

American Pharmacists Association – Academy of Student Pharmacists
2006–2007 Chapter Achievement Reports
Chapter Innovative Programming Report

The Wisconsin Society of Pharmacy Students

Investing In Our Future

A top pharmacy student looked around the room. He was overwhelmed by the vast numbers of pharmacists present at the closing reception for the national APhA meeting. He saw a small group of people who had been promoting their residency at the residency fair earlier in the day. This student thought to himself how interested he was in pursuing this particular opportunity. He wanted to talk to them, but felt too overwhelmed by the situation. Even though he had completed his professional degree, he had never been taught how to approach this type of situation. He became very frustrated with himself and wished that he could take advantage of this excellent opportunity to invest in his future.

As a chapter, WSPS helped student pharmacists and students such as the one described above to invest in their futures through the development and implementation of the first annual etiquette dinner, “Steps for Success.” The etiquette dinner was a formal reception and four-course dinner that included an interactive guest speaker who covered etiquette tips for each stage of such an event. This innovative program gave members the tools they need to develop professional networking skills at formal events. The chapter set several goals for the execution of this event:

- 1) Provide a forum for students to learn proper etiquette for a formal reception and dinner, so that they will further their skill sets and be better able to present themselves during professional events;
- 2) Promote the importance of professionalism to students in order to advance the profession through engaging each student in intellectual social situations;
- 3) Provide a social event to help members network with each other and create new contacts within the profession, as well as have an enjoyable experience.

The aim of this event was to help students become more comfortable in a professional setting. The event allowed the students to gain an understanding of the professional attire required for such an event, the appropriate mannerisms and topics for conversation and it helped to instill confidence in them that they could thrive in a professional social situation. It gave students an opportunity to practice important life skills so that they will exude confidence when in an actual professional setting. Prior to the event, many students commented that they felt nervous about how to approach others and were unsure of appropriate conversation topics. It was evident by the end of the evening that students who originally felt out of their element were conversing with others with ease.

This creative idea was implemented by the chapter's Organization Affairs co-chairs and was astoundingly successful. The event was held on February 6th, 2007, from 7:00 to 9:30 pm at the Lowell Center, a formal banquet hall on campus. Members, non-members and faculty were invited to take part in this valuable experience. The cost was \$20.00 for members and \$25.00 for non-members. This

covered all expenses for the chapter with no profit. This was in line with the goals for the event, as the executive board wished to keep the event affordable for students.

Seventy WSPS members and fourteen other students attended the dinner. Two faculty members were present. The evening began with a reception and punch. Students were given a handout with tips on proper etiquette for a pre-dinner gathering, including introductions and conversation topics. The reception lasted approximately one-half hour, at which time the students were directed to the formal banquet hall for the dinner and presentation. The meal consisted of soup, salad, choice of chicken, beef or vegetarian main course and dessert.

The speaker presented a power point presentation throughout the course of the meal, covering topics at appropriate points. These topics included conversation topics, place settings, meal etiquette, appropriate ways to interact with wait staff, and manners. He used multiple-choice questions directed at table numbers to engage the students and his presentation highlighted important points for students to be aware of when dining in a formal situation, such as on an interview.

Overall, the feedback on this program was overwhelmingly positive. The students were given a survey to fill out at the end of the dinner. They were asked to rank on a scale of one to five (five being very satisfied) how satisfied they were with the following: location (4.58), reception (4.36), meal (4.44), dinner program (4.89) and overall experience (4.9). The response was exceptionally positive in all categories. The students were also asked to indicate on a scale of one to five (five being strongly agree) their level of agreement with the following: session content was consistent with

my expectations (4.8), session content was relevant to me (4.85), the speakers' level of expertise was appropriate (4.93) and the speaker had effective presentation skills (5). Again, students were highly satisfied with the speaker and content of the presentation. Students were also asked to rank on a scale of one to five how likely they were to recommend this program to a colleague (five being highly likely), and the response was 4.78 out of 5. Comments were also solicited from students regarding what they liked most and what could be improved for next year (see attached survey results).

Based on the feedback from students, the goals for the event were met and exceeded. Students felt the content was an asset to them in developing their professional networking skills for interviews and professional meetings. Many stated they felt more comfortable interacting with other professionals after attending the etiquette dinner. They also indicated that the event was enjoyable and that they would recommend it to others. This event was exceptionally successful and WSPS looks forward to continuing in further years to help future members invest in their futures.