VIEWPOINTS

Planning Strategically

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Any faculty member who has even casually perused the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards 2007 knows that the first section is entitled “Mission, Planning, and Evaluation.”¹ Yet an online search of the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* for “planning” showed that only a single article had been published that was relevant to the concept of overall planning.² A search for *evaluation* resulted in *Journal* articles that focused on curricular or course-based assessments. While I could propose reasons for the paucity of publications, I will focus my attention on the issues of planning, staff, and academia.

As faculty members, we fully appreciate that academia differs significantly from the corporate world, where the concepts of mission, vision, and strategic planning had their home. Our academic world has a lexicon that includes *peer review*, *tenure*, *sabbatical*, *semester*, *syllabus*, and *academic freedom*—words not found in the language generally used within corporations. Likewise, the terms *creating share-holder value*, *profitability*, *revenue forecasting*, *margin contribution*, and *logistics* are unique to the corporate world. However, to achieve our greatest potential, our colleges and schools of pharmacy must embrace the best practices of strategic planning and evaluation—not just for our curriculum, but for the entirety of the mission and vision of our respective colleges and schools.

In the true spirit of strategic planning, let’s digress for an extremely brief environmental scan. We live in world that is technologically advanced, where Web sites and e-mail communication have nearly replaced school brochures and telephone interactions. We live in a recessionary environment that is shorter on fiscal resources than in most years past. We live in an environment fraught with faculty shortages – a 10% current vacancy rate and a projected future shortage of approximately 800 faculty members in the next decade.³ We live in a time when health care reforms will impact our profession, the role of pharmacists in patient care, and us as patients. And we live in a time of uncertain federal and industry funding for our research enterprise.

Even in the absence of a mandate from ACPE, our current environment demands that we marshal our crea-

tivity and our resources to develop and embrace the strategies that will define our futures. This means not just the deans but faculty and staff members as well. While the *raison d’être* for our colleges and schools may be the education of students, we, as faculty members, must embrace a disciplined approach to planning and evaluation for all elements of our colleges and schools because our future depends upon it.

As academicians, we are not trained in the discipline of developing quality strategic plans. ACPE is very wise to suggest under Guideline 2.3 that “in general, strategic planning should...consider the use of external facilitators.” Whether we use external facilitators or rely on experienced individuals within our colleges and schools, good strategic plans have a few things in common. I am making a case for only 2 elements, with the first being perhaps the more challenging.

Good plans articulate goals clearly along with measurable outcomes, which essentially become targets. We like to reach targets. These targets, or measurable outcomes, may be the simplest way for faculty members with disparate interests to understand and embrace the achievement of specific goals for which they may not personally be responsible. As William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, stated, “...when you cannot express [what you are speaking about] in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind.” If we think hard enough, there is a way to measure almost every goal that we would want to achieve within our colleges and schools.

My second point relates to who does the planning and evaluation. In your college or school, who attends the planning and evaluation sessions? If you did not answer both faculty and administrative staff members, I ask that you think again. As an aside, a search for the term *staff* revealed not a single publication in *AJPE*. Administrative staff members in this context refer to those staff members employed in non-research functions, whether the work is information technology, financial, or secretarial.

Think for a minute about Toyota, a company that is well known for its lean manufacturing practices that engage the people who do the work in identifying and solving problems. Our staff members are skilled, experienced,

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and often highly educated. The members of our colleges' and schools' staffs manage our finances and space; work with our alumni; manage the grant submission process; recruit our students; take applicants and families on tours; manage our servers, our databases, and educational technology platforms; oversee the communications through our annual reports, magazines, and Web sites; and contribute the skill to develop curricular maps and assessment tools. The staff is the voice of our colleges and schools on the phone; the staff has tools for planning and achieving the greatest cost-savings for purchases, the rate of turnover of desktop computers and printers, and the inventories of our supply cabinets. The staff touches virtually every element of our programs. In the days of small colleges and schools, before the advanced technology of the 21st century, staff members may have been there simply to help the faculty. It is time to break that model if we still hold it. For pharmacy as an academy to meet its potential, we need to engage every resource we can muster, and that includes our staff members.

We need to embrace the concept of planning strategically with measurable outcomes—not just because it is an ACPE standard, but because it will help us to make our colleges and schools better than they would otherwise be. We need to learn about and adopt the best practices from each other as well as from the corporate world. Finally, while the ultimate responsibility for mission, vision, planning, and evaluation may lie in the office of the dean, the entire process must include—and matter to—not only faculty members, but also staff members.

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