

Student Pharmacist Interest in a Pharmaceutical Industry Preparation Elective Course: A Cross-sectional Survey

Introduction: As the job market becomes more competitive for graduating pharmacy students, non-traditional career pathways are becoming more attractive. In order to assess their interest in pharmaceutical industry careers, current students of pharmacy at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy (SIUE SOP) were surveyed to gauge baseline awareness and need for an Industry preparation elective.

Methods: A 10-item questionnaire was emailed to SIUE SOP students, alumni, and Pre-Pharmacy Association members. The questionnaire requested demographic information, work experience, knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry, active participation within the SIUE Industry Pharmacists Organization (IPhO) chapter, participation in the Value of Industry Pharmacists (VIP) Case Competition, and openness to a proposed industry elective. The primary objective was to assess pharmacy and pre-pharmacy student baseline knowledge of pharmaceutical industry career options.

Results: The questionnaire yielded 292 respondents. Of the respondents, 34.2% reported that they had learned about the pharmaceutical industry within their first year of pharmacy studies, followed by 10.3% within their second year, 7.5% within their third year, 5.5% within their fourth year, and 32.9% before beginning pharmacy school. IPhO members made up 2.4% of the respondents and 5.8% had attended seminars on careers in the pharmaceutical Industry. When asked if students are interested in taking an industry focused elective, 28.4% indicated interest in an industry-focused elective, 34.9% would consider, and 29.5% would not consider such an elective.

Conclusion: Survey results suggest a need for more awareness and education on the pharmaceutical industry pathway for pharmacists as many students are not aware of these opportunities or how to pursue this career path if interested. Offering an industry-focused elective would bridge the gap in knowledge and provide students with the resources needed to pursue this path if interested.