

Three-Year Retrospective Theme Analysis on Impact of Co-Curricular Activities in First Year Pharmacy Students

Ann Ryan Haddad, PharmD, Gretchen Corpus, PharmD, Kelli Coover, PharmD
Creighton University School of Pharmacy and Health Professions



Background and Objectives

- Requirements for co-curricular activities were implemented in Fall 2019.
- First year pharmacy students are introduced to co-curricular activities in the Professional Development and Experience I course in the fall semester.
- Students must complete 7 required and a minimum of 5 student-selected co-curricular activities during their first year.
- It is mandatory to complete 1 student-selected activity in each of the following domains: Leadership, Professionalism, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Advocacy and Self-Awareness.
- At the end of the spring semester, in the Professional Development and Experience II course, students participate in a discussion board assignment describing their most impactful co-curricular activity.
- The objective of this project was to evaluate the impact of co-curricular activities among first-year pharmacy (P1) students across three years.

Methods

- This is a retrospective, observational theme analysis based on responses from P1 students enrolled between Fall 2019 and Spring 2022.
- The impact of the activities was assessed through theme analysis of written response submission via discussion boards. Students' responses could reflect more than one domain.
- A code book was developed focusing on the five co-curricular domains.
- A fourth-year pharmacy student researcher coded the de-identified student responses.
- A mixed methods approach was used to report the findings, with codes and sub-codes transformed and reported quantitatively.



Results

- Response rate to written submission was 93.8% (303 of 323).
- Trends were similar across the three classes.

Co-Curricular Domain	Percent of Students Noting Most Impactful Co-Curricular Activity
Self-Awareness	75.6% (229 of 303)
Professionalism	54.4% (165 of 303)
Advocacy	33.7% (102 of 303)
Leadership	31.7% (96 of 303)
Innovation & Entrepreneurship	25.7% (78 of 303)

Graduating Class Year	# Co-Curricular Activities in P1 Year	Number of Students	Average Number of Documented Co-Curriculars Per Student*
2023	1,130	139	8.1
2024	666	103	6.5
2025	519	75	6.9

*Not all students enter every co-curricular activity they participate in.

Code	Class of 2023 (129 students)	Class of 2024 (99 students)	Class of 2025 (75 students)
Impactful Co-Curricular Activities	% of Domain Responses	% of Domain Responses	% of Domain Responses
Self-Awareness (4.1)			
Discovery of Strengths	36.6%	26.9%	39.5%
Presentation Attendance			
Wisdom Group			
Leadership (4.2)			
Student Organizations Executive	13.4%	17.6%	11.7%
Committee Involvement			
At Work			
General Leadership Development			
Immersion Lab			
Innovation - Entrepreneurship (4.3)			
Research Opportunities	11.6%	13.0%	9.9%
Special projects at work			
"Other" Innovation			
Professionalism (4.4)			
Internship	21.2%	26.4%	28.4%
White Coat Ceremony			
Presentation Attendance			
Local Association Attendance			
Organization Membership			
Organization Attendance			
Haunted/Heartbreak Hospital			
Education and Advocacy (3.2)			
Project or Experience	17.1%	16.2%	10.5%
Volunteering			
Presentation Attendance			
Total Response by Class	592	449	346

Selected Student Comments

- *"Many of them pushed me to step out of my comfort zone, and to become an overall more well-rounded individual, which I think will continue to help me throughout my career and the rest of my life."*
- *"These exposures have helped to shape my professional development and will guide my activities next year as I continue to explore and figure out what type of pharmacist I want to be."*
- *"I enjoyed the co-curricular activities I participated in, and they helped me branch out into pharmacy activities that were not solely in the classroom to make me a well-rounded pharmacist in the future."*
- *"Co-curricular experiences provide the opportunity for me to imagine myself in the driver's seat."*
- *"Co-Curriculars I thought at first were going to be my biggest task to complete in this year. Turns out, I enjoyed everything about co-curriculars, and they have really helped me better myself not only as a student, but as a pharmacist intern as well."*
- *"The most impactful experience of completing co-curriculars is the appreciation and gratitude shown by the patients. Once they find out I am a student pharmacist, many complimented me on my success. It makes me feel very proud and excited about my future career as a pharmacist."*
- *"I believe that in terms of growth as a future health care professional, our co-curricular experiences are a crucial part of the curriculum."*
- *"The co-curriculars are opportunities for us to gain new experiences and grow as individuals, students, and professionals."*

Conclusions

- Analysis indicates first-year students identified Self-Awareness, Professionalism, and Advocacy co-curricular activities as the most impactful.
- In contrast, Leadership and Innovation & Entrepreneurship co-curricular activities were less often identified as impactful.
- P1 students must complete Leadership and Innovation & Entrepreneurship co-curricular activities, however, more robust opportunities are identified during their second and third years.