Comparison of the Responsibilities of Tenure versus Non-tenure Track Pharmacy Practice Faculty

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Pharmacy faculty are expected to participate in teaching, scholarly, and service activities. The goal of this study was to determine if the expectations of tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty differed with respect to their involvement with these activities. A survey was sent to the chairs of the pharmacy practice department of 82 United States Colleges of Pharmacy to ascertain their faculty's responsibilities. Seventy-one (86 percent) of the surveys were returned with two surveys lacking sufficient data for interpretation. Based on the remaining 69 surveys, there was a significant difference in the majority of the responsibilities among tenure and non-tenure track faculty. Tenure track faculty are expected to serve on more college committees and publish more articles, while non-tenure track faculty are expected to have more student clerkship responsibilities. Although not significantly different, tenure track faculty also teach more didactic hours. Of the activities assessed, the number of annual publications represented the greatest disparity between the two groups. If increased scholarly activity is desired from non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty, as seems to be the trend, the amount of time allocated for clinical activities may need to be reduced.

INTRODUCTION

Colleges of pharmacy expect their faculty to participate in teaching, scholarly, and service activities(1,2). They also expect faculty to achieve a certain level of excellence within each of these three areas in order to be retained or promoted. However, faculty commitment to these areas often varies among universities as well as among individuals within the same university. Some universities are noted primarily for their scholarly emphasis, while others place stronger demands on teaching or service. Regardless of the focus, the importance of scholarly activities is being recognized by an increasing number of colleges as an essential expectation of their faculty(1,2).

With the advent of clinical pharmacy, colleges began hiring greater numbers of pharmacy practice faculty compared to pharmaceutical sciences or pharmacy administration faculty (1). This increase in the number of pharmacy practice faculty was driven by a transformation of the curriculum into a more clinically oriented program of study. Unique to pharmacy practice faculty is a substantial service responsibility to patient care. Even so, they are expected to be actively involved in teaching and scholarly activities. Within colleges of pharmacy, both tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty exist, however, a reasonable assumption would be that tenure track faculty are expected to be more productive in the area of scholarship with less time devoted to patient care than nontenure track faculty. Currently, there is little published information available on this topic. The purpose of this study was to compare responsibilities between tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty within colleges of pharmacy in the United States.

METHODS

An 11-item survey, divided into two sections, was developed to identify the activities of both tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty among colleges of pharmacy within the United States (see Appendix). The survey was mailed to the chairs of pharmacy practice in 82 United States schools of pharmacy. The chair's name and mailing address of the school were obtained from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy 2000-2001 Roster of Faculty and Professional Staff publication. Each mailing included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the survey, and a self-addressed postage paid envelope for return of the survey. The return envelopes were coded to identify the responding school. After three weeks, a second mailing was sent to those chairs who had failed to return the initial survey. Several weeks after the second mailing, an email with the aforementioned documents attached, was sent to the remaining non-responders.

Responses to each of the survey questions were compared between the tenure and non-tenure faculty. We also performed the same comparison of schools who employ both tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty. Data from completed surveys were entered into SPSS® for Windows, Version 11.0 (SPSS® Inc., Chicago, IL) for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for all data and separately for tenure and non-tenure categories. Data were further analyzed to determine if significant differences existed between the tenure and nontenure track faculty responsibilities. Statistical significance was set at P < 0.05. Independent t-tests were used to test for differences between the academic track (e.g., tenure or nontenure) and the following: (i) the number of weeks per year precepting students; (ii) the number of clerkship students precepted per year; (iii) the number of didactic hours taught per
RESULTS

Fifty-three of 82 (65 percent) surveys were returned with the initial mailing. A second mailing was sent to the remaining 29 chairs resulting in an additional 18 surveys being returned. An email was sent to the departmental chairs of the remaining 11 non-responders, however, none of the chairs responded to the email. Therefore, a total of 71 (87 percent) surveys were returned. One of the surveys was returned with no data recorded, while a second survey failed to provide absolute numbers for any of the questions. These two were omitted resulting in 69 (84 percent) surveys representing our sample population.

Of the 69 pharmacy practice departments represented, nine (13 percent) indicated they only employ tenure track faculty while eleven (16 percent) of the departments only have non-tenure track faculty. Forty-nine (71 percent) departments were comprised of both tenure and non-tenure track faculty.

Survey responses are shown in Tables I and II. Analysis of all responses indicated that a significant difference existed between tenure and non-tenure faculty for all questions with the exception of the number of didactic hours taught per year (Table I). Although not statistically significant, tenure track faculty tended to devote more time to didactic teaching than did non-tenure faculty (36 vs. 29 hours). Responses to survey questions from pharmacy practice departments that employ both tenure and non-tenure track faculty were also compared yielding identical statistically significant results (Table II).

Survey responses between private and public colleges are shown in Table III. Faculty at private institutions are expected to devote significantly more time to precepting students and precept more students, while faculty at public institutions are expected to publish significantly more peer-reviewed articles.

DISCUSSION

Pharmacy practice faculty often have difficulty balancing their responsibilities among teaching, scholarly, and service activities(3). Pharmacy practice faculty differ from other pharmacy faculty in that a substantial amount of time is devoted to clinical service activities(1). Nevertheless, pharmacy practice faculty are expected to maintain an adequate teaching load, provide service to the university, and produce scholarly work(2). However, as our data indicate, the time allotted to these activities differs between tenure and non-tenure track pharmacy practice faculty.

Regarding teaching responsibilities, tenure track faculty are expected to be involved in more didactic teaching than non-tenure track faculty. Although the difference was not statistically significant, the trend was the same when all responses were considered as well as in departments that offer both tracks.

In the area of scholarship, tenure track faculty are expected to publish approximately three times the number of peer reviewed articles than non-tenure track faculty. This would suggest that tenure track faculty are involved in scholarly activities to a greater extent than non-tenure faculty. This may also indicate that non-tenure track faculty are involved in clinical activities to a greater extent than tenure track faculty with less of their time being directed towards scholarly activities. Clinical service responsibilities can place enormous time demands on faculty, and may cause other activities, including scholarly activities, to suffer(1). With scholarly activities being

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Table I. Survey responses of pharmacy practice departments that recognize both tenure and non-tenure faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Non-tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of weeks per year</td>
<td>27.6 ± 9.9</td>
<td>33.4 ± 7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precepting students a</td>
<td>(n = 57)</td>
<td>(n = 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clerkship students per year b</td>
<td>13 ± 6.2</td>
<td>16.8 ± 8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 56)</td>
<td>(n = 58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of didactic hours taught per year</td>
<td>36.1 ± 29.6</td>
<td>29.2 ± 23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 56)</td>
<td>(n = 57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of peer-reviewed articles published per year</td>
<td>1.5 ± 1.3</td>
<td>0.6 ± 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 57)</td>
<td>(n = 59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of committees assigned to per year c</td>
<td>2.1 ± 0.9</td>
<td>1.8 ± 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 57)</td>
<td>(n = 59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data presented as mean ± SD. n = number of departments responding.
a Statistical significance at P < 0.01 for comparison between tenure and non-tenure faculty.
b Statistical significance at P < 0.05 for comparison between tenure and non-tenure faculty.

c Statistical significance at P < 0.01 for comparison between private and public colleges.
recognized as an important element of the maturation of faculty as well as an essential requirement for retention and promotion, it appears necessary to provide faculty the opportunity to expand their scholarly potential (1,4,5). One such option is to provide faculty with additional clinical personnel (i.e., residents, clinical pharmacists) that will serve to decrease the faculty's patient care responsibilities (1). Insufficient time is the number one impediment reported by faculty for their inability to increase their research activities (3). By alleviating some of their clinical responsibilities, faculty may be able to focus more attention and time on scholarly activities in order to broaden their research endeavors. Another option is to encourage collaboration among pharmacy practice faculty as well as among faculty from other departments (1,5). The majority of pharmacy practice faculty possess a PharmD degree as opposed to faculty from other departments that often have a PhD degree. Unlike PhD’s, PharmD’s receive intense clinical instruction, but often lack in-depth education in research design and statistics (4). Moreover, practice faculty members often have accessible patient populations, while PhD faculty have the training and knowledge needed to ensure quality research is being performed. Therefore, collaboration among pharmacy practice faculty and PhD’s may provide improved research opportunities and support (5-7).

In assessing the faculty member's service activities, tenure track faculty are expected to serve on more committees than non-tenure track faculty. Although there was a significant difference between the two tracks, the absolute numbers of committee assignments were quite similar. These data may be somewhat misleading as faculty often participate in committees at their respective clinical sites with that data not being represented in our survey. Nevertheless, tenure track faculty do appear to have more committee responsibilities within the college of pharmacy.

Regarding clinical service responsibilities, non-tenure track faculty are expected to precept a significantly greater number of clerkship students than tenure track faculty. They also are required to devote significantly more time to clerkship students per year than do tenure faculty. While precepting students on their clinical rotations, most pharmacy practice faculty are also actively involved in clinical activities at their practice site. It is estimated that pharmacy practice faculty devote 40 percent of their time to clinical practice and clerkship teaching (4). As mentioned, this increased time devoted to clinical service interferes with that which might otherwise be allocated for scholarly activities. Pharmacy practice faculty also tend to provide students with individualized or small group instruction during their clinical rotations. Although often not included as a faculty member's teaching load, such instructional sessions can consume an enormous amount of time, far exceeding the time noted for didactic lectures.

Although not the primary focus of our paper, it is interesting to note that private institutions allocate significantly more time to precepting students while public institutions produce significantly more peer-reviewed publications. Therefore, it appears the primary focus of the pharmacy practice faculty of private colleges is on educating the students while the faculty of public institutions place a greater emphasis on scholarly activities.

One limitation of this study is that the survey questions were structured to assess requirements of faculty as opposed to their actual performance. Hence, although faculty may actually function at a level higher than their college requirements, this study did not assess this. Nevertheless, the intention was to ascertain the minimal standards of productivity for pharmacy practice faculty.

CONCLUSIONS

Tenure and non-tenure pharmacy practice faculty differ significantly in terms of their required research and service activities. Pharmacy practice departments may wish to review these numbers as they develop guidelines for tenure and non-tenure track faculty. If increased scholarly activity is desired from nontenure track pharmacy practice faculty, as seems to be the trend, the amount of time allocated for clinical activities may need to be reduced.

References


APPENDIX. PHARMACY PRACTICE FACULTY SURVEY

Please answer the following questions regarding your Tenure-Track Pharmacy Practice Faculty. If your department does not recognize a tenure-track, please omit this section and proceed to section B.

- How many weeks or months per year are your tenure-track faculty members required to precept clerkship students? ___ weeks/year OR ___ months/year
- How many students are your tenure-track faculty required to precept per year? ___ students/year
- On average, how many didactic hours do your tenure-track faculty teach per year? ___ didactic hours/year
- How many peer-reviewed articles are your tenure-track faculty required to publish per year? ___ articles/year
- On average, how many departmental or college committees do your tenure-track faculty participate on per year? ___ Committees

Please answer the following questions regarding your Non-Tenure-Track Pharmacy Practice Faculty. If your department does not recognize a non-tenure-track, please omit this section.

- Do your non-tenure-track faculty receive annual or multi-year employment contracts? If multi-year, please indicate the number of years. ___ annual contracts
multi-year contracts (number of years)

- How many weeks/months per year are your non-tenure-track faculty required to precept clerkship students?
  ___ weeks/year OR ___ months/year

- How many students are your non-tenure-track faculty required to precept per year?
  ___ students/year

- On average, how many didactic hours do your non-tenure-track faculty teach per year?
  ___ didactic hours/year

- How many peer-reviewed articles are your non-tenure-track faculty required to publish per year?
  ___ articles/year

- On average, how many departmental or college committees do your non-tenure-track faculty participate on per year?
  ___ Committees