LETTERS

Academic Entitlement: A Student's Perspective

To the Editor. The concept of academic entitlement in higher education has been thoroughly described and was discussed in the context of pharmacy education by Cain and colleagues.¹ Few publications on the topic take into consideration the perspective of the student. As a current student in my fourth year of pharmacy school, I believe a student's opinions on academic entitlement are important if the issue is to be resolved.

While I am ultimately responsible for my own education, I cannot become a successful pharmacist without help from the institution I attend and the faculty members who teach me. Students must understand paying tuition does not entitle them to a degree but rather the opportunity to learn. However, colleges and schools of pharmacy and their faculty members have certain responsibilities to their students that must be realized if graduates are to become successful pharmacists.

The most important thing an institution must provide for its students is an environment that fosters student professional growth and development. Becoming a pharmacist takes more than memorizing guidelines or learning pharmacology. A student must be able to think like a pharmacist, something that can only be achieved through an enriched learning atmosphere and quality experiential education opportunities. The most fundamental way a college can offer this is by ensuring the excellence of its educators. Comprehensive reviews of faculty teaching skills are therefore essential. Assessments must go beyond student evaluations, as relying heavily on these panders to academically entitled students and does little to support good teaching practices. An institution also must hold its students to a similar high standard. Pharmacy school can be difficult even for the brightest student, and the pressures of the increasingly competitive field can drive some students to search for shortcuts. Overlooking cases of academic dishonesty or inflating a failing

student's grade can alienate good students and serve to cheapen the value of a doctor of pharmacy degree. A perfect graduation rate cannot be more important to an institution than graduating competent pharmacists.

I expect my professors to have time set aside to address my needs. Professors should be available to clarify lectures and provide additional sources of information when needed. It is not a professor's job to tutor a student individually, but I believe accessibility and willingness to provide tools to help a struggling student is crucial to being an effective educator. Students often see professors as educators first and researchers or clinicians second. However, contractual teaching responsibilities can be small in proportion to service and research commitments. In order to keep student expectations in check, professors should adequately communicate the full scope of their responsibilities and involvement to students. I also expect my professors to be passionate about their subject matter. A dry topic delivered with excitement in an engaging fashion is far superior to an interesting lesson delivered with no enthusiasm. In these regards, PowerPoint presentations, which are easily read from without further discussion, must be used with caution and cannot take the place of active learning.

I believe a fundamental understanding of the roles the institution, the faculty members, and the students play in the development of pharmacists is necessary to prevent entitlement from affecting pharmacy education. High standards must be set for all parties and accountability to these standards will improve morale of students and professors, increase the quality of pharmacists entering the profession, and prevent feelings of academic entitlement.

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REFERENCES

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