

Evaluation of Pharmacy Family Pilot Program During COVID-19

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Background

- Student pharmacist well-being is heavily derived from system factors and students cite forming social relationships as a top strategy for success.^{1,2}
- Group encounters successfully create community when group members feel a sense of membership, personal influence, and experience shared emotions.³
- Positive well-being in health professional students is related to improved mental health outcomes, better academic performance, and academic self-efficacy.²
- Pharmacy family (PF) meetings conducted in a relaxed environment allows for community and relationship enhancement which helps to reduce healthcare student burnout.^{2,4}
- Social isolation from burnout results in graduate students feeling more stressed when performing daily tasks and poorer academic performance compared to non-isolated counterparts.^{2,5}
- Physical distancing and virtual learning due to COVID-19 pandemic led to student pharmacists feeling lonely and grieving over loss of connection with others.⁶

Objectives

- To provide an opportunity to promote wellness, improve climate, and engage in mentoring.
- To evaluate the impact of a school-wide community-building program on student pharmacists.

Methods

Creation of PF Program:

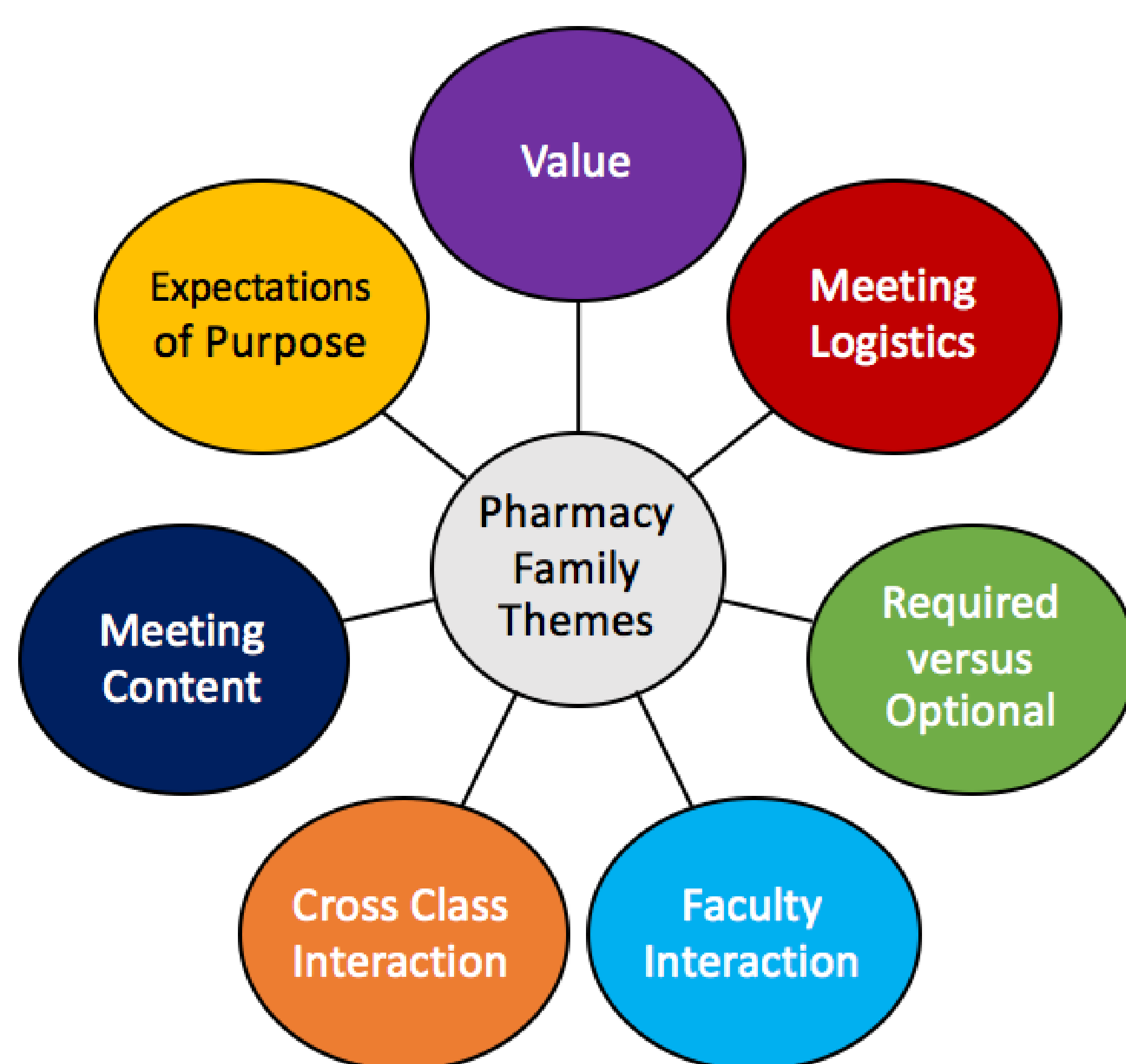
- PF groups were assigned prior to the 2020-2021 academic year and included 1 to 2 instructors and 3 to 4 students from each of the P1-4 PharmD cohorts.
- Each group met two times virtually every semester for 1 hour each.
- Meetings were required for P1-3 students and optional for P4 students due to being on rotations.
- Facilitator guides were provided to instructors prior to each meeting to offer ice breaker ideas and discussion topics.

Evaluation of PF Program:

- A survey was administered to all P1, P2, and P3 students at the end of the academic year.
- The survey utilized a 5-point bipolar Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
- Inductive content analysis was utilized to analyze comments from open-ended questions.

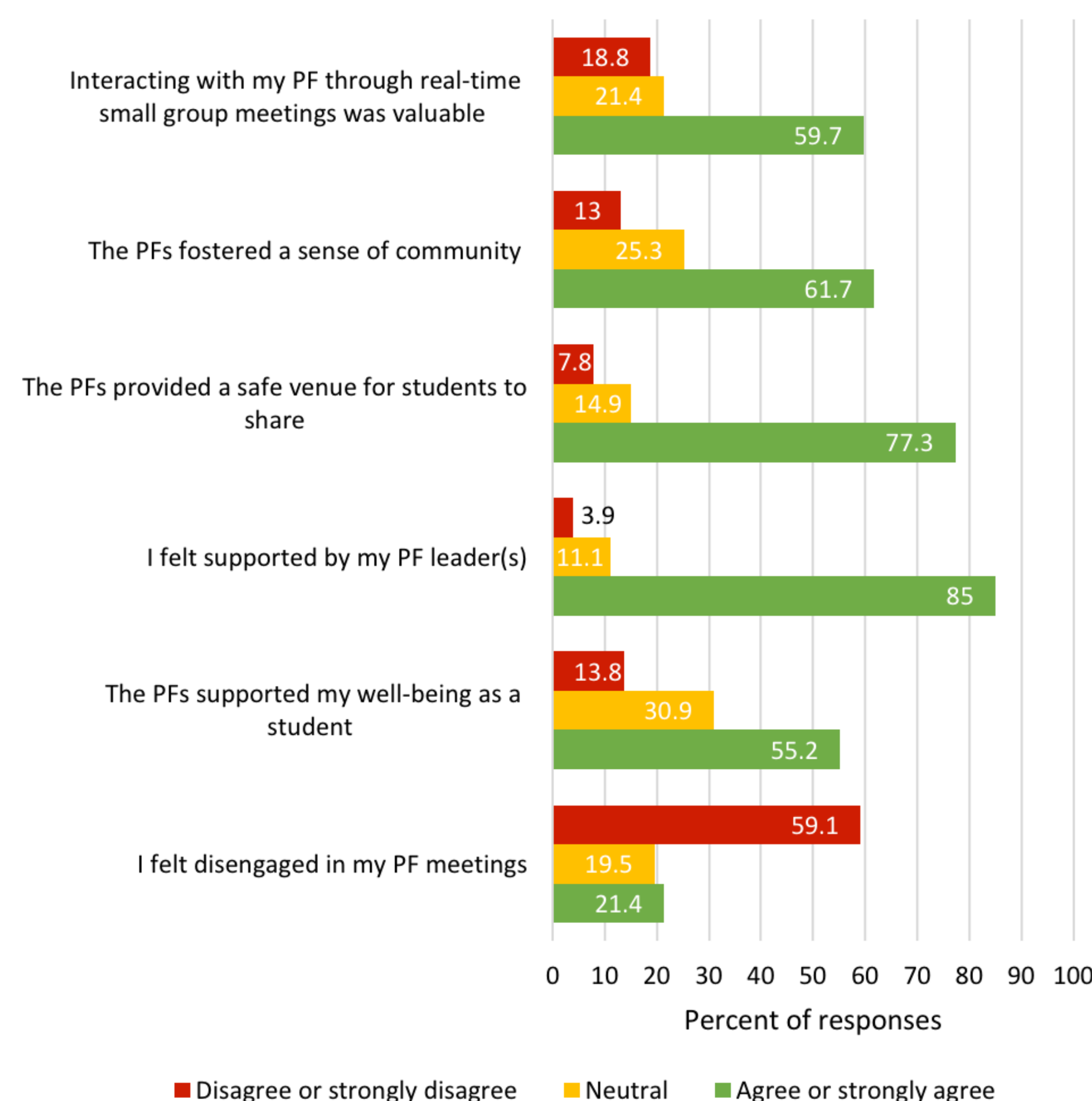
- 34 PF groups were formed, and 38 instructors participated.
 - 34 groups x 4 meetings each = 136 PF meetings conducted throughout the year.
- 153 out of 361 students completed the survey (42.4% response rate).

Characteristic	n (%)
Year in School	
DPH-1 (Class of 2024)	38 (24.8)
DPH-2 (Class of 2023)	53 (34.6)
DPH-3 (Class of 2022)	62 (40.5)
Gender	
Female	109 (71.2)
Male	44 (28.8)
Nonbinary	0 (0)
Other	0 (0)
Prefer not to answer	0 (0)
Age	
20 to 25 years	126 (82.3)
26 to 30 years	19 (12.4)
31 to 35 years	7 (4.6)
36 to 40 years	1 (0.7)
Greater than 40 years	0 (0)
Live Alone	
Yes	28 (18.3)
No	125 (81.2)
Average number of work hours/week	
Zero	22 (14.4)
1 to 10 hours	42 (27.5)
11 to 20 hours	75 (49.0)
21 to 30 hours	10 (6.5)
31 to 40 hours	4 (2.6)
Active member of 1 or more student orgs	
Yes	124 (81.0)
No	29 (19.0)
Number of meetings attended	
1	0 (0)
2	9 (5.9)
3	33 (21.6)
4	111 (72.5)



Results

Student Perception of PF Program



Illustrative Quotes

"I really enjoyed this program. I was able to connect not only with other students but with a professor who I hadn't been able to connect with before and it made them more approachable which I think is important in the professional school culture."

"I didn't find much value in this program. It ended up just being people talking about how much they are doing with pharmacy and didn't foster conversation or relationships."

"I think it would be fun if the Pharmacy Family groups could meet in person next year; I even think it would be fun if the groups could meet at a locations outside of the School of Pharmacy."

"Encouraging more informal meetings (coffee once a month) or other ways to see these people in addition to the 2 required meetings"

"Scheduling is important - students want to be present during these meetings but if they are scheduled the same day that multiple classes have exams or during weeks when there are multiple exams for one class then it just adds to the stress, and it won't be an opportunity for students to relax and engage."

"It was really nice to be able to talk to the faculty about issues students were having with online courses without fear of judgment or punishment."

"I liked the opportunities for DPH-1s and 2s to ask questions to 3s and 4s about issues or advice in classes and the ability for those students who have already had those classes to provide feedback"

"I liked the bingo game we did during one of the meetings. I thought that was fun and we were able to learn more about others in the group! It was kind of like a big "ice breaker."

"Although I believe that the topics we covered were beneficial, it would be a nice chance to disengage from school as well. So, I would recommend playing a card game or spending some of the time talking about random topics than pharmacy-specific ones."

Limitations

- Only students were surveyed at the end of the PF program's first year.
- Suboptimal response rate from student pharmacists.
- Small sample size from single Midwest four-year public pharmacy school.

Conclusion

- The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to implement a pilot program to improve wellness and sense of belonging among students.
- While some objectives were met, opportunities were identified to improve the program in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Next Steps

- Reconfigure the PF program to involve both in-person and online activities.
- Provide student-driven facilitator guides to help with engagement.
- Incorporate PF groups into other areas of the pharmacy curriculum.
- Survey students and faculty at the end of the next academic year to evaluate impact of changes made to program on student and faculty perceptions.

Disclosures

Authors of this presentation have nothing to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of this presentation.

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