

Submission date: February 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Pharmacy Technology OEC

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)-recognition

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

- Sandra Pence, Professor, Dental Hygiene (chair), UAA/Goose Lake
- Lita Preston, Assistant Professor, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, UAA/Goose Lake

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Program Relevancy

The mission of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. Located in Anchorage and on community campuses in Southcentral Alaska, UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. The University of Alaska Anchorage is an open access university with academic programs leading to occupational endorsements; undergraduate and graduate certificates; and associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees in a rich, diverse and inclusive environment.

UAA's School of Allied Health's mission is "to educate and develop allied health professionals to serve all Alaskans," while the College of Health's mission is "Advancing the health and well-being of people and communities."

The mission of the UAA Allied Health Pharmacy Technology program is to develop students with the essential skills in order to support pharmacists in a healthcare setting; promote safe and effective skills that will benefit any level of occupation obtained; endorse professionalism, ethics and codes of conduct in a working environment; and encourage pharmacy technicians as an integral part of the patient care team. (Academic Assessment Report, 2018-2019)

The program's mission directly aligns with those of the School and Institution with its goal to educate pharmacy technicians in all areas of the state through its distance education format (disseminate knowledge through teaching; educate and develop allied health professionals to serve all Alaskans). By providing a focused, low-credit, minimal cost path towards the career of pharmacy technician, the program is also in line with the College of Health's strategic priority of "efficiently and effectively utilizing our resources to prepare and maintain a workforce to meet future health and well-being needs in Alaska." Though not specified in its mission but noted through annual program assessment reports and faculty interviews, the program also contributes to the strategic priority of "forging strong relationships, partnerships and ties with our communities, businesses, schools and people" with its solid connection to industry partners.

The Pharmacy Technology Occupational Endorsement Certificate program is a small program (13-20 enrolled with 3-17 graduates each year) focused on workforce preparation in pharmacy technology. Graduates are prepared to take the national board called the Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination (PTCE). At the present time licensure as a pharmacy technician through the State of Alaska functions as a registry and does *not* require the examination; however, the Alaska Board of Pharmacy is considering adding that requirement in the near future.

Furthermore, effective **January 1, 2020** the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) implemented education/training requirements for certification. The UAA Pharmacy Technology OEC is the only program in Alaska to train pharmacy technicians and it has recently received recognition as a PTCB Education/Training program.

Support of Other Academic Programs

Approximately one-third of SCH production is from students in the major while two-thirds are from students in other programs or non-degree seeking students. These courses could be electives to support majors or may be considered for a second career option.

Partnerships

The program maintains a relationship with the Alaska Pharmacist Association through its Advisory Committee to stay abreast of current certification requirements and employment needs. Faculty members continue to work in the pharmacy industry while they teach, with one newly appointed to the State Pharmacy Board.

Workforce Development/Employment Opportunities

The Alaska employment growth outlook for pharmacy technicians is low, with moderate employment opportunities. Forty-four openings are expected from 2016-2026. That said, two factors could further increase demand for the program.

1. Effective January 2020, the national board agency requires completion of an approved education program for people with no work experience to be eligible to sit for the exam. UAA's Pharmacy Technology Occupational Endorsement Certificate program is an approved training program.
2. The State Board of Pharmacy may revise state statute/regulation to require successful completion of the national board exam to obtain State of Alaska licensure. This is currently *not* required. There are 1,557 active pharmacy technician licenses issued by the State of Alaska; it is unknown how many of those license holders have passed the PTCE and that may want formal education to help them pass the exam. Industry indicates employers are seeking applicants with more formal training regardless of state requirements for licensure, however.

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

The number of majors greatly exceeds the number of graduates. Some students may major in pharmacy technology while also majoring in another program, and decide not to apply for graduation for this OEC even if they complete the program. Because formal education has not previously been required to sit for the national exam or to obtain employment, students may not prioritize applying for graduation and thus all completers would not show up on IR data. This may change if the Board of Pharmacy changes the requirements for licensure to include formal education and/or successful completion of the PTCE.

The PHAR A192 course is typically the last course students take and so completion rates from that course can quasi-substitute for official graduation rates. Over the past five years, the number of students passing that course compared to the official graduation numbers is: 2015: 17/13, 2016: 15/17, 2017: 11/5, 2018:11/5, 2019: 12/7. This is still lower than the number of majors; perhaps some students declare the major but for various reasons decide not to continue.

While the program can be completed in one year, many students are taking classes part time, have changed majors to this one, or are concurrently enrolled in other programs. All of these situations can extend the length of time to complete the program. The overall time to complete the program has ranged from 0.8-3 years. The overall course pass rate is 80%, which is acceptable considering these courses are basically open enrollment. The 5-year pass rate for the PHAR A192 course is 88%, and indicates a higher course completion rate for students that have taken most or all of the program courses.

FTE student count ranges from 14-23, with the high year coinciding with a contract with Palau negotiated by a full-time program director. FTE faculty ranges from 0.9-1.5, and parallels student count because this program is delivered entirely by adjuncts that are hired to teach sections as they are scheduled. This allows tight fiscal management, which is evident in the next discussion.

The 80% tuition revenue/instruction cost ratio ranges from 1.5-2.5 (self-calculated), meaning it brings in more revenue than is expended in instructional costs. This program stands out in the School of Allied Health in because it actually brings in significantly more revenue than expenses and helps support other programs.

SCH production has been relatively level for the past three years, with higher production seen in 2013-2016. Current levels still provide sufficient revenue to meet and exceed costs. The program has room to grow and increase SCH should State of Alaska regulations change and require either formal education or successful completion of the national PTCE (which requires program completion) for inexperienced pharmacy technicians.

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

Specialized Accreditation

The program is a PTCEB-Recognized Education/Training program, effective December 2, 2019.

Currency of the Curriculum

All six courses were updated to meet the new PTCE blueprint (exam content update is effective in 2020) this fall and are proceeding through the curriculum review process. They should be on the Faculty Senate consent agenda on February 7, 2020. Informal changes are planned for implementation in Spring 2020. Program Student Learning Outcomes were updated based on the new PTCE blueprint, and the program assessment plan was revised and submitted for review/approval, expected to be scheduled with the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee in Spring 2020.

Innovative Program Design

This program is entirely distance-delivered, meaning it is available to meet the needs of the entire state.

Availability and Indications of Quality Distance Offerings

All six courses are distance-delivered. A review of the distance offerings was conducted in an AY19 Program Review using the Quality Matters Non-annotated Standards from the QM Continuing and Professional Education Rubric, Second Edition (extracted from the Quality Matters (QM) website: <https://www.qualitymatters.org/>). Using the rubric as a guide, the eight General Standards were applied to a sampling of Pharmacy Technology courses. Regarding General Standards 1 – 4, learning objectives, assessment strategies and instructional materials were easily identified and well organized; only one course did not provide a student link to current “course, institutional or organizational policies with which the learner is expected to comply.” For General Standard 5 in one of the courses, “instructor/facilitator’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments” was not apparent. For General Standard 6 & 7, some links were either not functional (404 Not Found) or lead the learner to an incorrectly stated site. General Standard 8 for accessibility appeared to be the weakest in the following areas: information about accessibility, providing alternative means of access in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners and syllabi in an accessible format. Weekly collaborate recordings and some Podcasts were not Closed Captioned. Two courses could not be evaluated for General Standard 8.5 as the collaborative recordings are no longer available.

Since that review was completed, the program has worked towards correcting deficiencies. Course links are being checked for functionality and accuracy and the program is researching means to obtain transcripts for videos that are not closed-captioned.

Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

The Pharmacy Technology program uses three assessment instruments to evaluate its program student learning outcomes (PSLOs). These include an exit exam modeled after the national certification exam and two surveys, graduate and employer. The 2019 Assessment Report covered the six PSLOs in use at that time. Key findings were that students overall had the knowledge necessary to pass the national credentialing examination and that graduates felt well-prepared (4+ or higher on a 5 point Likert scale) in three outcomes: 1) Receiving, screening, preparing and checking prescription orders; 2) Participating in medical error prevention; 3) Communicating clearly with confidentiality and professionalism. Graduates felt adequately prepared (3.6-3.88 on a 5 point Likert scale) for the remaining three outcomes: 4) Initiating, verifying, assisting and collecting payments; 5) Maintaining equipment and

facilities; 6) Purchasing and maintaining inventory. Overall, graduates were satisfied with their overall preparation for their career (4.0 on a 5 point Likert scale). Employer survey results were not available due to difficulty in tracking down graduates to ask where they were employed.

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

The UAA Pharmacy Technician Occupational Endorsement program is the only one in Alaska. The 2014 Program Prioritization report categorized this program as a priority for enhancement due to its good outcomes and mission alignment, on-line delivery to allow universal access, and being the only program for this discipline in Alaska.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

Since last year's program review, the program has met two of the three recommendations in the Provost's findings. The program is now a PTCB-Recognized Education/Training program. Additionally, all six of its courses have been updated to reflect the new blueprint for PTCE content that will be effective in 2020. Areas of concern identified in the Quality Matters review are being addressed, with links checked for functionality and accuracy and transcripts sought for videos that are not closed-captioned.

The third recommendation addressed low student retention. This review committee is uncertain the program's apparent low retention rate is cause for concern. Students may initially enroll to explore the career, and then choose another healthcare pathway with a "higher" award, using PHAR courses as electives that support the new career choice. Because students cannot change majors from an OEC to an associate or baccalaureate degree, and students rarely think to drop a major, that OEC major remains until it expires in five years whether or not the student intends to complete the program.

Despite the discrepancy in the number of majors versus the number of completers, this program has a solid financial status, consistently bringing in more revenue than expenses. This, if no other reason, seems a legitimate motive to continue the program as it supports other programs that do not have a positive cash flow. Furthermore, the Pharmacy Technology program has potential to bring in students from other states and countries (with out of state tuition) if it were marketed. In 2011-2013 the program had an Educational Service Agreement with Palau that increased enrollment substantially. That came about because the program had a full-time program director at that time who was able to reach out and establish the partnership. While a full-time program director may not be possible in these budget times with a program of this size, this type of outreach might be possible at an administrative level should an opportunity present at some time.

In the program review last year, the committee recommended the Pharmacy Technician OEC program have a dedicated program director. The committee suggested that the program hire an experienced adjunct to administer the program through a course release similar to what other Allied Health program directors receive (~3 credits/year). This year the School of Allied Health hired a long-term adjunct faculty through credits in her appointment letter to revise the curriculum and assessment process. This seemed to work well, with some additional support from the School of Allied Health. The review committee strongly recommends the program have a designated part-time program director through a similar arrangement, or another that meets the needs of the program.

The review committee finds the Pharmacy Technology Occupational Endorsement Certificate program successfully serves its students and meets its mission and goals. Necessary changes recommended in the AY19 program review have been made and no immediate changes are necessary, other than obtaining a designated part-time (adjunct) program director. The review committee recommends the Pharmacy Technology Occupational Endorsement Certificate program be *continued*.