

AACP News

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AACP, the national organization representing and supporting all U.S. colleges and schools of pharmacy and their faculties, is committed to education and scholarship for improving drug therapy.

Interest in PCAT, Services Improve

More students are taking the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT), reflecting the growing interest in pharmacy as a career choice. A number of enhancements have also been made in customer service by Harcourt Assessment, Inc., the San Antonio-based company that administers PCAT, including availability of online registration for the test. Steps are also being taken to improve the test itself.

The preliminary number of student participants for the October 2003 PCAT was nearly double that of October 2002. There were approximately 12,000 PCAT registrants for the October 25, 2003 examination compared with 6,617 last year, the previous record high for an October exam. Due to the volume of participants, the PCAT was administered in some locations in both morning and afternoon sessions. Harcourt Assessment, Inc. expressed appreciation and gratitude to the administrators and staff that helped to accommodate the large volume of students.

"The record numbers of students taking the October exam is another indicator of the strong interest in pharmacy education and careers," said Lucinda L. Maine, Ph.D.,

AACP executive vice president. "It also reflects the fact that additional pharmacy schools may be looking for other quality measures to enhance the admission decision process," she added.

"The increase in the number of PCAT registrants is consistent with similarly dramatic growth in the number of PharmCAS applicants, which has exceeded AACP's expectations," said Elisabeth J. "Libby" Ross, director of PharmCAS and Student Affairs at AACP. Applicants who apply through PharmCAS may be more likely to take the PCAT because they are applying to multiple pharmacy degree programs, she explained. If just one of the designated pharmacy colleges or schools requires the PCAT, the applicant must sit for the exam. For those applicants who have submitted their completed application to PharmCAS to date, the average application to applicant ratio is 3:5.

The PCAT, developed and maintained by Harcourt Assessment, Inc., is a national examination sponsored by the AACP to provide college admission committees with comparable information about the abilities of applicants. The test is currently used by

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Students Star in National Pharmacy Week Activities

Pharmacy students enthusiastically participated in a range of activities to promote National Pharmacy Week, held October 19 to 25. Activities to promote this year's theme of "Know Your Medicines-Know Your Pharmacist," and highlight the vital role pharmacists play in health care included television appearances, "brown bag" sessions with seniors, and even "drive-by" flu vaccinations. Here is a sampling:

Students from **Long Island University's Arnold & Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences** appeared on network television

bearing the message: talk to your pharmacist if you have questions about your medications. The 12 LIU students in their white lab coats along with faculty advisor John Lonie appeared on *Good Morning America* on Tuesday, October 21. Hosts Diane Sawyer and Charles Gibson, and meteorologist Tony Perkins tried to stump the students with questions from the National Pharmacy Board Examination, asking, for example, "What is the incubation period of chicken pox?" The students answered correctly—14 to 16 days.

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Interest in PCAT, Services Improve
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49 pharmacy colleges and schools as one criterion for admissions to the professional degree program.

In June 2003, members of the AACP PCAT Advisory Committee met with executives at Harcourt Assessment, Inc. At that time, the committee discussed possible changes to the PCAT blueprint and format, and voiced concerns related to customer service. Since that time, the company's customer relations department has taken steps to improve the level of service provided to PCAT user institutions, applicants, and test administrators.

Students can now register for the March 27, 2004 PCAT by completing an online form at the PCAT Web site (www.pcatweb.info). According to Cindy Agonis, Harcourt PCAT product manager, "The online registration has been a huge success and should be a great benefit to applicants now and in the future." Students also have the option to register for the March exam using the existing paper application form.

Other enhancements to PCAT include:

- Updated user prompts on the Harcourt customer relations number (800-622-3231)

and live responses from customer relation representatives;

- Meeting of target dates for the mailing of tickets to applicants and testing materials to the schools and universities;
- Accommodating of seating capacity and registrations for the increased number of applicants for the October 25 exam; and
- Updated PCAT Web site (www.pcatweb.info).

In October 2004, Harcourt will introduce a new PCAT test form for the new blueprint, as recommended by the PCAT Advisory Panel. At that same time, Harcourt will also begin field-testing the "critical thinking" essay component, with plans to include it as a live part of the test in October 2005. Under development are a PCAT practice test and a computer-based exam.

AACP is currently engaged in contract negotiations with Harcourt Assessment, Inc., for the continued development and administration of PCAT. The company, a division of Reed Elsevier Group plc., recently changed its name to Harcourt Assessment and is retiring the two division names, The Psychological Corp. and Harcourt Educational Management, under which it operated previously. The company will retain "PsychCorp" as a brand imprint for selected products.

Number of PharmCAS Applicants Exceeds 13,000

