INTRODUCTION

Formative and summative assessment of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) students’ performance is required according to Appendix 2: Expectations within the APPE Curriculum of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education Standards 2016. The University of Georgia College of Pharmacy (UGA COP) and Mercer University College of Pharmacy (MU COP), two member schools of the Southeastern Pharmacy Experiential Education Consortium, utilize a standard evaluation tool for student and preceptor APPE assessments.

Students’ competency in 12 learning objectives is assessed by preceptors at the midpoint and conclusion of each APPE. At times, students may be repeatedly receiving preceptor scores of “needs development” in the same learning objective(s) without this triggering an intervention from the Office of Experiential Education (OEE), since these students typically received average or above average final scores. To address this issue, a process was developed for students to be assigned and complete an academic success plan (ASP) when recurrent performance deficiencies were noted. ASPs are a formal process for reflecting on experiential competencies and performance and creating an individualized plan for improvement.

METHODS

ASPs were assigned based on the following pre-determined criteria:

1. “needs development” documented by preceptors for the same learning objective during more than one APPE;
2. on a case-by-case basis for documented professionalism issues; and/or,
3. poor overall performance during an APPE.

ASP documents were sent to students via email with the appropriate behavior or competency prepopulated. Students were required to self-identify the reasons for performance deficiency, the specific actions they would take to correct the deficiency, and the action. Tenets of SMART goal-setting were encouraged to ensure plans were achievable.

Students returned ASPs to the OEE for review including appropriateness of the student’s plan. Though ASPs were assigned and required by OEE faculty, they were not formally linked to a course or grade.

RESULTS

During AY2014-2015, 44 ASPs were assigned to 33 students for competency-related and/or professionalism concerns. 74% of students who were assigned an ASP due to competency-related reasons received ratings of “competent” or “exceeds expectations” for the remainder of the academic year.

CONCLUSION

ASPs provide a non-punitive means to formally address both flagrant and subtle performance deficiencies of students, the latter of which may not be as readily identified by students and the OEE. The incorporation of ASPs into the APPE curriculum met the intended goal of the OEE to have students achieve proficiency by calling attention to repeated or global documented deficiencies.

ASPs offer a framework for students to create a personalized action plan, emphasizing the importance of reflection, and the need for self-awareness. These two traits are key components of the continuous professional development process of a pharmacist. The value of formally practicing these skills with the use of an ASP has the potential to improve students’ current and future practice. ASPs also provided additional opportunities for individualized mentoring and advice from OEE faculty which may not have otherwise been initiated.