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Pharm.D. students' opinions on peer mentoring

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Background

- A peer-to-peer student mentoring pilot program was implemented at the University of Rhode Island (URI) College of Pharmacy (COP) in the Fall of 2013, to supplement a well-established, formal, faculty-to-student mentoring program for students beginning their first professional (P1) year.
- The peer mentoring component added one or two students in their third professional (P3) year to each advising group. The goals of the program were to improve academic success for P1 students, enhance leadership, and promote strong communication and camaraderie within the COP.

Objective

- This study aims to evaluate differences in opinions of the previous faculty-mentored classes (P3 class and P4 class) compared to those with a peer mentor (the current P1 class and P2 class).

Methods

- To evaluate the current pilot program, a 16-question survey was administered to all URI pharmacy students during the Fall of 2014. The surveys were administered electronically to all professional pharmacy students.
- The responses to the questions evaluated demographics, students' level of professional involvement, and students' attitudes towards their mentoring experiences. Once the results were collected, information was stratified based on the students' mentoring program during their P1 year. The class of 2015 and 2016 (P4 and P3, respectively) only experienced a formal faculty-to-student mentoring program and their cumulative responses are compared to the classes of 2017 and 2018 (P2 and P1, respectively), those with the peer-to-peer student mentoring program.
- Descriptive statistics are used to compare students' opinions on confidence, preparedness, time management skills, and level of support provided by faculty and peer mentors in the beginning of their first professional year. This study has been designated exempt by the URI Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Results

Table 1: Student Demographics

Questions	N (%)	
	FM	PFM
18-23 y/o	52 (93)	61 (98)
24-27 y/o	4 (7)	1 (2)
Off-campus	49 (88)	46 (74)
Female	41 (73)	46 (74)
Total responses	56	62

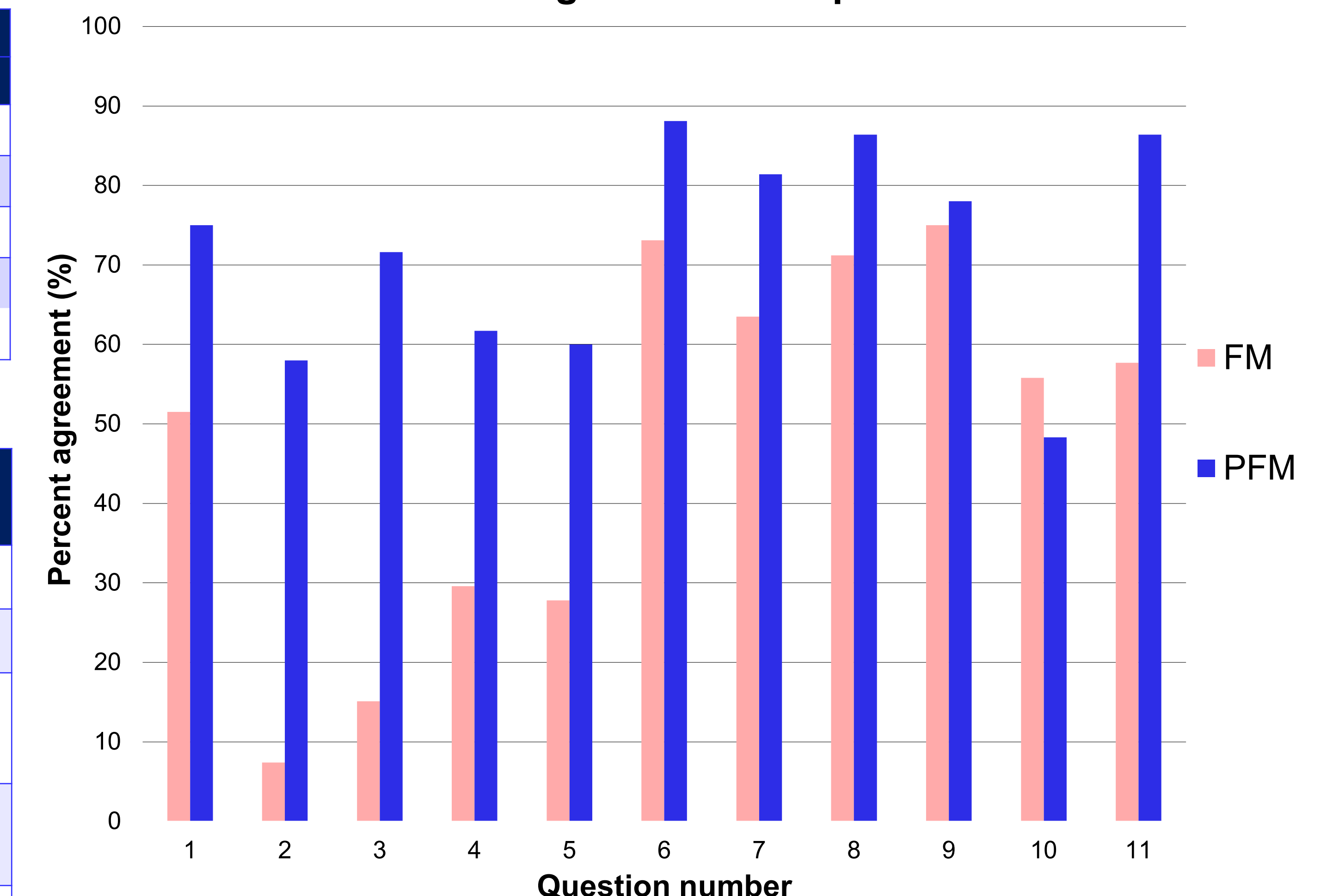
Table 2: Percent Agreement Comparison

Questions	% Agreement		Change
	FM	PFM	
1. I was overly anxious my P1 year.	51.5%	75%	23.5%
2. I felt prepared starting my P1 year.	7.4%	58.3%	50.9%
3. I was realistic about the time commitment required my P1 year.	15.1%	71.6%	56.5%
4. During my P1 year I felt comfortable reaching out to my faculty mentor for advice or guidance.	29.6%	61.7%	32.1%
5. During my P1 year my faculty mentor reached out to offer advice or guidance.	27.8%	60%	32.2%
6. I felt comfortable as a P1 to reach out to other students farther along in the program for advice.	73.1%	88.1%	15%
7. During my P1 year students farther along in the program reached out to me to offer advice or guidance.	63.5%	81.4%	17.9%
8. If so, was that advice helpful?	71.2%	86.4%	15.2%
9. During my P1 year it was easy to meet other students within my class that I did not previously know.	75%	78%	3%
10. I found my P1 year to be balanced in regards to my academic life, social life, organization membership, and extra-curricular activities.	55.8%	48.3%	-7.5%
Q11: During my P1 year I was given opportunities to interact with students farther along in the program and gain advice.	57.7%	86.4%	28.7%

Table 3: Indications of Support

Questions	FM	PFM
12. Did anyone influence your decision regarding IPPE site selection, if so, who?	N/A 46%	N/A 68%
13. Did anyone help you feel more prepared for P1 year, if so who?	Other peers 54%	Other peers 57%
14. Did anyone influence your decision regarding course selection?	Other peers 66%	Other peers 46%
15. Has anyone helped you with balancing your time to decrease your stress level?	N/A 44%	N/A 49%
16. Has your interest/involvement in organizations within the COP been influenced in a positive way, if so by who?	Other peers 48%	Other peers 53%

Percent Agreement Comparison



Discussion

- Overall students that experienced the peer mentoring component in addition to the prior established faculty mentoring program felt more prepared starting their P1 year, were more realistic about the time commitment required, felt more comfortable reaching out to their faculty mentor for advice, and experienced more encounters with their own faculty mentors.
- Limitations to the study include: recall bias for P3 and P4 students and their corresponding experience in comparison to P1 and P2 students, and P1 students only experienced a few months of the program.
- Data collected also shows areas for improvement for the mentoring program including: anxiety lowering strategies, creating more opportunities to meet peer mentors, and providing advice or activities to balance responsibilities.

Disclosure Panel

- Authors of this presentation have the following to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships with commercial entities that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of this presentation:
 - Rachel Morgans Pharm.D. Candidate 2015: Nothing to disclose
 - Nicole Asal Pharm.D., BCPS: Nothing to disclose