LETTERS

Active Student Engagement in Curriculum Development

To the Editor. With students being the recipients of education in a classroom setting, their participation in curriculum development should be considered. As pharmacy students of the inaugural class at Manchester University College of Pharmacy in Fort Wayne, Indiana, we were fortunate to have the chance to be involved in developing our curriculum. We had opportunities, such as end-of-course evaluations and focus groups, to voice our positive and constructive criticism to mold our developing program. Courses such as Integrated Pharmacotherapy incorporated student focus groups to provide weekly feedback on the effectiveness of the faculty member's presentation and clarity of PowerPoint slides. Drug Literature Evaluation is another course that relied on student input to identify difficult topics from the previous semester, which allowed the faculty member to incorporate the topics into new lectures to further clarify them.

Our personal involvement in course development began with a semester-long advocacy project assignment in the Population Health Management course. The assignment's purpose was to have students identify an underserved group and become advocates for it. For our project, we aimed to create a learning opportunity that would allow students to gain experience with pharmacogenomics, an impactful topic not offered by the curriculum at that time. We proposed to establish an advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) in pharmacogenomics and chose the US National Institute of Health (NIH) as the experience site.

Working closely with our project mentor, we conducted meetings with our experiential director to learn from other institutions that focus on pharmacogenomics. We also reached out to a faculty member, who was a former NIH employee, for contact information at NIH. We identified local practitioners who incorporated pharmacogenomics in their daily practices and brainstormed potential assignments for the APPE site. Examples of assignments included an opinion paper on genetic testing and an nonprescription presentation on genetic testing being offered at the time. The final product of our advocacy project took the form of a course syllabus. Our advocacy for pharmacogenomics proved to be impactful in that an instructor for an upcoming elective course on pharmacogenomics requested to collaborate with us for ideas on potential course outcomes.

Pharmacogenomics is just one of the many areas that would benefit from student involvement in course development. We encourage schools to go a step further and have student involvement at the earliest phases of course development, such as constructing learning objectives and writing case studies for difficult topics. Challenging students to collaborate with faculty members and to co-create topics would likely enhance engagement and interest among students.[1] Furthermore, these instances of co-created courses create opportunities for career exploration and inspire students to pursue innovative career paths. Having students take part in curriculum development cultivates a sense of shared responsibility among faculty members and students. The added responsibility puts students in the driver's seat, encouraging them to be resourceful and knowledgeable in course content prior to starting the course. When students are involved in course development from the beginning, the background information they have acquired should allow additional class time for deeper discussion of topics.

Our interest stemmed from our pharmacogenomics project, but we reiterate that student involvement in curriculum development could take many forms. We invite other pharmacy programs to explore this rather uncharted territory of course development using faculty members and students and to share the findings with one another.

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REFERENCES

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