



Small-scale changes with big benefits: Addressing low course evaluation scores in a pharmacy management course

Erin E. Miller, PharmD, MBA; Shanna K. O'Connor, PharmD; Jacob Ford, MA

College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, South Dakota State University

Background

- Evaluation scores are not indicative of student learning yet remain a central element evaluated for many annual evaluation and promotion processes
- Challenging to improve courses in manner that improves both course evaluation scores and student learning within time constraints faculty face
- 2020-2022: Poor course evaluation scores and negative feedback from students for pharmacy management course (P3 year)
- 2023: Course improvement approach focused on reasonable time lift while addressing student concerns

Objective

- Evaluate impact of course changes on evaluation scores and student performance

Course Changes

- Backwards design focused on development of specific skills directly tied to practice
- Streamlined core assignment (business plan):
 - Leveraged APhA monograph "Writing a Business Plan for a New Pharmacy Service"
 - Pharmacy (business) standardization
 - Changes to business plan deliverables
 - Language clarification
 - Updated rubrics
- Rearranged didactic topics to parallel and support business plan assignment
- Added quizzes on self-study work
- Collaborative classroom management techniques for shared decision-making

Methods

- Mid-semester survey and discussion: Targeted questions mapped to course evaluations followed by course discussion and class votes on resolution options
- End-of-semester student feedback on business plan assignment: Students asked for feedback comparing 2022 and 2023 instructions
- Student work products: 2022 and 2023 business plans independently scored by two faculty blinded to course changes and business plan year
- Standard course evaluations: Quantitative scores (overall and sub-categories) compared and qualitative data evaluated independently by two researchers for themes

Results

- Time required to make course changes was estimated at eight hours
- Positive student feedback for assignment changes

Table 1: End-of-semester business plan assignment survey: # of Agree and Strongly Agree responses (n=39)

Assignment #	1	2	3	4
The 2023 assignment instructions are more clear	36	37	37	38
The 2023 assignments are more fair	37	36	37	36
The 2023 assignment deliverables are more appropriate	35	36	32	34

Table 2: Average business plan scores

Cohort*	Total Score /25
2022	19.4
2023	20.5

Table 3: IDEA Surveys

	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Response (%)	42/60 (70%)	31/56 (55%)
Summative rating, Teacher	3.1	4.7
Summative rating, Course	2.6	3.5

*Course enrollment was 60 and 56 students in 2022 and 2023, respectively

Implications

- Course improvements did not take a significant amount of time but had desired outcome of improving course evaluation scores without negatively impacting student performance
- Course evaluation score shifted from below to above University-set threshold required for promotion and tenure
- Improvement in course evaluation scores may be impacted more by instructor responsiveness to student concerns than other changes to course