VIEWPOINTS

AACP Pharmacy Education Assessment Services: Outcomes, Assessment, Accountability

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The *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently described a battle raging in higher education.¹ The players are the Department of Education, accreditors, including specialty and regional bodies, and us – the US higher education establishment. The battleground is a fairly simple but incredibly important question: Who has the upper hand in establishing the outcome measures that demonstrate our education programs and processes accomplish what we say they do? How can those measures be adequately assessed for the accountability that is increasingly being called for by the government and society in general?

The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), along with each school and college of pharmacy, embraces the accountability movement within higher education. Students, employers, and patients demand that pharmacists entering the profession demonstrate the requisite skills, knowledge, and aptitude necessary to ensure both safe and effective use of medications. Similarly, schools and colleges are challenged to demonstrate the outcomes of their programs. Such programmatic assessment includes definition of desired outcomes and the development of metrics and assessment processes for each of our missions: teaching, scholarship (including original research), patient care, and public service. The maturing of programmatic assessment which builds upon ongoing individual student assessment offers an opportunity for pharmacy education. This opportunity is embraced by AACP. AACP is taking bold action to help you meet this challenge.

AACP's Pharmacy Education Assessment Services Program (PEAS), is under construction! The vision is the creation of an umbrella of diverse services and tools that will be integral to our programmatic assessment programs. AACP leadership, with insight of the Institutional Research and Assessment Committee, developed the vision for PEAS. This vision is now being translated into a number of new initiatives. It is also integrating current AACP services and tools. This melding of old, revised, and new tools will result in a comprehensive menu-driven support of schools' and colleges' assessment programs. A good example of tool development is the 4 new surveys,

currently being subjected to psychometric analysis, to collect information from students, alumni, faculty, and preceptors.

One area in critical need of tool development is experiential education. Our preceptors, serving an average of 2.5 schools/colleges, are asking for standardized evaluation tools to help them consistently evaluate our students. Likewise, as already exemplified by the work of the Academic Practice Partnership Initiative and the CRYSTAL APPLE Awards program, schools can use nationally developed tools to train and evaluate their preceptors.

The PEAS vision also includes a process whereby AACP will peer review assessment tools developed by AACP members and public/private partners. Such tools will likely include student and faculty portfolio systems, peer teaching evaluations tools, and tools for curricular mapping and mapping of curricular competencies to outcomes.

Central to PEAS will be an online desktop Self-Study Management System. This system will enable faculty and administrators to collect and analyze the longitudinal data needed to meet the annual reporting requirements of the Accreditation Council of Pharmacy Education (ACPE), as well as complete the more comprehensive self-study process. Clearly, the "bolus" approach to self-study and accreditation accountability occurring every 6 years is past. The vision is for the full complement of AACP institutional research data, including the financial and faculty salary data, to be managed each year through PEAS. Likewise, the ACPE-mandated surveys of faculty, alumni, preceptors, and graduating students will be accessed and traced through PEAS.

An important component of this new commitment to assessment is the further maturation of a learning community where those with responsibility for building and leading the academy's assessment efforts can share experiences, tools, and strategies integral to the review and continuous improvement of our programs. Blogs, podcasts, webinars, live programming, institutes, seminars, and consultants will convene in cyberspace and in person to advance our programs. Such advances are best developed

through AACP achieving efficiency in manpower and technology costs. Even more importantly, through AACP we can harness the collective experience of our schools and colleges to identify those best practices and metrics which provide evidence of quality pharmaceutical education. *Assessment. outcomes*: 2 words that strike at the heart of every faculty member and administrative leader's

responsibility. We seek your input, guidance, and feedback as PEAS evolves.

REFERENCES

1. Basken P. Colleges and their accreditors seek compromise, fearing education department rules. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. December 10, 2007.