VIEWPOINTS

Rewarding Diversity of Excellence

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Schools and colleges of pharmacy need to be more creative and flexible with rewarding our faculty members who excel at different aspects of our academic mission. I believe we can do this without compromising standards of excellence. Further, I believe we can enhance performance in all areas by explicitly acknowledging and rewarding diversity of excellence and designing environments that optimize collective and individual strengths.

The academy of pharmacy educators faces many challenges. Chief among these are (1) recruitment, development, and retention of well-qualified faculty members; and (2) assessment of curricular outcomes. Faculty members are diverse. This is true not only with regard to scientific or clinical discipline, but also with regard to specific talents and passion. Institutional missions vary from school to school, but all or nearly all include teaching, scholarship, and service in their mission statements. All 3 are essential. They represent our values. We say and believe we should provide outstanding educational experiences, engage in meaningful scholarship, and serve our disciplines, profession, and communities. Clearly, there are individual differences in how our faculty members contribute to the mission, but I believe there is a painful disconnect in how diversity of excellence is rewarded.

The academic health science center at my university is in the midst of a promotional campaign. Vibrant, large banners, 2 or 3 stories tall, hanging from a parking deck, the library building, and the main hospital, with photographs of medical center staff members, clearly seen from nearby streets, espouse our passions. One says, "My passion is healing." Another states, "My passion is teaching." A third, "My passion is discovery." None of them says, "My passions are healing, teaching, and discovery." I am proud of my school and my colleagues and what we contribute to the quality of life in our state and the health of our citizens. As I see these banners, however, I suspect that the individuals in those photographs are not equally passionate about all 3 missions or equally prolific at production in each area. I know I'm not.

The academic reward system is tilted in favor of scholarship. As institutions, we aspire to excellence in all areas of our mission. I have long believed (and as I interact with my peers and colleagues my views are often echoed) that the "triple hitter" or "triple threat"—someone who is truly outstanding in all areas of the academic mission—is rare. They exist, but they are few. Those colleagues should be honored and celebrated, but I believe it is not reasonable to expect excellence of everyone in all 3 areas. We should reward excellence where it exists, provided we are meeting our institutional missions. Aspiring to excellence in all areas as an institution is achievable, based on the varied contributions and talents of individuals who work together for a common purpose. A major problem is the rewards are uneven. Scholarship is rewarded more prominently. It is easy to quantify and it attracts resources, but do those qualities make it more important and vital than the other parts of our mission? We have broadened the accepted definition of scholarship to include the scholarship of teaching and learning, a positive development. Can we also find ways to better measure performance in all areas? Leaders have presented many programs on the development of teaching portfolios, which are a wonderful tool for documenting teaching excellence. A resolution introduced at the 2006 Annual Meeting urged the development of service metrics.

I don't believe anyone disputes the importance of the scholarship mission. Every time we teach, we communicate the product of someone's scholarship. Full-time faculty members are and should be expected to engage in research and scholarship at some level. Standard No. 25 of our current accreditation standards states that faculty members should demonstrate evidence of scholarship and publication. The equity of importance of other components of the mission in the reward system is what is absent, in my view.

Tenure track positions and awarding of tenure are based in many universities on research productivity. In my discipline, pharmacy practice, we now have positions that are non-tenure track or "clinical track" to accommodate faculty members whose focus is more practice and teaching and less scholarship. Why is that? Awarding of tenure was originally conceived as acknowledging the successful end of a period of probationary employment.

Now, it is often something different, related more to productivity in a research-intensive position or environment. How did teaching, which is arguably the very heart of our academic mission, become less worthy than scholarship as a measure for awarding tenure? Tenure as a concept or institution is the basis for its own controversy, but it is an explicit acknowledgement of sorts, at least in its current form. Young faculty members, especially in my discipline in which research training in postgraduate residencies is often modest, may be discouraged and leave the academy. The same may happen to faculty members who are tasked with critical service responsibilities. Many of these people are passionate and excellent at teaching or service or patient care and make meaningful contributions, but may not excel at scholarship, just as there are outstanding scholars who do not excel at other mission

elements. With the expansion of the academic enterprise, coupled with the decline in interest in entering academia in all disciplines, we cannot afford to lose these people.

I believe if we are to address the challenges facing us, particularly the recruitment and retention challenge, we must be more flexible and creative in rewarding our people. This does not mean compromising standards. Individual faculty positions can be designed or redesigned to reflect contributions to the mission of the program with recruitment of candidates with a specific background and skill set. Day-to-day or year-to-year duties can be adjusted to reflect institutional needs and individual strengths. Our institutional missions aspire to excellence and the collective contributions of our faculty will meet this goal. Individual contributions will vary. We must find ways of measuring and rewarding diversity of excellence.