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Opinion

# Development of a one-year academic fellowship in a skills lab environment

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## Abstract

To help fill the shortage of pharmacy faculty members, more first-time faculty are being hired directly out of residency programs, with little specialized training in academia. Fellowships focused specifically in the area of academia may be useful in developing well-rounded, better-prepared new faculty members. These academic fellowships build on the foundation already established by previous work experiences, including prior residencies, by immersing the fellow in an academic-rich setting full of learning opportunities. Such programs could help supply pharmacy schools and colleges with qualified individuals to fill current and future vacancies. This paper describes the development of an academic fellowship in a skills lab environment and the perspectives of key players involved in the fellowship.

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## Introduction

While the pharmacist shortage has essentially been resolved in the United States, the pharmacy faculty shortage continues to be of concern. The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Institutional Research Brief reported that for the academic year 2012–2013, there were 473 vacant positions, a 14.8% increase from the prior year.<sup>1</sup> The same brief stated that over 32% of the vacant positions remained vacant due to lack of qualified candidates in the pool,<sup>1</sup> suggesting the need for additional well-trained applicants. Some proposed reasons for the shortage include retirements, creation

of new pharmacy schools, large differences in salaries (sometimes as much as \$20,000/year difference from a corporate pharmacist position to faculty), and decreased funding for colleges and schools of pharmacy.<sup>2</sup>

To fulfill the need for pharmacy faculty, there has been an increase in hiring of first-time faculty members. For the 2012–2013 academic year, the AACP reported that 307 first-time faculty members were hired.<sup>1</sup> Many first-time faculty members are being hired directly out of residency training, a trend noted at the University of Houston, College of Pharmacy, by Wanat and Garey<sup>3</sup> in 2013. This was reinforced by Wanat et al.<sup>4</sup> in 2014, where 56% of those surveyed entered academia directly following residency training. There are varying and often high expectations for new faculty members to successfully balance the various components of academia: teaching, scholarship, service, and in many cases, practice. These expectations, coupled with

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the natural desire to succeed, can create a stressful transition into academia if the new faculty member is inadequately prepared or supported, potentially resulting in decreased job satisfaction and high turnover.<sup>5–7</sup>

Exposure of new faculty members to the breadth of teaching, scholarship, service, and practice (as applicable) opportunities available is important to help better ensure successful careers. Residency training programs afford excellent clinical training opportunities but may provide limited and inconsistent instruction on how to be a full-time faculty member. Teaching certificate programs, which are becoming increasingly popular, have addressed some of this need, but these programs vary widely in their scope.<sup>8,9</sup> In 2013, guidelines were developed by Havrda et al.<sup>10</sup> to help address existing inconsistencies in these programs. Additional academic training for some individuals pursuing second-year residencies has been described by Medina and Herring<sup>11</sup>; however, the experiences are still not comparable to that of a fully immersed full-time faculty member. A new way of training the next generation of pharmacy faculty is needed, an area of need confirmed by Poirier and Ferguson<sup>12</sup> in a recent *American Journal of Pharmacy Education* (AJPE) Viewpoints article. This need resulted in the development of an academic fellowship in the pharmaceutical care lab (PCL) at the University of North Carolina, Eshelman School of Pharmacy, Chapel Hill. While this particular academic fellowship was created with a focus in the skills lab, the concept of an academic fellowship could be easily adapted for a variety of other specialty areas.<sup>12</sup>

Early in 2011, the director of the PCL drafted a proposal to the Dean to create a new academic fellowship to train the next generation of faculty, as well as promote growth of the skills lab program and current faculty. Previously, she served as co-director of teaching certificate programs and had provided an introduction to academia to dozens of residents. However, the certificate programs were limited in depth, and a volunteer experience in addition to a busy resident schedule did not seem to adequately prepare individuals to become full-time faculty members. Additionally, a faculty shortage and loss of skills lab faculty at our institution prompted the search for a solution. The PCL director wanted to create a premier training experience that would provide the tools to help bridge the gap between residency and a new faculty position for individuals who were passionate about becoming full-time faculty members.

The fellow would invigorate the PCL team, bring fresh ideas, and challenge the team to continue to provide the most cutting edge, hands-on learning experiences to the students.

The written proposal included a request for salary and benefits, office space, and technology support for the fellowship. Other considerations included advertising and travel for the fellow to attend the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists' Midyear meeting and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Annual meeting. The proposal was accepted, a budget was created, and the first PCL academic fellowship started in July 2011. The fellowship salary and benefits structure was modeled after the university's post-doctoral program, which eased implementation. The Dean's office established a fellowship funding stream, and the program is reviewed on an annual basis.

### Recruitment

Recruitment of fellowship candidates is accomplished by advertising via the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Personal Placement System (PPS) online. The current fellow and a PCL faculty member attend the ASHP midyear meeting and conduct preliminary interviews. Qualified candidates are encouraged to formally apply by sending a curriculum vitae (CV), transcript, cover letter, and references to the PCL director. On-site interviews are conducted by the PCL team, and the selected candidates are notified in early March. While completion of a pharmacy practice residency is not required for application to the program, it is very strongly encouraged, as the added clinical experience provides a stronger foundation upon which the fellowship can build.

### Overview of the fellowship structure

The PCL fellowship is a 12-month program designed to train an individual for entry into a full-time faculty position. While many traditional research fellowships are designed for 24 months, budget constraints only allowed for 12 months. The director and the Dean agreed 12 months was an adequate training period for this fellowship, since the fellowship was ideally intended to build on skills learned in residency. The program is designed to expose the fellow to a multitude of experiences in the areas of teaching, scholarship, service, and practice. The specific goals and objectives

#### Table

The fellow will have the following goals

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Design, develop, and implement innovative educational content within the pharmaceutical care laboratory (PCL) environment
Develop skills necessary to coordinate a one-semester PCL course through participation in educational workshops and guided practice with the current PCL faculty
Document and share educational innovations through publications and presentations
Develop skills necessary to create and sustain a compounding educational center
Refine clinical practice skills by maintaining a clinical practice in the inpatient or outpatient setting

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