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2023 ADVANCING THE PROFESSION SCHOLARSHIP - ESSAY

When I think back to my first day of pharmacy school, I remember feeling overwhelmingly excited, yet equally as nervous. Despite having a passion to pursue a career in pharmacy since the age of sixteen, I knew little about what being a pharmacist entailed. I have now realized that these mixed emotions demonstrated the beginning of my professional identity formation. Over the last four years, my academics, job experiences, and leadership opportunities have developed my sense of belonging within the pharmacy profession and have grown my enthusiasm for becoming a pharmacist.

Advocating for the profession as a pharmacy student is a responsibility that I have demonstrated across various domains. As the Student Representative for the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists' (CSHP) Alberta Branch, I enhanced pharmacy student awareness of hospital pharmacy practice by leading the implementation of educational sessions, mentorship programs, awards, networking events, conference funding, and summer job positions. Additionally, I connected with hospital pharmacists from across Canada, which developed my profound appreciation for the impact that great leadership has on pharmacy practice. Beyond student club initiatives, I have advocated for pharmacists' expanded scope of practice both in the community and hospital settings. I have educated patients on the integral role of pharmacists in healthcare by performing comprehensive care plans and finding opportunities for my supervising pharmacists to prescribe and order laboratory tests. As a student working with the Home Parenteral Therapy Program, advocacy took on the form of interprofessional collaboration by encouraging team members to utilize the unique skills and expertise of pharmacy technicians and pharmacists. Lastly, I believe my biggest role as an advocate has been promoting the value of the profession to family and friends. This has included discussing the services that pharmacists can provide, explaining the educational requirements completed by pharmacy professionals, and sharing stories from my pharmacy school journey. By integrating advocacy into various aspects of my pharmacy student life, I know that I am pushing the profession forward and equipping myself with the tools to keep doing so as a practicing pharmacist.

Following graduation, I will be starting a new endeavor as a hospital pharmacy resident through Alberta Health Services in Calgary. As I transition from a pharmacy student to a pharmacist, I plan to build upon the advocacy efforts that I began during university. Firstly, maintaining my membership with professional organizations, such as the Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA), will allow me to stay up-to-date and voice my concerns on healthcare policy and current issues affecting pharmacy practice. I am also eager to continue engaging with CSHP through their volunteer committees to bring new ideas and learning opportunities to hospital pharmacy professionals. Having attended RxA's Professional Development Conferences as a fourth-year student, I understand how lifelong learning will enhance my advocacy skills by encouraging me to be open to new ideas and willing to adapt to changes in the profession. This is one of the reasons I decided to pursue residency training and why I intend to participate

regularly in educational programs. Additionally, I will be completing rotations in leadership and preceptorship during residency, which will refine my skills in these areas to help shape future generations of pharmacists. Furthermore, the responsibility that comes with being a clinical pharmacist is significant. Living by the profession's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, specifically keeping informed with new pharmaceutical knowledge, acting with honesty, and maintaining collaborative relationships with other healthcare professionals, will ensure that I continuously nurture the profession. Lastly, practicing to full scope, such as by obtaining my Additional Prescribing Authority, will grant me the ability to provide the best patient-centered care that I can. By preventing medication errors, managing diseases, and educating on proper medication use, I will be exemplifying why pharmacists are essential members of the healthcare team both to the public and other professionals.

As I approach the end of my PharmD degree, I am proud to have advanced my professional identity. I now recognize myself as a future medication expert, leader in evidence-based medicine, and an indispensable resource on an interprofessional team. I have seen first-hand how respected and accessible pharmacists are in society. It is an exciting time to be a pharmacist, especially in Alberta, where our scope of practice serves as a beacon to guide the evolution of the profession across the globe. Professional advocacy is a responsibility of all pharmacists, and it is through advocating that I have discovered the genuine privilege it is to belong to this profession.