VIEWPOINTS

Is There Time for Student Intellectual Development and Scholarly Pursuits?

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One cannot convene a group of academics to discuss the current status of pharmacy education without the conversation turning at some point to faculty colleagues who lack the intellectual curiosity and drive to be successful scholars. A review of recent papers in the *Journal* indicates curiosity and drive are critical and essential for faculty development and promotion. All colleges and schools of pharmacy expend significant resources developing methods and tools to promote, enhance, and quantify faculty scholarly activities.¹⁻⁵ The importance of scholarship for faculty and students is also emphasized in the current accreditation standards.⁶ Furthermore, missions, educational philosophies, and curricular outcomes often include the importance of intellectual curiosity as a cornerstone skill for lifelong learning and professional growth.

It was Albert Einstein who reminded us that “intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.” The foundation for any successful lifelong career as a health care professional is centered on intellectual growth, starting the moment students enter colleges or schools of pharmacy. Not surprisingly, the pharmacy admissions process in most cases favors applicants who enter a program with experience in an area of scholarly activity. If we value pursuit of scholarly interests as a component of intellectual growth, and intellectual growth begins when students enter a degree program, what then is our responsibility? Do we provide sufficient time for students to pursue scholarly activities during their pharmacy education? Colleges and schools of pharmacy spend time and effort in documenting how we are meeting the educational learning outcomes needed for graduates to become successful entry-level practitioners, the types of learning (eg, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), and levels of learning (eg, knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). As we continue to add more to the professional curriculum through classroom, laboratory, discussion/small group, or experiential settings to address desired curricular outcomes, are we minimizing or losing opportunities for students to grow intellectually? Intellectual development and growth is more than a set of courses, laboratories,

and other educational experiences. It requires commitment of time and energy.

It is critical for faculty members to step back during any curricular revision process and evaluate whether time and flexibility have been incorporated into the programs for students to pursue interesting questions or engage in scholarly activities as a means of promoting their intellectual development. If students are to engage in scholarly activities or projects, ranging from research in the pharmaceutical, biomedical sciences, clinical sciences, or social-administrative sciences, as well as the scholarship of teaching and learning, the key elements are time and opportunity! There is certainly no lack of important questions or challenges in the current health care system, the sciences, or professional practice for talented students to use their enthusiasm and intellect to pursue while in a doctor of pharmacy program. We must honestly ask ourselves: “Are we giving our students the chance to explore the questions they encounter during their professional education?” “Are we including sufficient time or electives focusing on independent scholarly activities throughout our curriculum and professional program?” We need to evaluate to what extent a pharmacy curriculum offers the flexibility for students to explore their curiosities and unanswered questions. Furthermore, what is a PharmD program doing to encourage, recognize, and reward those students who excel in scholarly activities? How many pharmacy colleges and schools provide encouragement/mentoring, financial support, and time for those pharmacy students to present or even publish the results of their scholarly activities? How many colleges and schools highlight in graduation booklets those students who have successfully engaged in a scholarly pursuit? If student intellectual development and scholarly pursuits is indeed a priority in the academy, faculty members and administrators must continue to champion financial support from their institutions or through other organizations. At a minimum, we can begin by implementing local and/or national recognition programs for outstanding scholarly research activities or projects by our pharmacy students. One can envision an exciting future of unlimited possibilities for recognizing the scholarly or

intellectual activities of pharmacy students and future successful academicians if our councils, sections, or special interest groups would include this as a priority in their goals, activities, and meeting programs.

The academy continues to express concerns about attracting pharmacy students to academic careers, and assisting the newest generation of academicians to enhance their scholarly activities and intellectual development. Could the lack of time and opportunities for intellectual growth through scholarly activities or projects while in pharmacy school be one of the reasons we see too few students pursuing academic careers? How many pharmacy students have been given the opportunity to be “bitten by the research bug” and feel the enthusiasm that arises when confronted with an interesting question or problem needing to be solved or investigated?

We are asked to document many aspects of our professional programs in the current accreditation standards. Yet when we take a critical, thoughtful look at our programs during the accreditation process, how are we evaluating pharmacy students’ scholarly activities, intellectual pursuits, or intellectual growth? Many of the important issues in pharmacy need to be investigated or solved, and we, as an academy, have enthusiastic pharmacy students with the outstanding academic and intellectual abilities to tackle the questions that need to be answered. The latest, highly qualified applicants to

PharmD programs have the enthusiasm for learning, foundational knowledge, and potential for further intellectual development through scholarly activities and projects, but what do our colleges or schools do to further students’ intellectual growth throughout their professional education and beyond?

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