Raising the Bar for Student Performance in a 6-semester Pharmacy Skills Sequence

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OBJECTIVES
To develop a comprehensive in-course remediation program for the Pharmacy Skills courses to support students in achieving a higher course grade and meeting the new passing standard of 70 %.

BACKGROUND
The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Accreditation Standards and Guidelines state that schools and colleges of pharmacy must have policies related to remediation and progression1. The guidelines are not specific as to the methods of remediation, but the interventions should have the potential to be successful. Given that the most successful remediation programs are those tailored to the individual student2, in-conse, content specific, required remediation was implemented.

The Pharmacy Skills program at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (ACPHS) was reclassified from a one credit hour course to a course with multiple assessments and skill demonstrations throughout the semester. Remediation is a procedure to create activities necessary to improve student learning and has been previously defined as a process in which students are provided an opportunity to improve their performance in a course by acquiring the knowledge and skills that were previously lacking. The program is administered by APPE Students or Teaching Assistants (TA) who are identified after successfully completing a stipulated number of pharmacy courses.

METHODS
The remediation program varies slightly across the sequence to accommodate the needs of the students. Generally the program is administered by APPE Students or Teaching Assistants (TA) who are identified after successfully completing the Pharmacy Skills course and demonstrating proficiency of the course content.

Table 2 describes the characteristics of the Pharmacy Skills remediation program.

Remediation is required when the student receives:

- A grade of less than 70 % on any assessment (“knowledge check”).
- An average course grade < than 70 % after the first Exam (mid-semester).

Remediation Policies:

- Remediation does not alter the grade received on the previous assessment or provide “extra credit”.
- Students must attend a remediation session within one week of receiving the grade.
- Failure to attend a remediation session within one week results in a one point deduction of professionalism points (equivalent to a one point deduction in the overall course grade).

Remediation Structure (written assessments):

- Group remediation sessions are held three to four times a week; daytime sessions and evening sessions.
- At the beginning of the session a APPE/TA works through assessment and answers specific questions.
- When the student has had all their questions answered and feels confident with the material, the student will complete a different version of the assessment.
- The APPE/TA will check the answers. If any answers are incorrect the APPE/TA will work individually with the student until they are competent with the content.

Remediation Structure (skill-based assessments):

- Group remediation sessions are held two to three times a week; daytime sessions and evening sessions.
- Students review deficiencies with APPE/TA then practice the specific skill. APPE/TA offer feedback during skill demonstration.
- APPE/TA will work with individual students until they demonstrate competency

RESULTS
Table 3 shows the number of students, the course average and number of students scoring less than 70 % for 3 consecutive years.

Figure 1

Percent Students Receiving a Grade of Less than 70 %

- Student specific remediation reduces the number of course failures and the need to repeat a course.
- In course remediation seems to promote a better understanding of the material as reflected by the slight increase in the overall class average in several of the courses.
- We will track individual student’s grades based on their midterm and final exam grades and the number of required remediation sessions and optional practice/tutoring sessions they attended. Planned remediation improvements include:
  - Students with a course average of less than 70 % at the midpoint, meet with a course instructor to develop an individualized remediation plan.
  - Students with individualized remediation plans will meet weekly with an assigned APPE/TA to review content and practice skills.

REFERENCES