VIEWPOINTS

Recruiting Faculty: Dovetailing Pharmaceutical and Clinical Scientists Into Our Colleges and Schools

Gayle A. Brazeau, PhD

Associate Editor, *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*
School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University at Buffalo

Perhaps as academicians, we can learn something from carpenters who utilize dovetail joints in fine cabinetry. The dovetail joint is considered one of the most perfected forms for joining 2 pieces of wood at different angles such that the interlocking “pins and tails” support each other to achieve the strongest, most permanent bond possible.¹ It would seem we should consider methods to “dovetail” the connections of those pharmaceutical scientists who elect to join the academy with our colleges/schools and our universities. The difficulties recruiting and retaining faculty members continue to be a frustration and a frequent topic of discussions in our schools and colleges. The 2007-2008 Joint Council of Deans/Council of Faculties Task Force on Faculty Workforce was charged to assess mechanisms like novel compensation packages, alternative faculty appointments, and other programs to enhance the applicant pool and retain faculty members. It is reassuring that this issue is now a discussion topic in our sister professional organizations such as the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education (AFPE), the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP), and the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), who recognize the importance and necessity for faculty members to educate the next generation of practitioners, clinical scientists, and pharmaceutical scientists. Furthermore, it is encouraging that we are all working collaboratively to address the current and future faculty shortages.

We need to consider other talented individuals who might fill our faculty ranks. There have been many approaches to motivating new scientists and clinicians to enter the academy. This is evident in the programming at local, regional, and national meetings where students and residents are provided with insights and recommendations about how to be successful in an academic career.

Scientists from the pharmaceutical industry represent another avenue to add to our faculty ranks. In the AAPS President’s report from September 2007, Gene Fiese and Rich Lawson highlighted a collaborative effort between AAPS, AFPE, and AACP to assist scientists in the pharmaceutical industry to learn more about careers in the Academy.² This is certainly a needed and critical approach to persuade individuals to transition from the pharmaceutical industry to faculty positions. Furthermore, this report discussed creative strategies for engaging pharmaceutical scientists in our educational efforts and encouraged pharmacy deans to think outside the box to fill the many open positions in the pharmaceutical sciences.

There is no argument about the availability of talented clinicians, pharmaceutical scientists, and clinical scientists in the pharmaceutical industry and what expertise and experiences they could bring to the educational and research programs in our colleges and schools. Furthermore, the continuing downsizing or “right sizing” of the pharmaceutical industry workforce suggests that pharmaceutical scientists may be considering alternative career pathways. Those who elect to pursue a career in the academic arena will undoubtedly require time to adapt to the differences in the work environment and the expectations for success. Yet, there is one critical component that we as academicians must be responsible for when these individuals become faculty members. We must assist these colleagues with becoming successful in the academy.

It is our responsibility as faculty colleagues and administrators to serve as vocal and enthusiastic advocates for those individuals who transition into our colleges and schools from the pharmaceutical industry. We must place a high priority on educating faculty members in departments outside of our colleges and schools to realize the skills and wealth of experiences pharmaceutical scientists from industry have brought to our programs and we should serve as advocates during their hiring. In addition, we should not assume that pharmaceutical scientists from industry, who in many cases have extensive work experience, will be able to easily develop collaborative

Corresponding Author: Gayle A. Brazeau, PhD. University at Buffalo, Amherst, New York 14260. Tel: 716-645-2848. Fax: 716-645-3688. E-mail: gbrazeau@buffalo.edu

relationships needed for success in our universities. As such, it is our responsibility to spend the time to ensure that these individuals have the opportunity to collaborate with the key individuals and engage in activities needed to enhance their skills as educators and scholars. Finally, we must take responsibility for educating faculty members on the promotion and/or tenure committees in our colleges/schools and universities to comprehend what these individuals and their previous career(s) have brought to our colleges/schools to strengthen our professional, undergraduate and graduate programs. Alternatively, faculty members and upper administration need to think innovatively to identify new advancement pathways that differ from existing options and time frames, thus providing these individuals with the opportunity to be successful in academic careers.

In carpentry, dovetailing is the approach that yields one of the strongest and most beautiful joint connections. While we are not at cross angles with our colleagues in the pharmaceutical industry, we, as the current members

of the academy, must make sure we each do as much as possible to dovetail and strengthen the connections and interactions these individuals have in our schools, colleges, and universities; continually articulate the strengths and experiences they bring to our programs; and develop and promote approaches to enable the success of these colleagues who choose to transition into academic pharmacy. If successful in these dovetailing efforts, we all will benefit from increasing the academic and intellectual strengths and opportunities in our educational programs, research, and service to our institutions and our communities.

REFERENCES

1. Dove Tail Joints. The Manufacturer and Builder, Volume one; 1869. Posted on business web site by Rucker KS. Available at: <http://pages.friendlycity.net/~krucker/Dovetail/dovetailjoints.htm>. Accessed November 18, 2007.
2. Fiese EF, Lawson R. Report from the President. AAPS Newsletter: 2007;7:50.