

## LETTERS

### Considerations for Determining Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Student Organizations at Pharmacy School Satellite Campuses

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*To the Editor:* In the June 2016 issue of the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, Feller and colleagues published an insightful article entitled, "Professional Organizations for Pharmacy Students on Satellite Campuses."<sup>1</sup> I am appreciative of their attention to such an important topic. In the short amount of time since the start of the study, the number of satellite pharmacy campuses in the United States increased from 40 to 46.<sup>2</sup> As a recent graduate from a school of pharmacy with a satellite campus, I can attest that student organizations play a critical role in shaping the overall pharmacy student experience through development of leadership and communication skills and involvement in community service. The article provides thoughtful considerations regarding the benefits and challenges of satellite organizations; however, it does not account for student body size nor student perception, which compromises its validity.

The authors acknowledge a limitation of not stratifying the survey results for satellite campuses with smaller versus larger student bodies.<sup>1</sup> Student body size can have a significant impact on the types of challenges that arise with satellite student organizations. For example, a satellite campus with a smaller student body may be limited to the organizational agendas set by the main campus. However, a satellite campus with a larger student body may have enough resources to develop its own structure, posing the unique challenge of cohesive integration into the structure established by the main campus. If there were significant differences relative to campus size, future research could begin to develop solutions for both smaller and larger satellite campuses.

The surveyors only captured perceptions of administrators with this study. The primary administrator at each satellite campus may not be the individual working most closely with the student organizations. Alternatively, the researchers could have surveyed students, allowing for a more accurate depiction of the opinions and involvement of student organizations on campus. Although there is not sufficient literature to compare student and administrator perceptions, there is some evidence to suggest that pharmacy student and faculty

perceptions may differ.<sup>3,4</sup> Thus, pharmacy students may have different perceptions regarding the challenges and benefits of student organizations on satellite campuses.

One potential difference in perception between students and administrators is communication between campuses. While administrators perceived communication as a challenge, students may perceive experience with remote communication to be a benefit in order to develop this specific skill set. Though communicating remotely can be challenging, the use of video technology, social media, and a unified mission mitigates this concern. These skills will become especially important when engaging in pharmacy organizations at the national level as a pharmacist, in which remote leadership and teamwork is necessary to unify pharmacists around the nation.

As the number of satellite pharmacy schools continues to grow, it will become more imperative to focus on the challenges faced by these local organizations. Delineation of student body size would provide greater insight into specific challenges posed by small and large student populations. Additionally, student-based perceptions may differ from the perceptions of administrators, highlighting unique opportunities and challenges. Practical solutions are needed to ensure the success of these organizations and to enhance the overall pharmacy student experience.

## REFERENCES

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