

LEADERSHIP

Academy Strives To Build Next Generation of Leaders

Five years after the ASHP Foundation's Center for Health-System Pharmacy Leadership established the Pharmacy Leadership Academy (PLA)—with the aim of fending off an impending crisis in the field—the program continues to build an alumni base that is taking on larger leadership roles and spreading skills among colleagues.

What's more, institutions of higher learning now recognize the PLA as worthy of graduate credit.

"The PLA was launched in 2006 as a result of a study conducted by Sara J. White, that projected that 80% of pharmacy directors plan to retire in the next decade, and more than half indicated they did not know of anyone qualified to replace them," noted Stephen J. Allen, RPh, MS, FASHP, executive vice president of the ASHP (American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacy) Foundation. "If they did take over, they were less than fully prepared and notably challenged. Other pharmacists would then witness their colleagues struggling and were less inclined to consider this as a career advancement opportunity."

The solution, as Mr. Allen and the ASHP Foundation team saw it, was a program that could complement schools of pharmacy and residencies, which build essential clinical skills but may not emphasize leadership areas.

"We need to do a better job of developing dynamic leaders in our profession who can stand in front of administrators and clinicians and represent pharmacy," said Michael O'Neal, RPh, manager of pharmacy procurement at Vanderbilt

A total of 81 students are enrolled in the 2011 PLA class. The series of nine online courses over 15 months cover a range of topics from change and innovation to financial management—all taught by renowned pharmacy practice leaders.

Alliance With GlobalHealth Education

Thanks to a new alliance with GlobalHealth Education, an online educational services firm based in West Palm Beach, Fla., completing the program will earn participants gradu-



Scan to access more details on PLA program

System in Boise, Idaho. Ms. Heckathorn described the day when the CEO of her health system approached her in the cafeteria. "He sat down with me to pick my brain regarding a new business venture," she recalled. Because she was in the midst of the PLA program, she shared with him some of the tools she was learning.

"At the end of our discussion, he asked me to serve on the infusion center's team," added Ms. Heckathorn. "Then he paused and asked me if I would like to lead the team. I know that I am improving my performance, but this is definitely a milestone in my career."

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—Karen Riley, PharmD, BCPS



hospital institutions," said Karen Riley, PharmD, BCPS, clinical pharmacy manager of education and quality assurance at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor-Essex, Ontario, Canada, and PLA participant. "I have also been trying to make changes behind the scenes by planting the seeds of change in my director's mind."

A Team Approach

Janice Glascock, PharmD, assistant director of clinical and educational services for the Department of Pharmaceutical Services at Emory Hospitals, in Atlanta, has taken it even further. She is a graduate of the 2009 PLA class, and recently went through the capstone coursework along with another PLA graduate, Chad Hatfield, PharmD, BCPS, who plans to take advantage of the MHA. They also recruited two colleagues who have not completed the PLA to join them: Julie Temples, RPh, and Collin Lee, PharmD, BCPS. The group ended up collaborating on a course project that prompted a proposal for a new department-wide leadership training program.

"We recently went through the transition to CPOE [computerized provider order entry] and updated drug distribution practices that have impacted our workflow processes," Dr. Glascock said. "We need to make some major changes, and we felt that getting our leaders to embrace leadership principles would help us move through those changes more quickly."

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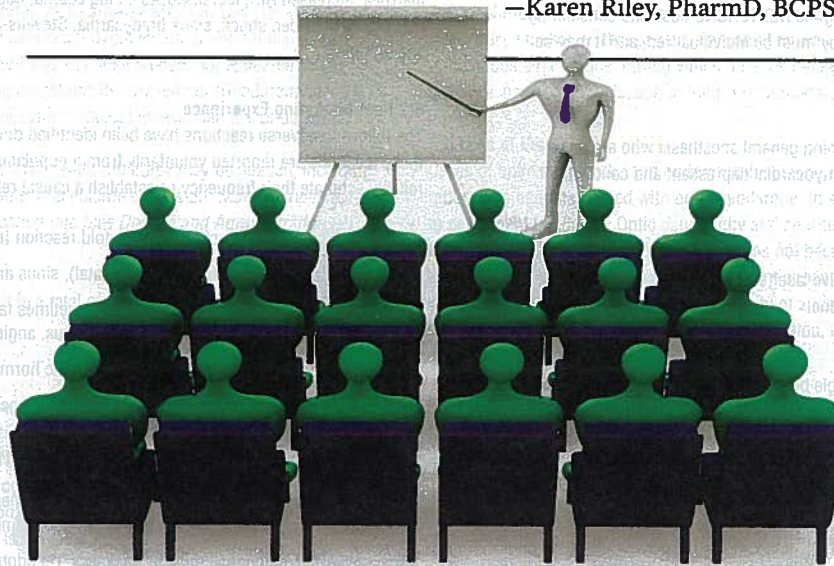
"We need to do a better job of developing dynamic leaders in our profession who can stand in front of administrators and clinicians and represent pharmacy," said Michael O'Neal, RPh, manager of pharmacy procurement at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, in Nashville, Tenn., and recent PLA graduate. "We are advancing along with medicine. In fact, a lot of the advancements in medicine are pharmacy-related."

The PLA program is focused on filling this leadership gap, working to assist pharmacists in applying their leadership learning in advancing safe and effective medication use in health systems. But the ASHP Foundation also acknowledged a third category of key skills that remained unaddressed: management.

"So when opportunity came along for us to partner with academic institutions that could provide that last slice of the triad and build various academic avenues for pharmacists to take depending on their pursuit, it just seemed like a no-brainer," said Richard Walling, BSPHarm, MHA, director of the Center for Health-System Pharmacy Leadership. "A 2010 survey of pharmacy directors and assistant directors indicated that advanced degrees (MHA, MBA, MPH) are the most desirable and well-recognized means of advancing in health systems."

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ate credits that can be applied to online master's programs in health care administration, management, public policy or pharmacy at Simmons College, New England College or the University of Florida. (Mr. Walling expects more schools to be added over the next year.) Graduates of the classes of 2007 through 2010, before the agreement, can take two capstone courses that will bring them up to speed with students going through the revamped program. These additions will qualify them to apply for credit after acceptance into a master's program.

Meanwhile, a growing number of alumni—and their home departments—are already reaping the benefits of the continuing education. "My life has changed dramatically since joining the PLA," noted Debbie Heckathorn, RPh, director of pharmacy at Elks Rehab

Before she knew it, she was also appointed to represent the hospital employees on a systemwide performance review committee, lead a team in charge of quality and compliance, and sit on a disaster planning council.

The CEO even asked Ms. Heckathorn if she planned to take over his position. She has a few steps to take first, including an MHA. "The PLA opens the door and I'm going to walk on through," she said. Ms. Heckathorn is not keeping all of the skills to herself. "If I can teach someone else how to use a tool, and he uses it successfully, that means I really do understand what I'm learning."

Other PLA graduates are also spreading the wealth and making broad changes at their home institutions. "I find that I am learning skills to help motivate staff and appropriately delegate and understand the politics of

graduate, Chad Hatfield, PharmD, BCPS, who plans to take advantage of the MHA. They also recruited two colleagues who have not completed the PLA to join them: Julie Temples, RPh, and Collin Lee, PharmD, BCPS. The group ended up collaborating on a course project that prompted a proposal for a new department-wide leadership training program.

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They borrowed a series of readings and ideas focused on self-awareness and negotiation from the PLA curriculum that they now aim to cover during monthly meetings. Also included in their proposal, which is currently under consideration, is departmental funding for one person to go through the PLA annually.

Patricia A. Marken, PharmD, professor of pharmacy practice and administration at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and member of the board of directors for the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), suggested that the PLA is a great improvement on the traditional continuing education (CE) model.

"Rather than just doing random CE to learn a little more about whatever new drug is out there, this program actually advances a skill set," she said. "That's the better model for maintaining our practice, and that's why you're seeing these programs coming together."

Dr. Marken noted that the AACP also offers a leadership program, which is aimed more at pharmacists in academia who want to become chairs or deans. But the specific coursework and

happened to me several years ago when I was a new manager. I hired a pharmacy technician who turned out to be very abrasive in his interactions with people, both internally and externally. I committed to work with this individual and assured everyone that he was "going to make it." Sadly, after working with him for six months, we finally concluded together that he was just not cut out to be a pharmacy technician.

We mutually agreed that it wasn't going to work and we parted company.

The important lesson I learned was that there are times when no matter what efforts are made with the intention of "changing" someone, no change will come. Sometimes, the person is just not the right fit for the job. Although easier said than done, we need to do what it takes to hire good people who are the right fit for each position. We need to find those self-motivated pharmacy



employees who want to learn and grow and have the innate skills required for the job. We cannot force people to be who they are not.

Know the DNA of Your Staff

Of course, no two people are alike. We all have different skills, abilities, knowledge, training, experience and DNA. Our jobs as leaders are to place the right people in the right positions and maximize their particular strengths. Wise managers realize that they cannot know

these natural skills can be improved, too, although perhaps not as dramatically. This is why it is important to hire the right people.

Focus on the Important Items

We've been taught to prioritize and concentrate on the important items on our lists. As busy pharmacy leaders, this is becoming increasingly difficult as our responsibilities continue to pile up. I would like to encourage all leaders to get out of the crisis-management mode that we often find ourselves embroiled in. If you believe in Pareto's 80/20 principle, then you will want to concentrate on the top 20% of your activities that provide 80% of your impact. You may want to ask yourself how many of the items on your list are important to someone else, but not to you. Can you bounce issues and tasks back to others?

There are three questions that can help you focus when your priorities feel fuzzy. First, what gives you the greatest return?

we're all human, therefore we make mistakes. We all recognize this fact. What we also need to recognize is how to handle our mistakes. Good leaders need to acknowledge their mistakes to people above and below them in the hierarchy. We also need to learn from our mistakes in order not to repeat them. When we admit to mistakes, particularly to those we lead, we are acknowledging our weaknesses. By doing so, we invite others to honestly share, too, without fear of retribution. Fear immobilizes people and teams. I often say to those who report to me: "Let me know when I am doing something wrong, if I am going in the wrong direction or if I am missing something." This requires abundant trust, in both directions. Accepting negative feedback constructively is the sign of a mature leader. This is the price of progress. Avoid taking criticism personally or defensively. Thank the person and work to improve. Do not rule

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advanced degree component, she added, are unique to the PLA.

Vanderbilt's Mr. O'Neal, who now plans to pursue a dual MHA and MBA, pointed to other opportunities for pharmacists to enhance their leadership skills, including the Pharmacy Leadership Institute held at Boston University once a year. "But the PLA is the first I've seen that is so comprehensive, where you have classmates collaborate and share ideas," he said.

Another unique aspect of the PLA is its target audience: not students or residents, but career pharmacists who have spent years, even decades, in the field. "We're still a huge group of pharmacists that needs to be invested in," noted Mr. O'Neal.

And with all the programs available

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online, career pharmacists don't have to leave work to go back to school.

Roger Woolf, PharmD, administrative director at Virginia Mason Medical Center, in Seattle, has put five individuals through the PLA. One went on to complete an MHA certificate; two are currently in the MHA degree program at the University of Washington; and a third will start next year. "At the

time the leadership academy was initiated, I had a relatively young management team but one with strong potential for assuming leadership roles," he said. "They all will continue to expand their leadership roles in health care."

But Dr. Woolf notes that the PLA is not the end-all answer to health-system pharmacy's leadership dilemma. "The PLA does not automatically prepare

individuals for a formal leadership role," he said. "It does, however, provide some background knowledge and an introduction to the concepts that new leaders need to develop. To be most effective, the PLA program also has to be paired with mentoring and coaching as the participants are allowed to integrate their new knowledge and projects into their day-to-day work."

A rolling application process is under way for the PLA class of 2012. Requirements, costs and other details can be found on the ASHP Foundation Web site (www.ashpfoundation.org).

—Lynne Peeples

The sources in this story did not report any relevant conflicts of interest.