

If You Build It They Will Come: A New Course for Struggling Students

Students are struggling. Programs have always had some students who struggle to master materials, but it seems more are struggling now. This poster will share solutions to help these students through a course for students to gain tools to enhance their academic success.

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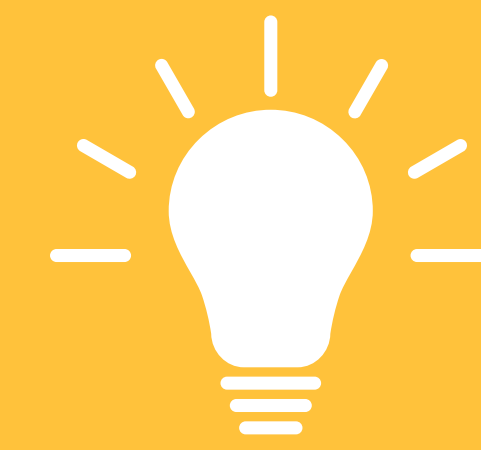


Introduction

Navigating the rigorous path of a PharmD program is a journey that not all students traverse with ease. Some struggle to keep pace with the demanding coursework and high expectations while navigating academic, emotional, and social challenges. Many resources have been developed to foster a supportive academic environment that cultivates resilience, encourages engagement, and promotes success for all students embarking on this challenging yet rewarding professional journey.

Objective

To describe and assess the impact of an academic skills course intentionally designed to help struggling students through early intervention.



Analysis

Course Topics



Time Management, Self-discipline



Goal-setting, weekly & semester planning



Mindset, Self-Motivation



Exam preparation, post-exam analysis



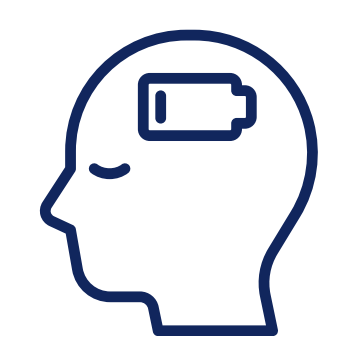
Learning and Memory Strategies



Academic Emotions, Anxiety, Stress Management



How Students Learn



Managing Burnout

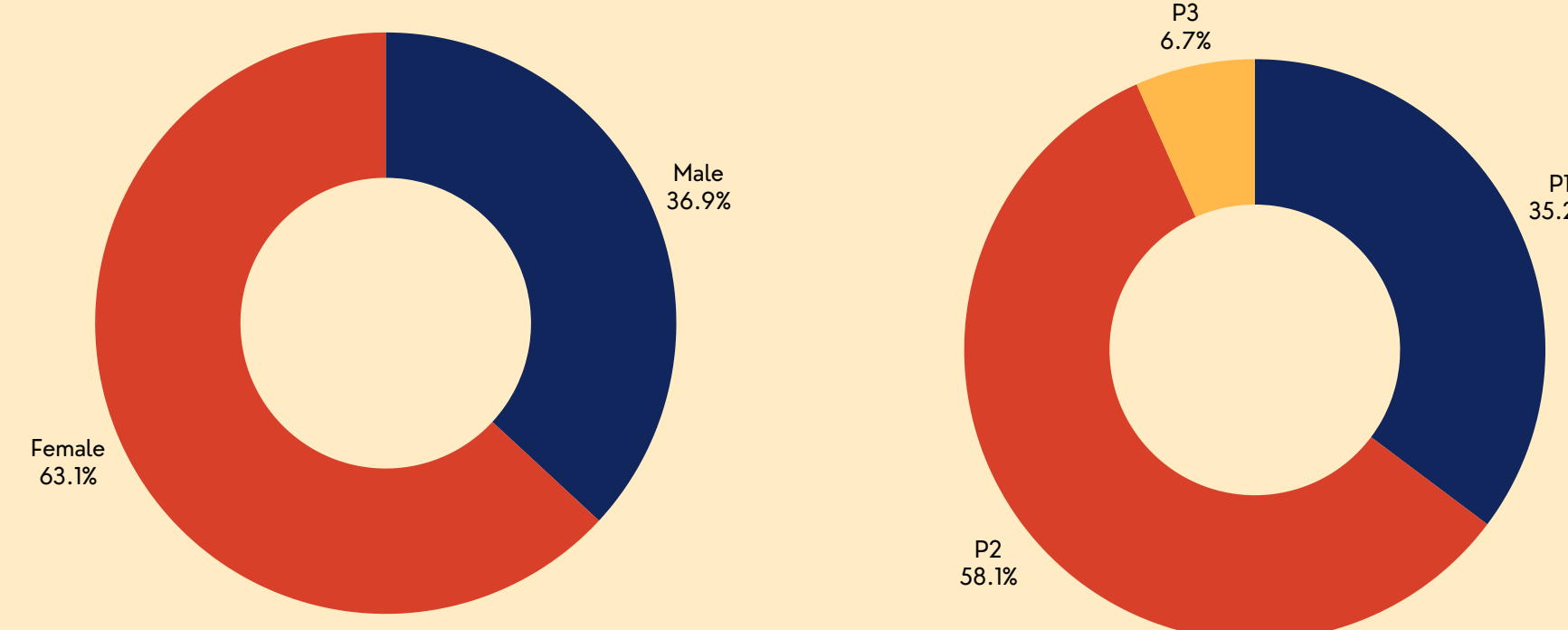


Communication and Listening

Methodology

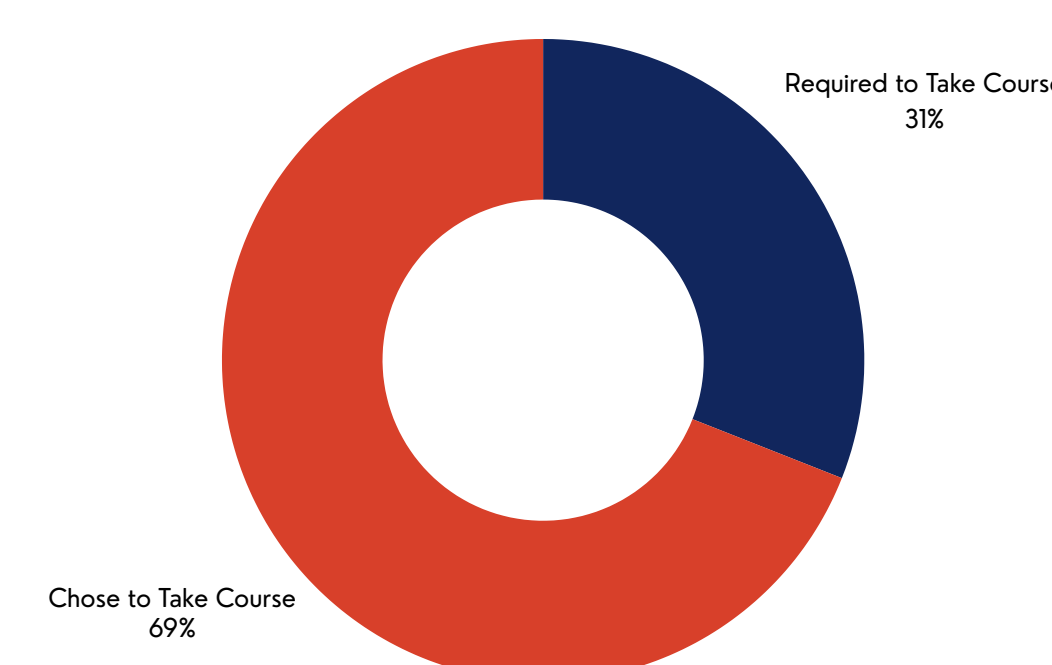
A remediation course, "Tools to Enhance Academic Success" was created at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy in 2020 and expanded to Ferris State University in 2023 with targeted enrollment from students experiencing academic difficulty in their first semester of pharmacy school.

Course evaluation surveys and subsequent student performance throughout the curriculum were analyzed to assess impact.



Results/Findings

Though the full impact through graduation cannot be assessed due to the recent implementation, a review of student progression after completion of the course indicates that students completing the course are successful in future PharmD coursework.



Across 10 course offerings at two institutions, 125 students have successfully completed the courses.

All but 6 are still in or have graduated from the program.

RELATED LITERATURE

AACP's Creating a Culture of Well-Being: A Resource Guide for Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy
"Mindset, The new psychology of success," Carol Dweck
"Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success: A Focus on Self-Regulated Learning," Myron Dembo & Helena Seli

Curricular Changes Made Based on Feedback from this Course

- Exam Review Process overview implemented for P1s in Administrative Sessions so all students could benefit.
- Backward navigation use during exams reconsidered by faculty.
- Item rationales were required for all assessment items in required courses.
- Study skills session was added to New Student Orientation to discuss students' overestimation of study skills.
- Faculty development sessions created on evidence-based teaching and learning strategies.

Student Feedback and Comments

- Based on a 5-point scale, students rate the course at an average score of 4.92 (range 4.8-5.0).
- Qualitative analysis of student course evaluation surveys depict the course as being enriching, beneficial, and one that students wish everyone could experience in their first year of pharmacy school.

"This was the most helpful course I attended this semester."

"An amazing class that helped me a lot to be more proactive in learning and how to succeed."

"I liked all the information given throughout the various lectures. I found that a lot of the information was very useful and beneficial. I liked the reflection assignments and activities I feel that they encouraged thoughtful and meaningful reflection."

Conclusion

This innovative approach has been successful in remediating students to success and has grown in popularity as more hear about course benefits and opt to take the elective. Curricular changes to didactic courses and assessment processes have been implemented based on insights gained by faculty during the course.

Considerations for Programs Considering Similar Implementation

1. Create a classroom space that supports psychological safety is important to facilitate discussion and engagement among learners.
2. Consider if the course should be required or optional. Different offerings may be needed to create the wanted environment.
3. Consider the need for multiple sections of the course since learners at various academic levels or points in the curriculum can add a challenging element to creating relevant examples and assignments.
4. Avoid making assumptions that students are aware of different study methods or resources available to assist with learning material.
5. Understand that students are generally high achievers who are reluctant to ask for help as they associate it as a sign of weakness.