

Empowering Pharmacy Students: The Impact of Organising a National Conference on Career Growth

Letter

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In order to pursue a career in healthcare, I knew I needed to push myself out of my comfort zone. When I enrolled in the Bachelor of Pharmacy degree, I decided to focus my free time on networking within the pharmaceutical industry, first in the Australian Capital Territory, and eventually around Australia.

As time went on, I kept thriving for more. I served as Vice-President of the Canberra Student Pharmacy Association (CaSPA) for two consecutive terms. This role evoked a sense of responsibility, pride, fulfilment, and connection. I enjoyed empowering others, advocating for positive changes, and helping fellow students navigate the many challenges of being a pharmacy student. During this time, I was lucky enough to step up to a much bigger role, organising the biggest pharmacy student conference in Australia for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as the 2023 National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) Congress Chair.

Congress is an annual conference organised by NAPSA, the peak representative body for pharmacy students in Australia. This is an opportunity for students to hear from keynote speakers, take part in workshops, network with the leaders of our profession, and meet their fellow students across Australia and New Zealand.¹ Serving as the Chair of such an event offered a multitude of benefits that positively impacted the development of my skills and supported my career growth within the pharmaceutical industry.

As the main organiser and leader of my team, it was important to have strong leadership and management skills to effectively communicate, motivate, and inspire my committee. These skills were crucial to resolve disputes and make informed and innovative decisions to build a cohesive team.

Additionally, I interacted with sponsors, attendees, and other stakeholders whilst organising the conference. One major skill I had to learn was to negotiate sponsorships while keeping everyone satisfied. This was one of the biggest challenges of my role as I was working on rebuilding the image of NAPSA Congress post-pandemic and building strong relationships with our industry partners.

A key part of organising a conference was designing a compelling program addressing the current relevant topics for the target audience. I worked with my committee to identify students' interests by researching the most wanted speakers and themes to cover, ensuring a successful educational and social program. This part required a lot of strategic thinking, planning, decision-making, and compromise.

Lastly, on a personal level, successfully organising a national conference elevated my professional visibility and reputation within the pharmacy community. It offered a transformative learning experience, enhancing my leadership and communication skills, strategic thinking, and personal

confidence. It helped me with my career growth and expanded my network, whilst making a meaningful impact on the pharmacy profession.

Becoming the 2023 NAPSA Congress Chair opened many doors for me, from invitations to speak about my experiences to school students wanting a career in health, to building strong relationships with colleagues from organisations such as the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA), Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Pharmacists' Support Services (PSS) and many pharmacy owners. This role also enabled new career opportunities, as I am now the 2024 International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (IPSF) and Student Exchange Officer (SEO) Chair on the NAPSA Committee. I am looking forward to what the future holds for me, and I am planning on saying yes to many more opportunities coming my way.

REFERENCES

1. National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (updated 2024; cited 2024 Feb 11). Website, available from: <https://www.napsa.org.au>

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