

Rewarding Volunteer Faculty at a College of Pharmacy

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INTRODUCTION

For many years schools of pharmacy have used the services of volunteer faculty to provide experiential clerkships. Currently, several schools are considering or are in the process of expanding the practical training provided to their students.¹ With this change in education policy, many more practitioners will be called upon to serve as volunteer faculty.^{1, 2} However, in order for these programs to function as envisioned, it will become increasingly important to retain these volunteers.²⁻⁴

Wayne State University's College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions relies on a number of volunteer faculty to provide both community and institutional externships/clerkships for both their Baccalaureate and Doctor of Pharmacy students. Previously, published data^{5, 6} had suggested that practitioners who precept students did not feel that they were being adequately recognized for their contributions. In order to determine how our faculty felt, a questionnaire was sent out to volunteer faculty that assessed factors motivating them to serve as preceptors and their reasons for doing so. We anticipated that the results could be used to better meet the needs of volunteer faculty.

METHODS

All volunteer faculty who taught an experiential rotation were eligible and a previously validated questionnaire was mailed to each of them. The survey questioned the faculty about demographic information, years of service to the college, the degrees held by the preceptor, and which students (Baccalaureate or Doctor of Pharmacy) they precepted. The respondents were also asked to identify any faculty appointment and the benefits they received for the service they provided to the school.

The questionnaire included scales using a Likert format to investigate how the faculty would value potential benefits or mechanisms of recognition and what factors motivated them to precept students. Responses to each of these items were scored on a five-point scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. Using this same scoring scheme, respondents were able to indicate whether they felt they

were appropriately recognized for their teaching contributions and the extent that it was worthwhile to participate in experiential education.

Descriptive statistics were applied to the data. The Student's t-test was used to compare the number of years of preceptorship between males and females.

RESULTS

Fifty-four surveys were mailed. Thirty-six (67%) of the surveys were returned. Respondents had served as preceptors for an average of 7.8 ± 6.6 years with a range of 1-30 years. Male faculty had been involved for a significantly longer duration of time than female faculty, [9.61 ± 6.91 versus 4.05 ± 4.15 years, respectively, ($p=0.025$)], and outnumbered females more than 2 to 1, (24 males to 11 females, 1 no response).

The majority of respondents, (58%), held a Baccalaureate pharmacy degree alone. Eleven respondents (31%) held a Doctor of Pharmacy degree with seven of these being post-Baccalaureate and four entry level. Four respondents (11%) held a Masters degree.

Sixty-four percent of the faculty were involved in teaching community externship, while 13% were involved with institutional externship, 10% in Baccalaureate clerkship, and 13% in Doctor of Pharmacy clerkship. Three preceptors were involved in precepting more than one type of experiential course. The number of students precepted in the previous 12 months varied considerably. Those who oversaw PharmD clerkships or community

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externship had on average the fewest students (2.8 ± 0.5 and 2.8 ± 1.4 , respectively). For institutional externship 11.2 ± 7.9 students were taught in a 12-month period, compared with 9.3 ± 5.0 in B.S. clerkships. Externships focus more on drug distribution functions, while clerkships focus on patient care.⁷

When respondents were asked what faculty appointment they held, 50% replied that either they did not know what their appointment was, did not know if they had an appointment, or stated that they did not have an appointment. Eleven of 18 of those who knew their appointment described themselves as adjunct or affiliate instructors.

The survey was also intended to determine the perceived benefits the respondents received from the college for their service. They could select as many options as they felt applied. The results are shown in Table I. The perceived benefits most often cited were a faculty appointment and continuing education programs. A substantial number of respondents felt that they did not receive any benefits or other forms of recognition.

Respondents were asked to rate their response to the following statement: I feel I am appropriately recognized for my contributions to student instruction. Thirty-seven percent strongly agreed or agreed; 40% were neutral; and 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the next section of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the value of benefits and mechanisms of recognition, if they were available, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results are shown in Table II. Reference books, education programs at reduced or no charge, and the opportunity to take university courses at a reduced rate were cited by faculty as the benefits they would most value. A number of respondents had their own suggestions which included: identification card, limited salary, materials provided to preceptor and student, group discussions of new ideas, and learning about how to advance.

Respondents were requested to rank their top three most desired potential benefits. They cited continuing education at no charge or reference books as being the most desired potential

benefits. Faculty appointment and continuing education courses at no charge were the next most frequently selected benefit followed by a faculty appointment, the opportunity to take university courses at reduced or no cost, travel funds, computer software, certificate recognition, access to university facilities, an award, parking permits and continuing education at reduced charge. The respondents were very agreeable to the statement: overall I feel it is worthwhile to participate in the school's/college's experiential teaching programs. The results

Table I. Perceived Benefits or Mechanisms of Recognition

Benefits	Number of Respondents	(%)
Faculty Appointment	14	39
Continuing Education Programs	14	39
Medical/Pharmaceutical Reference Books and/or Journals	10	28
I receive no benefits or other mechanism of Recognition	9	25
Eligible for Recognition Awards	5	14
Honoured at a Special Event or Banquet	5	14
Opportunity to Attend University Events at a discounted rate	5	14
Use of University Facilities	3	8
Campus Parking Permits	2	6
Office Space	1	3
Tuition Credit	1	3
Campus Bookstore Discounts	1	3
Certificate Recognizing my appointment	0	0
Travel Funds to attend Professional Meetings	0	0
Computer Hardware/Software	0	0

Table II. Value of Possible Benefits/Mechanisms of Recognition (n=36)

Statement I WOULD VALUE:	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Reference books provided by the school (n=36)	64	36	0	0	0
Continuing education programs at no charge (n=36)	61	31	8	0	0
University courses at reduced or no tuition costs (n=36)	61	28	11	0	0
The faculty appointment/title	47	36	17	0	0
Travel funds to attend professional meetings (n=36)	42	36	19	3	0
Given a certificate that indicated my appointment (n=36)	39	39	14	8	0
Access to university facilities (n=36)	36	36	19	6	3
Continuing education programs at reduced charge (n=36)	33	42	14	8	3
The availability of computer hardware/software (n=36)	31	44	17	8	0
The possibility of receiving an award for recognition (n=36)	25	36	33	6	0
Campus parking permits (n=36)	19	28	36	14	3
Being honoured at an annual banquet (n=36)	14	19	53	14	0
Office space (n=35)	3	11	46	34	6

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

describing why preceptors participate are shown in Table III.

DISCUSSION

The results of our survey were similar to those of a previously published paper.⁶ Overall, respondents felt that it was worthwhile to participate in this teaching experience despite the fact that there was less agreement on whether they were being adequately recognized. Since the colleges of pharmacy are becoming more dependent upon these practitioners in their curriculum, it is imperative that volunteer faculty are made to feel appreciated.

It is obvious from the replies that a faculty appointment is important to these practitioners. Eighty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed they would value such an appointment. It is also apparent that a significant number of respondents are unaware that they can apply for an appointment as only 50% of these individuals stated they have a faculty appointment. To receive an appointment as adjunct faculty, it is required that the pharmacist provide the college with a letter of intent accompanied by a reference. In a further question, 78% stated that they would value receiving a certificate indicating their appointment. This could be a simple and relatively inexpensive method of recognizing these preceptors.

The responses to identification of perceived benefits and mechanisms of recognition are quite variable. It is

possible that benefits are not being distributed equally or that faculty are unaware of what is available to them. For example, the college holds an annual half-day continuing education session which is free of charge to all faculty. Only 39% identified this as a benefit, yet over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that they would value continuing education at no charge. At present, the college sends one mailing to notify the preceptors of their benefits. This may be remedied by better advertisement of this event.

One third of the surveys were not returned. While it is not possible to rule out responder bias, we believe that the results are representative of the entire group. Nonetheless, this does represent a potential limitation to the survey.

In conclusion, overall the volunteer faculty feel that participating in professional experiential programs is worthwhile, however, many do not feel that they are being adequately recognized. To improve this we recommend that the college apply for an appointment on behalf of the individual preceptor after a term of one year; that the college reassess how faculty are notified of benefits and appointments; that the college recognize the preceptors by awarding them with a framed certificate with service stickers which can be updated annually; and that the college consider the value of possible benefits as listed in Table II when recognizing volunteer faculty. ☒

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Table III. Reasons for Participating as a Preceptor (n=36)

Statement: I PARTICIPATE BECAUSE	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I feel that I am making a positive contribution to the profession.	64	36	0	0	0
I enjoy teaching.	53	44	3	0	0
Teaching keeps me up to date.	42	39	17	0	3
I feel that I have accomplished something when a student is successful after graduation.	33	53	8	0	6
Students make a positive contribution to the care of my patients.	22	56	19	3	0
I am a graduate of this school.	19	22	14	17	28
Students increase my ability to have an impact on a larger number of patients.	8	19	42	25	6
I can evaluate students for potential employment.	6	25	33	19	17
I receive a faculty appointment.	3	14	53	20	11
My peers have a high regard for faculty.	3	11	44	31	11
The presence of a student increases my work productivity.	3	17	31	22	28
My employer requires me to teach.	34	6	25	36	31
For monetary reasons.	0	3	17	33	47
The students complete tasks a pharmacist would otherwise have to do.	0	6	31	36	28
The student complete tasks a technician would otherwise have to do.	0	0	31	39	31

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree