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## Research Note

## Factors associated with mentor satisfaction among teaching and learning curriculum program participants

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To evaluate participants' satisfaction with their teaching mentor relationship in a teaching and learning curriculum (TLC) and determine characteristics that are associated with high mentee satisfaction.**Methods:** A 31-item survey instrument was administered to all 2015–2016 participants of the Teaching Certificate Program.**Results:** Seventy percent of program participants (n = 60/86) responded to the survey. Overall, 80% of program participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their mentor relationship. Characteristics associated with participants reporting that they were very satisfied with their teaching mentor relationship included mentor availability for face-to-face contact and affiliation with the same institution. Mentor actions associated with high mentee satisfaction included reviewing lecture slides, providing midpoint feedback, providing career advice, and attending mentee lectures.**Conclusions:** Teaching certificate program participants perceive increased mentor accessibility and frequent interaction as key factors to a satisfying mentor-mentee relationship. Optimizing and standardizing mentorship programs are essential to the success of postgraduate teaching curriculums.

## Introduction

It has been well established that mentorship can positively impact mentee confidence, research productivity, and career satisfaction among healthcare professions, including pharmacy.<sup>1–11</sup> In a 2016 study by Scolaro et al., 93% of participants in a pharmacy school-based teaching and learning curriculum (TLC) program agreed or strongly agreed that the program benefited them in their current position and highlighted that the one-on-one mentorship received was one of the most appreciated aspects.<sup>1</sup> These positive findings on the impact of formalized pharmacy mentorship were consistent in both the postgraduate and early career settings.<sup>2,3</sup> Research in the field of medicine has also been conducted on what characteristics support successful mentorship relationships. These

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included clear expectations, personal connection, mutual respect, and shared values. Not surprisingly, poor communication, lack of commitment, limited mentor experience, and personality differences have been correlated with unsuccessful mentorship.<sup>12</sup>

The American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacy (ASHP) and the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) have each released guidelines for pharmacy resident teaching experiences.<sup>13-15</sup> These standards support the role of a designated teaching mentor and provide general recommendations for mentor characteristics. Despite this guidance, little has been published on what characteristics are most valued by pharmacist mentees in these TLCs or how these perceived characteristics relate to actual mentee satisfaction. Furthermore, previous studies evaluating formalized pharmacy TLC mentorship programs have evaluated very small pools of participants often within only one health network or one academic institution and demonstrate great variability between different TLC designs.<sup>1-3</sup> With the continued focus in pharmacy education to promote postgraduate training and shift toward more standardized TLCs, insight on what postgraduate pharmacists value in mentorship will be critical to guide intentional mentor training and development for both established and future TLC mentorship programs.

In an effort to gain insight that could be applied to widespread TLC mentorship programs, the TLC program leadership team conducted a study to identify what pharmacy residents value in professional mentorship relationships. This study, conducted in 2014–2015, consisted of a survey administered to participants at the beginning of the program to measure the importance of various mentor characteristics.<sup>16</sup> Ninety-nine percent of participants indicated that having a professional mentor was important to their professional development. Having similar clinical practice and research interests, as well as the ability to meet face-to-face, were of high importance. The ability to choose one's own mentor was also ranked as highly important. Age, race, and gender were not important characteristics. While findings were consistent with prior research, it remained to be tested if perceived characteristics truly correlate to increased mentee satisfaction.<sup>3,17</sup> For this follow-up study, we hypothesized that mentor characteristics identified as being of high importance would result in higher mentee satisfaction.

The aims of this study are twofold: 1) to evaluate mentee satisfaction with their teaching mentor, and 2) to determine if characteristics perceived to be of high importance by previous program participants are associated with high mentee satisfaction. Results from this study will highlight areas of excellence or improvement that can be applied to TLC mentorship programs across the pharmacy field as well as other health professions.

## Methods

### Context

The TLC program consists of a two-day seminar focused on academic and precepting topics, followed by longitudinal completion of TLC program requirements including seminar attendance, completion of teaching requirements, selection of a mentor, and submission of a teaching portfolio. All TLC program participants were required to complete the following teaching requirements: (1) two, 60-min lectures, (2) three hours of recitation or lab instruction, (3) six hours of precepting, and (4) six hours of leading topic discussions or journal clubs. Participants are encouraged to receive feedback from mentors as well as peers and students throughout the program. Sample evaluation tools for presentations and precepting are provided, but not required. An electronic teaching portfolio is submitted near the end of the academic year to complete the TLC program. A comprehensive program description, as well as update on the mentor process have previously been published.<sup>18,19</sup>

Provided with a list of past mentors and recommended qualifications if selecting a new mentor, participants selected their own teaching mentor within one month after starting the TLC. Based on ASHP and ACCP recommendations, our statewide TLC endorsed the following qualifications for teaching mentors: (1) didactic teaching experience, (2) commitment to resident learning and development, and (3) previous participation in a TLC.<sup>19</sup> Mentors are not required to be faculty members at an academic institution but are encouraged to have the characteristics outlined above. Examples of mentor responsibilities included reviewing teaching materials and exam questions, previewing and providing feedback on teaching experiences, sharing insightful teaching techniques from personal experience, reviewing the teaching portfolio, and promoting professional development. Participants and mentors were provided with a toolkit, reminder emails, and checklists in monthly newsletters and on the program's website. The toolkit contained the following: program requirements, initial discussion questionnaires (Table 1), sample timelines, evaluation forms, and examples of

**Table 1**  
Initial questionnaire topics.

Mentor topics	Mentee topics
Current position and description of role	Brief introduction
Events that lead to current position	Short-term and long-term goals
Current and past teaching experience	Teaching specific goals
Traits of impactful mentors in their life	Reason for participating in the program
Areas they provided feedback on for past participants	Past teaching experience
Biggest challenge in past mentorship	Two-three personal strengths
Preferred contact method	Two-three anticipated challenges
Top three qualities appreciated in a mentee	Areas where feedback would be most beneficial
Time needed to provide feedback on specific items (ie, slides and handouts, exam questions, <i>curriculum vitae</i> , teaching philosophy)	

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