

STUDENT TO ALUMNI TRANSITION GUIDE



PHI LAMBDA SIGMA
PHARMACY LEADERSHIP SOCIETY

2ND ED, UPDATED JULY 1, 2025

SUPPORTED BY THE 2024 - 2025 MEMBER
ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE



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**AS AN ALUMNI OF YOUR PHARMACY
PROGRAM, YOUR PLS COLLEGIATE
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THERE IS NO COST OR APPLICATION.

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS DO NOT PAY
DUES.**

Message from Phi Lambda Sigma

by Caroline Lindsay Ko, PharmD, BCCCP, 2024 - 2025 International PLS President

Start of Final Year

Dear Graduating Student Pharmacist,

As the 2024–2025 International PLS President, it is my honor to welcome you to the profession. As you transition from your role as a collegiate member of Phi Lambda Sigma to a professional member, we hope to provide you with resources, guidance, and encouragement to make this transition as smooth as possible.

There are many changes ahead for you. There will be times when you feel overwhelmed, unsure of your abilities, or uncertain about the challenges that lie ahead. I can assure you that we have all felt this way—and many of us continue to feel this way—even as we grow into our careers and develop professionally. There is no magic moment when everything suddenly falls into place. Instead, growth happens gradually as you challenge yourself and gain experience and confidence.

During my own career, I faced many leadership challenges early on. One of the best decisions I made was to join a Leader Academy as a professional member. Through PLS, I had the opportunity to connect with experienced leaders, first serving on the Awards Committee and eventually stepping into my current role as Society President. The perspectives of my cohort leader and fellow members were invaluable, and I encourage you to stay involved with PLS to take advantage of these opportunities for support and growth.

As you build your career, rely on the leadership skills you developed through your membership in PLS. I hope these skills will empower you to take on challenges and advocate for the profession of pharmacy. You are the leaders of both the present and the future, and PLS is here to support you on your journey.

There will be times when you feel overwhelmed or when life challenges you personally. Know that it is okay to take time for yourself, your family, and your community in whatever way you need. The profession—and PLS—will always benefit from your expertise and perspective, whether now or in the future.

To support you in this next phase, our leadership team has compiled resources to help you navigate the challenges ahead. Remember to stay true to yourself as a leader—your unique skills, values, and leadership style are what set you apart. I cannot wait to see where your leadership journey takes you and the transformational change you will make in the world.

Caroline Lindsay Ko, PharmD, BCCCP
2024–2025 International PLS President



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Timeline for Your Final Year and Beyond

by Ashley L. Moffett

As you begin your final year of rotations, you can be filled with excitement and uncertainty as you think about your future as a pharmacist. There are a few key events to remember that can help guide you as you embark on this journey and transition whether you are searching for a job or a residency program. Rotations are a great opportunity to network and find your dream job. Remember to treat every rotation like a job interview. Throughout the year consider which preceptors would be able to write good letter of recommendations for applications. Your preceptors can also provide feedback on your CV and help you refine future application materials. As the spring semester begins, you will be interviewing and searching for your new position. Utilize the career resources provided at your college/university to ace these.

PLS provides many opportunities for students and new practitioners. One way to get involved outside of your local chapter is by joining a committee! Applications and descriptions are sent out in the summer, so keep an eye out! the PLS Leadership Summit is another great opportunity to network with other students and pharmacists to make the transition a little easier. After graduation, you are still a member so stay involved by attending workshops or becoming a mentor to a PLS collegiate member!

Your final year is rewarding and flies by, so remember to take a breathe, slow down, and enjoy your final year as a student pharmacist! Before you know it, you will be graduating and stepping in your new role as a pharmacist!



Start of Final Year

- Start rotations
- Join a PLS Board Committee (June/July)

Fall Semester

- Stay involved with your local PLS chapter
- Attend the PLS Leadership Summit (Sept./Oct.)
- Post-graduate applications open (residency, fellowship, etc)
- Network at conferences and on rotations

Spring Semester

- Attend job fairs
- Interview for positions

End of Final Year

- Graduate!!
- Take NAPLEX and MPJE
- Start job/residency program

Beyond...

- Attend Society-wide and local events & your inducting chapter events

“WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR WHY, YOU’LL KNOW THE WAY,
AND YOU WON’T LET OBSTACLES GET IN YOUR WAY.”

JON GORDON

How to Be a Leader During Rotations

by Gladimarys Grajales Aviles

Developing leadership skills during pharmacy rotations is vital for students looking to make a meaningful impact in healthcare. Effective leaders combine clinical expertise with initiative, clear communication, collaboration, and professionalism. The GiANT 5 Voices framework—Nurturer, Creative, Guardian, Connector, and Pioneer—helps students identify their leadership styles and leverage their peers' strengths, fostering an environment that encourages learning and growth.

Proactive leadership is essential; it involves anticipating team needs, preparing for patient rounds, and understanding medication protocols. Professionalism is crucial, as it builds trust and respect through a positive attitude, punctuality, and thorough preparation. Pharmacy students who exemplify these traits inspire their peers to strive for excellence. Constructive feedback from preceptors and colleagues is also essential for personal growth. In summary, leadership during pharmacy rotations is about creating a supportive, learning-focused environment that benefits the entire healthcare team, leaving a lasting positive impact.



PLS Professional Status: Why you should stay involved!

by Tessa Ann Schnelle, PharmD, MPH, DPLA

I can remember the days after graduation like it was yesterday. Studying for exams followed by starting a new job, building new relationships, everything changed so quickly. However, there was one thing that remained a steadfast priority, my involvement with pharmacy professionals through societies and associations at both the local and Society-wide level.

By participating in committees and in leadership roles I not only believed that my work made a difference beyond the walls of the pharmacy I worked at, but I was also able to play a pivotal role in shaping these programs, initiatives and policies for the future of my profession. As I stayed involved, my professional network flourished, and my pharmacy mentors provided me with opportunities to impact the parts of our profession where I was uniquely skilled.

As a result, I have been surrounded by inspiring and driven pharmacy professionals that have deeply enriched my professional career and expedited my career trajectory. Without a doubt my continued involvement has played the greatest role in my success as a new practitioner. My greatest advice to new graduates is to maintain your involvement and nurture your professional relationships. They will provide you with the pathways to your professional goals and encouragement along the journey!

“BE YOURSELF. EVERYONE ELSE IS ALREADY
TAKEN.”

OSCAR WILDE

GiANT Leadership Tools

by Mary Christine Buehner

Although everyone who becomes a pharmacist or works in the industry garners a tremendous amount of “book knowledge”, it is difficult at times to transition from the role of knowledge consumer to that of an efficient preceptor, teacher, or leader. The foundational tool of the **GiANT leadership process** can illuminate the heart of a leader and team member. The 5 Voices tool helps individuals determine where their strengths and weaknesses lie, allowing for them to begin to understand how they work within a group dynamic and how they can lead and support others that are both similar and different in style and personality.

After establishing how we instinctively lead, the GiANT toolkit helps to refine our skills to create awareness and continued growth in both students and alumni working in the field of pharmacy. This process of leadership development focuses on five areas of potential growth within a system or team: communication, relationships, alignment, execution, and capacity. GiANT purports that if any of these five areas do not operate appropriately, the organization cannot grow and develop as intended. Two tools that perpetuate individual awareness outside of establishing one’s voice are The Core tool and the Know Yourself to Lead Yourself tool. Both support understanding of how performance stems from the intersection of our self-awareness, competency, and connectivity, allowing us to understand how we must be willing to work with others by fully understanding ourselves. By understanding our personal need for balance, we can continue to enhance our work in the five foundational areas of the GiANT system previously discussed.

Proper communication within an organization or team is further stressed through use of the Go To The Source tool, which helps to limit drama, gossip, and misunderstanding. The X-Factor tool supports the foundational areas of alignment, execution, and capacity, by presenting the importance and urgency of work as a continuum. Individuals can prioritize tasks that are most urgent and important versus deescalating activities that can be completed later.

Once these areas are enhanced, personal leadership can be expanded through the Support Challenge Matrix, which enables individuals to examine the best ways to provide focus, direction, and encouragement to team members. Another instrument that fosters team building is the Power of the Medium. This tool speaks to methods of effective communication. Users are encouraged that in-person communication techniques foster better collaboration and understanding versus other forms of connections such as texting or email. Along the journey of GiANT, it is also important to emphasize each voice and how to grow as a leader within the context of who we are foundationally.

There are so many ways to grow within the GiANT process – as a leader and active team member! Further information and access to the PLS GiANT toolkit can be found on the PLS website. The Society will also host free virtual workshops on these tools throughout the year.

Happy growing!



“REAL CHANGE, ENDURING CHANGE, HAPPENS
ONE STEP AT A TIME.”

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Leadership as a Future Pharmacist

by Shirley Ly, PharmD, MS

Leadership is a crucial skill for pharmacists transitioning from student to new practitioner, regardless of the practice setting. Strong leadership enables new pharmacists to confidently manage responsibilities, adapt to dynamic healthcare environments, and advocate for patient care improvements. As new practitioners, pharmacists often take on roles that require them to make informed decisions, collaborate with multidisciplinary teams, and guide pharmacy technicians and support staff. Effective leadership can enhance communication and coordination, ensuring that patient care is seamless and that medication safety protocols are upheld. During this early phase in your career, you will learn to demonstrate the value that pharmacists bring to direct patient care and preventive care.

A few key leadership pearls for new pharmacists include developing strong communication skills, maintaining adaptability, and actively seeking feedback. You are still molding into the pharmacist that you want to be, enhanced by the experiences that you will encounter. Good communication enables pharmacists to effectively educate patients, discuss treatment plans with prescribers, and resolve conflicts within the healthcare team. It also helps with managing expectations, having crucial conversations, and developing a good relationship with the individuals you work with. Adaptability is essential for healthcare, especially pharmacy, where new guidelines, medications, policies, and technologies frequently emerge. You also see this reflect in policy that dictates pharmacy practice. Being flexible and open to change enhances your ability to lead effectively. Seeking and acting on feedback helps you recognize areas for growth, stay aligned with your organizational goals, as well as your personal goals, and continually to improve as a new practitioner and as an individual navigating through this next stage in your life.

As new practitioners (and professional members of PLS), it is very important to continue to advocate for the pharmacy profession and contribute to policy changes. By engaging in professional organizations, participating in committees, or serving as a mentor to pharmacy students, new practitioners can demonstrate commitment to their field and support the next generation of pharmacy professionals. Serving as a mentor is a great way to exercise your leadership skills. This early cultivation of leadership skills not only advances your career but also strengthens the healthcare system as a whole. The positive impact of leadership extends beyond personal career growth.



“LEADERSHIP IS SIMPLE. BUT IT IS NOT EASY.”

JOCKO WILLINK

Mentorship vs Leadership: What's the Difference?

by Josh Kim

Mentorship

- **Definition:** Mentorship is a personal, developmental relationship in which an experienced individual (mentor) provides guidance, support, and advice to another person (mentee) to help them grow professionally or personally.
- **Focus:** Mentors typically focus on the mentee's (can be multiple) individual growth, learning, and career development. Their role is less about achieving organizational goals and more about nurturing the potential of the individual.
- **Skills:** Mentors use active listening, empathy, encouragement, and coaching. They offer personalized feedback, share experiences, and provide career advice.
- **Role:** Mentors act as trusted advisors who guide others through challenges and opportunities. They influence through their expertise and personal investment in the mentee's success.
- **Goal:** To foster personal and professional development by providing tailored guidance and support. Mentorship is typically relationship- and growth-oriented.

Leadership

- **Definition:** Leadership is the ability to guide, influence, and inspire a group or organization toward achieving a common goal.
- **Focus:** Leaders often focus on an organization's vision, mission, and long-term goals. They are responsible for directing and making decisions that affect larger groups or the organization as a whole.
- **Skills:** Leadership requires strategic thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and the ability to motivate and manage teams.
- **Role:** Leaders create structure, set direction, and ensure accountability. They influence through authority, but also seek to inspire action and alignment.
- **Goal:** To move a group or organization forward by defining and achieving broader objectives. Leadership is often results-oriented.

Key Differences

- Leadership is broad and organizational, while mentorship is personal and individualized.
- Leaders focus on team or organizational success, whereas mentors focus on individual success.
- Leadership involves managing multiple people, while mentorship typically centers on one-on-one relationships.

**"WE DON'T BUILD TRUST WHEN WE OFFER
HELP. WE BUILD TRUST WHEN WE ASK FOR IT."**

SIMON SINEK

Professional Perspective: Erin Ballentine, PharmD, MBA, MS, BCPS

Inpatient Operations Manager

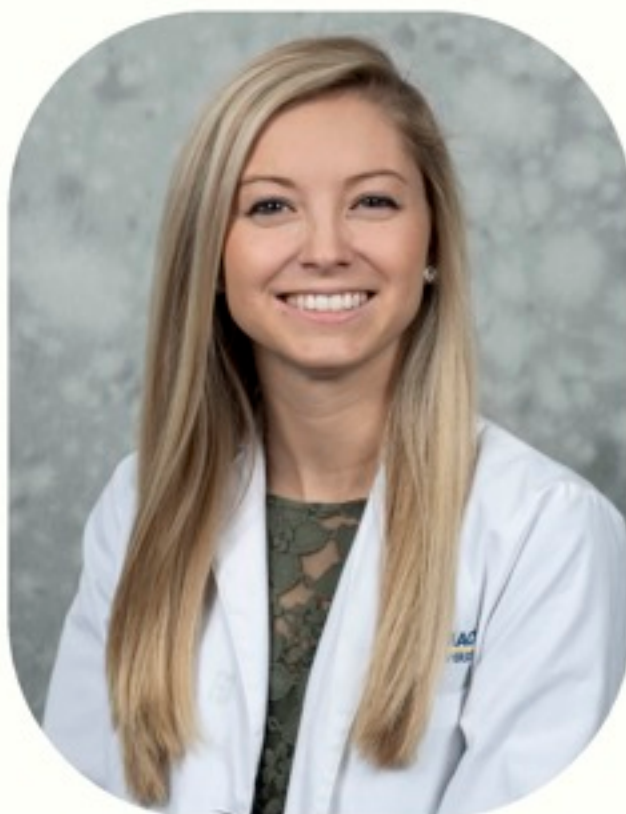
How did you get involved with PLS and what is your current involvement with PLS?

I became involved in PLS at the Society level as the 2021-2022 Collegiate Member-at-Large. I remained involved with PLS Board Committees for the past few years, including as the 2024-2025 Member Engagement Committee Chair. I am now serving as the 2025-2026 Society President-Elect.

What is some leadership advice you have for current PLS collegiate members and future professional members?

Don't be afraid to say "yes" to new opportunities and keep showing up! Knowing your personal boundaries is important, but don't let the newness of an opportunity keep you from exploring an area of interest.

Your leadership skills will be refined through new experiences and you may identify personal strengths or skills you didn't realize you have! If you don't know where to get started, keep showing up. Stay involved and engaged in the little things, and the bigger opportunities will present themselves.



Why do you think students should stay involved with PLS after graduation?

Everyone says networking is important - and that is because it is very true! Involvement with PLS has allowed me to meet so many amazing pharmacists leading the profession in various areas of pharmacy practice. Working on a PLS Board Committee has allowed me to make personal friendships, establish professional connections, and provide so many examples of various leadership styles and skills that have shaped how I lead others.

Professional Perspective: Adam Remick, PharmD

Repare Therapeutics, Biotech/Pharma



How did you get involved with PLS and what is your current involvement with PLS?

I became eligible for Phi Lambda Sigma during my P2 year of pharmacy school and was a member of the executive board for my chapter. I'm currently involved in the mentor program.

What is some leadership advice you have for current PLS collegiate members and future professional members?

Acquire multiple skills and find a passion within your skill sets. Purely following your passion may lead you with less options. If there is something in your profession that doesn't exist or is a combination of 2 or more different professions, explore it. I had developed a formulas for excipients that can be used for compounding pharmacies. Without having a way of getting it actually manufactured, I started a manufacturing company to create the product. I had to learn a little about what is needed and went for it. If you keep a growth or open mindset, opportunities will appear.

Why do you think students should stay involved with PLS after graduation?

Surrounding yourself with 3 types of people is key to a successful career after graduation. Mentors have vast knowledge in the skill set you are determined to acquire or are trying to master. Peers have the unique ability to be someone who you can ask for advice as well as those you can give advice to depending on strengths and weaknesses. Finally, mentoring others is a way of successfully passing down wisdom while also honing your skills and staying sharp. Those who stay involved will be in a better position to take advantage of the 2 hardest types to get surrounding you: mentors and those who seek mentorship.

Professional Perspective: Landon Johnson, PharmD, BCPS

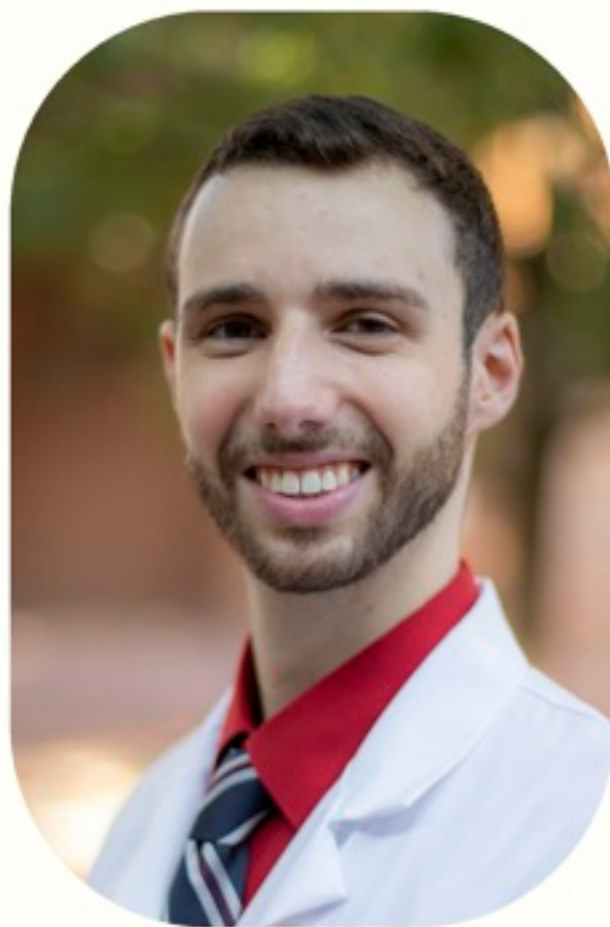
Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Internal Medicine Pharmacist

How did you get involved with PLS and what is your current involvement with PLS?

As a fairly quiet and reserved person, I had a difficult time picturing myself as a leader. However, by pushing myself out of my comfort zone and drawing strength from my friends and family, I found myself leading in many ways I hadn't imagined - from working as a teaching assistant to serving as the secretary for our chapter of APhA. Before I knew it, I was serving as the president of the Alpha Iota chapter of Rho Chi and eventually accepted an invitation to join Phi Lambda Sigma during my third year at the Medical University of South Carolina. Becoming a member of this prestigious organization was only the beginning.

What is some leadership advice you have for PLS collegiate members and future professional members?

I have kept the PLS mission in mind to promote the development of leadership qualities in the students and residents I have had the honor of teaching/mentoring. With every encounter, I hope to convey some of the key aspects of leadership I've learned from my own mentors in PLS: showing compassion for others, having confidence in yourself, and leading by example.



Why do you think students should stay involved with PLS after graduation?

I truly believe no matter the path one takes into PLS, the leadership journey does not end after initiation into the society or graduation from pharmacy school. To be a pharmacist is to be a leader, and staying involved with PLS is a great way to maintain leadership skills, develop new skills to utilize throughout a career in pharmacy, or give back by helping the next generations of pharmacists realize their own place as leaders in our field.



Professional Perspective: Jocelyn Freimuth, PharmD, MBA

Camino Compass, Specialty Pharmacy Management & Consulting

What is some leadership advice you have for PLS collegiate members and future professional members?

Look for non-traditional opportunities where you can give back to the profession. Leadership doesn't always happen within the expected paths—it often thrives in spaces where innovation and courage are needed most. That is what has pivoted me into the role I have now helping independent pharmacies across the country. When I graduated, I had no idea this is where I would be ending up, but it is so rewarding being able to assist so many specialty pharmacies who serve some of our most underserved patients.

Why do you think students should stay involved with PLS after graduation?

The value of PLS extends far beyond pharmacy school. The networking opportunities are unparalleled, providing access to a diverse group of leaders who can guide and inspire you throughout your career. Additionally, the continued leadership development and resources PLS offers can support your growth, especially as your professional journey evolves and pivots, as mine has. Staying involved ensures you remain connected to a community that champions leadership in every stage of your career.

How did you get involved with PLS and what is your current involvement with PLS?

I became eligible for Phi Lambda Sigma during my P2 year of pharmacy school and was immediately drawn to everything the organization stood for. Leadership has always been a passion of mine, and PLS provided a platform to cultivate that passion. During my time as a collegiate member, I had the honor of serving as President of my chapter, which was awarded the Charles Thomas Leadership Challenge award for our school. One of the highlights of my leadership journey was presenting at the PLS House of Delegates—a privilege that deepened my commitment to the values of the organization.

Professional Perspective: Anthony DeClue, PharmD, MA, BCACP

Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)

How did you get involved with PLS and what is your current involvement with PLS?

I joined PLS as a student leader at my college of pharmacy (MUSC). I became Chapter Vice-President of the Beta Chi Chapter. Through recommendations of my chapter advisor and Board of Directors, I was elected to the role of Speaker of the House throughout my P4 year of school. During my time in that capacity, we launched some Society-wide committees and I remained in service to the Board, serving as Chair and Member of various committees. After a couple of years, I became Society Parliamentarian for a couple of years, until doing a three-year stint as President-Elect, President, and Immediate-Past President of the Board of Directors. I also chaired and served on various other Board Committees and have continued to remain involved in Board committees and task forces. I also am actively involved in my alma mater's local chapter, Beta Chi.

What is some leadership advice you have for PLS collegiate members and future professional members?

Find people who embody characteristics you admire and who have achieved successes upon which you would like to achieve and/or build upon yourself. Seek their advice and incorporate their recommendations into your actions. Focus most on who you are and who you want to be. Give yourself grace for being well-meaning, if sometimes imperfect. Say "yes" to opportunities and commit to those things to which you have dedicated your service. Make your "asks" and be sure to make the world tell you "no," instead of preemptively saying "no" on the world's behalf; you'll be surprised how much positive response you'll receive if you just give people a chance to respond to you, invest in you, and say "yes." Remember that leadership is a continuous journey, full of growth and personal development, and is never something to be perceived as something ultimately actualized in its final form. Embody confidence, but remain humble and teachable, in whatever capacities you serve and lead. Pay forward the investments others have made in you by guiding and investing in others.



Why do you think students should stay involved with PLS after graduation?

Graduation is not an end; it is a beginning to a new chapter. Upon graduation, emerging pharmacists finally begin meaningfully amassing some of the time, talents, and treasure that can really make an impact on the Society and the profession in which we serve. We grow as leaders through continuous leadership, development, and service opportunities; this is a lifelong commitment and a pledge we made upon taking the "Oath of a Pharmacist."

Within PLS specifically, formal opportunities for service and impact for practicing pharmacists and professional members has been growing exponentially, but we need continued input and involvement from this demographic to further expand how the Society can best serve the profession.

**HAVE QUESTIONS
ABOUT HOW YOU
CAN GET INVOLVED
AS A FINAL-YEAR
COLLEGIATE MEMBER
OR AS A
PROFESSIONAL
MEMBER?**

PLS IS HERE FOR YOU!

**REACH OUT BY
VISITING:**

**[https://philambdasigma.org/
society-leadership/](https://philambdasigma.org/society-leadership/)**



PHI LAMBDA SIGMA

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