



Description of a Book Club Faculty Development Program and Faculty Opinions Regarding the Process

Michelle Zagar, Pharm.D., M.Ed., Laurel Sampognaro, Pharm.D., Courtney Robertson, Pharm.D., BCPS, Gina Craft, Pharm.D., MBA
University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy

Background:

- To be successful, faculty must develop an understanding of the three traditional roles in the academy--teaching, scholarship, and service.¹ However, most higher education faculty are experts in a particular discipline. Pharmacy is one such specialty in which faculty struggle to allocate time for development in both professional and academic areas.^{1,2}
- The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education 2016 Standards looks for colleges and schools to provide “opportunities for career and professional development of its faculty and staff, individually and collectively, to enhance their role-related skills, scholarly productivity, and leadership.”³
- Faculty development programs can help prepare new faculty and support experienced faculty in their roles as educators and scholars.⁴
- Few faculty book clubs have been mentioned in the literature.^{1,5} This study is the first to describe a live longitudinal faculty development book club for combined new and experienced faculty cohorts.

Objective:

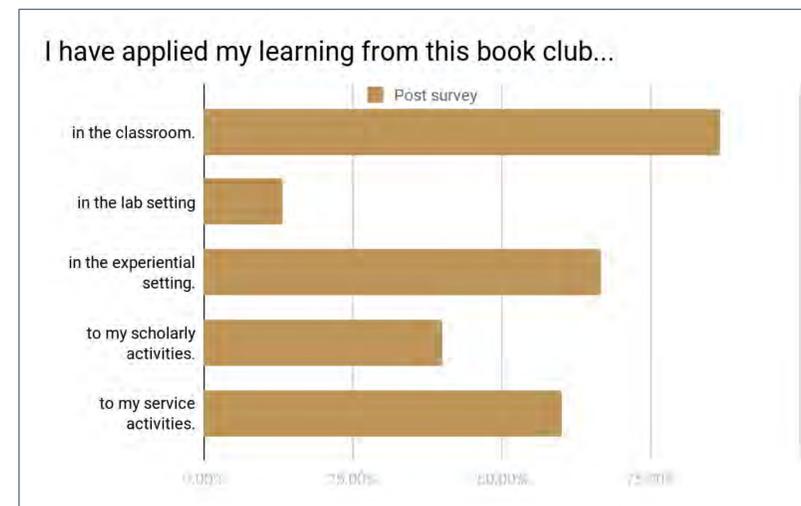
- To describe a faculty development book club and faculty opinions and outcomes regarding this process of faculty development.

Methods:

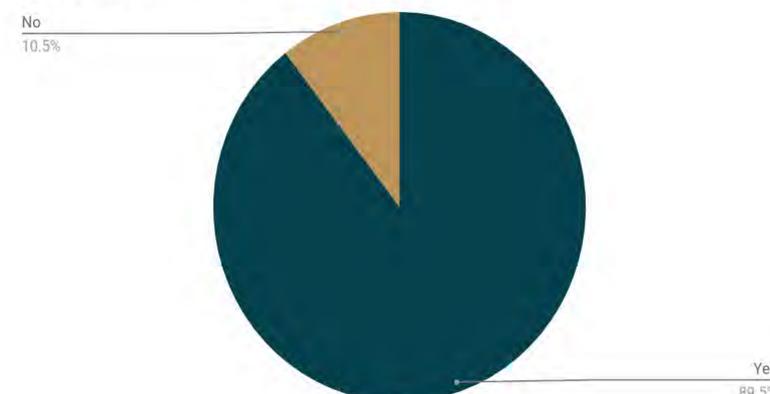
- Faculty members of the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) College of Pharmacy were invited to participate in a year-long book club centered around pharmacy education and the development of junior and senior faculty.
- One-hour book club meetings were held monthly to examine and discuss chapters of a pharmacy education textbook⁶ addressing theory of learning, various teaching environments, student professionalism, and advancement through teaching, service, and scholarly activity. The textbook was selected for its pharmacy education specificity, but contains principles and practices that are applicable to academia in general. Texts were purchased with faculty development funds and were ordered in bulk from the publisher at a discounted price.
- Monthly dates were scheduled with input of all members. Meetings were held during afternoon work hours in a relaxed environment; snacks were provided by members.
- Following a traditional book club format, as well as the application-based, workbook-like text design, faculty discussions were centered on reflective questions submitted by participating faculty members. The participants chose to serve as monthly facilitators of text chapters based on their specific interests and previous experience. Chapter facilitators posted preparatory exercises in a shared cloud-based file storage platform in advance of meetings. Mobile conferencing was used to connect faculty at distance campuses to the main campus for discussions.
- Book club coordinators planned to use a “Fish Bowl” discussion structure for all meetings, but only used the format for the first few meetings.
- Faculty members completed pre- and post-surveys, which utilized 5-point Likert scales for statements related to attitudes and opinions of faculty development, utilization of a book club format, and program outcomes. Surveys offered opportunities for comments related to current teaching practices and suggestions regarding future faculty development and book club offerings.
- Demographic information collected included age, gender, degree and other training, department, appointment, and years in academia.
- Kruskal-Wallis, Dunn’s multiple comparisons, Mann Whitney, and Wilcoxon tests were used to analyze pre- and post-survey results.
- This project was approved by the ULM Institutional Review Board.

Survey Item	Pre mean	Post mean
I can clearly describe my teaching philosophy.	3.85	4.00
I can describe the characteristics of a student-centered approach to teaching.	3.31	4.43*
I can describe the components of pharmacy education as a system.	3.12	3.86
I can describe the components of assessment in pharmacy education.	3.23	4.15
I can describe the roles and responsibilities of a student mentor.	3.54	4.43
I effectively mentor students.	3.50	4.07
I can describe the components of a faculty development program.	3.23	4.00
I can describe the benefits service provides to faculty.	3.81	4.50
I can describe the scholarship of teaching and learning.	3.73	4.23
I can effectively formulate a plan to conduct scholarship of teaching and learning.	3.58	3.77

Likert Scale: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree
*p=0.0391



Would you be willing to participate in a future faculty development book club?



Results:

- The majority (96.2%) of participants were from the School of Clinical Sciences; one member represented the School of Basic Pharmaceutical and Toxicological Sciences.
- Of 26 (54.2%) and 19 (38.8%) respondents to the pre- and post-surveys respectively, 73% agreed they would like a faculty development book club on the pre-survey, while 86.3% of participants were satisfied or highly satisfied with the book club on the post-survey.
- Females and clinical faculty felt they would be more engaged in the book club than they had been in more traditional development programs (p=0.0491 and 0.0314 respectively) on the pre-survey; the same groups indicated more engagement on the post-survey (p=0.0536 and p=0.0320 respectively).
- Males indicated greater improvement in teaching abilities than females as a result of the book club (p=0.0406).
- The most commonly stated reasons for joining the book club were opportunities for learning alongside peers and increased camaraderie; faculty also cited these factors as what they liked most about the program. Multiple members cited the fish bowl discussion format as the least-liked feature of the book club.
- The majority of post-survey respondents stated they attended book club meetings frequently (33.3%) or sometimes (40%); 40% of participants cited service-related commitments as the primary limitation to participation.
- About half of faculty (46.7%) indicated their engagement during book club activities was average, but 60% strongly agreed that they were more engaged in discussions for which they read and completed preparatory exercises than those for which they did not complete the activities.

Limitations:

- The sample size was small and the majority of participants were from one department. Data also represent only one institution and may not be generalizable to other institutions.

Implications:

- Faculty found a book club format to be an enjoyable, effective, and engaging way of developing skills and knowledge as a pharmacy academician.
- This alternative delivery method is a relatively inexpensive format for faculty development that can be replicated by other institutions.
- Future efforts should include evaluation of the long-term impact of the program.

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