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Roosevelt University College of Pharmacy Residency 101: The Road to Residency

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College Connection

by Patrick Tednes, PS-3, SSHP Vice President

Our SSHP chapter recently hosted a topic discussion about “The Road to Residency” led by Roosevelt University faculty member and Northwestern Memorial Hospital clinical pharmacist, Dr. Craig Cooper, BS, PharmD, BCCCP, BCPS. In his discussion, Dr. Cooper addressed how to build a CV worthy of attaining a residency position. Following his presentation, he facilitated a question and answer session to address audience concerns regarding residency. The topic discussion was open to all Roosevelt University College of Pharmacy (RUCOP) students and approximately 30 students attended.

Major talking points that Dr. Cooper addressed during his talk included grades/transcripts, working as a student, and student involvement in organizations. Dr. Cooper discussed how grades are not all that important in the application process for potential residents which was surprising to many students in the room. He went on to discuss how grades do not tell the whole story of a student; rather, there are many other aspects of a person that are indicative of how successful that particular person would be as a resident. He further explained how incorporating work, participation in volunteer opportunities, and involvement in student organizations into a CV can show that a student is well-rounded and able to manage their time efficiently. Being able to manage classwork, working, and student organizations shows the ability to balance multiple aspects of life. Working, specifically in pharmacy-related positions, shows that the student is capable of managing time appropriately and also gives students an upper edge in the field of pharmacy. Regarding participation in student organizations, Dr. Cooper explained the importance of having an active role within the organization and highlighting any leadership roles. Leadership positions demonstrate that a student is able to plan events, host guest speakers, manage members, etc.

Dr. Cooper went on to address several questions from the audience. The first question was about the difference between applying for a residency at a smaller institution versus at a larger, academic institution. Dr. Cooper discussed how each type of program has their own perks and choosing the right program depends on the goals of the individual student. He pointed out some key differences between larger and smaller programs. Smaller programs may have more one-on-one experiences with preceptors; however, they may not have as many elective rotation options. Smaller institutions are also likely to have fewer resident positions available. Another question revolved around the importance of a post-graduate year 2 (PGY2) residency and what opportunities may be available after completing a specialty residency. His response was that a post-graduate year 1 (PGY1)

residency “opens the door that may have been closed” in terms of applying for clinical pharmacist jobs after graduation. However, even though a door may be opened, a resident may not be able to “walk through” the door after completing a PGY-1 residency. Dr. Cooper further explained that a PGY2 residency allows a resident to “walk through” the door that was opened from the completion of a PGY1 residency. Completing both a PGY1 and PGY2 gives a pharmacist a great edge in the job market and helps solidify positions that may not have been achievable right out of pharmacy school or after one year of residency.

In the concluding thoughts of his talk, Dr. Cooper stated the importance of keeping CVs as up-to-date as possible and making sure that it accurate. He explained that it is imperative for students have their CVs proofread and edited by both a healthcare professional and a non-healthcare professional. He also reiterated the importance of building your CV to highlight your accomplishments of working, volunteering, being involved in student organizations, and presenting posters.

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