

## VIEWPOINTS

### Hiring Residents as Faculty Members: Dancing with the Stars

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As a department chair, I am deeply grateful for the efforts of residency program directors and graduate student mentors who nurture and develop residents and graduate students to become future faculty members. It is always hard to let go of individuals in whom you have vested so much, but your legacy grows with each successful placement.

From December to April is the crucial recruitment season when residents begin the serious process of interviewing for prospective faculty positions and making employment decisions. I have likened it to “Dancing with the Stars.” Most residents are already “stars,” but the condensed timeline creates stress on school personnel and residency candidates, and some of the prospects miss important steps in the “dance.”

Like many of you, I spent endless hours in the ASHP Personnel Placement Service (PPS) venue last December. (Was the meeting actually in New Orleans?) With several of my colleagues, I enjoyed the introductory interviews with many pharmacists who would complete their residencies the following July and who expressed interest in faculty positions. The residents were well-prepared with excellent curriculum vitae, business cards, professional attire, and engaging communication. Most wrote timely and detailed thank you notes after the meeting. In other words, they made an excellent impression.

As a newer school, we conducted extensive interviews for pharmacy practice, pharmacy administration, and administrative positions over several months. I believe that just like student pharmacists who are applying to more residency programs because they perceive increased competition, residents are applying to many colleges and schools as they search for faculty positions. For example, 1 future candidate interviewed with 30 programs at PPS, applied to 8 programs, and received interviews with 6 colleges or schools. Residents are scheduling interviews, travel, presentations, and coverage at the practice site, while simultaneously completing residency requirements and dealing with the uncertainty of a potential move, spousal employment, family issues, and licensure in a new state — a challenging time, to be sure.

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Meanwhile a school must try to balance expertise in practice areas, involve practice site personnel in interviews and decisions, navigate university processes, and prepare to gradually orient new faculty members and integrate them into courses and practice experiences. Some colleges and schools complete their interviews by April and others start them in April. Spring is as crucial (and challenging) to colleges and schools as it is to candidates.

The question I pose is whether it is time to establish guidelines and timelines for spring recruitment of residents into academic positions. Generally, they finish residencies at the same time. Is it possible to conclude the “free agency” period with a “draft” by April 15th each year? Match Day is a relief for students interested in residencies. How would a “Decision Day” for faculty positions work? Would a more synchronous timeline allow for better planning and appropriate use of resources?

I had mentioned mis-steps in the dance. When individuals are interviewing for multiple positions, they should be encouraged to show proper courtesy and respect to programs who are awaiting a decision on an offer. I think it is inappropriate for colleges and schools to place excessive pressure on candidates for immediate decisions, but it is also not acceptable for candidates to ignore phone calls or e-mails because they are not ready to commit. My suggestion is for advisors and mentors to encourage candidates to complete interviews and responses with the same professionalism that they demonstrated when they began the process. I would advise residents to:

- (1) Always reply to a communication, even if more time is needed for a decision.
- (2) Personally communicate by phone with the person who extended the offer. (It is possible to arrange a mutually convenient time by e-mail.)
- (3) Be civil, courteous, and generous at all times.

We all have the same goal for these pharmacy stars: to have professional satisfaction and personal happiness working with a college or school at which they can prosper. When someone I interview and recruit decides to work elsewhere, I am disappointed, but I am happy to have gotten to know the person better. We have shared a dance, and we actually might be partners in the future.