table 2). The *management* abilities ranked as most important were conducting effective meetings; overseeing faculty promotion, tenure, and termination decisions; and monitoring faculty and staff workloads and productivity. The most important *leadership* abilities reported were understanding the roles and responsibilities of the chair; recruiting, retaining, and developing faculty; and cultivating positive working relationships with administration. All of the *personal* abilities offered as options were rated as being important by most chairs. The most common responses given for personal abilities required were managing time effectively and managing work–life balance.

Challenges Facing Chairs

In response to an open-ended question about the biggest single challenge the respondents face as chairs, the most common responses were categorized as working with faculty or administration (54%), time management (31%), and budgetary/financial concerns (12%). Other

Table 2. Management, Leadership, and Personal Abilities Rated as Important by Chairs

Abilities	Percent ^a
Management Abilities	
Conducting effective meetings	96
Overseeing faculty promotion, tenure, and termination decisions	94
Monitoring faculty and staff workloads and productivity	92
Creating/updating department strategic plan	84
Overseeing the curriculum (including accreditation if applicable)	82
Understanding operations and policies of the parent institution	79
Understanding financial policies and procedures	78
Determining/recommending faculty salaries and raises	76
Creating and managing budgets	75
Overseeing staff promotion, raise, and termination decisions	70
Understanding legal issues in academia	69
Keeping pace with technology in classroom and office	66
Managing departmental space and equipment	58
Achieving cultural diversity	50
Managing part-time faculty and/or co-funded (shared) faculty	50
Managing laboratory space	38
Leadership Abilities	
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the department chair	99
Recruiting, retaining and developing faculty	99
Cultivating positive working relationships with the dean and other administrators	99
Managing or resolving conflicts	97
Managing change	97
Giving and receiving feedback	96
Understanding the difference between leadership and management	91
Developing strategic plans	89
Negotiating for additional resources	89
Recruiting, retaining and developing staff	77
Developing and nurturing relationships with professional organizations, associations, and/or alumni	67
Conducting public relations	54
Fundraising	33
Personal Abilities	
Managing time effectively	98
Managing work–life balance	92
Evaluating my success as chair	89
Managing a teaching role within the school	85
Maintaining my scholarship program	83

Items within each category are listed from highest to lowest percentage.

^a Percent of respondents rating each item as either 3 or 4 on a Likert scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = less important and 4 = more important.

categories of challenges were managing change, personnel development, and maintaining work–life balance (3% each).

Sources of Job Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate the contribution of various factors to high levels of job satisfaction. The strongest contributors to high job satisfaction were the academic environment, working with faculty and students, and teaching (Table 3). The factors contributing least to high job satisfaction were community relations, budget/financial management, and service/patient care.

Overall, 77% of respondents rated their overall level of job satisfaction as “high” (either 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, with a 1 being lowest and 5 being highest).

Relationship with the Dean and Performance Evaluation

Only 58% of chairs reported that the dean had conveyed either verbally or in writing his/her expectations to the chair prior to starting in the position. The majority of chairs (77%) received annual performance reviews by the dean. Seven percent received reviews at intervals of 2 to 4 years, and 9% were too new in the job to have

Table 3. Sources of Job Satisfaction for Chairs

Job Characteristic	Percent^a
The academic environment	92
Working with faculty	92
Working with students	91
Teaching	86
Research	69
Collaboration with other units of the university/health science center	59
Administrative/management duties	58
Staff (not faculty)	53
Alumni/former students	35
Community relations	28
Budget/financial management	28
Service/patient care	27

Items are listed from highest to lowest percentage.

^a Percent of respondents rating each item as either 3 or 4 on a Likert scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = a minor contributor and 4 = a major contributor.

received a review but indicated that there are plans for such reviews.

Of chairs who received reviews from their dean, only 29% reported that the review was formal, written, and based on clear performance expectations. Another 29% stated that the review was formal and written but based on vague performance expectations. Twenty-seven percent received only verbal reviews, and the remaining 14% weren't certain of the type of reviews they received.

About one third of chairs (35%) reported that their performance is reviewed by the faculty annually. Almost another third (31%) are reviewed by the faculty every 2 to 6 years. The performance of almost one-fourth (23%) of chairs never receives faculty review. Eleven percent of respondents weren't certain whether their performance undergoes faculty review.

Professional Development for Department Chairs

The majority of chairs (74%) reported that they have taken part in formal courses, classes, or programs to help them grow as leaders. Although dozens of individual programs were cited, the single program reported most commonly was the AACP Academic Leadership Fellows Program (28%). Other programs reported included those sponsored by the parent institution (19%), those designed exclusively for chairs (14%), workshops for general faculty development (10%), MBA courses (3%), and military programs (1%).

When asked to list resources they have used to advance their department chair leadership skills, the majority of respondents listed books and periodicals such as: *Good to Great* (Collins 2001); *The First 90*

Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels (Watkins 2003); *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011); *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 1990); *The One Minute Manager* (Blanchard and Johnson 2003); *Who Moved My Cheese?* (Johnson 1998); *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; *The Department Chair*; and *The Harvard Business Review*. Several respondents also relied on colleagues with administrative experience to serve as mentors to help them grow professionally.

DISCUSSION

Most schools and colleges of pharmacy are comprised of two or more discipline-based academic departments (or divisions) led by a chair (or similarly titled leader). Department chairs play vital roles in the administration of their institutions on several levels. At the “big picture” level, chairs are responsible for working with the dean, assistant/associate deans, directors, and other chairs to advance the mission of the school or college. At the “micro” level of the department, chairs must perform duties and responsibilities in both academic and administrative dimensions.¹⁰ Academic roles may include duties related to teaching, advising, research, student and faculty development, and curricular planning. Administrative roles include duties associated with departmental organization, strategic planning and goal setting, chairing faculty meetings, procuring resources, managing the budget, maintaining records, allocating departmental space, evaluating faculty, resolving conflict, and recruiting for departmental positions. In order to meet the needs of both higher administration and individual department members, chairs must possess well-honed skills in communication, organization, time management, problem solving, negotiating, conflict management, and coaching, among others.¹⁰ Successful chairs generally also possess the personal characteristics of confidence, integrity, transparency, trustworthiness, confidence, and fairness. The management, leadership, and personal abilities rated as important by chairs in this survey (Table 2) could serve as a “curriculum” for the professional development of department chairs in academic pharmacy.

The survey results suggest that much of what has been reported in the higher education literature regarding academic department chairs also holds true in academic pharmacy. Similar to national surveys of academic department chairs, many professors choose to become chairs for reasons of personal development or to seek new opportunities.¹¹ Altruistic reasons such as a desire to advance the department were also frequently cited as relevant in our survey, whereas increased pay and a lack of alternative candidates for the job were less frequently cited.

Despite having admirable reasons for taking the position, new chairs who lack preparation and training are likely to begin their positions with some trepidation, not fully knowing what is expected of them and not understanding the full constellation of their responsibilities. The unfortunate result can be a long and steep learning curve accompanied by mistakes, missed opportunities, soured relationships, and general inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Poor chair performance can adversely impact the success of the department and school as well as the productivity and success of individual faculty members.

Our survey results identified relative inexperience on the part of responding chairs, which underscores the need for development programs for academic pharmacy chairs. Many survey respondents were not fully promoted faculty members: less than half held the rank of professor. In a survey of college and university department chairs in 2010, Cipriano and Riccardi found that only 44.2% of chairs nationwide are full professors.¹² Many of the respondents to our survey were relatively inexperienced as chairs: most (71.5%) had been chair for 6 years or less, and almost half (49.7%) had been chair for 3 years or less.

An encouraging survey result was that almost three-fourths (74%) of the respondents reported that they had taken part in some formal leadership development programs, with the AACP Academic Leadership Fellows Program being cited most frequently (28% of respondents). In contrast to academic pharmacy, reports from the higher education literature indicate that up to 80% of chairs have had no formal training in administrative procedures and 67% have not been exposed to published literature on chairing a department.^{13,14} Our survey data suggest that many chairs in academic pharmacy are aware of the need for professional development and take advantage of available program opportunities. Research is needed to determine the effectiveness of those programs in enhancing the leadership and management skills required to be chair. Our survey was not able to discern the number of newly-appointed chairs who have little academic experience and administrative training for their critical leadership role as department chair.

Faculty members who transition to become chairs surrender the relative autonomy they once had to become accountable first and foremost for the greater good of the department. However, chairs are usually still expected to teach in the classroom, engage in scholarship, contribute to service activities, advise students, and perhaps even maintain a patient care practice.¹² Many new chairs quickly realize that their new role is much more time consuming than they had anticipated, with little time left over for personal pursuits in teaching, scholarship, service, or patient care. Survey respondents reported

working long hours (median 55 hours/week) to meet their responsibilities. Despite the demands of the position and the long hours it entails, most responding chairs (77%) indicated that they had high levels of satisfaction with their roles at their institutions. These results are similar to those of a nationwide survey of academic department chairs, in which the majority of respondents reported that they were either satisfied (56.7%) or very satisfied (30.8%) overall as department chairs.¹²

Most respondents agreed that the largest challenges as a chairperson arise from issues directly involving their faculty or administration. In the 2010 survey of chairs by Cipriano and Riccardi, more than half of respondents reported these five major challenges: dealing with bureaucracy, lack of time for individual research, job-related stress, dealing with noncollegial faculty, and excessive workload.¹² Poor understanding of the nature of the position, lack of formal training, and inadequate preparation for their new roles can lead chairs to become overwhelmed, overworked, and burned out. The turnover rate for chairs in higher education is 15% to 20% per year, with an average term of service of 6 years.¹⁵ The known difficulties associated with chairing a department can discourage many mid-career faculty who have leadership abilities and administrative aspirations from considering these positions. Making the role of chair more attractive to these rising stars is essential to ensure the future success of our schools and colleges of pharmacy.

The survey results indicate that department chairs believe they must possess a wide variety of managerial, leadership, and personal capabilities. Chief among these abilities are managing time and work effectively, overseeing faculty productivity and development, managing and resolving conflicts, and leading change. The abilities contained in Table 2 that were reported to be most relevant to success as chair can be addressed in leadership development programs for department chairs. In addition, chairs in schools of the health professions such as pharmacy may have some development needs that differ from other professions or fields of study. Some examples include maintaining a patient care practice, providing oversight of clinical research, dealing with faculty shortages, and administering unique postgraduate education programs such as residencies and fellowships.

The deans of colleges and schools of pharmacy can also facilitate the development and success of their chairs by discussing expectations clearly at the outset, providing sufficient orientation to the position, giving frequent feedback, and performing formal written performance appraisals at least annually. Positive reinforcement and encouragement from the dean when warranted can also help maintain the chair's enthusiasm and commitment to

the position. Structured feedback from constituents (faculty, staff, and students) about the performance of chairs can also provide meaningful insight into the quality of the chair's performance.

Actions of the Faculty Affairs Committee

The survey results were intended to identify areas of developmental need, which could then be used to inform future AACP educational programming for department chairs. Members of the FAC, AAL, and AACP staff reviewed the survey results and identified and prioritized topics for future AACP programming. The AACP contracted with AAL to plan and conduct three sessions for department chairs at the Interim Meeting in February 2011: 1) working effectively with conflict; 2) principles and practices for work–life balance; and 3) managing up: working effectively with senior administrators. The session on work–life balance was a joint session with department chairs and deans. Of the attendees who completed session evaluations, 88% or more at each session rated their quality to be either Good or Excellent.

The FAC itself was responsible for developing and conducting one four-hour session at the 2011 Interim Meeting related to faculty recruitment, retention, and development. Individual speakers led sessions on: 1) recruitment strategies to attract the best faculty (Cynthia L. Raehl, Texas Tech University); 2) faculty advising, coaching, and development (Shane P. Desselle, University of Oklahoma); and 3) annual performance reviews: steps toward promotion and tenure (Christopher K. Surratt, Duquesne University). The speakers represented both public and private institutions and included chairs from pharmacy practice, social/administrative sciences, and basic pharmaceutical sciences departments. The program was well attended and highly rated by meeting attendees. Twenty-eight of 33 participants (85%) who evaluated the session reported its quality to be either Good or Excellent. In all, 76 department chairs registered for the 2011 Interim Meeting.

For the 2011 AACP Annual Meeting, the FAC planned a 1.5-hour program for the Department Chair session. Entitled *Developing the Academic Department as a Team*, this session focused on how department chairs can work with faculty having varying backgrounds, experiences, and interests to develop the department as a team for achieving departmental and school missions while facilitating the personal goals of faculty members. Two speakers give brief presentations followed by discussion. Bernard Sorofman (University of Iowa) focused on mission, vision, and priorities; and Stephen Cutler (University of Mississippi), discussed faculty incentives and accountability.

The AACP and AAL continued the theme of teamwork at the 2012 Interim Meeting, with targeted development programs for department chairs and deans. Entitled *Teams That Work: Effective Group Leadership in Pharmacy Education*, the meeting included sessions on team emotional and social intelligence; managing more senior administrators, peers, and more junior administrators and faculty; understanding the legal principles and issues in higher education; and establishing team expectations. Depending on the particular session, from 57% to 97% of the participants who completed evaluations rated their quality as either Good or Excellent.

The final charge to the FAC was to recommend appropriate chair development resources to place on the AACP website. A subcommittee performed an extensive literature review to identify existing educational and developmental resources for department chairs. The subcommittee's report was reviewed by the full committee and then forwarded to AACP for placement on the website. At the time of this writing, the resource is available at: http://www.aacp.org/governance/councilfaculties/Documents/Resources%20for%20Dept%20Chairs_COFA%202011.pdf. This 10-page resource includes a list of journals, books, websites, training programs, and conferences identified by the committee by searching booksellers, web search engines, and printed reference materials for information on “department chairs” and various forms of the term “academic department leadership.” Additionally, programs attended by the department chairs of schools/colleges of pharmacy and publications reported to be read by department chairs in schools/colleges of pharmacy were identified from the department chair survey conducted by the Committee.

CONCLUSIONS

Chairing a department in a school or college of pharmacy is an important, complicated, time-consuming responsibility that requires a unique set of knowledge, skills, and abilities. It also offers considerable personal rewards in terms of opportunities to have an impact on the educational institution as well as personal advancement and job satisfaction. Appropriate initial training in management and leadership principles, coupled with ongoing professional development can help chairs perform successfully in their positions. Our survey found that many academic pharmacy chairs are relatively inexperienced or untrained for their vital roles and responsibilities. The AACP has used these results to provide educational programming targeted to chair development, and future similar programs are planned. The survey findings may also be useful to faculty members who aspire to leadership roles and to other administrators

who collaborate with chairs in pursuit of the institution's academic mission.

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