

LETTERS

Impact of a Student Leadership Development Program

To the Editor. The recent article by Renae Chesnut and Jennifer Tran-Johnson considered the effectiveness of a year-long, academic, co-curricular Student Leadership Development Series (SLDS) in fostering leadership skills in pharmacy students. The program provided an interactive experience where students participated in discussions and activities designed to enhance their knowledge of leadership concepts and strategies. According to the program's evaluations, overall students found the program to be successful in preparing them for future leadership roles. Although one of the goals of the program was to allow students the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills, it was disappointing that there was no quantitative assessment for the implementation of ideas or an accounting of active participation in other outside programs and organizations requiring leadership during the academic year by SLDS participants.

Many pharmacy students and local organizations are experiencing a problem with lack of participation and support witnessed by dwindling counts of active members. This issue directly stems back to leadership. Most student leaders lack the experience of implementing programs and ideas. This puts them at a great disadvantage when

it comes to conquering the real life issues of vetting ideas, eliciting support, acquiring the necessary resources for projects, and following through with administrative processes for programming. This consistent lack of preparation translates to poor leadership performance and results in a decrease in number of events, as well as support for programs.

Therefore, in a program designed to promote student leadership, it would be optimal to have not only objectives for creating goals and actions plans, but also to establish objectives for identifying problems and effecting change through the implementation of those action plans within existing organizations. This experience alone would not only lend to more robust discussions on the existing objectives involving obstacles to leadership, but also provide invaluable application opportunities to "practice the use of leadership principles to achieve a desired outcome."¹ Thereby, inculcating real life skills and techniques needed to effectively prepare students to prosper as future leaders.

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REFERENCES

1. Chesnut R, Tran-Johnson J. Impact of a student leadership development program. *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2013;77(10): Article 225.