

# Matching your personal preferences and professional goals with a career option

By Ruby Singh, PharmD

Today, more than ever, student pharmacists are faced with a daunting number of career options. Even the most traditional practice areas, such as community pharmacy, now offer several opportunities in different types of practice.

To assist student pharmacists in navigating these options by using an informed decision-making process and to provide a resource for matching personal preferences and professional goals with career options, APhA has launched an updated version of the Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals, more commonly known as the Pathways Program.

## Program components

The Pathways Program involves commitment from pharmacy professionals to find the best career path. Typically, the program has three key components: a Briefing Document; Seminar Program Materials, which include a self-assessment and practice specialty profiles; and Follow-up Materials. Most of the program materials are currently available online at [www.aphanet.org/pathways/pathways.html](http://www.aphanet.org/pathways/pathways.html) or via APhA's online Career Center at [www.pharmacist.com/careers.cfm](http://www.pharmacist.com/careers.cfm). The program involves both self-guided exercises and a facilitated workshop in a classroom setting. It is important that the program be completed in its entirety to gain maximum benefit.

The first component of the program is the Briefing Document. This document contains several exercises designed to let you gauge your interest in various pharmacy career options and understand your professional goals and personal career preferences. The Briefing Document is usually completed on your own and then discussed in a seminar-type setting with your peers and a trained facilitator.

The second component of the Pathways Program is a live seminar facilitated by a trained faculty member. This session features several exercises aimed at improving your ability to make informed career decisions (see sidebar) and to work with critical factors to understand the career option that best suits you. The online version of the Pathways Program has an interactive self-assessment that allows you to select your critical factors and see what career options match your personal and professional goals.

The self-assessment should only be used as a guide. Doing further research and networking with pharmacists currently working in targeted practice settings, talking to faculty advisors, and reviewing pharmacy career profiles such as those included in the pathways materials are strongly recommended.

You can also use the self-assessment tool to assist in selecting rotation sites. You can learn more about the position identified as

### Steps to making an informed decision

The Pathways Program employs a five-step decision-making process to provide a structure for making career choices. The steps are outlined below with brief descriptions. For more information and the exercises to assist in making decisions, visit [www.aphanet.org/pathways/pathways.html](http://www.aphanet.org/pathways/pathways.html).

- **Appraising the challenge:** Your first step is to recognize the importance of making an informed career decision, rather than assuming things will just work out. You also should realize that you need to play an active part in this process, and not allow others to make decisions for you.
- **Assessing yourself:** This is probably one of the most difficult steps: You need to examine yourself and understand your goals, values, strengths, interests, and abilities. Knowing these will help you find a career option that provides you with satisfaction and professional enjoyment.
- **Surveying the alternatives:** Because the pharmacy profession offers so many diverse career options, it is important to not immediately discount options. You should adequately research options, or you risk overlooking an exciting opportunity.
- **Evaluating alternatives:** In this step, you are asked to evaluate your options by matching your preferences and priorities to the options most attractive to you. As an example, you can create a list of the pros and cons of a given position. The challenge here is to remain open and objective. This step is usually an ongoing process.
- **Achieving commitment:** The last step of the process is reaching a conclusion. Use your knowledge, intuition, and research to find a career path that best meets your goals and allows for both professional and personal growth and satisfaction.

If you have any questions about the Pathways Program or the APhA Career Center, or if you have any suggestions for items that may be useful to you, please e-mail Ruby Singh at [rsingh@aphanet.org](mailto:rsingh@aphanet.org).

—By Ruby Singh, PharmD, and Elliott Sogol, PhD, APhA science officer.

meeting your personal and professional goals by doing a rotation.

The third component to the Pathways Program is the Follow-Up Material. This information provides you with ways to continue researching career options and also to reassess your critical factors and continue your quest to find the best career path. These materials are designed for you to do on your own on an ongoing basis.

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