

GAINING PHARMACY EXPERIENCE

Pharmacy colleges encourage or require applicants to have volunteer or paid experience working with patients in a pharmacy or health-related setting (i.e. hospitals, nursing homes, clinics). On-going work or volunteer experience in a pharmacy setting may be an important factor in the admissions process. Finding work, volunteer, or shadowing experiences can sometimes be a challenging process for students. This resource guide will provide you information on best practices for pursuing these opportunities and a list of local resources and sites.

In addition to this resource guide you can also meet with an advisor to discuss your interest in pharmacy school or finding relevant experience:

- **Pharmacy School Admissions Advising:** admissions@pharmacy.ohio-state.edu
- **Job Search Strategies, Document Reviews, Mock Interviews:** COP-CareerServices@osu.edu

Pharmacy Technician Positions



WHAT IS A PHARMACY TECHNICIAN?

Pharmacy technicians work under the direct supervision of a licensed pharmacist and perform many pharmacy-related functions. Pharmacy technicians must be extremely detail-oriented and accurate assisting in the prescription dispensing process. They also refer any questions regarding prescriptions, drug information, or health concerns to a pharmacist.

Working as a pharmacy technician is the most valuable experience students can take part in to learn more about the profession of pharmacy. Becoming a pharmacy technician will enable you to interact with pharmacists and patients and help you make a more educated decision about applying to pharmacy school.

WHERE DO STUDENTS WORK?

A large majority of BSPS students, who work as a pharmacy technicians, are employed in community pharmacies. Community pharmacies typically offer more flexible work schedules to students and provide a comprehensive training process. Community pharmacies currently employing BSPS students include, but are not limited to:

- CVS
- Giant Eagle
- Kroger
- Meijer
- RiteAide
- Target
- Walgreens
- Walmart

A small number of students also find pharmacy technician positions at local hospitals or clinics. Students who successfully obtain these positions often started as a volunteer. *A list of popular volunteer sites is included on page 3 of this guide.*

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN QUALIFICATIONS

To become a pharmacy technician you must meet the following three criteria:

- be at least 18 years of age
- obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent
- successfully complete a certified pharmacy technician training course or pass the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) exam

All community pharmacies listed above include a certified training process. Most students applying to these companies choose not to take the PTCB exam. Students interested in working in an independent, hospital, or clinic setting may be required to complete the PTCB exam prior to applying or during the first, six-months of employment. To learn more about becoming a licensed pharmacy technician and the PTCB exam visit: <http://www.ptcb.org/>.

APPLYING TO BE A PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Applying to be a pharmacy technician can be a worrisome process for some students. Don't worry almost all students interested in working as a pharmacy technician find employment within two to three months! The following tips will help you get hired as a pharmacy technician:

- **Resume & Cover Letter Review:** Before you start job searching consider scheduling an appointment to have your resume and cover letter reviewed. Fine-tuning these materials ahead of time will save you time in the long run.
- **Buckeye Careers Network & Weekly Job Blasts:** Employers actively seek out BSPS students to hire by posting positions in the Buckeye Careers Network, the University's job posting system. Be sure to check your inbox each week for a list of new job opportunities targeting College of Pharmacy students. You can log-in to your Buckeye Careers account and view a full list of employment opportunities by visiting pharmacy.osu.edu/careers.
- **Apply to Multiple Locations:** Getting hired as a pharmacy technician can be competitive, especially if you are interested in working within walking distance to campus. Successful students apply to numerous positions and are willing to drive 15-20 minutes to get to work. Plan on applying to at least 5-7 different technician positions.



- **Follow Up After You Apply:** Submitting your application online is just one step to obtaining a pharmacy technician experience. Increase your odds of getting an interview by calling or stopping by in-person to introduce yourself to the Pharmacy Manager. For more information about what to include in your introduction please see the “Your Networking Pitch” section in the [Networking Guide](#).
- **Practice for Your Interview:** Interviews are an important piece of the hiring process. Consider scheduling a mock interview or appointment to begin preparing for your interview. You can also learn more by reading the [Interview Guide](#) and the [Common Interview Questions Guide](#).

**GET
INVOLVED**
Be a volunteer and reap the rewards

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is a great way to demonstrate your interest and commitment to health care and the profession of pharmacy. Wide varieties of volunteer opportunities exist throughout Columbus, so be sure to research your options carefully. Most hospitals have structured volunteer programs that may require you to apply at the start of the academic year or adhere to a regular schedule. Some clinics may even require students to be licensed pharmacy technicians. Researching volunteer sites ahead of time is a great way to ensure that you have a meaningful volunteer experience.

The following websites can help you learn more about local volunteer opportunities:

- **OSU Wexner Medical Center:** <http://wexnermedical.osu.edu/patient-care/patient-and-visitor-guide/volunteers>
- **Nationwide Children’s Hospital:** <http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/volunteering>
- **Ohio Health Hospitals:** <https://www.ohiohealth.com/volunteer/>
- **Mount Carmel Hospitals:** <http://www.mountcarmelhealth.com/volunteering>
- **Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio:** <http://www.charitablepharmacy.org/SitePages/volunteering.aspx>
- **The Generation Rx Initiative:** <http://www.pharmacy.ohio-state.edu/outreach/generation-rx-initiative>
- **Hands On Central Ohio:** <http://www.volunteercentralohio.org/search>

Shadowing Pharmacists

WHAT IS SHADOWING?

Shadowing, sometimes called job shadowing, refers to scheduled periods of time to observe a particular profession or work setting. Shadowing pharmacists is another great way for you to learn about the profession of pharmacy and strengthen your application to pharmacy schools. Students should view shadowing as a privilege and are expected to demonstrate professionalism, enthusiasm, and respect.

Shadowing in multiple pharmacy settings will also introduce you to the wide variety of career options available to pharmacists. You can learn more about the different practice areas in pharmacy by visiting the College of Pharmacy's Introduction to Pharmacy website: <http://www.pharmacy.ohio-state.edu/outreach/introduction-pharmacy>.

SETTING UP YOUR SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

Obtaining a shadowing opportunity can sometimes be challenging due to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act's (HIPAA) regulations on patient information. Having a positive, professional attitude and follow the tips below will help ensure a positive shadowing experience:

- **Identifying Pharmacists:** Begin by identifying several pharmacists you would like to shadow. You can do this by speaking to your community pharmacist, asking family members, faculty, and friends if they know any pharmacists, or using LinkedIn to identify pharmacists in your area.
- **Be Open to Shadowing at Multiple Locations:** Shadowing opportunities can at times be difficult to obtain so persistence pays off. Successful students reach out to multiple pharmacists and also look for opportunities in their hometowns and outside of the immediate campus area.
- **Write a Formal Email:** Once you have identified who you would like to shadow, you should write a formal email introducing yourself and requesting to shadow. This email is similar to the email you would write when requesting an informational interview. For more information on what to include in your email see the "Informational Interviews" section in the [Networking Guide](#).
- **Ask Questions:** Shadowing provides an opportunity not only for you to observe a health care setting, but also for you to ask questions about profession on pharmacy. Bring a list of at least 4-6 questions with you to make sure your experience is a success. Sample questions can be found in the "Informational Interviews" section in the [Networking Guide](#).
- **Dress the Part:** When shadowing it is important to dress professionally. You should ask in advance what the dress expectations are for the work setting. When in doubt wear professional dress and always wear closed toed shoes.
- **Write a Thank You Note:** Be sure to thank the pharmacist who took the time to help you learn more about the profession. Send them a brief note that thanks them for their time, expresses your appreciation for the opportunity, and shares something valuable you learned or observed.