Supporting Newly Admitted Students' Transition to Pharmacy School

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INTRODUCTION

Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) admission metrics are associated with academic success but are not perfect predictors of performance.[1] Mercer University College of Pharmacy (MUCOP) monitors students' exams scores. If a student fails an exam, they are required to complete a self-assessment tool to explore causes for failure. Subsequently, the student meets with the academic success specialist (AcSS) to discuss the self-assessment results and formulate an academic plan.

The AcSS identified the most common areas contributing to students' academic struggles were related to housing, work, commute, non-school responsibilities and commitments, finances, and study approach. When problems are identified post-test failure, there is often insufficient time to resolve them before additional test failures occur.

MUCOP implemented a unique, post-admission, pre-matriculation transition team intervention that works proactively with newly admitted students in the six areas, known as transition areas, to address concerns that could affect academic performance if not resolved. The transition team consists of the Associate Deans for Student and Academic Affairs, the Director of Admissions, the AcSS, and the Instructional Designer.

OBJECTIVE

To provide pre-matriculation intervention in areas of basic need to newly admitted PharmD students and to determine post-intervention changes made.

METHODS

- Pre- and post-matriculation surveys regarding six transition areas were administered to the January-entry cohort
- Surveys consisted of fixed and open-ended responses
- "Red flag" responses and appropriate interventions were identified by Transition Team

RESULTS

Table 1. Interventions Made to Support Students' Transition to Pharmacy School

Transition Area	Intervention[a]		
	n	% of total interventions[b]	% of students[c]
Work	7	36.8	29.2
Study approach	6	31.6	25.0
Finances	3	15.8	12.5
Non-school related responsibilities	2	10.5	8.3
Housing	1	5.3	4.2
Commute	0	0	0

[a]Interventions were conducted by videoconference or email exchange
[b]Of 19 total interventions, the percentage comprising the transition area indicated.
[c]Of 24 students, the percentage who received intervention in the transition area indicated.

Table 2. Post-intervention Changes Made by Students

Transition Area	Changes made by students		
	n	% of total changes[a]	% of students[b]
Study approach	19	35.2	79.2
Work	16	29.6	66.7
Finances	8	14.8	33.3
Commute	6	11.1	25.0
Non-school related responsibilities	3	5.6	12.5
Housing	2	3.7	8.3

[a]Of 54 total changes, the percentage comprising the transition area indicated.
[b]Of 24 students, the percentage who made a change in the transition area indicated.

- Twenty-four (24) students (100%) completed the pre- and post-matriculation surveys
- Pre-matriculation survey responses resulted in 7 video conference interventions and 7 email exchange interventions (Table 1)
  - 5 of the 14 students required intervention in two areas, resulting in a total of 19 interventions
- Post-matriculation responses indicated students made a total of 54 changes in transition areas (Table 2)
  - All students made at least one change, including those who had not been contacted for intervention.

- Of the 14 students who received intervention, 12 (85.7%) made changes in at least one area
  - 8 (57.1%) made all recommended changes
  - 4 (28.6%) made one of two recommended changes
  - 2 (14.3%) did not make recommended changes

At the conclusion of the first semester:
- 5 students (20.8%) from the cohort were no longer in the Doctor of Pharmacy program, but were eligible to apply for readmission
  - Of these students:
    - 2 had received intervention but did not make changes in all of their recommended transition areas
    - 3 students did not reveal challenges they were facing in the transition areas at the time of the pre-matriculation survey, so intervention for those transition areas was not provided

CONCLUSION

Pre-matriculation intervention for students in areas of basic need is one way to assist the transition to pharmacy school and proactively address academic success.

Additional data needs to be collected and assessment performed to determine the benefits of transition team interventions.

REFERENCES

1. Ferrante A, Lambert J, Leggas M, Black EP. Predicting Student Success Using In-Program Monitoring. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2017;81(6):111-111. doi:10.5688/ajpe816111

Pre-matriculation survey

Post-matriculation survey

Poster