LETTERS

Caveat Lector

To the Editor. Although I share many of the concerns put forth by Brown in his Statements article, “A Looming Joblessness Crisis for New Pharmacy Graduates and the Implications It Holds for the Academy,” individual institutions may wish to analyze their specific annual data over a 20-year time period, as the snapshots in time and estimates (particularly the 15-year growth rate) presented in Table 1 of Brown’s article may not accurately reflect those of their state and/or specific institution.¹ In the case of Oklahoma, the 15-year growth is reported as 135%, given there were 84 first degrees awarded in 2001 and an estimate of 197 to be awarded in 2016. An isolated observation, even when correct, may not afford a true longitudinal picture. The 2001 academic year was a complete aberration in that the curriculum zeitgeist of the conversion to the all-doctor of pharmacy (PharmD) degree was in full swing such that there were only 32 bachelor of science in pharmacy (BSPharm) graduates and no PharmD graduates from the University of Oklahoma that year. In 1993, the 2 colleges of pharmacy in the state conferred a total of 161 BSPharm degrees. In the 3 years prior to the article’s 2001 benchmark year, the first degree pharmacy graduates averaged 160 in the state. If 160 is substituted for the unrepresentative observation of 84 and using the 197 graduation class size in 2011 to project for 2016, it would yield a 15-year growth of 23%. In reality, there are smaller seated classes such that the true 15-year growth rate will be even lower. The 3 years following the benchmark year averaged 136 as the 2 institutions ramped up to delivering an all-PharmD curriculum. The largest numbers of graduates were produced in 2008, 2009, and 2010, with an average of 207 PharmD graduates entering the market. If recent PharmD graduates and soon-to-be

alumni from Oklahoma colleges and schools of pharmacy fail to find a position, I would hate for them to see the Table 1 entry for our state without full knowledge of the true picture. Although the selection of 2001 as the benchmark year had a rationale, there were certainly assumptions made that it was representative for each institution and/or state with potential for inaccuracy and bias in the 15-year growth rate. Thus, *caveat lector*. As to the suggestion that institutions revisit their plans for recruiting and admitting students and that these processes “will be vastly different from just a few years ago,” I say, “Amen, brother!” Our student affairs division has been addressing these considerations for 5 years. Will the 2013-2014 recruitment and application season be academic pharmacy’s version of the 2005-2006 housing bubble? Another irony is that of branch campuses and increased class sizes and the phenomenon of the so-called “geographically bound” student in order to pursue a pharmacy degree in place vs finding a position when done. Unemployment or underemployment will be more prevalent if graduates are still unable or unwilling to relocate. As to Brown’s admonition, “growth of the academy needs to cease forthwith,” The University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy is doing our part in that we have been decreasing enrollment numbers in the professional program, but we are also looking toward strategic growth in other areas. That is, diversification and pursuit of multiple missions.

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REFERENCES

1. Brown DL. A looming joblessness crisis for new pharmacy graduates and the implications it holds for the academy. *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2013;77(5): Article 90.