

# Implementation of a Strengths-Based Leadership Program for Third-Year Pharmacy Students: a pilot study

Amy M Pick, PharmD, BCOP; Shawn Cook, MPA; Kimberley Begley, PharmD; Kevin Fuji, PharmD, MA

Departments of Pharmacy Practice and Office of Academic and Student Affairs

Creighton  
UNIVERSITY  
School of Pharmacy  
and Health Professions

## Objective

To develop and implement a strength-based leadership program for third-year pharmacy students that enhances their professional and personal development and addresses ACPE 2016 Standard Section 4.

## Methods

- Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment grant was secured to provide funding for project (books & assessment).
- Twenty third-year campus pharmacy students were randomly selected and participated in pilot study.
- Pilot study was not affiliated with a class but was a co-curricular activity.
- Students completed Clifton Strengths for Students assessment prior to sessions.
- Three, one-hour workshops were conducted on the following topics:
  - Understanding your strengths
  - Applying your strengths
  - Strength-based leadership
- Sessions consisted of hands-on activities and group discussion.
- Data collected included a pre- and post-leadership qualitative perception survey, leadership portfolio, and workshop evaluation.

## Strength-based Leadership Program Structure

### Session 1: Understanding your strengths

**Activities:** Group discussion, picture card activity.  
**Reflection:** *Now that you know your strengths, please reflect on how you perceive leadership?*

### Session 2: Applying your strengths

**Activity:** Talents in Action (List strength, When did I use this strength?).  
**Activity:** You get the best of me when....  
You get the worse of me when...  
**Reflection:** *Now that you know your strengths, please reflect on how you can apply your strengths to a long-term group project.*

### Session 3: Strength-based leadership

**Activity:** Build the tallest shoe tower. Discussion how strengths were used positively and negatively.  
**Activity:** Four domains of strengths.  
**Reflection:** *Knowing what you know now, including your strengths and leadership style, are you going to do anything differently? What can you do differently when leading and working with others? This may be personal or professional application.*

## Leadership assessment questions (pre and post)

- When you hear the word, leadership, what are your perceptions?
- How do you define a leader?
- Are there certain qualities that leaders must possess? What are they?
- Would you consider yourself to be a leader (yes/no)? Why or why not?
- What types of leadership experiences have you been involved in during your Doctor of Pharmacy training?
- How do you plan to engage in leadership in the future?

## Results, Evaluation, and Feedback

- 20 students received a certificate of completion
- Pre- and post- leadership survey (N = 20)
  - 70% and 100% of students considered themselves a leader, respectively.

**Post workshop assessment qualitative responses**  
“ Before participating in this program, I used to think that a leader is someone who leads a group of people or the face of an organization. After this course, I've come to realize that everyone is a leader in their personal lives. When we are aware of our strengths and put effort into developing them, we can use these strengths to lead us through life and get through anything situation we may face.”

“After this course, I don't think there is a quality or set of qualities that make someone a leader. A leader is someone who is aware of who they are and builds on their strengths. They know their weaknesses and when to delegate things to others”

## Workshop overall evaluation comments

- All pharmacy students should have to take this.
- It would be helpful to have known strengths before starting the many group projects of P3 year. It will be helpful moving forward in future, but could also be very helpful when starting pharmacy school.
- I wish that this was offered P1 year. I think that I would have become more involved on campus.

## Conclusion

- A strength-based leadership program can increase the students' awareness of their own and others' strengths and may enhance their leadership skills.
- Consider incorporation into professional development course to address ACPE Standard Section 4.
- Future projects will need to incorporate quantitative data.