

Faith-based colleges and schools of pharmacy in the united states: a taxonomic survey and results

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the characteristics and intensity of religious identity integration within the curriculum of faith-based colleges and schools of pharmacy in the United States.

Methods: The Web pages of 129 US colleges and schools of pharmacy were reviewed for geographic location, religious identity and faith elements articulated in the mission or vision statement, within curricular course offerings and visible as student-centered liturgy or public worship services. A taxonomic metric was created to categorize the intensity of religious identity integration.

Results: 22% of colleges and schools are faith-based. Of these, 28% are categorized as faith-centered, 48% as faith-affiliated and 24% as faith-background. The religious identities included Catholicism, Judaism and Protestantism. The majority (59%) are Protestantism (denomination or nondenominational). Among faith-based colleges and schools, the majority are in the South (45%) followed by Midwest (24%), Northeast (21%) and West (10%).

Conclusion: A significant proportion of US colleges and schools of pharmacy are faith-based; with the majority religious identity as Protestantism (denomination or nondenominational). Based on Web site information, the intensity of religious identity integration within the college or school's curriculum can be assessed with the majority categorized as "faith-affiliated."

Keywords: faith, religion, pharmacy

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Jack J Chen, Katelyn E Horne, Arjun P Dutta
Marshall B Ketchum University, USA

Correspondence: Jack J Chen, College of Pharmacy, Marshall B Ketchum University, 2575 Yorba Linda Blvd, Fullerton, California, USA, Email jchen@ketchum.edu

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Abbreviations: ACPE, accreditation council for pharmacy education

Introduction

Religion has always played an active role in higher education. Many universities were founded on the tenets of Christianity (e.g., Catholicism, Protestantism), Judaism and other faiths. The faith or religious identity of an institution can influence career and education choices for academicians and students. The general term "faith-based" is inadequate because no clear definition exists of what it means to be faith-based. Individuals may interpret the term in the broadest sense to be inclusive of all colleges/schools that have any affiliation or connection to religion; whereas others may interpret it in more narrow senses as applying only to programs that mandate religion or religious activities in the curriculum and co-curriculum. This lack of clarity creates problems for assessing and studying characteristics of colleges/schools of pharmacy, particularly those which are associated with religion. Firstly, characteristics of colleges/schools of pharmacy, such as research funding, faculty salaries and student outcomes, may differ for faith-based programs compared to their secular counterparts. On a deeper level, lacks of clear analytical categories for the faith-based colleges/schools can hamper meaningful comparative benchmarking assessments. In certain situations, it would be more appropriate for a faith-based college/school of pharmacy to be benchmarked against other colleges/schools that are similarly categorized. A typology that organizes colleges/schools of pharmacy into meaningful categories based on their religious intensity and nature could serve meaningfully as a rubric to be used for these types of assessments and research.

While academic pharmacy professional degree programs do not generally have a deeply rooted religious foundation, there exist colleges/schools of pharmacy which are faith-based and maintain a religious identity by integrating religious elements and activities into the curriculum and daily campus life. Websites serve as the "public face" of colleges and schools of pharmacy and the publicly available information contained within Web sites' provide information that allows the public to identify the faith-based nature of the academic program. A faith-based program clearly articulates a religious identity on their Web site and the scope or intensity of religious activity requirements (academic or non-academic) for prospective students. A literature search did not reveal any currently available databases that summarized the religious identity of colleges and schools of pharmacy and/or the scope or intensity of religious activity integration within the curriculum. The objective of this survey was to utilize publicly accessible Web site information to characterize the religious elements within the curriculum of faith-based colleges/schools of pharmacy. The results from this survey provide added clarity and information regarding the attributes and characteristics of faith-based colleges and schools of pharmacy.

Methodology

A list of all US colleges and schools of pharmacy (pre-accredited and accredited) was accessed through the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Web site.¹ Each of the Web sites was searched for pertinent information between August 20 and December 11, 2013. If the hyperlink for a website was found to be inactive, a general Internet search was conducted for the college or school. If

needed, the colleges and schools of pharmacy were contacted by email or telephone. In an article Sider and Unruh, postulated that an explicit and public articulation of religious identity is a foundational element which differentiates faith-based institutions from secular institutions.² Thus, articulation of religious identity was the main criteria for identifying a college or school of pharmacy as “faith-based.” At the college or school’s main Web site, the mission statement (or similar) was located on the main page or on subpages. A college or school was categorized as “faith-based” if a religious identity was articulated in the statement. If no religious identify was articulated, the college or school was categorized as secular. Additionally, a college or school that was originally founded by religious organization but did not explicitly articulate a religious identity was considered to have secularized over time and thus, categorized as secular.

To further characterize the faith-based colleges and schools of pharmacy, we utilized a three-element metric to develop a taxonomic model (Table 1) to capture the intensity and variability of religious identity integration within the curriculum of faith-based colleges and

schools of pharmacy. The faith-based taxonomy consisted of three categories:

- i. Faith-centered
- ii. Faith-affiliated
- iii. Faith-background

These categories were adapted from the work of Sider and Unruh.² The determination of the faith-based category was based on partial or complete presence of the three elements. The metric is based on the presence of three elements:

- i. The explicit and public articulation of religious identity in the mission statement (or similar) of the college or school of pharmacy.
- ii. The requirement for religious coursework in the professional degree program.
- iii. Required attendance at liturgical and/or public worship activity.

Table 1 Taxonomic Model

Metric	Faith centered	Faith affiliated*	Faith background
1. Statement of Religious Identity**	Explicitly articulated in mission, values, or vision statement	Explicitly articulated in mission, values, or vision statement	Explicitly articulated in mission, values, or vision statement
2. Co-curricular Worship Participation	Required**	Required or optional*	Not offered
3. Religious Courses ^ψ	Religious courses that are specific to the college/school's religious identity is required in the professional pharmacy degree curriculum	Religious courses that are specific to the college/school's religious identity is	Not offered in the professional pharmacy degree curriculum
		i. A requirement or an elective offering in the professional pharmacy degree curriculum (or)	
		ii. A requirement in the pre-professional curriculum (or)	
		iii. Not offered	

Taxonomy categories are based on the following criteria:

- a. Statement of faith identity
- b. Weekday student public worship activity
- c. Religious courses

* if elements #2 and #3 are both required, the college/school's category migrates to “faith-centered”

** Must be explicitly articulated on the college or school Web site (university Web site statements, if present, are excluded)

κ Worship service as a co-curricular activity and must be specifically related to college or schools’ religious identify

ψ Includes Mission courses

These three elements were publicly available information on the college and schools’ Web sites. Once it was determined that a college or school of pharmacy’s Web site contained an explicit articulation of religious identity, the curriculum was assessed for the presence of any religious coursework requirements and/or mandatory student attendance at weekday liturgy/public worship services. Since, the metric was intended to capture the intensity of religious identity integration within the curriculum, only liturgy/public worship services required or offered during the weekday on campus (and not off campus or during weekends) were considered as inclusion criteria.

If the program did not offer a religious coursework nor did it require weekday liturgy/public worship services, then the programs were categorized as “faith-background.” If both religious coursework and student attendance at weekday liturgy/public worship services were required, then a categorization of “faith-centered” was determined. All other determinations were categorized as “faith-affiliated”.

Religious course offerings were identified by searching the main college or school Web page or subpages for academic and curricular requirements as well as the listing of courses. Religious coursework

was determined to be “required” when the Web site explicitly listed religious coursework as required in the pharmacy professional degree program. The presence of elective religious coursework as well as requirements in pre-professional programs was also noted. If religion course offerings in the curriculum were in-determinant (i.e., not clearly evident by course titles or descriptions), the college or school of pharmacy was contacted via phone or email.

Student requirements for attending liturgical or public worship services was determined by searching the main page or subpages related to campus, ministries, student and spiritual life, as well as curricular requirements. If no apparent hyperlinks were found, the Web site’s search engine was used to search for the key terms. If the college or school was affiliated with a university, the university’s Web site was also searched. Student attendance at weekday liturgy/public worship activities were determined to be “required” when the Web site explicitly listed the activity as a required element. If the student attendance expectation or requirement was in-determinant (i.e., not clearly articulated), the college or school of pharmacy was contacted for additional clarification. It was however noted that the absence of a mandatory attendance policy does not necessarily reflect a minimization of incorporating liturgical or public worship services into student life. If attendance was described as “optional”, the authors utilized informed judgment to make a determination and interpretation of “required” for this metric element. The informed judgment-determination was based on Web site resource descriptions and narratives that either clearly and explicitly articulated or emphasized the religious focus within on-campus student life or its absence therein. Additionally, in such cases, the school or college was contacted to gain clarification regarding the optional requirement.

Our taxonomy categories are adapted from Sider and Unruh in their typology of faith-based organizations.² Sider and Unruh had developed a taxonomy comprised of six-categories (faith-permeated, faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-background, faith-secular partnership and secular). Unlike Sider and Unruh, the taxonomic model for this research is behavior-centric; in that the elements are a reflection of the college and schools’ value-driven campus or curricular behavior. The authors excluded and did not incorporate elements of administrative or institutional policies (e.g., religious requirements for governance and staffing positions, religious service requirements for promotion and tenure) as these were in general not publicly available. Thus, for the taxonomy used in this research article, the categories of “faith-permeated” and “faith-secular partnership” are captured under “faith-centered” and “faith-background,” respectively.

Additional collected information included geographic location of the college or school of pharmacy. All data were recorded for analysis on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Descriptive statistics were used for all data evaluation. The data was collected from Web pages or subpages that were publicly available. Information available on private Web pages or social media sites was not included in the analysis. If the college of school had a distance-based or non-traditional professional pharmacy program, these were not included. The study did not request for any identifiable private information and only aggregate data that was publicly available was used for the analyses. As such, the research did not require oversight by an institutional review board.

Results

One-hundred twenty-nine candidate status and accredited PharmD programs in the US and its territories were identified using the ACPE

website. Twenty-nine of 129(22%) colleges/schools of pharmacy are faith-based. The composition based on the metric used was: faith-centered (28%), faith-affiliated (48%) and faith-background (24%). The colleges or schools reported their religious identities as: Protestant (59%), Roman Catholic (34%) and Jewish (7%). Among faith-based colleges or schools of pharmacy, the majority are geographically located in the South (45%) followed by Midwest (24%), Northeast (21%) and West (10%).

Discussion

A taxonomic model based on elements of religious integration was developed and then used to collate, assess and summarize publicly available empirical information from each 129 colleges/schools’ website. This typology organizes colleges/schools of pharmacy into clearly articulated faith-based categories and is based on a practical rubric that was designed to be generalizable and applicable to existing as well as emerging colleges/schools of pharmacy. The rubric and typology can serve as a meaningful tool for assessments, benchmarking and research. The taxonomic classification and assessment of religious integration was based on objective markers and did not necessarily capture the qualitative and subjective (e.g., behavioral, experiential, spiritual) aspects of campus life. Qualitative elements of religion are important determinants influencing the psychological and spiritual health among students and faculty in a faith-based program. As such, qualitative elements would be better captured by interviews with student body and faculty. However, the elements within the current metric (i.e., Missional/value statements, religion course requirements, corporate worship activities) are rooted to a colleges/schools’ religious identity and thus longitudinally stable (i.e., not likely to change substantially over time), unlike qualitative elements which can shift substantially due to attitudinal or behavior changes in administration/governance, faculty and student body.

When considering faith-based programs, students and faculty at “faith-centered” programs are more likely to have opportunities to encounter and engage in sacred objects/sacred texts, invitations to religious activities (e.g., prayer, worship), religious teachings, sharing of personal testimonies and invitations to a personal faith commitment. Additionally, we observed that “faith-centered” colleges/schools mandated religious coursework in the professional degree program and often highlighted missional service outreach (e.g., medical missions) as a co-curricular activity; and thus appeared to offer students a more in depth application of religion with the delivery pharmacy services and health care. Whereas, “faith-affiliated” programs may or may not have had similar opportunities or requirements; while “faith-historical” programs tend to have the least emphasis on such activities. It is also understood, that at many faith-based institutions, corporate worship activity is encouraged and optional and the mandating of required attendance is subject to existing administrative policy. Institutions with an optional attendance policy may have high rates of worship participation and this was not captured in this study.

Limitations

We acknowledge that the religious culture and intensity within an organization cannot be fully captured by merely tallying presence or absence of religion courses or required religious service curricular or co-curricular activities from the Website. Indeed, colleges/schools interact with their student community and the secular society in many ways (e.g., oral traditions) as to preclude a simple linkage between any taxonomy of religiosity and institutional culture of religiosity. We

also acknowledge that Website content may not be accurate or up to date regarding the curriculum and, without further verification; this is a potential source for uncertainty. Our results included the liturgical/public worship activity requirements for students; however, the depth of integration of other religious elements in the curriculum, such as: use of liturgy, devotionals, or prayer in the classroom or during faculty meetings and in private campus life among faculty and/or students; use of sacred objects or texts; invitations to religious activities, religious teachings, sharing of personal testimonies and invitations to a personal faith commitment were not captured via the web searches. Additionally, the methodology that we used captures a public depiction of the institution and is unable to capture the full extent to which the college/school's administration, faculty and student body personally embrace the institution's religious identity and creed.

Conclusion

Several college and schools of pharmacy provided accommodations for religiously observant students, offered programs that celebrated religious traditions and even tailored certain aspects of their curricula or facilities to align with a specific set of faith and religious values. Of the colleges/schools that have a religious affiliation, the level of religious integration ranged across a spectrum from faith-background to faith-centered. The taxonomy, developed in this study, can be

helpful for researchers to quickly and efficiently assess the level of religious integration within a faith-based pharmacy professional program. Additionally, the taxonomic model may also be applied to other health science programs.

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Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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