



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

A Simple and Effective Programmatic Assessment Process for Continuous Quality Improvement

**Recognized with
AACP's 2014 Award for
Excellence in Assessment**

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Background

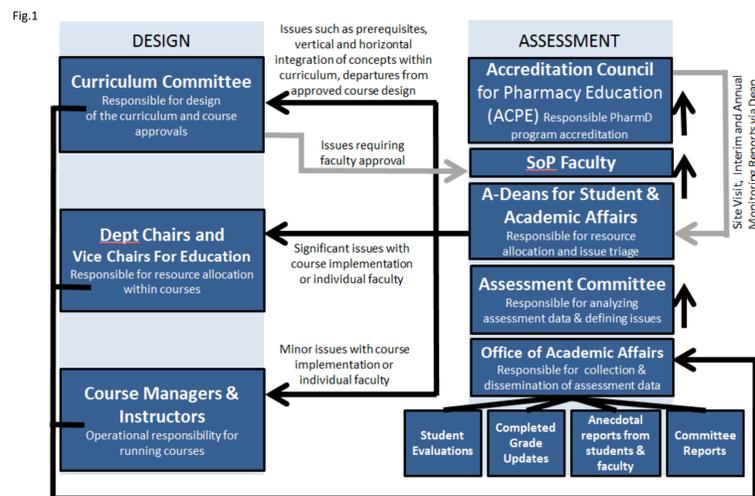
MISSION: The University of Maryland School of Pharmacy leads pharmacy education, scientific discovery, patient care, and community engagement in the state of Maryland and beyond.

PLEDGE: We are proud to be critical thinkers, life-long learners, and leaders who are sought for our expertise. We earn our reputation with the highest standards of personal ethics and professional conduct. Students and education are central to everything we do. We engage the community; together, we contribute to the improved health of society. We celebrate the distinctive talents of our faculty, staff, and students. We honor our traditions and advocate for dynamic changes in pharmacy practice, education, and research. We create the future of pharmacy.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME FOR EDUCATION: to foster student success through innovative curricula, superior practical experiences, and professional engagement. **GOAL:** to complement strong learner-centered environments using best practices in educational methodologies and instructional technology with evidence-driven approaches to teaching and assessment.

Through programmatic assessment, the school seeks to understand and improve curricular effectiveness and peripheral factors that impact the learning environment. Tools used to understand program-level quality include course evaluations, instructor evaluations, and academic performance campus comparisons. Established metrics and benchmarks include academic performance between campuses, course evaluation completion rate and documentation of course evaluation review by course managers, faculty and the department chair, vice chair, and mentors as needed. Students benchmark their performance against their peers by reviewing their class rank, which is provided to each individual via email by the Office of Academic Affairs every semester. The school benchmarks graduating class performance on the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) against peer institutions and longitudinally, as well as between campus cohorts. Faculty can benchmark themselves against other faculty who taught during the given semester by reflecting on their average instructor rating in conjunction with the other ratings on the graph.

Curricular Assessment and Improvement feedback loop, Figure 1.

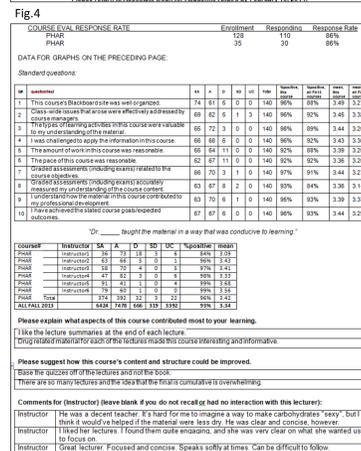
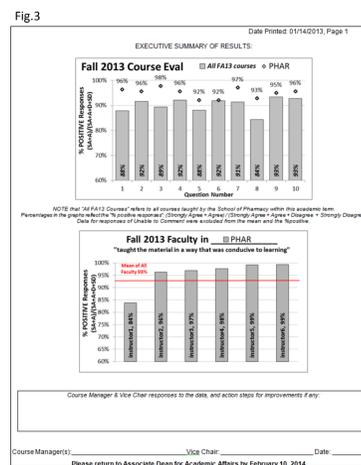
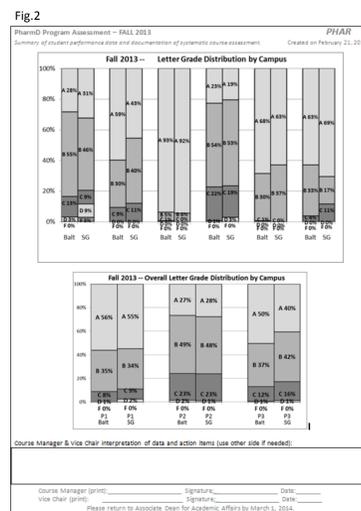


Methods

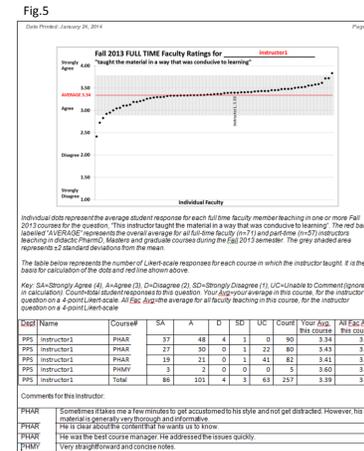
The curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to assure that learning experiences are as identical as possible for UM SOP students at both campuses – main campus in Baltimore (UMB); distance campus at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) in Rockville, MD. Reports on final letter grades include bar graphs by campus and class year for each required course and overall **letter grade distribution**, by class year for that semester, **Figure 2**.

Course evaluations are delivered via an in-house online survey tool through Blackboard. Data is collected anonymously as each respondent is automatically assigned a random number identifier. The evaluation period is opened three weeks prior to the end of the semester, and closed on the last official day of the semester. Automated reminders are generated on the morning an evaluation begins, then again at select intervals. Faculty are also notified when the evaluation period is opened, and are urged to share with students any course improvements resulting from previous feedback. Faculty are prohibited from awarding extra points or offering other incentives in exchange for completing course evaluations. The Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) provides to faculty course managers (CMs) the summary data and comments. Simple graphs and cross-course comparisons enable faculty to quickly analyze the results of their **course evaluations**, **Figures 3 and 4**.

The CMs and department vice chairs for academic affairs (VCs) review and sign off on the results, each noting their interpretation of the data and any plans for improvement. OAA retains this documentation and provides general feedback to students during class meetings. The Curriculum Committee conducts an iterative course review process that generates discussions between representatives of the committee and the current course managers regarding course evaluations, and documentation of any changes to the course as a result of the student feedback. The Assessment Committee reviews overall course evaluation data as part of the metrics for the Education goals of the school's strategic plan.



Another practice developed to save course managers the time of distributing instructor results is that each faculty member receives an **individual instructor evaluation** from the OAA, **Figure 5**, (numerical results for the standard question on teaching effectiveness and comments) for every PharmD course in which they taught that semester. The individual's overall average is graphed with all faculty teaching in the same semester. The instructor evaluations are retained in faculty portfolios for faculty and their mentors to assess overall performance across courses with varying content and pedagogy, and plan for professional development.



Results

Benchmarks for each metric include equivalent academic performance between campuses, 80% each evaluation response rate, and 100% documentation of evaluation review by faculty and vice chairs. The rationale for these high benchmarks is reflective of the value of student perspectives to inform the continuous quality improvement process at UM SOP. In the last six semesters, the overall course evaluation response rate has been between 67% and 78% each semester, and 100% return rate for documentation of review by faculty and vice chairs. Academic performance between campuses is comparable, with annual cumulative grade point averages by class cohort varying no more than a few hundredths of a point. When minor statistical differences are detected they are investigated and corrective action is taken.

According to the 2013 AACP Faculty Survey, 91% of UM SOP faculty agreed or strongly agreed that "the school uses programmatic assessment data to improve the curriculum," compared to 88% of faculty at peer schools and 87% nationally. This is consistent with previous years, indicating sustained curricular effectiveness despite the fact that faculty continue to debate the value of student attendance at recorded lectures, which has dropped substantially in Baltimore since the introduction of Mediasite technology for the launch of the Shady Grove campus in the fall of 2009. In the fall 2013 course evaluations, 89% of students agree or strongly agree that "the types of learning activities in this course were valuable to my understanding of the material" (Q3) and 94% agree or strongly agree that "I have achieved the stated course goals/expected outcomes" (Q10).

Implications

This process is easily transferable to other colleges and schools of pharmacy, regardless of the type of academic records and registration system and online survey tool for course evaluations. A dedicated staff person with skill in Excel is necessary to produce the graphs and summaries. Keys to success include only collecting and disseminating actionable data, benchmarking individual and course performance to mean data, and requiring staff, faculty and administrators to share their interpretation of the data.