

From Classroom to Career: Impact of Teaching Assistant Roles in Pharmacy Education

Guiselle Castrillo, PharmD Candidate 2027, Mannal Musa PharmD, Bradley Phillips PharmD, BCACP
Department of Pharmacy Education and Practice



Background

- Teaching is a fundamental component of pharmacy practice, requiring pharmacists to educate patients, caregivers, students, and other healthcare professionals.
- Peer-assisted learning (PAL) is an educational model in which students support the learning of other students through structured teaching and mentorship roles.
- In pharmacy education, PAL is commonly implemented through teaching assistant (TA) programs, where student pharmacists facilitate laboratories, reinforce course concepts, and provide learner feedback.
- Participation as a TA has been associated with enhanced communication, leadership, teaching confidence, and deeper understanding of course material in health professions education.
- Near-peer teaching experiences may also increase student interest in academic pharmacy, precepting, and future educator roles.
- Despite these reported benefits, limited research has evaluated how pharmacy students serving as TAs perceive the impact of these experiences on their professional development and career interests.

Objective

- This study evaluated the impact of a structured TA program on student pharmacists' confidence, professional development, interest in academic pharmacy careers, and the value of teaching in pharmacy.

Methods

- Survey data was collected in May at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 academic school year.
- Eligible applicants were ~350 second and third-year student pharmacists who completed their first academic school year.
- A total of 54 participants out of 133 were selected based on a free-response application process that collected basic demographic information, graduating year, professional experience, and current beliefs in teaching, learning, and interest in the program.
- A voluntary 31 question post-survey was developed focusing on prior teaching experience, prior collegiate-level degrees, and subjective self-evaluations of several domains such as, confidence and teaching ability, professional development, academic APPE interest, value of teaching in pharmacy, and academic pharmacy career interest.
- The post-survey was distributed to TAs after completing the teaching assistant program. Data was collected and analyzed to evaluate the outcome in preparing future pharmacy educators and leaders in their profession.

Results

Demographics (n=26)	
Teaching Assistants	Orlando: 69% (18/26) Gainesville: 31% (8/26)
Biological Gender	Male: 23% (6/26) Female: 77% (20/26)
Years Served as TA	1 year (2024-2025): 73% (19/26) 2 years (2023-2025): 27% (7/26)
Prior Teaching Experience	Teaching Assistant (Undergraduate/Graduate Level): 27% (7/26) Tutor (Kindergarten-Highschool): 27% (7/26) Tutor (Undergraduate/Graduate Level): 8% (2/26) Teacher/Substitute Teacher (K-Highschool): 8% (2/26) Other (Please explain below): 12% (3/26) None: 38% (10/26)
Collegiate-level Degrees	Associate: 46% (12/26) Bachelor: 88% (23/26) Master: 4% (1/26) Other: 4% (1/26)
Prior Training in Pedagogy	Yes: 8% (2/26) No: 92% (24/26)

Table 1. Demographics of students.

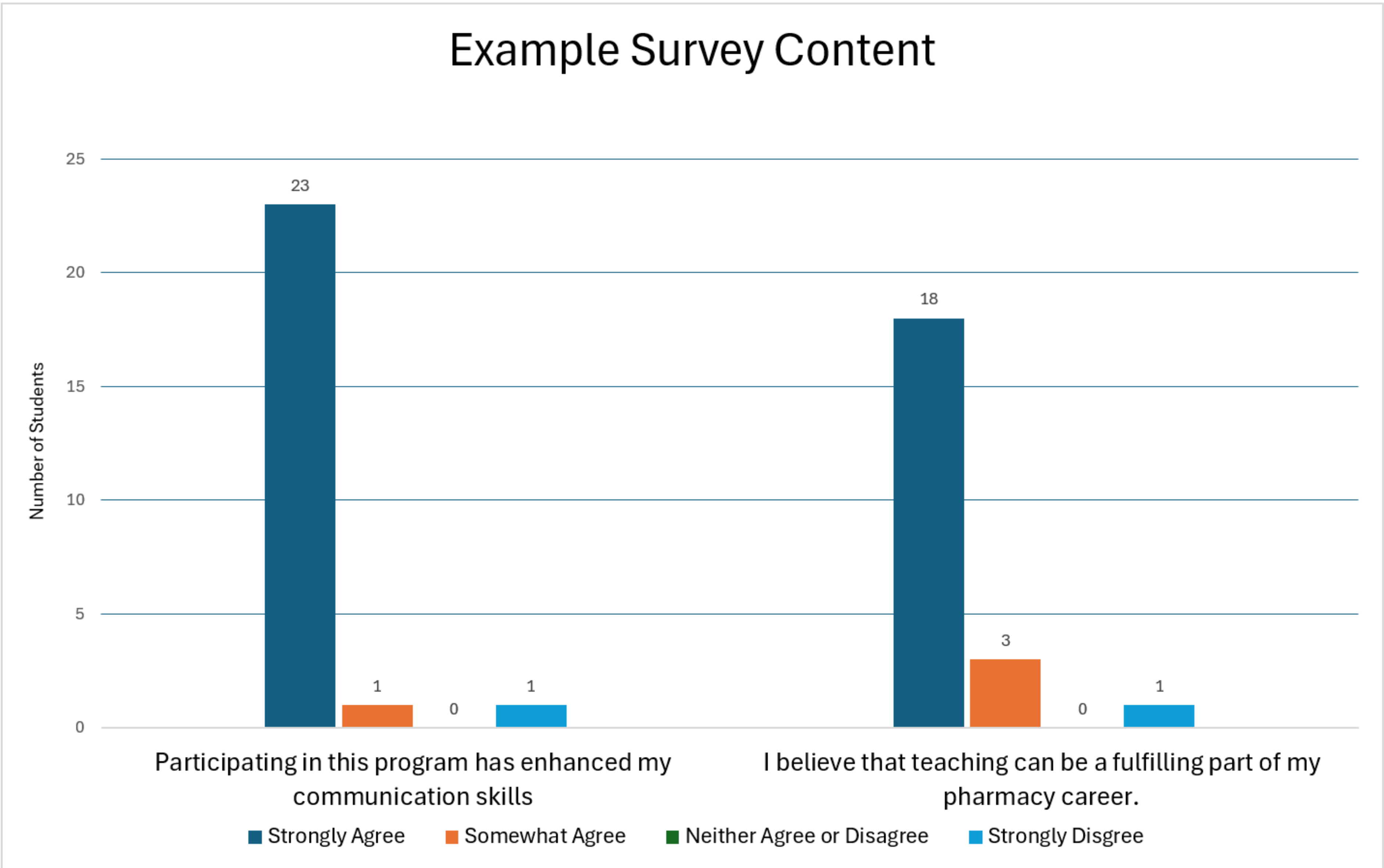


Figure 1. All survey items were preceded by the statement “After completing the TA program at UFCOP.”

Results

- A total of 25 students responded to the survey (response rate ~50%), with 22 completing the survey in its entirety.
- Not all participants answered every item; the sample size varied across questions (range n = 22–25). Percentages are reported based on the number of respondents for each item.
- The post-survey results demonstrated that majority of participants (24/25; 96%) reported high confidence in teaching.
- Results showed positive professional development outcomes, with (20/24) 83% of participants reporting enhanced professional development and (17/24) 71% reporting improved leadership skills.
- Majority of respondents valued teaching as a professional responsibility, with (20/25) 80% reported a positive impact to students' learning and (21/24) 88% agreeing that teaching is beneficial for future career.

Discussion

- Participation in a structured TA program was associated with increased self-perceived confidence in teaching, communication, leadership, and critical thinking, supporting the development of skills essential for pharmacy practice.
- Early exposure to near-peer teaching may enhance interest in academic pharmacy, precepting, and educational roles, highlighting TA programs as a potential pathway toward future academic and professional development opportunities.
- Findings support the integration of structured teaching experiences within pharmacy curricula as a strategy to reinforce knowledge application, strengthen communication skills, and foster leadership development among student pharmacists.

References

- Aburahma MH, Mohamed HM. Peer teaching as an educational tool in pharmacy schools; fruitful or futile. *Curr Pharm Teach Learn*. 2017;9(6):1170-1179. doi:10.1016/j.cptl.2017.07.026
- Anksorus HN, Bradley CL, Porter AL, VanLangen KM, Donohoe KL. Establishing a successful teaching assistant program in pharmacy skills laboratory courses. *Curr Pharm Teach Learn*. 2019;11(8):760-766. doi:10.1016/j.cptl.2019.04.003
- Bradley CL, Khanova J, Scolaro KL. Evaluation of a teaching assistant program for third-year pharmacy students. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2016;80(9):149. doi:10.5688/ajpe809149
- Darley A, Hannings AN, Logan LD, Brooks KL. A precepting-focused advanced pharmacy practice experience in academia. *Innov Pharm*. 2020;11(4):10.24926/iip.v11i4.2419. doi:10.24926/iip.v11i4.2419
- Draugalis JR, DiPiro JT, Zeolla MM, Schwinghammer TL. A career in academic pharmacy: opportunities, challenges, and rewards. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2006;70(1):17. doi:10.5688/aj700117
- Janzen K, Latiolais CA, Nguyen K, et al. Impact of a near-peer teaching program within a college of pharmacy on interest in mentoring roles. *Curr Pharm Teach Learn*. 2023;15(4):408-413. doi:10.1016/j.cptl.2023.04.00.

Disclosure

All authors have nothing to disclose

Please scan QR code below for all survey results

