STATEMENT

Reframing Our Pursuit of Life Balance

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During our time in the 2013 Academic Leadership Fellows Program, we explored what it takes to achieve life balance through a framework presented in a *Harvard Business Review* article. In this Statement, we describe 5 different areas from the article that provide infrastructure for reflecting on how we have learned to approach life balance in academia. We also provide brief messages based on this reading and others to help academics' pursuit of life balance.

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As members of the 2013-2014 Academic Leadership Fellows Program (ALFP), we read and shared with one another an article titled "Manage Your Work, Manage Your Life" from the March 2014 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, written by Groysberg and Abrahams.[1] This article deeply resonated with us because the message contradicted what we had always thought to be true during our early careers: that we should be able to have it all and do it all at all times. Rather than ensuring that all aspects of the tripartite mission of teaching, scholarship, and service, are kept in balance with our personal lives, giving equal time and effort to each area, the article instead challenged us to make deliberate choices and look at the idea of life balance as a "myth." They questioned the "balance" approach and described an alternate framework that allowed professional and personal goals to overlap. By following this framework, it seemed acceptable to sacrifice long hours at a time to complete a professional project, as long as such a period of professional productivity was followed by something that replenished us personally. Upon interviewing thousands of executives and leaders, Groysberg and Abrahams found the model they outlined was operationalized best by those making the "deliberate choice" to "engage meaningfully with work, family, and community."

We wanted to share the inspiration that the Groysberg and Abrahams article brought us. The reading helped us internalize the lessons of the ALFP program and cultivate our own perspectives on what it meant to truly develop as leaders in pharmacy education. Having spent years serving as faculty members and academic administrators, we have worked within our programs to develop interprofessional initiatives, expand distance pharmacy education, mentor young faculty members, and more, in addition to fulfilling the academy's tripartite mission. We have combined our central emphasis on administrative responsibilities with our teaching, service, and scholarship in ways that make it easy to blur the lines across all of our responsibilities as administrators and educators, as well as those regarding families, children, dreams, goals, and hobbies we also need to nourish. Awareness of whether we are spending too much time in one area, or recognizing when enough is enough, has been valuable when drawing the boundaries necessary to enrich our professional and personal development, to prevent burning out, and to keep ourselves effective.

As we discussed the Groysberg and Abrahams article, we found the five structural areas of (1) defining personal success, (2) managing technology and connectedness, (3) building and maintaining support networks, (4) collaborating with partners, and (5) selectively taking or passing on opportunities were interwoven into our professional and personal lives. Focusing on these five areas, as well as consulting other references, we were inspired by the thought of making deliberate choices. For the first time, balance wasn't the goal any longer, and our shared learning and reflection made achieving all the accomplishments we see our great leaders in pharmacy doing seem much more attainable.

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Defining Personal Success

Define and develop goals. It is important to work with an end in mind. Having professional and personal goals gives us a sense of not only what we have accomplished, but also of what we have yet to complete. Adopting continuous professional development (CPD) principles and SMART (subjective, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed) goal-setting strategies are important in defining steps and planning how those steps will be realized.[2,3] Understanding goal setting can help us get closer to a notion of success solidly based on what we can accomplish, while allowing us to continue to push ourselves beyond our goals in ways that are measurable.

Focus on strengths and talents. Focusing on strengths, while managing weaknesses, was a constant theme during our year within the ALFP program.[4,5] Discovering specific areas in our professional and personal lives we are naturally drawn to, and excel in, is instrumental in our engagement and fulfillment.

Seek feedback on definition of success. While developing our goals and finding our strengths en route to developing our own definition of success might be considered a highly individual and internal effort, being able to externally validate our definition or coherently explain it to another might help to make the definition more real and also provide a level of accountability.[6,7] Seeking feedback from a trusted professional or personal mentor may provide a means to either fill in a gap or provide a way to think differently about our definition of success.

Develop a personal strategic plan. A strategic plan helps organizations and their members approach the future using a very broad lens, while still providing guidance on prioritizing next steps in the development of a new initiative or even deciding in which initiatives to fully invest.[8] As we develop our own definition of success, it becomes import to have a broad and overarching strategy illustrating our identity and our approach to life, while still having mechanisms in place to think about how we will prioritize what we do, both professionally and personally.[9,10] Having such a mechanism might help us determine where our time and energy should be placed.

Engage in a personal SWOT analysis. Just as organizations list their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, it might be valuable to engage in that activity with ourselves.[11-13] Having a solid understanding of these areas can help us leverage our talents. Sharing a self-analysis with a trusted mentor can also be useful in validating, correcting and further refining how we approach these four areas.

Managing Technology and Connectedness

Understand expectations. It is imperative to fully understand the professional and personal expectations we face regarding connectedness. Technology is useful because it brings access to both professional and personal relationships. Every organization and every family may have different expectations and their own culture for staying connected and engaged, or the degree to which it values multi-tasking.[14] Diverse expectations of connectedness make it important to find out what is culturally acceptable in terms of communication within your professional organizations. It is also important to establish these expectations within personal relationships.

Find what works personally. As it relates to technology and connectedness, it is less important to pick a side for or against technology and more important to be aware of personal needs related to connectedness and communication.[15] From a professional perspective, some may prefer to completely avoid all information from their organization while vacationing, whereas others may be emotionally calmer if they are aware of what was happening regularly. Finding out how disconnected, or connected, we prefer to be helps in setting both professional and personal boundaries.

Set boundaries. Setting boundaries is as important in the professional arena as it is in personal relationships.[15,16] It might be easier to extricate ourselves from a dysfunctional relationship in our personal life than in our professional life because we don't choose our colleagues, but the same rules of respect apply. Technology and connectedness intersect with setting healthy boundaries because interruptions, whether in person or via e-mail, can be equally distracting.[14,15,17] Developing rules about general availability, in terms of responding to e-mail requests, accepting calendar invitations to events, or even being accessible in personal and professional settings can help crystallize expectations, minimize interruptions, and use technology to simplify life, rather than complicate it.

Assess how technology both helps and hinders. It is important to regularly take the time to assess the pros and cons of using technology. E-mail provides an easy method to access information, yet using it might be to our detriment as it constantly invites issues and information into our work day. Technology, such as e-mails and calendars help us quickly receive information and keep organized, respectively. Balancing this speed and organization with costs is important.[18] Some costs that come to mind relating to e-mails and web-based calendars include the expectation of immediate response and dictation of our daily actions.

Building and Maintaining Support Networks

Establish internal (close) and external (distance) mentorships. Mentorships, whether they are internal or external, formal or informal, can be valuable to professional

and personal development. Internal mentors can include those with whom we have personal relationships and who provide alternative perspectives and coaching; this mentorship gives both individuals a deep understanding of their common work environment.[19,20] External mentors provide similar support, but in a professional sense, may be less interested in the success of the organization and more invested in the individual. Having a variety of internal and external mentors will provide a rich variety of perspectives.[21-24]

Find internal and external sponsors. Similar to mentors as a source of support, sponsors can provide us with tangible opportunities to further showcase our talents.[25] Sponsors may, for example, connect us with professional speaking engagements or a career opportunity. Such relationships may also positively affect our personal life.

Bring health and stability to personal relationships. Part of maturation may be linked to the development of stable relationships in both professional and personal spheres. Often, our professional and personal lives intersect in ways that contribute to or detract from the success of both.[16,26] Many, if not all, the same principles of healthy and emotionally stable relationships apply to both professional and personal situations. Additionally, our professional relationships may become fulfilling personal relationships on different levels. Harmony across our varied relationships is essential to developing strong support systems.

Replenish. As we attempt to manage our network of relationships, we must constantly pay attention to our relationship with ourselves. This might especially be true for introverts, who recharge by spending time doing something for themselves to replenish energy and motivation to continue doing their best work.[27-29]

Collaborating with Partners

Develop an approach to professional and personal collaborations. Everyone has a different strategy for connecting with others. Whether it is for professional or personal reasons, our relationships have the potential to help us develop through different ideas, guidance, camaraderie, and valuable life advice. In professional relationships, for example, the mentor has more knowledge or experience than the mentee.[7,17,30] As these relationships develop and the mentee is exposed to additional perspectives, the mentee can then help the mentor in various areas or, in fact, reverse roles completely.

Peer mentor relationships, where, for example, one provides mentorship on teaching development, and the other reciprocates with mentorship on scholarship development, illustrate a "give and take" balance. Personal relationships can also have a "give and take" balance; for example, a spouse must contribute more to child care at certain times and seek a balance with the other spouse in the future, when the latter takes on more of those responsibilities.

Develop an approach to how professional and personal collaborations intersect. It is common to have relationships in the professional realm become personally rewarding. Within our professions, and our years of training in school or postgraduate development, we've potentially made long-lasting relationships ending in friendships, strong unions, and even family. Managing those relationships, in terms of developing strategies to effectively work with close acquaintances, friends, life partners, and spouses while maintaining professional boundaries is important.

Selectively Taking and Passing On Opportunities

Revisit our definition of success. By constantly revisiting our definition of success and individual strategic career plans and goals, we might be able to prevent ourselves from not only taking on too much, but from accepting opportunities that may take us further away from future goals or intended direction. It may not always be useful to stick rigidly to one path, and academia offers a variety of opportunities even if the choices might be overwhelming for both new and experienced faculty members. Revisiting our definition of success might help us find our center as new opportunities arise.

Evaluate the pros and cons of the new opportunity. Before saying "yes" to that new opportunity, it is imperative to identify and review the pros and cons carefully to be sure that this is the best opportunity, at the best time in our career, and that we are well-equipped to be challenged by it, learn from it, and grow because of it. By carefully evaluating the pros and cons, it might be possible to more clearly see whether to pursue it or not.

Discuss the new opportunity with a trusted individual. Additionally, it might be important to share our analysis of the pros and cons with someone close to us. Share the analysis with a trusted collaborator, such as a mentor, spouse, colleague, etc. Although the analysis may be complete, an outside perspective might add objectivity to our decision-making and encourage reflection before rendering a final decision.

Forecast the new opportunity a year or more into the future. Think about how involvement in this project will be rewarding in the long term. Will engaging in the new opportunity open doors for us or accelerate progression along our desired pathway? Are we adding undue stress at an inopportune time in our life in order to meet a new deadline? While it is difficult to tell what benefits

a new opportunity will bring, it is important to look at a more long-term view of our career trajectory and fit in opportunities that make sense for our development and align with how we deliberately choose to spend our time and energy.

The perspectives presented here can be valuable to students, staff, faculty members, and administrators within and beyond pharmacy education as guidance for managing our busy professional and personal lives. These examples and suggestions may help us think more deeply about the professional and personal choices we make, as well as how our professional and personal goals can intertwine and affect one another, both in positive and negative ways. It is also helpful to use these perspectives to reframe concepts we take for granted, such as success, connectedness, networks, and collaboration. Finally, it is imperative to use these concepts to bring intentionality to time and energy usage to enhance our professional effectiveness, long-term success in the academy, and personal happiness.

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