



Design and Evaluation of a Council Structure and Meeting Format for Pharmacy Student Government

Sabrina Dunham, PharmD, Jacqueline Zeeman, PharmD, Bradford Wingo, MEd, and Wendy Cox, PharmD

UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

KEY FINDINGS

- **PURPOSE:** To evaluate student perceptions of a transformed Senate Council (i.e., pharmacy student government) structure and meeting format.
 - Changes included defined seats on the Council, appointed delegates serving as Council members, newly defined roles and responsibilities of each delegate, and restructured monthly meetings held in roundtable format.
- The majority of Council member students agreed or strongly agreed that the new Senate Council format facilitated inter-organizational relations, communication, and collaboration.
- Ninety-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the new Senate Council format improved efficiencies.
- Ninety-six percent preferred the new Senate Council meeting format over the previous Student Senate meeting format.

INTRODUCTION

- Student government is an important institution serving to represent student interests to School faculty and administration, enact and enforce policies pertaining to both academic and co-curricular activities, and facilitate interactions among the student body.
- Available literature addresses the general importance of student government and basic overviews of structure, but best practices for efficient governing, especially in a PharmD program, are lacking.^{1,2}
- In August 2016, the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy Student Senate structure and general assembly meeting underwent a transformation to address perceived limitations, such as unidirectional information exchange, minimal discussion, and unengaged student leaders.
- A formal council was created in which one leader from each student organization served as a Council member at Senate meetings now held in a roundtable format.

METHODS

- A 12-item Qualtrics survey was created to evaluate student perceptions of the new Senate Council to assess the effectiveness of achieving the Council's objectives in the following areas:
 - (1) Interorganizational relations
 - (2) Communication
 - (3) Collaboration
 - (4) Efficiencies
- Council members (i.e. PY1, PY2, and PY3 students) who had participated in ≥ 1 Senate Council meeting during the 2016-2017 academic year were invited to complete the survey.
- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize agreement frequencies among survey items.

RESULTS

- 28 of the 29 Council members completed the survey.
 - Greater than 85% of Council members agreed or strongly agreed that the new Senate Council format facilitated inter-organizational relations, communication, and collaboration.
 - 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the new format improved efficiencies.
 - 93% were satisfied or highly satisfied with the new meeting format.
 - 96% preferred the new Senate Council meeting format over the former Senate General Body Meeting format.

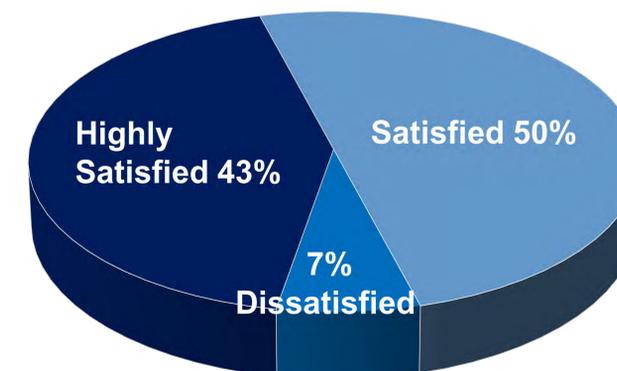
Summary of Survey Responses: Number and Percentage that "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"

Survey Item	n (%)
<i>Items 1-9</i>	
I prefer the new Senate Council Meeting format rather than the former Senate General Body Meeting	27 (96.4)
The Senate Council Meeting format has facilitated inter-organizational conversations that otherwise would not have occurred in the former Senate General Body Meeting format	26 (92.9)
The Senate Council Meeting format has improved collaboration among student organizations	24 (85.7)
The Senate Council Meeting format has improved inter-organizational relations	24 (85.7)
The Senate Council Meeting format facilitates the sharing of best practices in organizational planning and development	27 (96.4)
The Senate Council Meeting structure has provided an improved venue to voice organization opinions/concerns compared to the former Senate General Body Meeting structure	27 (96.4)
The Senate Council Meeting structure has provided an improved venue to voice overall student opinions/concerns compared to the former Senate General Body Meeting structure	24 (85.7)
The Senate Council Meeting format has improved the dissemination of information (i.e. upcoming events, potential opportunities, important announcements from administration)	23 (82.1)
Taking into consideration question 1-8, the Senate Council meeting met its goal to improve efficiency when compared to the Senate General Body Meeting	26 (92.7)

REFERENCES

1. Kennedy DR, Ginsburg DB, Harnois NJ, Spooner JJ. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*. 2015;79(7):100.
2. Ratsoy EW and Bing Z. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*; 1999:29(1).

Council Members Satisfaction with New Council Meeting Format



*0% of respondents indicated "highly dissatisfied"

- Themes from Items 11 and 12 free-form answers included some of the following:
 - The "no laptop" policy improved engagement during Council meetings.
 - The roundtable format and smaller number of members facilitated open conversations.
 - Student-wide participation during open-forum still needed improvement from the previous format.

LIMITATIONS

- Only one year of surveys were collected, although conducting further surveys would include individuals that did not experience the former Senate format.
- Two Council members indicated they were not involved in the former Senate structure affecting how they assessed improvements.

IMPLICATIONS

- Student government is an important institution within academia necessitating student involvement and engagement for both its functioning and success.
- Results of this study suggest a council structure and meeting format may effectively support inter-organization relations, communication, collaboration, and efficiencies within student body government.
- These findings help address deficits in the current literature, providing insight into opportunities for enhancing student government in a professional pharmacy program.