# INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT

# Effective Leadership and Advocacy: Amplifying Professional Citizenship

Cynthia J. Boyle, PharmD, Robert S. Beardsley, PhD, and Margaret Hayes, MS

School of Pharmacy, University of Maryland

**Objectives.** *Effective Leadership and Advocacy* is an elective implemented to develop doctor of pharmacy students' leadership and political advocacy. Students learn various leadership and organizational management skills and gain direct experience in the political process and community action through service-learning activities.
**Design.** Students attend classes and participate in individual and group assignments for required and elective elements. The fall 2003 course involved synchronous teaching with Virginia Commonwealth University doctor of pharmacy students and faculty.
**Assessment.** To demonstrate achievement of course objectives, students were required to submit portfolios documenting their participation in key activities. Student performances during group debates and class discussion (participation and professional behavior) were also assessed.
**Conclusions.** During 3 offerings at Maryland, the course has increased student and faculty member participation in statewide advocacy for pharmacy education and service. The state's pharmacy organizations, School's administration, and University's Office of External Affairs now use students more effectively in promoting health care legislation and School resource advocacy initiatives.
**Keywords:** leadership, advocacy, citizenship, professionalism, service-learning, distance learning

## INTRODUCTION

The profession of pharmacy is governed by legislation and regulations that are constantly changing. By bringing their expertise as medication specialists into legislative and regulatory negotiations, pharmacists can influence decisions to promote safe and effective health care policy and delivery. Therefore, it is important for student pharmacists to develop leadership and expertise in advocacy, as they meet the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education curricular outcomes for the doctor of pharmacy degree.[1]

Many of the elements of professional citizenship, as they relate to leadership and advocacy, are rooted in current core curricular competencies including: communication with health care professionals and patients regarding rational drug therapy, wellness, and health promotion; identification, assessment, and correction of medication-related problems; retrieval, evaluation, and management of professional information and literature; and collaboration with other health professionals.[1] As part of this professional citizenship, pharmacists must intervene for patients and communicate with individuals and groups that are not health professionals, such as man-

agers, legislators, payers, and society at large. The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) is committed to strengthening its mission of education and scholarship for improving drug therapy through effective use of policy, information, advocacy, and programming.[2] Thus, faculty members need to prepare students to advocate at the patient, practice site, professional organization, and extraprofessional levels.

As described below, the *Effective Leadership and Advocacy*[3] course was developed to strengthen the leadership ability of students to enhance their potential for future leadership within the profession and in the community. The course was initiated in spring 2002 and was conducted in fall 2002 and again in the fall of 2003. During the 2002 AACP annual meeting, course faculty members presented this elective course in 2 roundtable discussions. At the 2003 American Pharmacists Association, a related poster entitled, "Development of Pharmacy Students' Leadership and Advocacy Competence,"[4] received the Academy of Pharmacy Practice and Management's Presentation Merit Award for contributed innovation. Based on the interest from other groups, the syllabus has been disseminated to at least 12 colleges or schools of pharmacy and professional organizations. The information provided in this article is offered to assist faculty in developing similar content for their student pharmacists.

**Corresponding Author:** Cynthia J. Boyle, PharmD.
Address: University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, 110 North Pine Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Tel: 410-706-1495. Fax: 410-706-0988. E-mail: cboyle@rx.umaryland.edu.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of "Effective Leadership and Advocacy," a student should be able to:

1. define and evaluate effective leadership, including its attributes and barriers;
2. review the management of student organizations;
3. differentiate between legislation and regulation;
4. identify and analyze current health care issues;
5. discuss health care issues with individuals outside his/her discipline; and
6. advocate his/her stance on state or national health care issues.

## COURSE DESIGN

In order to participate in the course, students must "have the goal of being an active participant in a school organization." This prerequisite was implemented not only to attract current student leaders, but also those students who were seeking organizational involvement. To address its many objectives, the course systematically incorporates theories of advocacy, personal leadership attributes, and organizational management skills with practical application to current student organizational issues and to state and national health care issues.

Students attend class sessions and complete individual and group projects for both required and elective course elements. Students are required to read background articles and book chapters addressing key elements of effective leadership, such as transformational leadership, communication skills, conflict resolution, negotiation, delegation, team building, setting/assessing goals and objectives, strategic planning, and conducting effective meetings. The course uses Blackboard™ technology as a course management platform. Students participate in self-evaluations of leadership characteristics and they assess their organization's effectiveness in terms of goals and objectives and strategies for change. By meeting course objectives, students gain knowledge of the political process. They also enhance their debating skills, visit area health care leaders in organizations and agencies to supplement classroom activities, and interact with invited speakers.

All students are required to demonstrate active participation in a student professional organization; to add themselves to the Listserv of a national organization's political advocacy unit; to identify their state delegates and senators; to identify their national legislators; to interact with a legislator; and to attend a meeting of the Board of Pharmacy (or Task Force of the Board), or a board or committee meeting of a state professional association. For elective activities, students must participate in at least one of the following activities (or another activity approved by the faculty):

- Participate in the planning of Legislative Day.
- Draft a nomination for an award for a student leader or student organization.
- Interview the legislative chair of a state professional organization.
- Interview the executive director of a state professional organization.
- Organize a forum on a health care issue.
- Attend a state government committee hearing.
- Write and send a letter to the editor of a newspaper, journal, or periodical.
- Visit the national headquarters of their professional organization.
- Interview a participant in last year's Legislative Day.
- Interview a pharmacy or health care lobbyist.
- Discuss an issue with a health care provider outside their discipline.
- Interview a member of the Board of Pharmacy (or other health care regulatory board).

During the fall of 2003, the course was offered (via synchronous teaching) to doctor of pharmacy students at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. Faculty members from both campuses were involved with teaching the class. The course uses *Internet2* and the distance education rooms of the 2 participating institutions. Faculty also secured a grant from the American Pharmacists Association Foundation to support the fall 2003 course.

## ASSESSMENT

Students are required to attend all class sessions, to complete all assignments, and to submit a portfolio documenting required and elective activities in order to pass the course. Specific assessments, in consecutive order of completion dates, are described below.

**Student Organization Management Review**
Percent of grade: 10%
Completed by: Individual student
Description: Student will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an organization in which they are active.
Evaluation criteria: Focus the review on these questions:

- Does the organization have goals and objectives?
- Does it have a means of assessing whether it is meeting those objectives?
- Is it meeting its objectives?
- What are the strategies to change things if it is not meeting its objectives?

**Issue Debates**

Percent of grade: 15%

Completed by: Groups of 2–3 students, randomly chosen

Description: Groups of students will select a current topic involving health care delivery. They will select a position on that topic and present arguments (advocate) for its approval in front of the class. The faculty and others will take opposite sides of the argument during the discussion time. Each topic will be debated for a maximum of 10 minutes.

Evaluation criteria: Clearly articulated arguments; communication skills; response to arguments made by others.

**Service-Learning Project**

Percent of grade: 20% written; 5% presentation

Completed by: Individual students or self-selected groups of students (maximum of 3)

Description: Relative to course objectives 5 and 6, students need to advocate for a specific health care issue to individuals outside their discipline. Students select a particular issue and also a specific audience to use for this assignment. Students will report back to the entire class for a maximum of 10 minutes per student. Groups can speak for 20 minutes. One member of a group must present a general introduction to the project. Students will also write about their experiences.

Evaluation criteria: Description of activity; potential impact of advocacy effort; lessons learned during and following the activity.

**Summary of Required and Elective Activities**

Percent of grade: 15%

Completed by: Individual reports

Description: Students describe what was done for the required and elective activities and what was learned from them.

Evaluation criteria: A 1- or 2-paragraph description for each activity and what was learned from the experience.

**Reflective Paper**

Percent of grade: 30%

Completed by: Individual student

Description: Students will write 3–4 double-spaced pages (in 11 or 12 point font) to summarize all the experiences within the course, focusing on what was learned rather than what was done. Students need to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in their own leadership ability using material presented in class sessions and personal experiences and to address course objective 3 to differentiate between legislation and regulation.

Evaluation criteria: Insightful description of lessons learned during the course; appropriate grammar and presentation.

**Participation and Professionalism**

Percent of grade: 5%

Completed by: Individual student

Description: As stated in the syllabus, students will be required to attend all class sessions and act professionally during class sessions and outside activities.

Evaluation criteria: Attendance will be taken; behavioral professionalism will be observed for communication, appropriate attire, timeliness, and commitment.

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This 1-credit elective is best conducted with a small number of students. In each of the first 3 offerings, approximately 30 students enrolled, but as many as half dropped, citing the demanding workload for required courses, particularly for those in the second professional year, and scheduling conflicts with other desirable electives offered during the same time interval. (The Student Affairs Committee recommended a change in the policy for dropping courses to require students to drop courses no later than the fourth week, instead of the eighth week, so that their sampling of courses persists for a reasonable time without ongoing detriment to elective course management and planning.) Students in the second and third professional year are best prepared to enroll in the course because first-year students are not yet acclimated to the profession and are just exploring organizational involvement and fourth-year students are most often offsite in experiential learning rotations. Several pharmacists in the Nontraditional PharmD Pathway have taken the course and have provided substantive insights and perspectives. Portfolio activity and project due dates are staggered to distribute the workload throughout the semester for both students and faculty members.

The timetable for individual state legislative sessions may affect the timing of the course. The first offering in spring 2002 occurred simultaneously with Maryland's General Assembly session. This necessitated immediate coverage of the advocacy content prior to leadership elements in preparation for Legislative Day in February. In fall 2002, faculty members were able to sequence the course more efficiently by first discussing leadership, followed by advocacy. This approach was better accepted by the students and better prepared them for Legislative Day the following February. In fall 2002, the faculty members held a mock legislative assembly meeting conducted by a State Delegate in a historic chamber on campus as a substitute for an actual visit to the Assembly.

Many individuals have volunteered to serve as guest lecturers or facilitators. Guests have included pharmacy association members with legislative experience, campus external affairs activists, faculty members with public health backgrounds, pharmacy board members, administrators with student affairs responsibilities, state legislators (including pharmacist legislators), nonprofit organizers, and state and national organization officers and staff. While these guests have been located close to Baltimore and thus able to visit the school, faculty anticipate that future guests may be offsite and may have to participate via videoconferencing using *Internet2* sites.[5]

As with any course involving team-teaching, coordination of speakers and content is labor-intensive. For each class session, the guest speaker and the faculty member collaborate to create the objectives. Faculty members have also provided guests with previous and relevant objectives, to assist guests in structuring their sessions.

Another unique aspect of this course is that 2 students who took the course previously have requested to serve as teaching assistants for the course. These motivated students register for the school's special project elective and receive weekly assignments from faculty members. These students have expressed an interest in a possible academic career, so this experience serves as excellent practical training in course delivery and assessment; orienting students to the use of *Blackboard*; introducing guest speakers; participating in class discussions; developing and facilitating debates; developing lists of resources and suggestions for service projects; and serving as resources for students.

A value-added component of the course has been an etiquette dinner. As potential leaders, students will be expected to act professionally at various professional receptions and meetings. Thus, the special dinner session is conducted to teach proper business etiquette and to increase students' confidence in their professional networking skills. Courtesy and civility are highlighted, along with manners, as components of appropriate professional behavior. The first etiquette dinner was prepared and served by faculty members at a faculty member's home. Later, funding was identified that permitted the dinner to be held in a hotel meeting room.

## CONCLUSIONS

Students have met the course objectives and have exceeded faculty members' expectations. Students' exposure to the values and attitudes of key role models who served as guest lecturers and facilitators was essential in their translation of theory into applied behaviors to accomplish the required course elements. Nontraditional PharmD students performed as well as entry-level PharmD students, and they have stated that they achieved their goals of learning about the political process and investigating relevant practical methods to get involved with health care advocacy. In course evaluations, the students also identified several course benefits, such as building public-speaking skills, practicing debates, reflecting on personal experiences in course writings, increasing their confidence at business functions, meeting dynamic speakers, networking with practitioners, and even exploring legislative careers. By self-examining their personal leadership styles, students were able to apply leadership principles to organizational management assessment, identification of organizations' shortcomings, and implementation of recommendations for improvement. One specific outcome is that a former student, who is now working as a community pharmacist, plans to seek his first elected office in the state pharmacy association. Overall, students' comments in course evaluations alluded to their perceived empowerment and increased confidence in researching issues, to enter the political process, and to longitudinally commit to proactive advocacy through organizational involvement.

Each semester, the course has been enhanced based on the experiences gained in previous semesters. The addition of the Virginia Commonwealth University College of Pharmacy faculty members and students has been beneficial. Future initiatives may include interdisciplinary course delivery to students in other health professions or law, and possibly the development of an advocacy fellowship in collaboration with the Center on Drugs and Public Policy within the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy. Faculty members hope the concepts discussed in this course will impact on related courses and experiences within the schools' curricula.

Among health professions, pharmacy is relatively small, but has immense responsibilities for appropriate medication use. From a broad perspective, the pharmacy profession needs effective leadership, and in turn effective political advocacy, to deal with the numerous issues facing health care delivery. Pharmacists must develop competence in these areas to proactively affect regulations and legislation that govern the profession. Therefore, the development of leadership and advocacy skills and professional citizenship in pharmacy students is essential and will likely result in enhancement of effective advocacy for the benefit of patients, pharmacy, and society.

## REFERENCES

1. American Council on Pharmaceutical Education Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for the Professional Program in Pharmacy Leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy Degree. Adopted June 14, 1997. Available at: http://www.acpe-accredit.org. Accessed August 25, 2003.

2. American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. *Vision for the Future.* Available at: http://www.aacp.org/site/tertiary.asp?TRACKID=& VID=2&CID=48&DID=5529. Accessed August 25, 2003.

3. University of Maryland School of Pharmacy. Course syllabi. Available at: http://www.pharmacy.umaryland.edu/courses/syllabi.

Accessed August 25, 2003.

4. Boyle C, Beardsley R. Development of pharmacy students' leadership and advocacy competence. *J Am Pharm Assoc*. 2003;43:300.

5. Internet2 Consortium. Available at: http://www.internet2.edu/. Accessed August 25, 2003.