

# Executive Director's Section

## What a Fortuitous Decision!

Carl E. Trinca

*American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, 1426 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2841*

It was in the mid-1970s that AACP reorganized itself into a society to serve the needs of both pharmacy school administrators and faculty. At the time of the decision, those who designed and supported it did so because "it was the right thing to do." Little did the AACP leadership know at that time what a momentous decision they were making. In reorganizing AACP to include faculty, they not only created a professional organization unlike any other of its kind, certainly very unlike any organization representing health professions education, but they positioned AACP to play a critically important role in supporting the most profound change any health profession has made. By including faculty among the Association's strategic constituencies, AACP began to emphasize one of faculty's most important functions: teaching. While AACP had been sponsoring its Teachers Seminar since 1949, (indeed, one may argue that it was this annual focus on teaching that triggered the reorganization to include teachers in the Association) the Association's attention to teaching has increased dramatically since its reorganization.

Faculty who are planning to follow the recommendations and directions outlined by the Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education are finding that teaching is the key to success. It is teaching that will inculcate in students the desire to care for patients; it is teaching that will provide students with the skills to collaborate with other health professionals; it is teaching that will enable students to make therapeutic decisions on behalf of patients; and it is teaching that will empower practitioners to change the way they practice. As Background Paper II states:

"The outcomes occur as a result of material contained within the curriculum and the way in which students are taught."

At a time when teaching is becoming so critical to the strategic intentions of our profession, it is unfortunate that teaching receives so little attention in higher education. Evaluation of teaching effectiveness is ill-defined, incentives to change teaching and learning behavior are few and far between, and rewards are most often lacking. Many current efforts, although sincere, are often met in the field with "yes, but". Pharmaceutical education has pledged to come to grips with greater recognition of teaching as scholarship.

This issue of *the Journal* emphasizes teaching more than most; it continues the Association's teaching agenda on behalf of its members. Recognition of teaching excellence has been practiced

by individual colleges and schools of pharmacy for many years. In the mid-1980s, the Association moved to highlight the best local talent in our schools by recognizing Teachers of the Year during its annual Awards Banquet, by holding a special luncheon for them hosted by the president and *Journal* editor, and by encouraging them to submit manuscripts describing a favorite teaching method or technique for publication. Toward the end of the decade, it became evident from the higher education literature and the work of AACP's Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education that teaching was to experience a renaissance in our schools. Beginning in the new decade, the Association's Council of Faculties began to hold interim meetings and to focus on teaching during these events. Moreover, the Council moved to recognize innovation through a program sponsored by Merck Human Health Division that highlights outstanding teaching innovations through cash awards and annual meeting poster presentations.

The Center for the Advancement of Pharmaceutical Education (CAPE) has as one of its cornerstones a commitment to recognition of teaching; the planned result is the certification of Master Teachers, full-time, part-time, and voluntary.

Because this focus on teaching came from the faculty members of AACP, the response among the AACP membership to its emphasis on teaching has been extremely positive. This brings us back to the premise of this editorial: AACP's decision to expand its membership base to include faculty permitted the organization to respond to one of faculty's most pressing concerns, their teaching. The Association's response to this concern is paying enormous dividends as the profession is beginning to demand practitioners with new skills to deliver pharmaceutical care.

Forty-five years has provided us a good beginning, but its just that. If we want to keep students at the center of our work, we must take steps to increase the value placed on teaching. AACP will continue to pursue programming and projects which will enable schools to innovate and faculty to test and learn new teaching skills; schools should ensure that their missions clearly articulate the value of teaching quality. AACP will assist its members by developing a documentation system (*e.g.*, portfolio) for teaching contributions and excellence; faculty should examine defining teaching more broadly. AACP will help faculty learn skills of diagnosing teaching problems; faculty and schools must make efforts to correct teaching problems, and schools must make renewed efforts to reward faculty when they are successful.