VIEWPOINTS

Rethinking Faculty Career Development Strategies

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Faculty career development is an essential element to maintain the stability of the workforce in colleges and schools of pharmacy. Numerous reports from American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy committees as well as papers in this and other educational journals have provided useful insight into the challenges and opportunities with faculty career development. Many strategies have been identified and tested that colleges and schools could implement to assist faculty colleagues in their professional growth throughout an academic career.

As many of us can attest to from our individual academic careers, faculty work is a complex and at times challenging process. We find ourselves balancing multiple roles within and outside our organizations, often leading to role ambiguity. Dealing with stress and conflict that result from unclear responsibilities and expectations combined with what we believe are vague criteria for evaluating our success. Also, handling an increased workload can lead to a feeling of being overloaded as we move through the academic or administrative ranks. Many of us place stress on ourselves because of high self-expectations and goals for success in our academic career. The goal of well-designed faculty career development program should be to provide the tools and opportunities to reduce stresses and should be geared to the growth and advancement over the different stages of an academic career.¹

Faculty career development goes beyond advancing knowledge of teaching and learning; developing new skill sets to approach existing or future challenges in the classroom, laboratory or other educational setting; or gaining the experience and understanding needed to tackle the complexities associated with working in a rapidly changing academic setting. Professional development involves continual reflection, learning, and growth which will vary or change as faculty members mature and advance through the stages of their academic career. In addition, it requires that faculty career development activities be designed to achieve competence and self-awareness via opportunities for critical thought and reflection centered

on transformational learning experiences needed for success in adult learners.² Finally, faculty career development programs must be grounded in a foundation that enables individuals to remain motivated by providing autonomy in their selection of tasks, use of time, nature of the team in which they are working, and approaches to projects; show mastery in their chosen areas or passions; and focus on a larger purpose or goal besides their own self-interest.³ Many of our faculty career development opportunities may not reflect the differences in the career stages of individuals. We must be conscious of the differences in the approaches we use for faculty career development programs, particularly for new faculty colleagues vs colleagues navigating through the assistant and associate professor ranks vs colleagues who advance to becoming professors and/or colleagues those who pursue administrative positions.

We propose that faculty career development offerings for colleges and schools of pharmacy that are based upon a “one size fits all” model may not be effective because they do not address the needs of individual faculty members and do not effectively motivate faculty members at all career stages. Colleges and schools of pharmacy must design their faculty career development programs with an emphasis on understanding and motivating faculty members at all stages of their academic career. Dalton, Thompson, and Price, and Global Novations suggested that there are 4 stages in a professional career, ranging from when an individual shows dependence in their contributions to when an individual shows independence in their contributions, to when an individual is responsible and contributes to the success of others, and finally to when an individual contributes strategically to an organization through their ability to exercise power.^{4,5} Furthermore, for programs to be successful they must motivate faculty members by (1) allowing autonomy in how they work on tasks, time spent on their tasks, whom they work with, and how they work, (2) providing opportunities for mastery on their tasks, such that they must be able to feel the success and flow associated with mastery and centered on the concept that there is always a need for these individuals to have continued growth in their mastery efforts; and (3) focusing on programs that are purpose-driven such that these programs

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address issues with a larger purpose. These larger purposes must be based upon the missions and goals of the college/school or the advancement of the profession.³

The key component in any faculty career development program is to enable faculty members the time for critical and thoughtful reflection.² We propose that well-designed faculty career development activities must include a chance for written reflection, open dialogue, and feedback from peers, mentors, and department chairs. The annual performance review process must also include elements to motivate faculty members throughout the stages of their career. The development, planning, and implementation of a faculty career development program requires as much time and effort as that invested to ensure outstanding educational programs for our students. Pharmacy faculty career developmental programs must be transformational learning experiences that stretch the intellect and stimulate motivation as educators, scholars, and/or clinicians at all stages of an academic career.

The American physician, poet, professor, and lecturer Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. clearly stated this premise

by reminding us that “a man’s mind stretched by a new idea can never go back to its original dimensions.” Each of us must take a leadership role in developing transformational learning experiences to enhance faculty career development programs addressing the needs and motivations of pharmacy faculty members throughout their academic career.

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