

Chapter 6

Course Model Redesign for Continuity of Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the chapter is to illustrate instructional models that were implemented by Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy to comply with COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. While the second half of Spring 2020 was completely online (statewide shutdown), the university remained open in a hybrid manner for the 2020-21 academic year. There are three sections in the chapter: didactic, interprofessional, and advanced pharmacy practice experiences. The didactic section discusses course delivery methods and active learning, office hours, remote testing, student feedback, and contingency planning. The interprofessional section illustrates some of the school's synchronous and asynchronous interprofessional learning activities before and during the COVID-pandemic, as well as interprofessional education assessment methods. The last section of the chapter discusses how advanced pharmacy practice experience "direct patient care" was redefined, examples of the experiences, and contingency plans that were put into place to ensure on-time graduation for the classes of 2020 and 2021 pharmacy students.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has brought an abundance of change to all levels of education over the past year. In an effort to mitigate the spread of the disease and keep students and employees safe, remote learning and education became the norm for a minimum of six months (Draugalis, et al., 2020; Kawaguchi-Suzuki, et al.,

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2020; Romanelli, et al., 2020). While all higher education institutions faced similar challenges, they had slightly different variations in responses. The purpose of this chapter is to explain course models and strategies that were adopted or developed by the Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. The chapter objectives are as follows: (1) to describe methods for hybrid delivery of didactic and laboratory courses; (2) to describe methods for hybrid interprofessional activities; and (3) to describe methods for hybrid advanced pharmacy practice experiences.

BACKGROUND

Samford is in a suburban location of Birmingham, Alabama and has approximately 7,000 students and employees. The McWhorter School of Pharmacy has approximately 40 faculty members and 115 students per professional year cohort. Its Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) as a four-year in-person professional program.

Samford University ceased normal spring semester operations abruptly in March 2020. Faculty were asked to adjust as quickly as possible to move content to and teach their courses entirely online through the university's learning management system (LMS), Canvas (Instructure, 2021). Instructional designers and information technology staff held numerous online help sessions to assist faculty with this transition. Fortunately, the McWhorter School of Pharmacy already had all its classes and syllabi in Canvas, as well as most of its supplemental course materials. The traditional in-person component is what needed to be 'figured out' in a very short time frame. The spring semester finished as scheduled (although not in the manner it was scheduled), noting lessons learned along the way.

The university stated that its "response to the COVID-19 pandemic is focused on mitigating the risks for contracting and transmitting the virus among employees, students and others while continuing to be a place of superior learning and personal development" (Samford University, 2021). With strict precautions such as COVID testing prior to the fall and spring semesters, random COVID testing for students and employees, increased physical spacing in classrooms and open areas, and augmented cleaning protocols, the university was able to open (with pre-planned remote instruction from Thanksgiving to the end of the fall semester) for the entire 2020-2021 academic year. Having an in-person component was important to the university and school. Changes to course models, however, were necessary across campus to accommodate the six-foot social distancing rule.

COURSE MODEL REDESIGN

Issues, Controversies, Problems

Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy, like all educational institutions and programs, faced the challenge of managing the logistics and safety protocols for teaching and assessing content traditionally delivered in classroom, laboratory, and experiential settings. Of equal importance to managing the logistics required for social distancing, the school had to safeguard the achievement of student learning outcomes and compliance with applicable regional and professional accreditation standards. The authors

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