VIEWPOINTS

Supplementary Stipends for Faculty Assuming Administrative Roles

Joseph L. Fink III, BSPHarm, JD

University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy

American higher education has developed a practice of extending a salary supplement to faculty members who assume administrative responsibilities at a number of levels, especially department chairs and deans roles other than *the* dean. This presumably is in recognition of the assumption that the individual is either taking on expanded or enhanced responsibilities or that the salary supplement will be necessary to attract the person to assume the role, possibly giving up some other activity he or she would prefer. But are these inducements appropriate and consistent with what is trying to be accomplished? Here are some thoughts on the practice that may provide a different perspective to consider.

First, if where we allocate our institutional budgets or other resources is truly a reflection of what we value, does such action indicate that we value administrative activities more than the traditional academic functions of teaching, scholarship, and service? Allocation of scarce resources to this use means they will not be available to be applied to more core functions of the academy. Certainly administration is a necessary adjunct to support our mainstream activities of teaching, scholarship, and service. One colleague may agree to take on those responsibilities so others are spared from being diverted from their main academic goals. But it should always be borne in mind that administration is to buttress our efforts, not to supplant them as our main objectives.

Second, does availability of administrative stipends encourage some to eschew traditional academic functions to move into administrative positions? We should not be providing a financial incentive for faculty members to eschew teaching and research. We lament when industry or other pharmacy organization recruits an outstanding or promising faculty member away from us, viewing that as a blow to the academic enterprise in which we are engaged.

Third, does the fact that one has an administrative stipend encourage him or her to stay in the position after getting burned out or otherwise losing enthusiasm for the activities (eg, “My kids are in college now and I need the extra money” or “I really want to buy that place at the lake so I’ll persist in this administrative role despite really disliking it”)? Or does the stipend make the faculty-cum-administrator more likely to go along with a bad idea from “on high” because not to do so would jeopardize the personal financial flow?

One’s effectiveness as an administrator can be enhanced by the knowledge he or she can return to a traditional faculty role with no reduction in compensation. This degree of independence can enhance one’s effectiveness as an administrator, especially when it comes to taking unpopular positions, disliked by either institutional administrators or interest groups on campus. It makes doing what is right much easier. I have personally observed faculty members in administrative roles go along with a bad decision because their kids were in an expensive college and the extra money from the administrative stipend was needed to keep them there. To jeopardize their administrative positions would be to endanger their children’s futures.

Some may advance the perspective that, if no administrative supplement were forthcoming, those with the best potential as administrators may not be attracted to these sometimes challenging positions. If no administrative stipend were available what would attract a skilled person to take on these responsibilities? Here is a potential list of attractive features:

- Personal reward and growth from overcoming challenges and obstacles;
- Self-satisfaction from advancing the program or institution;
- Enjoying a change of pace from traditional activities;
- Accepting opportunities to learn more about the institution and about oneself; and
- Capitalizing on opportunities to be of service and advance the academic discipline or the profession.

Is the skill set required of an administrator different? Many would respond affirmatively and I would identify

Corresponding Author: Joseph L. Fink III, BSPHarm, JD, University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy, A262 Advanced Science & Technology Commercialization Center Building, Lexington, KY, 40506-0286. Tel: 859-218-6515. Fax: 859-257-2489. E-mail: jfink@uky.edu

one major difference I noted when in various administrative roles: being an administrator requires much greater patience than being a faculty member. In the faculty role, one delivers a number of lectures and then administers an examination to determine whether the students learned the material. In an administrative role, the results or feedback can be much slower in materializing. A decision made or an initiative launched today may not pro-

duce an impact for quite some time. An appropriate level of patience is truly a virtue for an academic administrator.

I readily acknowledge that my perspective is clearly one held by a small minority of faculty members. Is it likely this approach will go away? It is a very remote possibility. But hopefully people considering taking on an administrative role now have a differing perspective to consider before leaping into such opportunities.