

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Expectations and Orientation Activities of First-Year Pharmacy Practice Faculty

Mark L. Glover, PharmD, and Graciela M. Armayor, PharmD

College of Pharmacy, Nova Southeastern University

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Objectives. To determine the expectations and orientation activities of first-year pharmacy practice faculty members.

Methods. A survey instrument assessing the expectations and orientation activities of first-year pharmacy practice faculty members was mailed to the chairs of the pharmacy practice departments of the 82 United States schools and colleges of pharmacy with instructions to forward the survey instrument to a recently employed faculty member for completion.

Results. Of the 44 (54%) pharmacy practice departments represented, mean expectations for first-year faculty members were to teach 17.2 didactic hours, precept 6.7 students, and serve on 1.1 and 0.76 departmental and college committees, respectively. Forty-two percent were expected to initiate a research project, while 35% were expected to submit a manuscript for publication. Seventy-seven percent received a formal orientation with introduction to faculty and staff members and computer support being the most common activities, while guidance in developing research ideas and writing research protocols/manuscripts were the least common. A substantial number of faculty members also desired more teaching instruction than was provided.

Conclusion. First-year pharmacy practice faculty members should receive additional orientation instruction regarding scholarship and teaching activities.

Keywords: orientation, pharmacy practice faculty, expectations, faculty

INTRODUCTION

Pharmacy practice faculty members are expected to participate in teaching, scholarship, and service activities.¹ Depending on the institution, varying degrees of emphasis are placed on these activities. The majority of new pharmacy practice faculty members are graduates of residency training programs who often present with adequate clinical knowledge, but lack experience regarding teaching and scholarship activities.² This lack of experience often contributes to job stress as the faculty member is expected to perform despite having received minimal, or in some cases, no instruction in these job-related tasks.

A major concern among colleges of pharmacy is the high rate of faculty turnover. Moreover, retaining pharmacy practice faculty appears to be a major challenge as evidenced by a recent study indicating that each year approximately 2.7 pharmacy practice faculty members per department resign from their positions compared with 1.1 basic science faculty.² Job stress among faculty

members appears to be a major contributing factor to this impressively high turnover rate. Among pharmacy faculty members, the greatest amount of stress has been associated with scholarship expectations.³ This is to be expected, especially among pharmacy practice faculty members, as they often receive limited research training prior to their faculty appointment.² Additionally, junior faculty members appear to endure more stress than their senior colleagues as they are often more concerned with promotion and tenure criteria, of which scholarly activities are often a major component.²

One approach to alleviating much of the stress encountered by new faculty members is to provide them with a welcoming and comfortable environment upon their arrival.⁴ To accomplish this and to introduce them to the expectations and activities of a faculty member, a well-designed orientation program should be offered. Such a program not only provides a means of communicating essential information, but also eliminates or minimizes potential frustrations and stress commonly encountered when entering a new position.

The purpose of this study was to determine the expectations and orientation activities of first-year phar-

Corresponding Author: Mark L. Glover, PharmD. Address: College of Pharmacy, Nova Southeastern University, 3970 RCA Blvd., Suite 7006, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410. Tel: 561-622-8682. Fax: 561-622-9205. E-mail: mglover@nsu.nova.edu.

macy practice faculty members within colleges of pharmacy in the United States and to compare the responses between tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty.

METHODS

A 24-item survey instrument was developed to identify the expectations and orientation activities of first-year pharmacy practice faculty members among colleges of pharmacy in the United States. The survey instrument was mailed to the chairs of pharmacy practice departments of 82 United States schools and colleges of pharmacy with directions to forward the survey instrument to a recently employed pharmacy practice faculty member for completion. The names of the chairs and mailing addresses of the schools were obtained from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's 2001–2002 *Roster of Faculty and Professional Staff*. Each mailing included a cover letter, the survey instrument, and a self-addressed postage-paid envelope for returning the survey instrument. The return envelopes were coded to identify the responding school. Approximately 2 weeks following the initial mailing, a second mailing was sent to those who failed to return a survey instrument.

Data from completed survey instruments were entered into Microsoft *Excel* 2002 with *MegaStat*, Version 8 (Indianapolis, Ind: Butler University, 2001; *MegaStat* is an *Excel* add-in for statistical analysis and is available online at blue.butler.edu/~orris/megastat/index.html). Where applicable, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for all data. Chi-square or Fischer's Exact test was employed to compare the responses between tenure and nontenure-track faculty members for non-continuous data, and the Student's *t* test was used to compare differences for continuous data. Statistical significance was defined as a $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Thirty-four of 82 (41%) survey instruments from the initial mailing were returned. The second mailing produced an additional 16 survey instruments resulting in a total of 50 (61%) survey instruments being returned. Four of the survey instruments appeared to be completed by senior faculty members, one included data for the entire pharmacy practice department, and one was returned with no data recorded. These 6 were omitted resulting in 44 (54%) usable survey instruments representing our sample population.

All of the survey respondents were full-time faculty members, 17 (39%) of whom were pursuing a tenure appointment. At the time the survey was completed, the faculty members had been employed for a mean of 17.6

± 9.4 months (range 4 - 41 months), corresponding to 17.9 ± 9.7 months (range 4–41 months) and 17.5 ± 9.4 months (range 4 - 40 months) for tenure and nontenure-track faculty, respectively.

The teaching, service, and scholarship expectations of the faculty members during their first year of employment are presented in Table 1. Tenure-track faculty members were expected to provide significantly more didactic lectures than nontenure-track faculty; while nontenure-track faculty were expected to precept significantly more clerkship students and serve on more departmental committees. The scholarship demands were significantly greater for tenure-track faculty members, with more than half of those surveyed expected to participate in the scholarly activities that were assessed.

Approximately three fourths of those surveyed received a formal orientation, with the majority (36%) of the programs coordinated by the department chair (Table 2). Although there appeared to be a great disparity in the mean duration of the orientation program between tenure- and nontenure-track faculty (4.6 vs 28.2 days, respectively), only 3 respondents, all of whom were nontenured, indicated the orientation program exceeded 30 days. Approximately 80% of the faculty members believed the orientation process positively influenced their success during their first year as faculty members.

The components of orientation provided to the faculty members and those additionally desired are presented in Table 3. Overall, general activities, including introduction to pharmacy practice faculty and staff members and establishing an e-mail account, were the most common activities reported. In comparing tenure- to nontenure-track faculty members, being introduced to faculty members in other departments and being provided with promotion/tenure policies and procedures were the only significant differences, with more tenure-track faculty members being involved in these activities. The greatest disparity between the components of orientation provided to the faculty members and those additionally desired involved scholarship activities. Compared with the number of faculty members who received these scholarship components, approximately 2 to 5 times more faculty members who failed to receive such components preferred they be included in their orientation. A substantially greater number of faculty members also desired more teaching components to their orientation than were provided. In comparing the overall mean number of general, teaching, scholarship, and service-orientation components provided vs those additionally desired, the greatest demand was for additional scholarship orientation activities as demonstrated by an approx-

Table 1. Expectations of First-Year Pharmacy Practice Faculty

Item	Tenure	Nontenure	Combined
Teaching			
Didactic Lecture Hours*	23.9 ± 20.6 (0-67) (n = 17)	12.8 ± 14.8 (1-70) (n = 26)	17.2 ± 17.9 (0-70) (n = 43)
Clerkship Students*	3.9 ± 4.8 (0-14) (n = 16)	8.4 ± 7.4 (0-30) (n = 26)	6.7 ± 6.9 (0-30) (n = 42)
Service			
Departmental Committees*	0.76 ± 0.75 (0-2) (n = 17)	1.36 ± 1.15 (0-4) (n = 25)	1.12 ± 1.04 (0-4) (n = 42)
College Committees	0.71 ± 0.77 (0-2) (n = 17)	0.80 ± 1.35 (0-5) (n = 25)	0.76 ± 1.14 (0-5) (n = 42)
Professional Association Participation	64.70% (n = 17)	77.70% (n = 27)	72.73% (n = 44)

Item	Expected (%)	Number Achieved	Expected (%)	Number Achieved	Expected (%)	Number Achieved
Scholarship						
Grant Application	52.9* (n = 17)	3.0 ± 2.1 (1-7) (n = 8)	19.2* (n = 26)	1.0 ± 0.8 (0-2) (n = 4)	32.6 (n = 43)	2.3 ± 2.0 (0-7) (n = 12)
Initiation of Research	70.6* (n = 17)	1.7 ± 0.7* (1-3) (n = 10)	23.1* (n = 26)	0.8 ± 0.8* (0-2) (n = 5)	41.9 (n = 43)	1.4 ± 0.8 (0-3) (n = 15)
Presentation of Research	70.6* (n = 17)	1.7 ± 0.9 (0-3) (n = 11)	23.1* (n = 26)	1.8 ± 1.5 (0-4) (n = 6)	41.9 (n = 43)	1.8 ± 1.1 (0-4) (n = 17)
Manuscript Submission	52.9* (n = 17)	2.2 ± 1.6 (0-5) (n = 9)	23.1* (n = 26)	2.0 ± 1.9 (0-5) (n = 5)	34.9 (n = 43)	2.1 ± 1.7 (0-5) (n = 14)

Unless otherwise indicated, data presented as mean ± standard deviation with ranges reported in parenthesis

n=number of faculty responding

* Statistical significance at p< 0.05 for comparison between tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty

Table 2. Assessment of Orientation

Item	Tenure	Nontenure	Combined
General Orientation			
Formal Orientation Provided	13 (76.5)	21 (77.8)	34 (77.3)
Existing Structured Orientation Process	6 (46.2)	13 (68.4)	19 (59.4)
Duration of Orientation (Days; mean ± SD)	4.6 ± 8.3	28.2 ± 57.3	19.0 ± 46.2
Periodic Evaluation During Orientation	7 (58.3)	6 (28.6)	13 (39.4)
Number of Evaluations During Orientation (mean ± SD)	3.2 ± 4.4	1.0 ± 0	2.2 ± 3.3
Coordinator of Orientation Program			
Pharmacy Practice Chair	4 (30.8)	8 (40)	12 (36.4)
Faculty Advisor	0	1 (5)	1 (3)
Orientation/Faculty Development Committee	6 (46.2)	4 (20)	10 (30.7)
Other	3 (23.1)	7 (35)	10 (30.3)
Evaluation of Orientation			
Very Helpful	3 (25)	2 (9.5)	5 (15.2)
Helpful	7 (58.3)	14 (66.7)	21 (63.6)
Not Helpful	2 (16.7)	5 (23.8)	7 (21.2)

Data presented as absolute number and (percentage), unless otherwise indicated

SD - Standard deviation

Table 3. Components of Orientation

Item	Provided		Additionally Desired		Combined	
	Tenure n = 13	Nontenure n = 20	Tenure n = 10	Nontenure n = 21	Provided n = 33	Additional- Desired n = 31
General						
Assigned an advisor/mentor	6 (46)	7 (35)	2 (20)	9 (43)	13 (39)	11 (35)
Introduced to pharmacy practice faculty	12 (92)	18 (90)	0	1 (5)	30 (91)	1 (3)
Introduced to faculty in other departments	12 (92)*	10 (50)*	1 (10)	3 (14)	22 (67)	4 (13)
Introduced to support staff (ie, secretaries)	10 (77)	16 (80)	1 (10)	1(5)	26 (79)	2 (6)
Tour of department	10 (77)	14 (70)	0	0	24 (73)	0
Tour of college	8 (62)	9 (45)	0	1 (5)	17 (52)	1 (3)
Tour of campus	5 (38)	10 (50)	1 (10)	1 (5)	15 (45)	2 (6)
Obtaining office supplies	9 (69)	15 (75)	1 (10)	3 (14)	24 (73)	4 (13)
Establishing phone service/voice mail	11 (85)	14 (70)	2 (20)	1 (5)	25 (76)	3 (10)
Computer support (i.e., email account)	10 (77)	16 (80)	2 (20)	1 (5)	26 (79)	3 (10)
Orientation to clinical site	7 (54)	12 (60)	3 (30)	4 (19)	19 (58)	7 (23)
Teaching						
Guidance in organizing and delivering lecture material	6 (46)	5 (25)	4 (40)	8 (38)	11 (33)	12 (39)
Guidance in handout and exam preparation	4 (31)	5 (25)	5 (50)	12 (57)	9 (27)	17 (55)
Attended lecture of senior faculty member	3 (23)	4 (20)	2 (20)	5 (24)	7 (21)	7 (23)
Guidance in structuring clerkship	4 (31)	9 (45)	3 (30)	4 (19)	13 (39)	7 (23)
Scholarship						
Guidance in developing research ideas	2 (15)	2 (10)	4 (40)	11 (52)	4 (12)	15 (48)
Provided with information regarding "starter" grants	4 (31)	3 (15)	6 (60)	9 (43)	7 (21)	15 (48)
Guidance in conducting research	3 (23)	2 (10)	4 (40)	12 (57)	5 (15)	16 (52)
Guidance in writing protocols	2 (15)	1 (5)	5 (50)	11 (52)	3 (9)	16 (52)
Guidance in writing manuscripts	2 (15)	2 (10)	5 (50)	9 (43)	4 (12)	14 (45)
Provided with promotion/tenure policies and procedures	12 (92)*	12 (60)*	0	2 (10)	24 (73)	2 (6)
Guidance in identifying clinical research areas of interest	2 (15)	2 (10)	4 (40)	10 (48)	4 (12)	14 (45)
Service						
Provided with list of department and college committees	8 (62)	12 (60)	2 (20)	5 (24)	20 (61)	7 (23)
Guidance in selecting committees	4 (31)	5 (25)	4 (40)	9 (43)	9 (27)	13 (42)
Provided information regarding professional organizations	4 (31)	3 (15)	3 (30)	2 (10)	7 (21)	5 (16)
Guidance in developing clinical site	5 (28)	2 (10)	4 (40)	8 (38)	7 (21)	12 (39)

Data presented as absolute number (percentage)

n = number of faculty responding

*Statistically significant at $P < 0.05$ for comparison between tenure and nontenure-track faculty

imate 2-fold increase in the number of activities provided compared with those additionally desired, 1.5 vs 2.7, respectively. (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

Newly employed pharmacy practice faculty members are often inundated with teaching, service, and scholarship responsibilities.¹ Based on our data, nontenure-track faculty members are expected to precept significantly more clerkship students and serve on more committees, while tenure-track faculty members are expected to present significantly more didactic lectures.

This is not surprising given that nontenure-track faculty members tend to allocate an inordinate amount of time to their clinical site where they perform patient-related activities and precept students and residents.

Approximately 30% to 40% of the faculty respondents in our study were expected to participate in scholarly activities during their first year of employment. Although these scholarly expectations were significantly higher among tenure-track faculty, nontenure-track faculty were quite competitive with their tenure-track colleagues as the number of research presentations and manuscript submissions between them were quite similar.

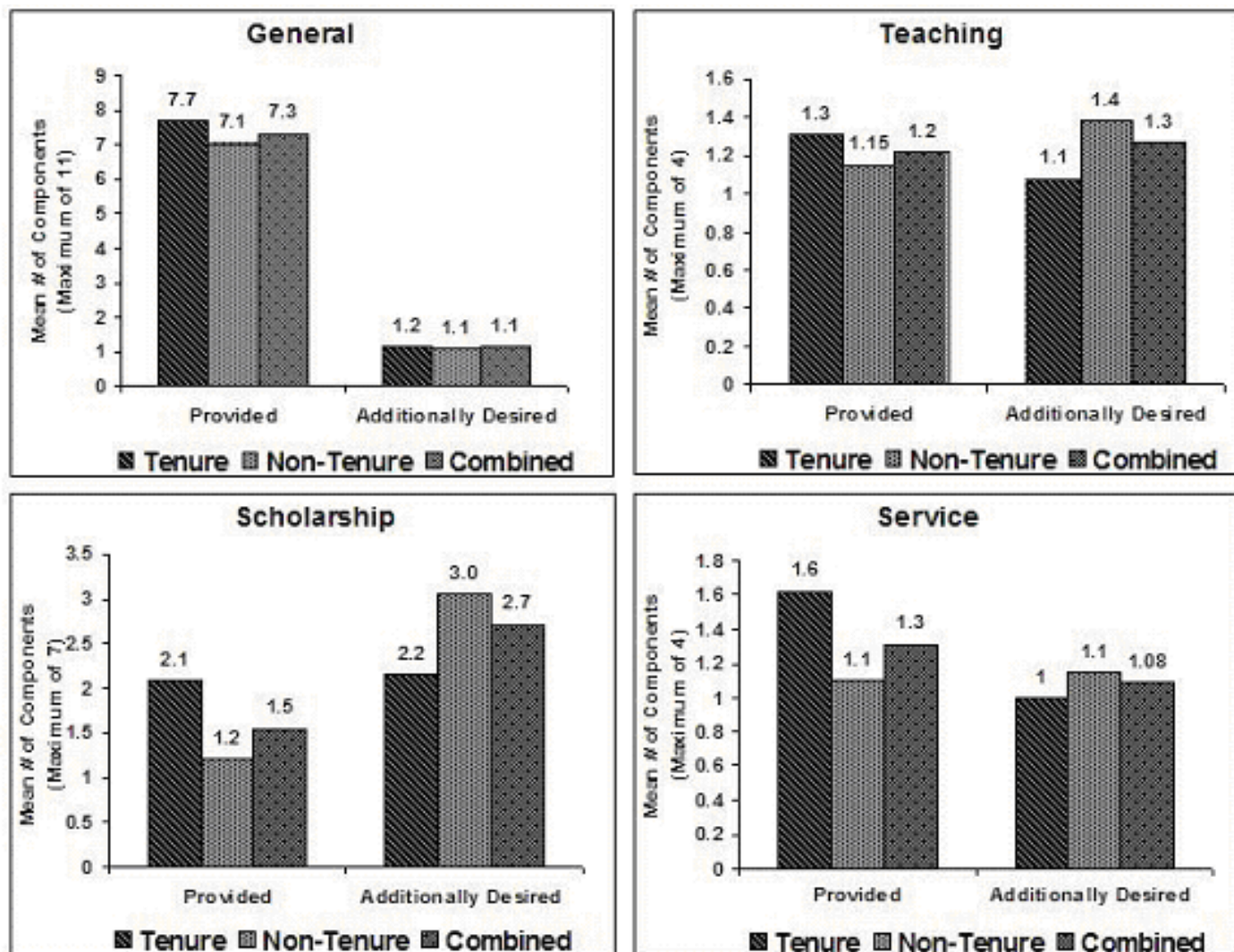


Figure 1. Components of orientation provided to new faculty and those additionally desired.

Many new faculty members are recent graduates of residency programs that often fail to provide them with an understanding of the expectations associated with their initial appointment. Therefore, it is essential for administration to educate new faculty members regarding the institution's expectations by providing them with an orientation program to ensure the faculty member understands and is equipped with the resources necessary for success. Department chairs should assume an active role in the orientation of their faculty members.⁵ Our data are consistent with this belief as the majority of our respondents indicated their department chair coordinated their orientation program. However, given that pharmacy practice departments often employ a large number of faculty members, allocating the desired amount of time to each faculty member during their orientation is difficult for department chairs. At our institution, we assign an advisor to each new pharmacy practice faculty member. This faculty member advisor assists

their new colleague by reviewing an orientation checklist with them during the initial days of their employment. The advisor also serves as a resource for the new faculty member to answer questions that may arise as the faculty member adjusts to the new environment.

Faculty evaluations are recognized as a means of providing feedback on performance, and thus serve as a tool to identify areas in which an individual excels and areas that need additional development.⁶ In order to assess how well new faculty members are acclimating to their new environment and to ensure they are progressing as desired, providing evaluations and feedback as components of their orientation program are critical. Despite the obvious benefits, less than 40% of those represented in our study indicated they received evaluations during their first year of employment.

The most common orientation activity observed in our study was introduction of the faculty members to colleagues within their own department. Although this

may appear trivial, providing new faculty members the opportunity to interact with new peers has resulted in more satisfying and successful relationships among colleagues.⁴ Establishing these initial contacts also allows opportunities for discussion and collaboration on future projects. To further support the importance of peer introductions, of 20 orientation activities assessed, assisting faculty members in developing positive relationships with individuals within their academic communities received the highest rating among academic deans.⁵

New faculty members lack adequate orientation in the areas of scholarship and teaching.⁷ As evidenced by our data, orientation programs were most deficient in providing scholarship-related activities. Due to this lack of instruction, new faculty members typically spend a minimal amount of time on scholarly activities, and as previously mentioned, acknowledge research as the most stressful element of their job.^{3,8} Nevertheless, faculty members do realize the importance of scholarly activities for promotion and tenure purposes and thus often desire to receive further instruction in this area. Our results are consistent with this thought as scholarship activities, when absent, were the most desired orientation activities to incorporate into the faculty member's program.

Although the majority of new faculty members have some experience in providing lectures, most have not been challenged with additional responsibilities such as coordinating entire courses.⁷ Also, the luxury of having a mentor oversee lecture preparation and delivery is noticeably absent when one graduates from a training program and enters their first faculty position. Additionally, as opposed to presenting a few lectures while in training, new faculty members are often assigned heavy teaching loads, of which some topics require an inordinate amount of preparation time.

Because of the relative lack of teaching during their training programs and the enormity of the expected teaching load, a substantial number of faculty in our survey desired teaching activities to be included in their orientation program. In order to provide our students with a proper education, it is the responsibility of the administrators and senior faculty members to provide new faculty members with the instruction and resources needed to ensure quality lectures are presented.

CONCLUSIONS

Orientation programs should be provided to new pharmacy practice faculty members in order to educate them on the expectations associated with their appointment as well as provide guidance for the successful achievement of these activities. Such programs should be tailored to include adequate instruction regarding scholarship and teaching activities.

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