

Design and implementation of a faculty-student engagement programme in an entry-to-practice Doctor of Pharmacy programme

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Abstract

Background: The importance of fostering connections between faculty and students is well documented in the literature. The University of British Columbia's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences (Faculty) launched a Faculty-Student Engagement Programme (FSEP) to cultivate links between faculty and students.

Aim: To describe the design, implementation, and outcomes of the FSEP for first-year students in a Doctor of Pharmacy Programme.

Methods: Forty-two volunteer faculty were matched with 224 students in groups of five or six. Evaluation surveys were distributed to faculty and students. Additional in-person feedback was obtained from students.

Results: In-person feedback was obtained from 79% (n=174) of students. Surveys were completed by 90% (n=38) of faculty and 25% (n=56) of students. Eighty percent of faculty agreed that the FSEP was a valuable initiative. Seventy-seven percent of students recommended that the Faculty continue to offer the FSEP.

Conclusion: The FSEP was positively evaluated by faculty and students and it could be emulated at other institutions interested in enhancing the student experience.

Keywords: *Advising, Engagement, Mentoring, Pharmacy, Professionalism*

Introduction

A quality undergraduate programme encourages students to actively engage with in-house activities such as interactions with faculty and peers (Kuh, 2001; Pascarella, 2001). Positive interactions between faculty and students has resulted in enhanced student self-confidence, the establishment of professional habits and behaviours, enhanced student self-assessment skills, and promotion of life-long learning (Chalmers *et al.*, 1995; American Pharmaceutical Association Academy of Students of Pharmacy, 2000; Volino *et al.*, 2015). Macaulay *et al.* described how a close relationship with faculty can help students reduce isolation and enhance their learning (Macaulay *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, enhanced student engagement and learning have been reported at institutions which adopt non-course-related faculty-student interactions that positively impact student engagement (Umbach & Wawrzynsk, 2005). In their outline of indicators which influence the quality of students' educational experiences, Chickering & Gamson described an association between formal and informal faculty-student contact and enhanced student learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Moreover, it has also been suggested that faculty mentoring students can improve student knowledge about the "hidden curriculum" of professionalism and help shape the

professionalism of students (Rose, Rukstalis & Schuckit, 2005: p.344).

The mentor-mentee relationship can be beneficial for the mentor as well. Benefits observed include greater productivity, learning from students, career satisfaction, personal gratification, and a sense of pride and fulfillment (Valadez & Lund, 1993; Wilson 2004; Rose, Rukstalis & Schuckit, 2005).

American and Canadian accreditation standards require undergraduate pharmacy programmes to provide student support services such as academic and career-pathway advising and orientation to programmes, but they do not specify a specific approach to advising (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, 2007; The Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programmes, 2012). Mentoring of students by faculty can be understood as a method of student advising and can take many forms. Examples of faculty-student mentoring activities include matching groups of students with faculty members, assigning an advisor to each student, using electronic journals to keep advisors informed of advisees' progress, and using alumni as career counsellors for students (Drusin *et al.*, 2013). A number of institutions have described a less formal mentoring programme in which faculty volunteer as advisors and

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the frequency of contact is dependent on their interest and availability (Rose, Rukstalis & Schuckit, 2005).

Oyler *et al.* have asserted, “the more engaged a student is, the better” (Oyler *et al.*, 2016:p.1). However, defining, measuring, and increasing engagement have proven to be challenging in pharmacy education. (Oyler *et al.*, 2016). DiPiro defined student engagement as getting students actively involved in academic programmes, and proposed that it could be enhanced with initiatives designed to create interactions between students and faculty members and peers (DiPiro, 2009). Harper & Quaye proposed that engagement encompasses not only involvement or participation but also feelings and affective reactions such as enjoyment and a sense of belonging (Harper & Quaye, 2009). These ideas provide insights for assessing efforts to engage students and faculty.

Since engagement is a challenging construct to measure, answering the question ‘How do we determine if students are engaged?’ is not easy. It has been proposed that giving students opportunities to participate in student-faculty interactions to develop professional relationships with faculty members may be a valid indicator to gauge student engagement (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014). However, the challenge remains how to measure and quantify success in engagement when there is a lack of agreement on the meaning of engagement (Oyler *et al.*, 2016).

Although there are published examples of initiatives within health programmes including pharmacy aimed at increasing connectedness and engagement between students and faculty in academic/career advising roles, reports of pharmacy faculty-student mentorship programmes outside of academic/career advising are lacking (Plaut *et al.*, 1980; Mann, 1992; Volino, Candelario & Bridgeman, 2015).

In the 1990’s, The University of British Columbia’s Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences (Faculty) had a programme to connect volunteer faculty with students in a mentor-mentee relationship; however, with no specified structure or evaluation and with competing priorities and significant institutional changes in the subsequent years, the initiative dwindled and was not revisited.

Although the Faculty does not collect data on the reasons students access the Office of Student Services, an increase in first-year entry-to-practice Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) students’ feelings of isolation upon entry to the Programme has been perceived since the class size increased from 150 to 224.

In 2012, the Faculty made significant efforts to strengthen the culture of professionalism by addressing it more thoroughly in the curriculum and by enhancing role-modelling by faculty. Because of this, and rising concerns about student isolation, the Faculty developed a programme to promote connectedness between faculty and students.

The author designed, developed, and implemented a Faculty-Student Engagement Programme (FSEP) whose primary objective was to cultivate links between faculty

and students, promote student connectedness, and facilitate student introductions to the Faculty. The FSEP was timed to coincide with the launch of the new entry-to-practice Pharm.D. Programme with a large class size at our research-intensive university. The author evaluated student and faculty perceptions of the FSEP during and after their participation. To the author’s knowledge, this is the first report of an evaluation of such an initiative implemented at the time of launch of a new degree programme with a large class size.

Methods

The advisory group to create the FSEP, led by the author, formed in 2015. To achieve the FSEP’s objectives, the author chose an informal mentorship programme in which faculty members volunteered as ‘liaisons’, and the frequency of contact with the students was flexible and dependent on faculty and student availability and interest.

One month before the first cohort of students began the entry-to-practice Pharm.D. Programme, the merits of a programme to connect faculty with incoming students were discussed in a brainstorming meeting chaired by the author and attended by 12 faculty members. The group assumed that faculty participation in such an initiative would be on a voluntary basis and driven partly by altruism. The FSEP’s objectives, the intended nature of the faculty-student relationship, expectations and nomenclature were discussed. The terms ‘mentor’ and ‘advisor’ were felt to imply a significant time commitment, thus it was decided that ‘Faculty Liaison’ (FL) would attract more faculty volunteers while remaining consistent with the FSEP’s objectives. The FL role was described not as academic advisors or counsellors, but rather as role models who provide students with an environment of connectivity, support, and orientation to the Faculty. During orientation week, students were informed of the roles of the Faculty’s Office of Student Services and other campus resources in the areas of academic advising and counselling. Specific responsibilities of FLs included attending an initial ‘Kick-Off’ meeting at the start of the term, attending a welcome session with the students, and engaging with the students assigned at least once during the autumn term and again in the winter term. A ‘Wrap-Up’ event was scheduled after the academic year to review the initiative.

One month prior to the start of the autumn term, the Associate Dean Academic (ADA) invited faculty members to volunteer as FLs and declared her intention of joining the initiative. In addition to advising on the design, development and implementation of the initiative, all twelve members of the advisory group volunteered to participate as FLs. The author was responsible for implementing the FSEP, developing a FSEP Guide for FLs, providing oversight of the initiative, and conducting the evaluation process.

The FSEP Guide was circulated *via* email along with the call for faculty to volunteer to participate. The Guide described the goals of the FSEP, the intended benefits to FLs and students, and the roles and responsibilities of FLs. It included suggested topics for discussion with students (*e.g.*, the FL's career journey, FL's hobbies, what FLs enjoy about their job, the students' observations about the Faculty, *etc.*), a list of suggested (not-required) activities for FLs and students to consider engaging in (*e.g.*, a tour of the FLs research lab or practice site, a walk through the campus, or a meeting at a coffee shop), and the contact information of the staff member appointed to assist with scheduling and room bookings for meetings and activities.

It was agreed that the number of recruited FLs would determine the size of the student group assigned to each. The Faculty's Office of Student Services conducted the matching of FLs and students. Each student group was advised *via* email of the name of their FL and invited to attend the first group meeting.

At the Kick-Off meeting with FLs the following topics were addressed: goals of the FSEP, responsibilities and expectations, professional boundaries within the faculty-student relationship, and the role of the Office of Student Services. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the University's Early Alert service who encouraged attendees to use Early Alert if concerned about a student's wellbeing (<https://faculty.staff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert>). Food and refreshments were provided as a token of appreciation. The Welcome Session for students and FLs held at the start of the academic year included an overview of the FSEP, introduction of the FLs, and an icebreaker game. FLs were asked to begin connecting with their assigned students immediately after the event.

During the Wrap-Up event at the end of the academic year, the feedback collected from FLs and students and how best to move forward were discussed.

Student feedback was solicited twice, using two different modalities. At the end of the autumn term, student feedback was collected from the 224 students in-person during class time. Each student was asked to write on a cue-card what they liked and disliked about the FSEP. The author collected the cards, organised the comments into themes, and manually tabulated the frequency of appearance of themes. The second feedback modality involved anonymous online surveys using SurveyMonkey®, deployed to students and FLs at the end of the winter term. These remained open for a total of six weeks. A reminder was sent to students at weeks three and five, and to FLs at week five. In keeping with the study objectives, the group collaboratively developed survey questions designed to elicit student and faculty perceptions of the FSEP (mainly in the affective domain), about the composition of the groups, the structure of the FL-students meetings, and the FSEP overall. Descriptive statistics were generated by the survey tool. The topics discussed during the meetings and the students' perception of their value were also ascertained. The University's Behavioural Research Ethics Board deemed

this project exempt from ethics review process because it consisted of an evaluation of an aspect of the FSEP rather than an intervention.

Results

A total of 42 faculty members (50% of faculty at the UBC Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences) served as FLs. Of these, 90% attended the Kick-Off meeting and 83% attended the Welcome Session. Most FLs were in the 'Lecturer' rank (49%, n=21) for fewer than five years (61%, n=26), and were self-identified as pharmacists faculty (57%, n=24) and research faculty (29%, n=12). Some non-pharmacist faculty expressed reluctance to participate in fear of not being adequately knowledgeable about the profession and the issues impacting it.

All 224 students enrolled in the first-year of the Pharm.D. Programme were matched with FLs and attended the Welcome Session. The matching process resulted in a 1:5 ratio of FL to students. The majority of students who completed the survey were female (63%, n=35), had been in post-secondary training for three - five years prior to entering the Programme (64%, n=36), were from within the province (91%, n=51), within the metropolitan area of the University (68%, n=38), and were living off-campus with family or roommates (61%, n=34). The study sample was similar to the study population (64% female; 69% with three - five years of post-secondary training prior to entering the Programme; 94% from within the province). The characteristics of the study sample are shown in Table I.

Table I: Characteristics of first-year Pharm.D. students who completed the survey

| Gender | % (N) |
|---|---------|
| Female | 63 (35) |
| Male | 32 (18) |
| Not specified/Other | 5 (3) |
| Years of post-secondary education prior to the Pharm.D. Programme | |
| 0 – 2 years | 25 (14) |
| 3 – 5 years | 64 (36) |
| 6 – 8 years | 11 (6) |
| Where they came from | |
| Within the metropolitan area of the University | 68 (38) |
| Elsewhere in the province | 23 (13) |
| Another province | 9 (5) |
| Housing arrangements upon entry to the Pharm.D. Programme | |
| Living on-campus | 25 (14) |
| Living off-campus with family or roommates | 61 (34) |
| Living off-campus alone | 13 (7) |
| Other | 2 (1) |

Tables II: Faculty Liaison (FL) online survey results*

| Faculty Liaison Responses | % Who Responded* |
|--|------------------|
| Percent of FL who used the Guide provided | 80 |
| Percent of FL who used the administrative support provided for scheduling meetings | 56 |
| Types of meetings/activities with the students in the assigned groups† | |
| Face-to-face meetings at the Faculty | 94 |
| Face-to-face meetings outside the Faculty (e.g. at a coffee shop, etc.) | 16 |
| Tour of lab/practice area | 19 |
| Technology enabled meetings/connection (e.g. Skype, email, etc.) | 58 |
| Frequency of engagement with students in face-to-face meetings/activities | |
| In the autumn term | |
| Never | 0 |
| Once | 67 |
| Twice | 23 |
| Three or more times | 10 |
| In the winter term | |
| Never | 17 |
| Once | 55 |
| Twice | 21 |
| Three or more times | 7 |
| Percent who engaged with students individually in addition to in the group assigned | 39 |
| Student attendance at most group meetings/activities | |
| 100% | 20 |
| 75 – 99% | 61 |
| 50 – 74% | 13 |
| 25 – 49% | 3 |
| 1 – 24% | 3 |

*Responding to each question was optional so the number of responses to each question was variable.

† Multiple options were allowed to be selected by respondents, so percentages may add up to more than 100%

FL = Faculty Liaison

FSEP = Faculty-Student Engagement Programme

Feedback surveys were completed by 90% (n=38) of FLs and by 25% of students (n=56); in-person feedback was obtained from 79% of students (n=174). Table II summarises the responses received from FLs, Table III summarises those from the student survey, and Table IV outlines the in-person student feedback. Most FLs engaged with their assigned students once or twice per academic term, and noted at least 75% student attendance at the meetings. Although 80% of FLs made use of the Guide, only 56% took advantage of the administrative support provided to facilitate the scheduling of meetings. The most common types of activities that FLs and students engaged in were face-to-face meetings and technology-enabled meetings. In 39% of cases, group activities resulted in meetings between FLs and individual students. Topics discussed during the meetings included pharmacy practice and education, career choices, current events, and life outside of the Faculty. Sixty-two to 96% of students declared finding each of these topic discussions very valuable or somewhat valuable.

| Faculty Liaison Responses | % Who Responded* |
|---|------------------|
| Topics discussed during meetings/activities† | |
| The Pharm.D. Programme | 94 |
| Differences between the Pharm.D. and BSc. Programmes | 58 |
| Pharmacy practice | 81 |
| Pharmacy education | 58 |
| Career choices | 71 |
| Current events | 29 |
| Research | 6 |
| Life | 55 |
| Challenges faced by FL† | |
| Lack of student response | 36 |
| Scheduling of meetings/finding suitable meeting rooms | 54 |
| Difficulty finding topics of interest to the students | 11 |
| No challenges | 36 |
| The FSEP is a valuable programme for students | |
| Strongly Agree | 32 |
| Agree | 48 |
| Neutral | 13 |
| Disagree | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 |
| The FSEP was a valuable experience for me as FLs | |
| Strongly Agree | 23 |
| Agree | 42 |
| Neutral | 22 |
| Disagree | 13 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 |
| I would consider participating again as FL | |
| Strongly Agree | 39 |
| Agree | 42 |
| Neutral | 16 |
| Disagree | 3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 |

Thirty-eight percent of students and 36% of FLs experienced no challenges with the FSEP; however, 43% of students and 54% of FLs found the scheduling of meetings and finding suitable meeting rooms challenging. Less than full student attendance was noted by 36% of FLs, and 42% of students expressed a lack of connection with their peer groups and/or FL.

Overall, 80% of FLs agreed or strongly agreed that the FSEP was a valuable programme and 81% declared their interest in participating again in the future. Although the percentage of students who declared that the FSEP helped them feel better oriented or connected with faculty and peers were 56% and 27%, respectively, 62% stated that the FSEP was a valuable experience and 77% recommended that the Faculty continue to offer it. Though not part of our evaluation methods, on multiple occasions throughout the year, unsolicited FL feedback praising the initiative was received by the author *via* email.

Table III: Student online survey results*

| Student Responses | % Who Responded* |
|--|------------------|
| Percent of students in favour of automatically enlisting all first year students in the FSEP | 75 |
| Percent of students in favour of the random assignment of students to their FL | 87 |
| Percent of students in favour of the size of the student group assigned to each FL | 81 |
| Percent of students in favour of the nature of the relationship between FL and students | 79 |
| Percent of students who found valuable or somewhat valuable each type of activity that occurred with their FL† | |
| Face-to-face meetings at the Faculty | 79 |
| Face-to-face meetings outside the Faculty (e.g., elsewhere on campus, at a coffee shop, etc.) | 69 |
| Tour of lab/practice area | 78 |
| Technology enabled meetings/connection (e.g., Skype, email, etc.) | 59 |
| Percent of students who found valuable or somewhat valuable the topic discussed during meetings with their FL† | |
| The Pharm.D. Programme | 96 |
| Differences between the Pharm.D. and BSc. Programmes | 79 |
| Pharmacy practice | 85 |
| Pharmacy education | 83 |
| Career choices | 76 |
| Current events | 62 |
| Research | 73 |
| Life | 84 |

*Responding to each question was optional so the number of responses to each question was variable

† Multiple options were allowed to be selected by respondents, so percentages may add up to more than 100%

FL = Faculty Liaison

FSEP = Faculty-Student Engagement Programme

| Student Responses | % Who Responded* |
|---|------------------|
| Challenges faced by Students† | |
| Lack of interest in being part of the FSEP | 2 |
| Lack of connection with my FL or peers in the group | 42 |
| Scheduling of meetings/finding suitable meeting rooms | 43 |
| Difficulty finding topics of interest to the students | 21 |
| No challenges | 38 |
| The FSEP help me feel more oriented to/connected with the Faculty | |
| Strongly Agree | 13 |
| Agree | 43 |
| Neutral | 36 |
| Disagree | 6 |
| Strongly Disagree | 2 |
| The FSEP helped me feel more connected with my classmates | |
| Strongly Agree | 6 |
| Agree | 21 |
| Neutral | 51 |
| Disagree | 21 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |
| My participating in the FSEP was a valuable experience for me as a student | |
| Strongly Agree | 19 |
| Agree | 43 |
| Neutral | 34 |
| Disagree | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree | 2 |
| I encourage the Faculty to keep the FSEP | |
| Yes | 77 |
| Neutral | 19 |
| No | 4 |

Table IV: Student cue-card comments

| Student Responses | % Who Responded* |
|--|------------------|
| “My FL.... | |
| Was helpful/supportive/ caring/kind/receptive/ honest/approachable/friendly/great | 21 |
| Made me feel welcomed/engaged/more comfortable/connected” | 10 |
| Was informative/knowledgeable a great resource” | 6 |
| Was a friendly face to greet in the hallways and someone who knew me by name” | 1 |
| Made me want to chat with her more” | 1 |
| Gave me more confidence in myself” | 0.5 |
| “I enjoyed/liked... | |
| Developing connections outside classes/getting to know professors personally, informally/talking about non-school related things/feeling more comfortable and welcomed into the faculty” | 20 |
| Learning about career options/talking with working pharmacists about the profession” | 10 |
| Networking opportunity/support network” | 3 |
| Meeting faculty members in small casual groups” | 3 |
| Listening to my FLs stories and career journey” | 2 |

* Many students completed only one side of the cue card by providing either positive or negative comments but not both

| Student Responses | % Who Responded* |
|--|------------------|
| “I enjoyed/liked... | |
| Having an introduction to the faculty / feeling included and engaged/a personal welcome to the faculty/having the program be a little less intimidating” | 2 |
| Visiting the FLs practice area” | 2 |
| Meeting a professor early in the term/having a good sense of community early on” | 1 |
| Learning a lot from my FL” | 1 |
| “I would have liked... | |
| More frequent meetings with my FL” | 12 |
| That participation not be required“ | 7 |
| More clarity about the role of the FL or the goal of the meetings” | 3 |
| An opportunity to connect with other FLs/larger groups/a large networking event” | 3 |
| For my FL to be my academic or personal advisor” | 2 |
| To be matched with the FL and peers by interest” | 2 |
| Launching the FSEP at the very start of the Fall term” | 2 |

FL = Faculty Liaison

FSEP = Faculty-Student Engagement Programme

Discussion

There was a high level of student and faculty participation in the first cycle of the FSEP, and it was well received by participants. The author was gratified that despite faculty being relatively fatigued from the process of developing the new degree programme, half of the faculty members participated. The fact that the ADA herself joined the FSEP may have contributed to the ease with which the FLs were recruited. The FLs represented a range of university tracks and disciplines; however, only about a quarter of FLs had been at the Faculty longer than ten years, and greater involvement of senior faculty, non-pharmacists, and those in the 'Professor of Teaching' rank would have been preferable in order to give students a broader range of faculty perspectives.

On multiple occasions throughout the year, unsolicited FL feedback praising the initiative was received by email. The fact that this modality of feedback was not captured in the survey results, and the FL enthusiasm at the Wrap-Up event indicate that the overall experience of FLs was more positive than what the survey results may suggest. FLs who were not assigned to teach in the first year of the Programme commented that the FSEP provided a creative means of engaging with students ahead of their scheduled teaching times. Appreciation for how the FSEP allowed them to get a sense of the students' well-being, and of how they appeared to be coping with the curriculum was also expressed by many FLs. This was important to many who had dedicated much effort to the design of the new Pharm.D. Programme.

The low response rate to the student online survey limits the interpretation of the results. It's possible that only those students who had a positive experience in the FSEP responded or that input came mainly from those who did not feel that the initiative was valuable. However, the response rate is higher than that typically reached in the evaluation of courses (in the 10-15% range), which is attributed to a tendency to over-evaluate the curriculum and Programme.

It was disappointing that only about a quarter of students who responded to the survey felt that the FSEP helped them feel more connected with their peers, and that only slightly more than half felt more connected or oriented to the Faculty as a result of the FSEP. However, it is difficult to interpret these results when most of the comments provided in the open-ended questions of the survey were unrelated to the FSEP and focused on frustration about schedules and course load. The fact that despite these comments, about three quarters of students would like to see the Faculty continue to offer the FSEP suggests that the survey may have been viewed as a means for sharing feedback pertaining to the new Programme in addition to the FSEP.

Since the Faculty's Office of Student Services does not collect data on the reasons for students accessing its services, the perceived increase in the number of new students feeling isolated within the large class size was a non-validated impression. Collecting hard data on the

actual reasons for accessing the Office would not have been possible during this initial iteration of the FSEP because of the concurrent commencement of the Pharm.D. Programme which, in itself, resulted in significant resources addressing schedules, courses, *etc.* In future iterations the Faculty may be able to capture such data to better understand the reasons for students accessing the Office. Even then, however, the number of potential confounders such as the nature of a given class of students, will render it difficult to ascertain whether any observed decline in the number of students feeling isolated could be attributed to the FSEP.

One of the aims of the FSEP was to enhance the Faculty's culture of professionalism. Although role models play a critical role in the early development of student professionalism, measuring the impact of them on student's professionalisation remains a challenge (Chalmers 1995; American Pharmaceutical Association Academy of Students of Pharmacy, 2000). The FSEP evaluation was not designed to assess this, though it probably provided students with opportunities to observe professional communication and behaviour; however, the fact that professionalism was not reported as one of the topics discussed during FL-student meetings suggests that in the future FLs should be encouraged to explore the topic.

Although the FSEP helped a number of students enhance their connectedness with the faculty and peers, some challenges were identified by both FLs and students. The scheduling of meetings and the lack of physical space to hold the meetings impacted both students and FLs. In future iterations, the availability of administrative support should be emphasised to participants.

Whether FSEP participation should be required was discussed at the Wrap-Up event. It was decided that regardless of whether it is a required aspect of the Programme or not, as noted by Drusin *et al.* in the implementation of their advising programme, students who are disinterested in establishing a relationship with faculty would opt-out simply by not attending the scheduled meetings (Drusin *et al.*, 2013).

Although some students suggested a non-randomised approach to the matching (*e.g.*, by personal interests), the group agreed that this would not be possible with existing resources. In addition, matching students with FLs or groups by interest seems contrary to the welcoming, informal role that we assigned to FLs. The need to emphasise to students the goal of the FSEP and the role and responsibilities of the FL was identified.

Similar to the experience of Drusin *et al.* where medical students in an advising programme requested more meetings with their advisors, (Drusin *et al.*, 2013) the students would have preferred to have more networking opportunities with multiple FLs. The merits of such an undertaking were discussed at the Wrap-Up event, but it was agreed that FL recruitment would be challenging. The group also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the minimum number of expected meetings with students from one per term to

two per term, but it was agreed that FLs would be reluctant to commit to increased demands.

The response rate to the student survey could be an additional limitation in the data. Although the additional in-person feedback collected via the cue-card exercise confirmed the strengths of the FSEP, a more robust body of data would have enhanced its reliability. In spite of the limited sample, the author was able to gain insight into the value of the FSEP and aspects that might be improved in the future.

In interpreting the results of the student survey, it is important to recognise that students were asked to rate the value of each topic discussed in the student-faculty group meetings, not the topics they found valuable. This distinction explains why, while only 6% of FLs indicated they discussed 'research' as a topic, 74% of students found value in such discussions and similarly, and why while only 29% of FLs indicated they discussed current events with students, 62% of students found the discussions valuable. Thus, the results reflect their overall feelings about the FSEP rather than their impressions of specific topics. Furthermore, it is important to note that the data in Table IV are specific to individual student-faculty groups and may therefore not be generalisable. For example, although students may have expressed a desire to meet with their groups more frequently, this may have been so for a student in a group which only met once or for a student whose group met multiple times yet really enjoyed the interactions.

The author recognises that there was variability in the frequency and nature of the student-faculty interactions within each group, resulting in a lack of uniformity which could interfere with the ability to ascertain the merits of the FSEP. However, the programme was intentionally designed so that the frequency of contact with the students was flexible and dependent on participant availability, interest, and driven partly by faculty altruism. A further limitation of the work is that the author focused the evaluation on perceptions of participants and did not set out to study other perspectives such as resource consumption or other measures of value. There may be other aspects of this topic that the evaluation did not address.

There was agreement amongst FLs that the Faculty should continue to offer the FSEP. A total of 47 FLs (including some who had declined to participate in the inaugural academic year or who were unavailable to do so) have already been recruited for the next academic year. The ADA has agreed to serve again in the role of FL and has agreed to commit to funding administrative assistance and refreshments for both the Kick-Off and Wrap-Up events.

A new University strategy to support students' mental health and success calls for faculty becoming more engaged in conversations with students about wellbeing and stress management. In future iterations, FLs will be encouraged to engage students in conversations about these issues, given that the FSEP provides a safe platform for such discussions.

Conclusion

The University of British Columbia's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences designed and delivered a Faculty-Student Engagement Programme (FSEP) to foster connections between faculty and students in the inaugural class of a new Pharm.D. Programme. On the basis of their experience and with the changes planned for its next iteration, the FSEP has the potential to enhance and enrich the student experience and could be emulated at other institutions interested in doing so.

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