Building the Pharmacy Pipeline: Admission Criteria and First Year Performance
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ABSTRACT

The admissions variables (Figure 1) of students admitted to the program in fall 2014 and fall 2015 are being evaluated for correlation with academic performance in the first year of pharmacy school coursework. The admissions data being evaluated include PCAT composite score, chemistry GPA, overall GPA, science/math GPA, letters of recommendation score, pharmacy technician experience, work experience, achievement of advanced degree, age upon admission to pharmacy program, critical thinking score, spontaneous writing score, and interview score. The first year academic performance data include enrollment in supplemental instruction, overall GPA in P1 coursework, and final core grades in biochemistry, pharmacaceutics I, and anatomy and physiology. Correlation and t-test statistical analyses will be performed to determine the relationship of performance of pharmacy school cohorts and admission criteria with student academic outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Pharmacy schools are facing challenges with respect to successful recruitment, retention, and on-time graduation. The increase in the number of pharmacy schools and expansion of existing programs is intensifying the competition for qualified students among established and new programs. In addition, the shrinking job market and reduced starting salaries could further decrease the applicant pool. As such, the competitiveness and sustainability of pharmacy programs is becoming heavily dependent upon its ability to recruit and ensure the best pharmacy student candidates are accepted and are able to successfully complete a rigorous curriculum and pass licensing exams.

The current FSOP admissions rubric, which includes both academic and non-academic factors, has been in place since 2005 without major review or revision. It also has not been correlated with student performance outcomes. The admissions committee is now in the process of reviewing and examining the correlation between current admissions data (See Figure 1) and students’ ability to successfully complete the first year of pharmacy school. Several pharmacy publications have reported PCAT scores and science/math GPA have positive correlations with academic performance in the first year of pharmacy school. Non-academic factors may correlate to academic performance in pharmacy school. However, one study reported prior pharmacy experience found no correlation between the two factors. Based on current literature, we will be looking at academic and non academic admissions data for correlations with academic performance to further refine our admissions processes.

METHODOLOGY

The admissions variables (Figure 1) of students admitted to the program in fall 2014 and fall 2015 are being evaluated for correlation with academic performance in the first year of pharmacy school coursework. The admissions data being evaluated include PCAT composite score, chemistry GPA, overall GPA, science/math GPA, letters of recommendation score, pharmacy technician experience, work experience, achievement of advanced degree, critical thinking score, spontaneous writing score, and interview score. The first year academic performance data include enrollment in supplemental instruction, overall GPA in P1 coursework, and final core grades in biochemistry, pharmacaceutics I, and anatomy and physiology. Correlation and t-test statistical analyses will be performed to determine the relationship of performance of pharmacy school cohorts and admission criteria with student academic outcomes.

GOALS/IMPLICATIONS

- Update the school’s admissions rubric based on the recommendations of the admissions committee task force
- Create a standing admissions committee task to have continuous review and evaluation of admissions variables and P1 performance outcomes to ensure the right formula for success for students and the program and to create an ongoing longitudinal review process
- Validate findings by further analyzing recommended changes in rubric by evaluating performance of previous P1 classes using the new and old rubrics
- Continue to add performance outcomes from P2, P3, and P4 years, including PCOA, NAPLEX, MPIE results
- Consider non-cognitive skills such as grit and self-regulation as possible components of the admissions rubric
- Consider reviewing admission interview methods and scoring to ensure accurate and precise data

This process has put in place a long-term quality improvement program (Figure 3) for the School’s admissions activities. The outcome of this process will ensure that the School is taking into account the qualities that ensure success of admitted students in both the program and the profession. Any changes to the admissions criteria will be the first major adjustments in the School’s admissions rubric since its inception 10 years ago. Ultimately, factors beyond GPA will continue to be a part of the process in determining the most qualified candidates for acceptance.