Expanding Academic Resources For Student Success:
Developing a Portfolio of Learning-Support Services With Limited Funding

Rebecca J.K. Beebe, M.S., Emily M. Tarter, University of Wisconsin – Madison School of Pharmacy

School of Pharmacy UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

OFFICE OF **STUDENT** SERVICES

Objective

Explore ways to implement innovative learning support programming, with limited funding, to address academic deficiencies and to promote student success at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy.
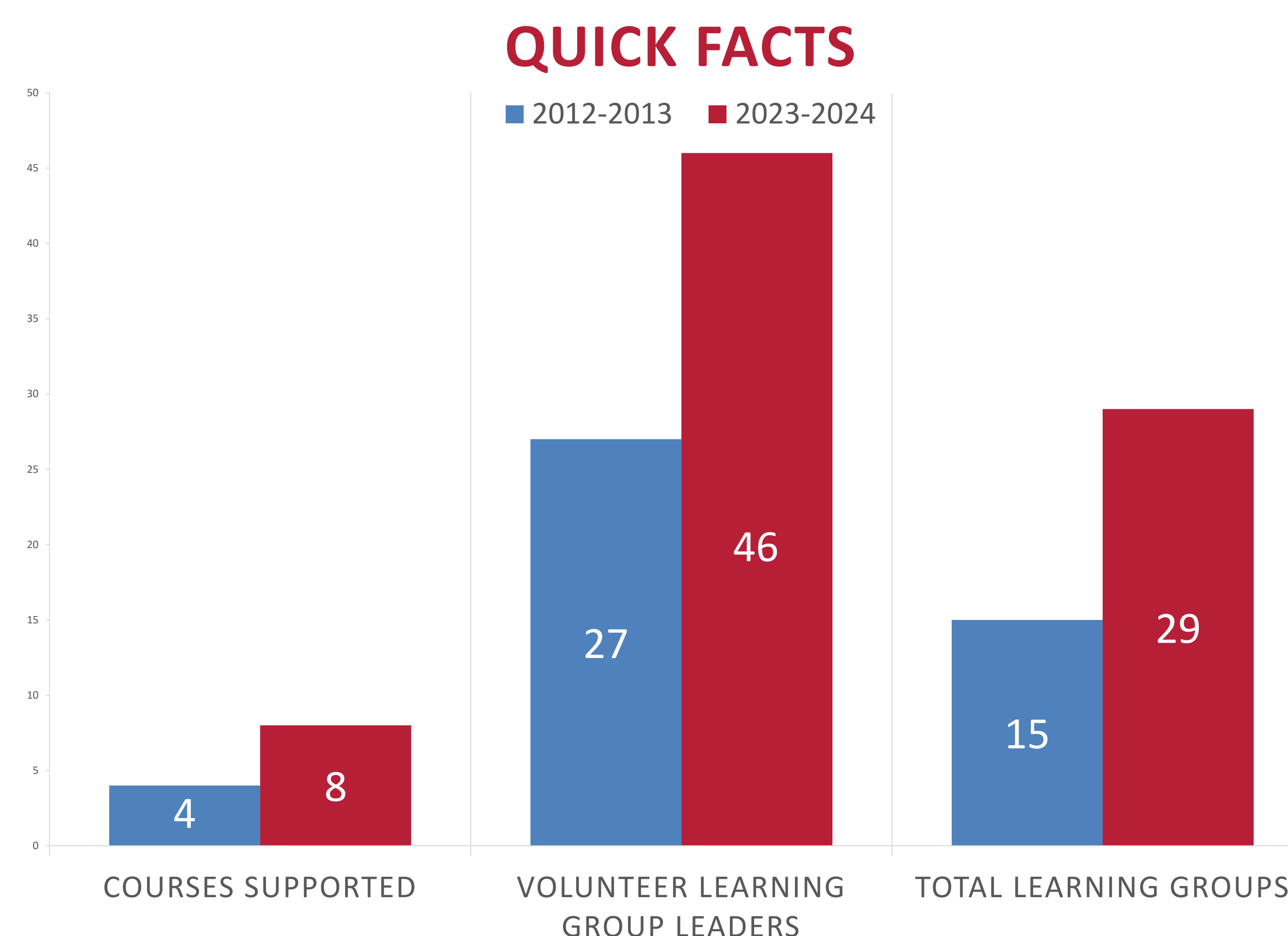
Methods

- **Over the past 13 years**, learning groups were facilitated in an increasing number of core courses in the PharmD program. The groups were led by student volunteers who achieved high grades in the course the previous year. All students were invited to join the learning groups, which met weekly for two hours, either virtually or in person.
- Students were identified for intervention by early warning indicators and met with their advisor to discuss study skills, learning strategies, and time management.
- Advisors participated in professional development such as reading groups, podcast discussion groups, and online courses, and used newly acquired learning-support skills and strategies to develop a portfolio of tools for students on academic probation, including an online resource page with interactive modules.
- **In the 2023-2024 academic year**, approximately 70% of first-year (P1) and 49% of second-year (P2) students volunteered to participate in 29 learning groups (16 in fall, 13 in spring) for four P1 and four P2 required courses each semester, led by 46 selected senior peers.
- 18 students volunteered as individual tutors, in addition to tutors in the Rho Chi Honor Society.
- Campus learning support professionals gave presentations to P1 students on time management, study skills, and what to do after their first round of exams.

Resources

- Brown PC. *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Belknap Press; 2014.
- Kuepper-Tetzel C, Nebel C, Need Kaminske A, Sumeracki M. Multiple Episodes. *The Learning Scientists Podcast*. 2021-2023. learningscientists.org
- Oakley B. *Learning how to learn: Powerful mental tools to help you master tough subjects*. Deep Teaching Solutions. coursera.org/learn/learning-how-to-learn. Accessed June 26-July 17, 2022.

Background

Advisors at public institutions are frequently asked to expand their roles in order to support students with increasing academic and mental health needs, yet there is often limited funding available for these efforts. The effects of the COVID pandemic on student learning and academic performance have been profound, and we predict that these trends will continue in the future, particularly related to deficiencies in foundational math and science skills. In addition, we saw the number of early warnings issued to Doctor of Pharmacy students at our institution increase from 40 in fall 2020 to 148 in fall 2023. To address this, we have been utilizing a variety of strategies to supplement classroom learning with academic support and study-skills development.
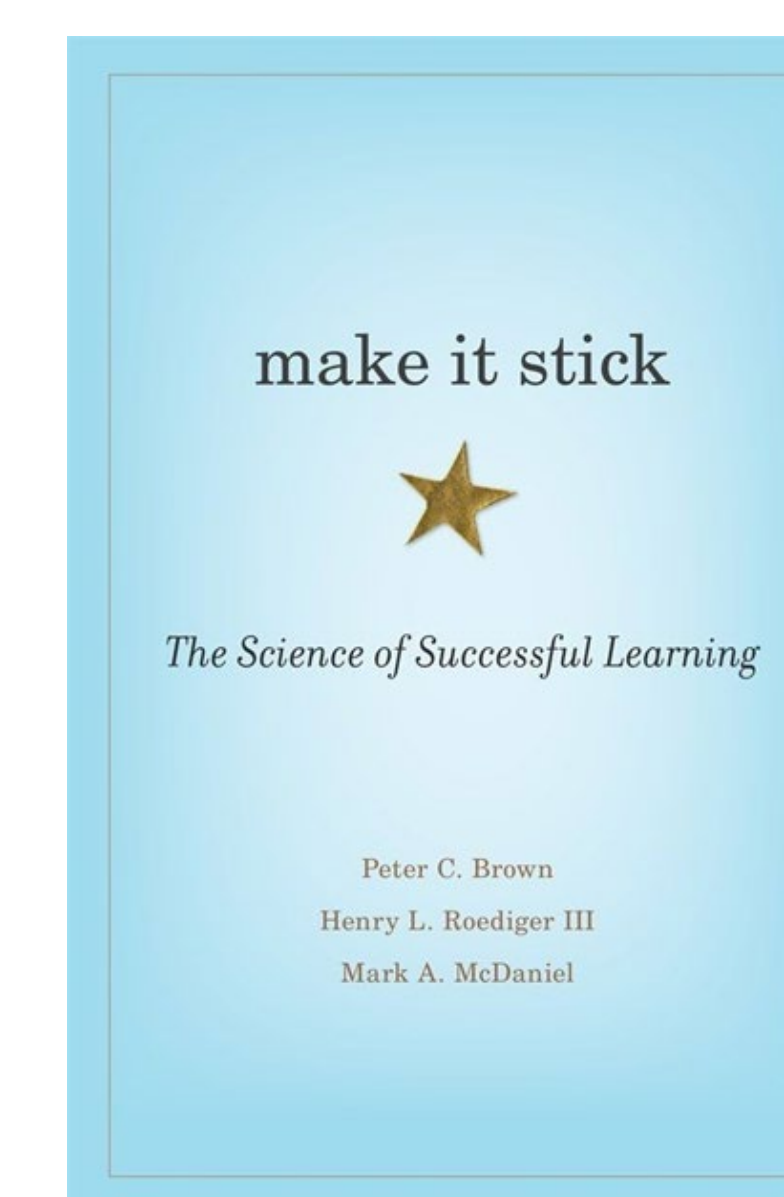
QUICK FACTS

- 2012-2013
- 2023-2024

	COURSES SUPPORTED	VOLUNTEER LEARNING GROUP LEADERS	TOTAL LEARNING GROUPS
2012-2013	4	27	15
2023-2024	8	46	29

> "Being a study group leader has expanded my ability to not only teach complex topics to others but has bolstered my ability to learn from others. It has pushed me to work harder academically so that I can provide the best support to my peers."

> "Having a more collaborative setting to ask questions and have a designated time to work with the course content has been so valuable to me, and I have especially loved getting to connect with students in the class ahead of me. My study group leaders have helped attune me to the bigger picture key concepts for a given lecture and unit. These students that have volunteered their time to promote study success in challenging courses have made such a difference in my learning!"

Learning Support

The Learning Scientists Podcast

make it stick
The Science of Successful Learning
Peter C. Brown
Henry L. Roediger III
Mark A. McDaniel

AVERAGE FINAL GRADES FOR ONE P3 COURSE

Those who **regularly attended** learning group sessions throughout the semester: **94.7 (equates to) A**

Those who **didn't** attend regularly OR who didn't sign up for learning groups: **89.1 (equates to) AB**

Results

- Evaluation feedback shows learning groups had a positive impact on student confidence and connectedness with peers.
- Preliminary data on learning group effectiveness shows an average of one letter grade higher for group participants.
- Advanced students leading groups gained skills needed to pursue careers in academia.
- Advisors enhanced their skills in providing learning support through purposeful professional development activities.

Conclusions

- Students are willing to dedicate time to attending weekly learning group or tutoring sessions.
- It is important to offer several types of learning support to match student preferences.
- Student affairs professionals faced with limited financial resources and time can find creative ways to support student learning.

Recommendations

- Take responsibility to support our students academically and personally
- Assess current student success and progression programs
- Look both within and outside of the curriculum to determine how best to help struggling students succeed
- Develop and implement a variety of learning support resources based on school or college program needs

References

- Robinson ET, Brazeau GA. Considering retention and curricula in reframing pharmacy enrollment challenges. *Am. J. Pharm. Educ.* 2023;87(3) doi.org/10.5688/ajpe9116
- Robinson ET, Cochrane ZR, Akiyode O, Chahine EB, Culhane JM, Do DP, Franson KL, Minze MG, Ross LJ. Envisioning the future of student success: report of the 2022–2023 AACP student affairs standing committee. *Am. J. Pharm. Educ.* 2023;87(8) doi.org/10.1016/j.ajpe.2023.100559