Considerations for Developing LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity Within School of Pharmacy Communities

Cayden Miller, 2023 PharmD Candidate, Ryan Olp, 2023 PharmD Candidate, and Kelly Gable, PharmD BCPP

Introduction

- In 2021, SIUE School of Pharmacy introduced the LGBTQIA+ Student Affinity Group as a safe community space for identifiers† represented within the student cohort.
- Through participation in the LGBTQIA+ Student Affinity Group, we identified a deficit in guidance for Schools of Pharmacy to create LGBTQIA+ inclusive environments within their graduate program.
- Three main categories for implementing inclusive LGBTQIA+ environments outlined in this study are student community building, curricular design, and facility infrastructure.

†**Definition of "Identifiers"** - Individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community

Background

- 15% of LGBTQIA+ individuals reported having avoided or delayed seeking healthcare due to discrimination from healthcare providers. Almost half of transgender individuals surveyed reported directly experiencing healthcare discrimination in the past year.
- Pharmacists are uniquely accessible healthcare providers that patients in the LGBTQIA+ community may seek out for information on topics regarding gender affirming care, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, or best immunization practices.
- The sharing of lived experiences from LGBTQIA+ identifiers combined with clinical and communication education allows student pharmacists to become prepared to care for members of this community.
- Current education strategies regarding this population are widely deficient, viewed as additive/elective content, or reinforce outdated curriculum.
- Current curricular recommendations are covered in detail within the corresponding ImPaCT paper and will be summarized in future publications.

Methods

- Six faculty, staff, and administrative members from SIUE School of Pharmacy were individually interviewed, selected based on the potential for their position to promote and maintain diversity and inclusion.
- Faculty interviews informed the researchers how the school has fostered an LGBTQIA+ inclusive environment, and what challenges and barriers remain to be overcome in such efforts.
- Seven student members of the LGBTQIA+ Student Affinity Group were interviewed in order to develop recommendations from a student perspective and assess the efficacy of the affinity group in furthering inclusivity.

Results

Faculty/Staff/Administration Interview Primary Trends and Conclusions	
Generalizable	Concern around lack of utilization/awareness of pre-existing resources
	Difficulty in getting education and training on inclusive practices to be accessible for and engaged in by all faculty members
	Affirmation of LGBTQIA+ Student Affinity Group utility
	Lack of faculty identifiers within our own facility
	Difficulty keeping up to date with most appropriate LGBTQIA+ terminology
	Need for increased inclusivity in curriculum, LGBTQIA+ specific population health, both in elective and core curriculum modalities
	Described ideal environment as one where authenticity and diversity are encouraged and celebrated
Facility-Specific	Large number of SafeZone trained faculty‡
	Above average in terms of active DEI efforts and awareness on a national scale

Table 1. Primary identified trends in faculty/staff/administration individual interviews.
‡Noted concern that this training may not be ideally visible to students.

Student Interview Primary Trends and Conclusions		
Generalizable	Benefits	Space provided community ownership, validation, normalization, and connection
		Acknowledgement of minority struggles personally and recognition of struggles in others' experiences
		Informal setting for students – establishment of "safe space"
		Protective measures such as membership anonymity (allows all stages of identity/visibility to participate)
		Increased students' knowledge regarding inclusivity and facility practices
		Allowed for student voices within community to be amplified and created a pipeline for identification and resolution of community-specific concerns
		Capacity to lessen feelings of isolation (especially in instances such as COVID-19 e-learning)
	Concerns	Ability for students to fit meetings into their schedules/maintaining energy to feel able to attend
		Unclear description of affinity groups / Unclear expectations
		Need for consistent, monthly to every other month meetings
		Joining without knowing the other members' identities can be difficult (akin to "coming out" to peers)
		Struggles with identifying most appropriate methods of ongoing communication
		Student identifiers should not be the primary educators for matters specific to the community
		Lack of allyship visibility outside of affinity group
Facility - Specific	Benefits	Ability to integrate advocacy efforts into cohort activity‡
		Hosting of student panel for faculty only successfully engaged with faculty members and opened conversation on barriers
	Concerns	Lack of faculty facilitator who is also an identifier

Table 2. Primary identified trends in student individual interviews.
‡This is reliant on the stage of development of the institution's inclusive practices and should only be pursued if safety and cohort investment are established prior.

Discussion

- The main topics to which awareness should be drawn to are the level of resource utilization/presence for individuals seeking guidance on improving inclusivity in their own personal efforts, visibility of identifiers among students and faculty and identification of correlating factors, and the value that active engagement and space formation for identifying students brings to the community.
- Valid concerns regarding financial barriers to hiring diverse representation, time constraints within curricular revision considerations, and ability of faculty to facilitate inclusive programming were addressed and may require facility-specific solutions.
- Ongoing efforts at our own institution have precipitated change throughout the research period:
  - Hosting of student panel for faculty, educating on LGBTQIA+ student perspectives.
  - Invitation of Dr. Kyle Wilby, Associate Professor at Dalhousie University College of Pharmacy as a guest speaker.
  - Case-based application revision across the curriculum.

Conclusion

- Viewing the furthering of inclusive environments via the compartmentalized lens of three categories by which to effect change (student community, facility infrastructure, and curricular design) allows changemakers to identify deficits and strengths unique to their environment and plan accordingly.

Author Contact

Cayden Miller, 2023 PharmD Candidate
caydenrmiller@gmail.com

Ryan Olp, 2023 PharmD Candidate
rolp@siue.edu

Kelly Gable, PharmD BCPP
kgable@siue.edu