Scheduling students for Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPE's) is an extremely challenging and time-consuming process. Developing schedules that meet both student interests as well as college needs and requirements can often times directly conflict or have the perception of favoritism. Manually scheduling APPE rotations is a time-consuming process which can encompass days and run the risk of manual data entry error. However, it allows the scheduler to use their personal interpretation of student interest, ability, goals, expectations for rotations, etc. to help develop a more desirable schedule. Computer-based scheduling programs can complete an entire APPE schedule in a matter of minutes or hours; however, lack the ability to customize a schedule that involves the personal understanding of a student and rotation or preceptor.

Methods

Three APPE schedules were created using the students’ rotation preference list. Schedules were created using traditional manual scheduling (Traditional), PharmAcademic using rules that mirrored the Traditional method (Mirrored), and PharmAcademic giving priority to scheduling the students’ most desired rotations without the use of rules (Student Preferred). APPE schedules were blinded, randomized, and provided individually to the students for review. Students completed a survey after reviewing each schedule rating their satisfaction as it pertained to required APPE’s, rotation sequence, ability to assist with career decision making, and achieve learning goals, and rank their preference for each schedule.

Students were informed in advance, that regardless of their preference of schedule, they would receive the Traditional schedule as their actual rotation schedule. This project was approved by the IRB at the University of Cincinnati.

Results

No. Students

10 20 30 40 50 60

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied A little satisfied A little dissatisfied Satisfied Very satisfied

Figure 1. Satisfaction with Rotation Schedule

• More students felt that the Mirrored Schedule (38.1%) was created manually compared with Traditional (31.9%) and Student Preferred (29.9%).
• More students preferred the Mirrored Schedule (41.4%) as their first choice compared with Traditional (35.4%) and Student Preferred (23.2%).
• More students preferred the Student Preferred Schedule (41.4%) as their second choice compared with Mirrored (31.3%) and Traditional (27.2%).

Conclusion

• Students were equally satisfied with an experiential scheduling platform as traditional manual scheduling method.
• Satisfaction decreased when schedules were computer generated based on students’ most desired preference.
• Computer-generated schedules give a greater perception of fairness and are associated with decreased administrative time.