

Council of Deans Chairman's Section

Do You Need to Be a Pharmacist to Be Dean of a School of Pharmacy?

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As the profession of pharmacy is experiencing unprecedented change, dean search committees and university administrators are increasingly asking the question as to whether a pharmacy degree should be a requirement to be dean of a School of Pharmacy. At the 1994 Annual Meeting of AACP, President Les Benet suggested that future deans should be trained and have experience in clinical pharmacy and that the best candidates would be clinical scientists.

There is no doubt that having prior clinical experience would be helpful in providing leadership when all schools are undergoing curricular reform in response to changes occurring in the profession. The question is whether not having this experience is a success-limiting factor. Would one expect a candidate without this experience not to be a successful dean? Is it that much more important than other factors which lead to being a successful dean?

AACP will soon have available a document entitled "AACP Pharmacy Deanship Manual." I had the opportunity of reviewing this manual prior to its release. It was adapted from a similar manual written for Law School Deans. The manual accurately describes the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of deans of pharmacy schools. The primary responsibility of the dean is to provide leadership to advance the mission of the School. In this time of rapid change, this most often involves the use of a consensus-driven strategic plan. The dean must also be adept at managing the fiscal, personnel and academic affairs of the School. In addition, the dean must provide leadership so that the School is responsive to multiple constituencies including: faculty, students, upper administration, alumni, other pharmacy practitioners and professional organizations. These obligations are best met by personal involvement rather than extensive delegation.

In my view, it is more important that a dean have a certain set of personal characteristics rather than coming with a background in pharmacy. The dean must continue to be a student learning

about the profession and its scientific disciplines. The dean must assimilate new information about issues affecting higher education and the health professions. The dean must also learn and become more adept in the use of managerial skills. The dean must be a problem solver and address administrative problems in sufficient depth such that unique and valuable solutions are attained. The dean must be devoted to the success of others and understand that the position of dean is a service position rather than one of personal achievement.

All new deans will enter their positions with certain strengths and weaknesses derived from their backgrounds. It is important for them to become familiar with all of the academic disciplines of pharmacy and this requires a substantial amount of effort. If a dean does not have a strong background in pharmacy, time must be allotted to learn in some detail about the issues affecting the profession. Likewise, if scholarship is an important part of the School's mission and is emphasized in the School's strategic plan, the dean must devote time to develop strategies to encourage and enlarge the scholarship activities of the School.

There is a great benefit to pharmacy education at the national level when deans come from diverse backgrounds. We need the attention to scholarship that distinguished professors bring to the academy of deans. We need the focus on professional issues that professors with long-time practice experience bring to the deanship. We need the emphasis on teaching brought by professors who have excelled in the classroom. We need more women and deans of ethnic diversity to better respond to the diverse needs of society. Deans with such backgrounds cannot be found within just one academic discipline. We need leadership talent from the entire academy if we are to succeed in meeting the challenges of advancing the mission of pharmacy education in these times of rapid change.