

Background

Benefits and Barriers of International Experiences:

Participation in international educational programs enhances global health understanding, intercultural interaction and professional development.^{1,2} However, PharmD students face barriers to participation such as affordability, work commitments, and academic requirements.^{1,3} Short-term international programs offer a practical way for students to engage in global learning without hindering their ability to pursue summer internships or complete academic requirements.

Global Pharmacy Experiences (GPEs):

The USC Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences offers short-term (10-14 days) international education experiences in the PharmD curriculum, focusing on pharmacy practice, traditional medicine, and the pharmaceutical industry. Some GPEs are faculty-led, while others require students to travel independently.

Faculty-led GPEs:

Faculty-led programs provide structure and reassurance, attracting students who may lack international travel experience. Faculty leaders serve as a “cultural mentors”⁴ to facilitate intercultural competence, build relationships with peers at host sites, and foster collaboration in research and academic exchange. These programs create a bond among participants, enhancing their sense of belonging in the School and profession.

Study Objectives:

By participating in these short-term global experiences, students may gain skills in communication, patient and population-based care, and intercultural competence.

Here we describe the implementation of short-term faculty-led GPEs for Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) students at the USC Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Implementation of USC Mann Global Pharmacy Experiences

Figure 1. Global Pharmacy Experience Partnerships

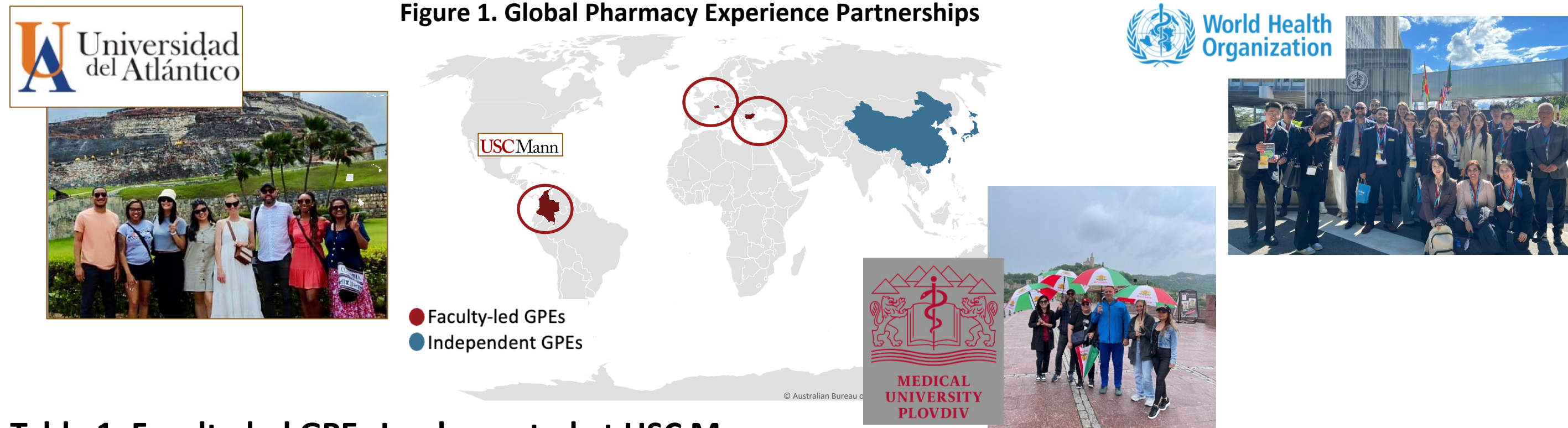


Table 1. Faculty-led GPEs Implemented at USC Mann

	Colombia	Bulgaria	Switzerland
Destination(s)	Bogota & Barranquilla, Colombia	Sofia, Stolat, & Plovdiv Bulgaria	Geneva, Zurich, & Basel, Switzerland
University Partner	Universidad del Atlántico	Medical University of Plovdiv	Not applicable
Length of program	2 weeks	10 days	11 days
Origin of Collaboration	D.K. Kim Foundation, Grant funding from 100,000 Strong in the Americas	In partnership with a non-profit study abroad organization.	Component of USC Mann Coursework
Curricular Focus	Exploration of pharmacy roles in Colombia and the United States. Assess health disparities associated with health care delivery in urban vs. rural settings	Compare and contrast pharmacy education and practice roles in Bulgaria versus the United States. Explore opportunities for collaboration to support community needs.	Exploration of healthcare systems across industrial countries, studying the dynamics between public and private health coverage.
Program Highlights	Collaborative research, visits to urban and rural pharmacies and hospitals, meetings with national pharmacy leaders, cultural visits to Cartagena & Santa Marta	Implementation of a local health fair, meetings with faculty from Universities in Sofia and Plovdiv, and visits to hospitals, clinics and pharmacies, and cultural visits throughout Bulgaria	Integration of students from PharmD, Health Care Decision Analysis, & Biopharmaceutical Marketing degree programs, visits to United Nations, World Health Organization, Biogen, and Novartis

Study Methods: Following the 2023 programs, all students participating in a GPE or APPE were asked to complete a post-travel survey. The survey included a variety of items to assess the student experience including the following: motivations for participating in international education, achievement of global competency outcomes adapted from Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) competency statements^{5,6}, achievement of Trojan Pharmacist Outcomes (TPOs), and an assessment of value of different components of international experiences.

Results

	Faculty-led GPEs	Independent (GPE or APPE)
2022	6	10
2023	9	14
2024	9	11

Table 2. GPE student participation by year

	Faculty-led (N=8)	Independent (n=4)
Site visits to hospitals	5	2
Opportunities to socialize with other students	8	3
Immersive cultural and historical learning	6	3
Meeting with local pharmacists and faculty	8	3
Observing pharmacist-patient interactions	4	2
Visits to pharmaceutical companies	6	0
Visits to other universities	6	2
Presentations by health entities (governmental/non-governmental)	4	0
Site visits to community pharmacies	6	0

Figure 3. Most Valuable Components of GPEs

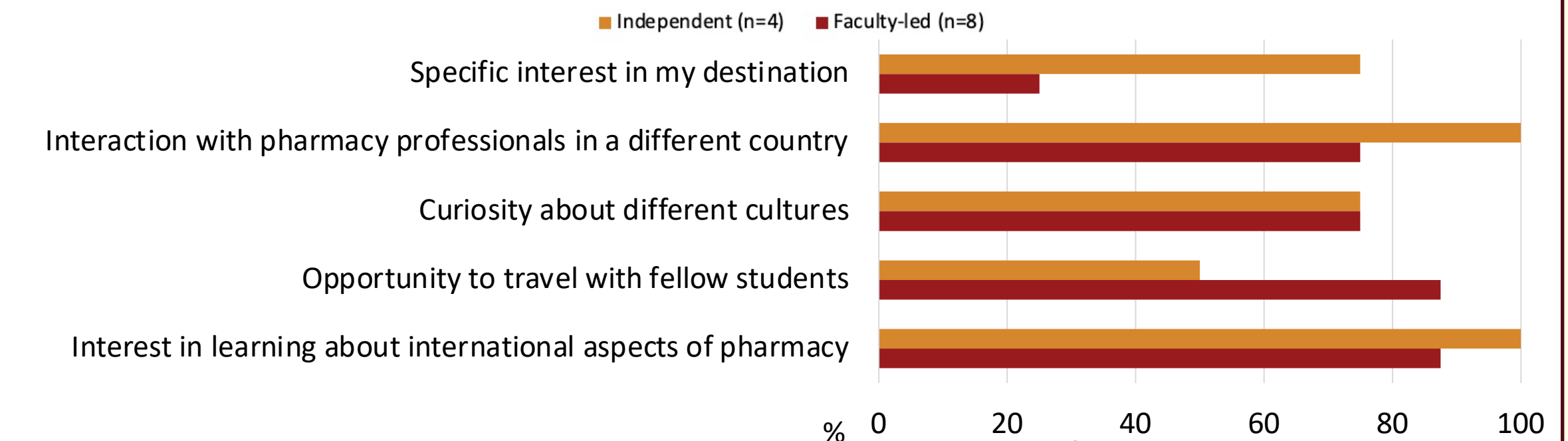


Figure 2. Motivations to participate in an international experience

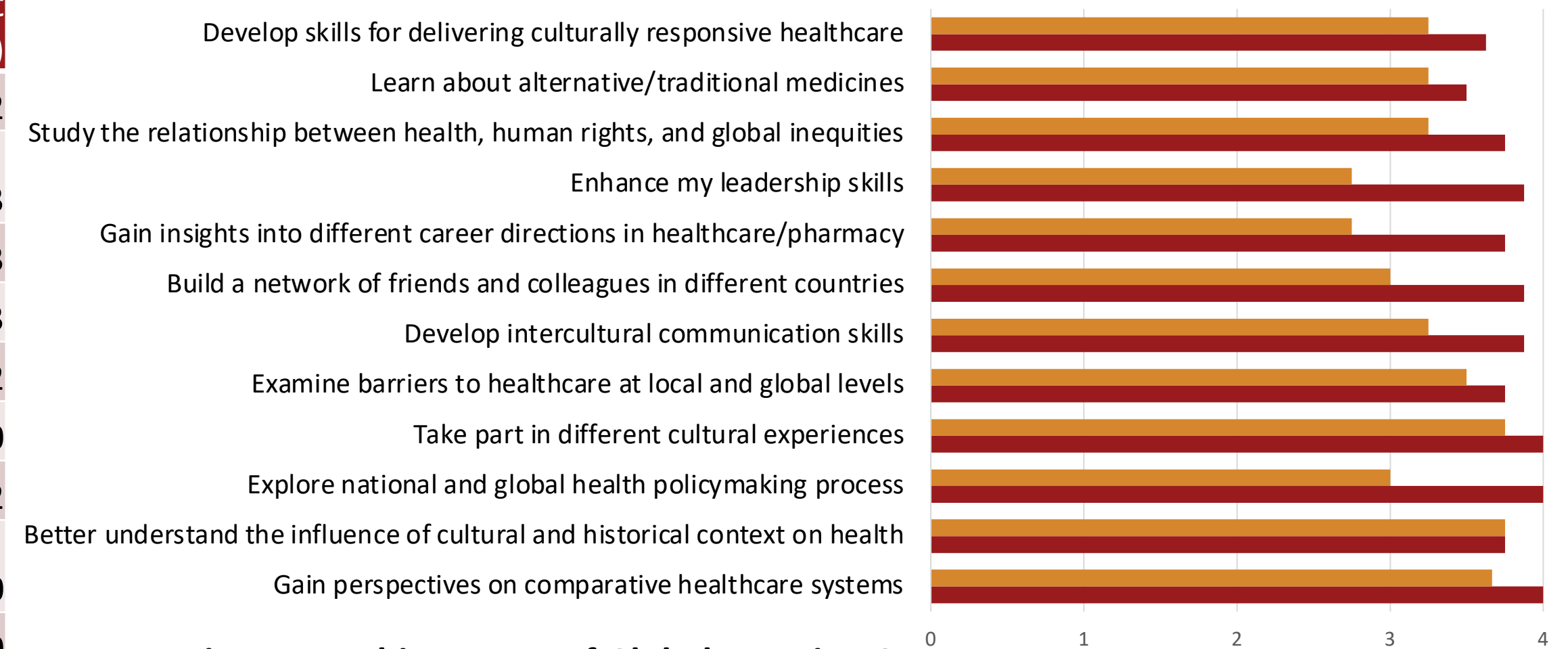


Figure 4. Achievement of Global Learning Outcomes

Students were asked to self-assess their achievement of the listed outcomes on a scale of 1=not achieved, 2=somewhat achieved, 3=achieved, and 4=strongly achieved

Discussion

Response to post-experience survey: 88.9% of students participating in faculty-led GPEs and 28.6% of students participating in independent experiences responded to the post-experience survey.

Motivations to participate in an international experience: Students indicated a variety of motivating factors for choosing to participate in an international experience. Students in the faculty-led GPE group were more likely to cite interest in traveling with fellow students, while students traveling independently were more likely to have a specific interest in their destination and to be interested in working with healthcare professionals in a different country.

Most Valuable Components of GPE: Students participating in faculty-led GPEs listed more components as most valuable overall with an average of 7 components selected per students vs. 4 per student in the independent experience group. Faculty-led GPEs appeared to offer a wider variety of experiences to the participants than the individual programs. Students traveling in faculty-led GPEs cited valuable visits to pharmaceutical companies, presentations by health entities and visits to community pharmacies.

Achievement of Global Learning Outcomes: Students who participated in the faculty-led GPEs reported a higher level of achievement of global learning outcomes across most items. There was less variability in the responses from the faculty-led GPE students relative to the independent students.

Conclusion: Faculty-led GPEs may provide more variety of valuable components of GPEs as well as more consistent achievement of global learning outcomes when compared to independent experiences.

Limitations and Challenges

Limitations: Student response rates were higher for the faculty-led GPEs and the sample size was small. Ongoing collection of post-experience surveys will further illuminate possible benefits of the different program types.

Challenges in implementation of GPEs: There are several challenges that may impact the implementation of GPEs. Coordinating academic calendars between institutions can be difficult, as optimal travel times may not align. Travel can be arranged individually or through specialty travel agencies. Individual planning poses logistical challenges and requires coordination, while agencies limit control over travel plans. Ensuring student safety is the top priority, with travel advisories and university requirements potentially restricting travel.

References

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