VIEWPOINTS

Protect Our House

Cynthia J. Boyle, PharmD

School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, University of Maryland Eastern Shore

With deference to a Baltimore-based athletic apparel company with the marketing motto “Protect This House,” I see the need for members of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) to protect our House of Delegates. In other words, we need to preserve our self-governance and our responsibility to deliberate as a body. As the newly installed 2011-2013 Speaker of the House, I envision great potential and profound opportunity for our House, and well-informed, engaged delegates are key to meaningful debate and decision-making.

I believe the House of Delegates is essential to AACP. There has been a tendency for organizations to discontinue their houses of delegates and to let the elected leadership conduct association business. The AACP Board of Directors can act on behalf of the organization between House sessions, but delegates must adopt policies. It is essential for members to have a voice in the policies that direct the actions of AACP. Elected leaders rely on the House to conduct this important function.

AACP is distinct from other organizations. Our policies deal with pharmacy education and state what we believe, who we are, and what we stand for. You can think of the House as the legislative branch of government. We could have further divided into a bicameral model with a dean/administrative body and a faculty body. Instead delegates from the Council of Deans and Council of Faculties sit side by side to make decisions that affect pharmacy education. We have new delegates and seasoned delegates, and overall this is a good model that can be made even stronger.

The perspectives of our institutional members and individual members are diverse and we do not always agree.

Through our board, councils, sections, and special interest groups, we have the venues to discuss what is important to us. Through our democratic process in the House, we generally reach consensus.

When voting on AACP policies, we should remain aware of the external audiences that monitor our actions. The pharmacy profession is highly regulated. Many entities are interested in the positions of pharmacists and pharmacy educators in particular. Practice issues have implications for pharmacy education, but so do initiatives or mandates from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Education, the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality, and state and national pharmacy organizations. Our House will need to improve our policy development process so that we become more proactive in issues affecting our students, faculty members, staff, graduates, institutions, and stakeholders. We can lead the way.

I look forward to working with the delegates from our member institutions. I will continue the efforts of our 2 previous speakers to improve training and communication with delegates. We have made progress by systematically reviewing our policies and archiving those that were outdated and by approving new rules of procedure for the House. This coming year, the Committee on Delegate Election and Deployment (CODED) will recommend best practices and timelines for electing delegates and alternate delegates so that they are honored, respected, and prepared for their vital roles in the AACP House. I am passionate about the process, committed to the responsibilities, and optimistic about the future of pharmacy education. I hope you are, too.

Corresponding Author: Cynthia Boyle, PharmD, Professor and Chair, Department of Pharmacy Practice and Administration, School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 109 Somerset Hall, Princess Anne, MD 21853. Tel: 410-651-7664. Fax: 410-651-8394.