



Successful Practices in  
**College/School Involvement in Offering  
Dual-Degree Programs**  
*Administration of Dual-Degree Programs*

Pharmaceutical Education 2009



**University at Buffalo, The State University of New York**  
School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Buffalo, NY 14260-1200

**College/School Involvement in Offering Dual-Degree Programs**  
*Area of Successful Practice: Administration of Dual-Degree Programs*

**Description**

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences has been very successful in the development of an array of joint degree programs since 2002 including a PharmD/MBA (Masters of Business Administration), PharmD/JD (Juris Doctor - Law), PharmD/MPH (Masters of Public Health), PharmD/MS and PharmD/PhD in collaboration with our School of Management, School of Law, School of Public Health and Health Professions, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the Graduate School at the University at Buffalo, respectively. For the PharmD/JD and PharmD/MPH, these programs were developed with an emphasis that students could enter these programs from either pharmacy or our collaborating decanal unit.

*Administration:* Each of these joint degree programs were developed and are administered collaboratively by one designated faculty member in each of the respective schools. These individuals serve as contacts/advisors for the students and are responsible for the recruitment and promotion of the program in the respective units. Work is done in connection with the Admissions Office to advertise the programs. The programs were designed with an assumption for no more than five students from both schools would enter any program in any one academic year. No more than three students enter one of these specific joint degree programs in the experiences to date. The PharmD/MBA has been the most popular joint degree program. All programs have been approved by the University at Buffalo Graduate School.

*Curricular Development and Organization:* We believe these programs have been successful because our curricular design provides students the opportunity to engage in the academic culture of both programs and to serve as a bridge between the two academic cultures. We emphasize that students who enter these programs must be flexible as they switch between the two academic environments. The development of these programs was initially based upon the requisite standards for each degree program and by optimizing the plan of study that would not compromise key curricular elements in each area. The programs were optimized for time by identifying overlapping courses for cross-listing in both schools and by utilizing the electives in each program to achieve the required number of hours. A useful format implemented in all these programs is that students will complete the first and/or second year in their entirety in a given program, then take a full year in the alternate program and then take courses concurrently in both programs. This allows the students to enter the joint degree program from both schools for the PharmD/JD and PharmD/MPH. In addition, this allows students the opportunity to apply to only one program at a time thus optimizing their admission success. Students enter the PharmD/MBA and PharmD/JD after completing their first professional year. Students enter the PharmD/MPH and PharmD/MS program after completing two professional years. Alternatively, students can enter the PharmD/MPH after completing one year in the MPH program. Students graduate with both degrees at the same time for the PharmD/MBA, PharmD/MPH and PharmD/MS, while they graduate with the JD first in the PharmD/JD and with the PharmD first in PharmD/PhD program.

The majority of these programs necessitate students to have a bachelor's degree as required by the JD program, MPH program and the Graduate School. Students in the PharmD/PhD program enter this program after completing three years and two of their six advanced pharmacy practice experiences. They subsequently complete one semester toward their graduate degree followed by completion of their PharmD. The subsequent years are focused in the PhD program. Each of these three programs reduces the overall course of study by one academic year.

*Pharmacy Faculty Involvement in the Second component of the Dual-Degree Program:* The curricular structure enables faculty members from both decanal units to be engaged throughout the joint program. For the PharmD/MPH, PharmD/MS and PharmD/PhD program, students are asked to select our Clinical or Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Track and to utilize this project as a component of the requirements for scholarly activities needed in the research degrees. Faculty members in both Pharmacy Practice and Pharmaceutical Sciences can serve as research advisors for these students.

*Student Recruitment:* The recruitment of students in this program is three-fold including providing information about the availability of these programs to potential applicants to the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Management, School of Public Health and Health Professions and School of Law, a specific program at orientation and offering separate recruitment programs for each joint degree program in the fall semester. Brochures and online Websites have been developed for these programs in the School. The experience to date is that these programs can serve as an attractive tool for recruiting the very best students to the PharmD program by providing alternative career pathways.

### **Outcomes**

*Quality Assessment:* The joint degree programs were developed with a focus to not disrupt the educational outcomes for an entry-level practitioner graduating from our Doctor of Pharmacy program. The current program, with electives, provides flexibility for these joint degree programs. Joint degree students are met with several times a semester to address progression and other issues that may arise in the course of the program or academic year.

*Barriers to Implementation:* Challenges in the implementation of these programs have stemmed from the development of a curricular sequence that fits efficiently for both programs. Faculty members from both schools work closely together as students often take courses out of sequence, thereby accommodating the need for minor schedule adaptations in these programs. Faculty members also work closely with the University to address the issues related to student registration and tuition.

*Lessons Learned:* These programs are not developed overnight and it can take patience and time (in months to a year or more) in working out the curricular framework needed to address the accreditation standards of both programs. It is critical to have designated and committed faculty members from both schools engaged in the development and in working/monitoring the progression of students in these programs. Administrative support at the decanal and university level is essential for development of these joint degree programs. Students must be provided with a faculty support network as they are between educational programs and may not have the normal support structure present in the individual schools. It is also critical to network these

students with alumni with these educational credentials as this also provides an important support network.

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**College/School Involvement in Offering Dual-Degree Programs**  
*Area of Successful Practice: Administration of Dual-Degree Programs*

**Description**

*Overview:* The College of Pharmacy and the Carlson School of Management collaboratively designed a five-year program allowing pharmacy students to simultaneously receive the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees. This combines the strengths of two existing top 25, nationally-ranked professional schools to inspire and prepare leaders who, armed with both business and public affairs management knowledge, expertly address the societal and pharmaceutical care issues facing the global community.

*Program Structure:* The curriculum is designed to integrate coursework across disciplines so that students may complete the two degrees in a shorter time frame than they would if the degrees were pursued separately. During the 10 semesters and two summer sessions, students experience both didactic and experiential components of pharmacy and management (63 credits for the MBA degree). The first three years of the curriculum emphasize the pharmacy foundation with students completing approximately 18 credit hours per semester covering areas of biomedical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, social/behavioral/administrative sciences, and clinical sciences including early experiential activities. The students transition into the blended portion of the program beginning in their fourth year. These didactic and experiential courses are closely sequenced and aligned to learning outcomes that provide students opportunities to build on their pharmacy foundation while exploring the application of management principles within didactic and experiential activities. This provides students with hands on experience solving real business and health issues within area organizations. Elective advanced practice experiences are chosen from among a menu of areas that connect to student areas of business-related interests including a required international studies component.

This program is administered by the Office of Professional Curriculum within the Division of Professional Education. This initiative is led by a dynamic team comprised of a director of professional curriculum, a curricular operations specialist, and an administrative assistant. Collectively, these individuals ensure overall program management including marketing, recruitment, curricular design and delivery. This team reports administratively to the Senior Associate Dean for Professional Education.

## **Outcomes**

The program is designed to provide a transformative learning environment that prepares future pharmacy leaders with a competitive business advantage. Students have the benefit of bolstering one degree with the other in order to leverage their knowledge and skills to advance the future scope of pharmacy practice. By all accounts, the program design has been an excellent example of a “win-win” partnership between two highly sought after academic programs. There are no other programs like this in the state of Minnesota and this is the first dual-degree program for the College of Pharmacy.

*Barriers to Implementation:* Few barriers to implementation have been identified given the creation of this dual-degree program. In the design of the program, we worked strategically with multiple stakeholders to align, simplify, and integrate policies, procedures, and outcomes. In particular, it was important to communicate effectively regarding the experiential and accreditation needs for both disciplines. It was essential that we work collaboratively within the academic health center to facilitate program approval before the final regent approval. Both programs were also undergoing curricular revision, so it was especially pertinent to continue to work closely together as changes in individual programs were emerging.

*Lessons Learned:* Most organizations recognize dual degree education as a positive return on investment, particularly when they share resources. During the course of this endeavor, faculty members realized that relationship building was a crucial element for success. This included multiple meetings to brainstorm strategies and listen to the challenges that each discipline may have to program implementation. The team was fortunate to have an infrastructure in place that allowed for individuals to foster the development of relationships, create mechanisms to communicate effectively, and support the flexibility of this type of program. It is essential to have specific individuals identified to lead these endeavors and offer creative time to fully explore the outcomes, operational logistics, and modes for implementation.

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