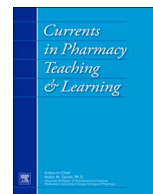




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## Commentary

# An advanced pharmacy practice experience in academia: More benefit than burden!

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Within the curriculum, students gain exposure to careers in community, ambulatory, and institutional pharmacy. Students may not consider alternative options, like academia. Perceived barriers to incorporation by faculty may limit opportunities for students. The following commentary describes one student and faculty member's experience with an academic advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE), and offers suggestions for overcoming potential barriers to implementation.

**Perspective – Student:** During my rotation, I learned just how much hard work and dedication goes into teaching. Before this rotation I didn't have a good sense of the responsibilities and requirements of a faculty member. My goals were to participate in as many activities my preceptor could allow me to be a part of. I wanted to get a true idea of what her daily demands were. Because of this rotation, I have a better understanding of the challenges and rewards of a career in academia, and it has solidified my interest in teaching.

**Perspective – Faculty:** I'll admit that taking on an academic APPE student during my busiest term made me think twice. To assure a smooth rotation, I spent a lot of time in the planning phase which allowed the student and I to communicate effectively from day one. Outlining my expectations while ensuring I had a good understanding of my student's objectives for the rotation made sure we had a successful rotation.

**Conclusion:** Elective APPEs are the perfect time for students to explore a career in academia. Faculty are well positioned to offer rotations to promote interest in academia that may be mutually beneficial.

## Introduction

During pharmacy school, students are often presented with two main career paths to consider after graduation: becoming a community pharmacist or pursuing a job as a hospital pharmacist. Although students are introduced to the other options that a doctor of pharmacy degree may lead to throughout the curriculum, students may not have significant exposure to these practice settings prior to graduation.<sup>1</sup> While advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) rotations in academia are offered at many colleges and schools of pharmacy across the United States, students may be hesitant to take advantage of these opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, perceived barriers to widespread incorporation by faculty may limit opportunities for students.<sup>2</sup> The need for full-time faculty members is great; a 2008 report, commissioned by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP) Council of Faculties and Council of Deans and published by the Task Force on Faculty Workload, estimated that over the next ten years, 1200 new faculty members would be needed at colleges and schools of pharmacy.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, students and faculty alike should be encouraged to

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participate in academic elective experiences to promote interest in academic pharmacy.

APPE rotations are implemented into the pharmacy school curriculum to help students apply the concepts and information taught during the didactic coursework to “real world” situations. At the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) School of Pharmacy, students complete six different 6-week rotations during the final year of the pharmacy curriculum. These rotation blocks are divided into inpatient/acute care, advanced community, advanced hospital/institutional, ambulatory care, and two elective rotations. The elective rotations must be in compliance with the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education's (ACPE) Standards. Standard 13.7 states that “elective APPEs are structured to give students the opportunity to: (1) mature professionally, (2) secure the breadth and depth of experiences needed to achieve the Educational Outcomes articulated in Standards 1–4 and (3) explore various sectors of practice”.<sup>4</sup> Elective APPE rotations are the perfect time for students to explore alternative career options. Faculty and administrators have a great opportunity to promote student interest in careers in academic pharmacy. The following commentary briefly describes one student and faculty member's experience with an academic APPE elective and offers suggestions for overcoming potential barriers to incorporation.

## Commentary

### *Student perspective*

When selecting options for my own APPE rotations, I chose elective rotations that would complement my interests. I have always been interested in academia and hope to someday incorporate teaching into my pharmacy practice. Therefore, I chose to rank an academic elective as my first choice in the match process. There was only one academic rotation slot available for a single student at my school of pharmacy, so I was very nervous that I wouldn't be placed in this rotation. When our rotation assignments were posted, however, I was beyond excited to see an academic elective on my list.

On our first day together, we met in my preceptor's office to discuss the student expectations during our time together, which is pretty standard as far as the first day of rotations goes. Before discussing her expectations, she asked me what my expectations of the rotation would be. I simply asked her to allow me to participate in as many activities that a professor completes on a daily basis as she could allow me to be a part of. I wanted to get a true idea of what her career demands were.

During my six weeks, I learned just how much hard work and dedication goes into teaching. Working side by side, we tackled many assignments, such as formatting course presentations, preparing and observing didactic lectures, participating in workshops, proctoring labs, peer reviewing a journal club article, compiling exams and quizzes, attending meetings, organizing club activities, and answering countless emails. Because my preceptor sat on multiple school committees, I also had the chance to interact with members of LECOM's administration. Many students do not realize that the responsibilities of pharmacy faculty go above and beyond presenting to students in a lecture hall.

Aside from learning how much work goes into a teaching career, I learned how rewarding all of that hard work can be. I had the chance to lead an enrichment session in a course for first-year students on developing drug information skills and performing effective literature searches. During this 50-min active learning session, I had the opportunity to run the entire class from start to finish. The students had a homework assignment due before class, so we took time at the beginning of the session to review the assignment. During the second half of the class, I walked the students through three examples of how to complete a literature search, depending on the type of drug information question they are presented with. The students were eager to participate and answer the questions that I asked of them during this session. Watching students apply what they learned in the lecture and the accompanying homework to our discussion was so rewarding.

Because of this rotation, I now have a better understanding of the challenges and rewards of holding a career in academia. It has truly shown me a new side of pharmacy and solidified my interest in teaching. I hope that someday I will have the opportunity to help students grow and learn just as my preceptor has helped me. There is no doubt that our time together has made a lasting impression on the type of teacher and mentor I hope to be one day. To have a role in the education and maturation of future pharmacists would be so rewarding to me, and I am very excited to continue my journey towards a career in academia.

### *Faculty perspective*

As a former clinical pharmacist turned academician, and a preceptor for institutional APPEs, I am accustomed to developing and implementing clinical rotations. However, implementing an elective rotation in academia was a brand-new experience for me. I initially came up with the idea through my personal experiences as a teaching assistant during pharmacy school and during my post-graduate pharmacy residency where I pursued a teaching certificate. I had the opportunity to work side by side with faculty members at these institutions, which ultimately influenced my decision to make the transition out of full-time clinical practice.

Much of my teaching workload takes place in the winter term. I participate in approximately 65 hours of didactic teaching and small and large group facilitation over an 11-week period. In addition to in-class contact time, I spend a significant amount of time outside of the classroom recording lectures on “difficult concepts” discussed during class to enhance student understanding and retention. I also prepare and grade enrichment exercises, quizzes, and tests, and provide direct feedback on group assignments related to drug literature evaluation. When designing an APPE experience, it is important to provide an in-depth exposure to the world of academia during the rotation. I'll admit that I was slightly concerned that due to my heavy teaching workload and clinical responsibilities, taking on an additional APPE student would add more work to my already full plate. In a survey of members of AACP, respondents agreed that the number one perceived challenge to delivering academic-focused APPEs was time.<sup>2</sup> However, I found that

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