

VIEWPOINTS

Entrepreneurial Spirit in Pharmacy

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Reflecting on the significance and future of the students recently graduating from colleges and schools of pharmacy across the country brings us mixed feelings as educators and scholars. It is indeed a happy and exciting time, realizing the tremendous growth and maturation of these students into enthusiastic new pharmacy practitioners with many opportunities and pathways for a successful, productive, and satisfying career. There is also a sense of sadness and loss, realizing the many hours in classrooms, laboratories, and experiential sites, as well as in various professional and fraternal organizations and local and national meetings, that we have spent together during the course of their professional education. Finally, there is a bit of anxiety and concern, hoping that we have provided these new practitioners with the necessary critical thinking, critical questioning, and problem-solving skills, as well as intellectual curiosity, entrepreneurial spirit, and passion for life-long learning, needed for success over their professional career and for the future development and enhancement of pharmacy practice. Our educational programs have worked diligently to promote critical thinking and questioning, problem solving, and life-long learning throughout the curriculum, but what about intellectual curiosity and an entrepreneurial spirit?

Intellectual curiosity, which is one's ability to enjoy and engage in learning opportunities, is an important element for success in pharmacy students. Intellectual curiosity is similar to cognitive ability and effort in predicting success of students in educational programs.¹ An entrepreneurial spirit can be thought to include elements such as creativity, uniqueness, adaptability, risk taking, developing potential, and business savvy, and ultimately can be self-destructive (if not realized and managed).² As such, the word "entrepreneur" has had many definitions ranging from negative connotations such as pursuing business opportunities with or without regard for other resources and individuals for personal gain, to positive connotations such as being a trailblazer and leader, envisioning and creating new opportunities for their generation and beyond. Without intellectual curiosity and an entrepreneurial spirit, many of the technologies and approaches considered commonplace today would not exist.

One need only look as far as cell phones and other electronic and computer devices, as well as technologies used in patient care, to demonstrate how intellectual curiosity and an entrepreneurial spirit have changed contemporary life, health care, and wellness.

I have great confidence that our educational programs have provided these future pharmacists with the necessary foundations in the biomedical, pharmaceutical, clinical, and social and administrative sciences, as well as with the patient care skills needed for successful contemporary practice. Yet, when I reflect upon the tremendous changes ahead in patient care and the research opportunities in the upcoming decades, I realize the future will require pharmacists who have this intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit. We need pharmacists who will envision future practice and patient care opportunities, be willing to assume the role of entrepreneur and risk taker, and move forward in these areas despite the potential for great failures on the way to success.

This raises the question to what extent are educational programs stimulating and enhancing pharmacy student's intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit throughout their undergraduate, graduate professional, and/or graduate education. Even more important, to what extent are we considering in our admissions processes and procedures for all programs in our colleges and schools the ability to attract and recruit applicants who demonstrate intellectual curiosity and an entrepreneurial spirit in addition to strong academic and interpersonal skills. The rate of new knowledge in the biomedical, pharmaceutical, and clinical sciences and the massive information and technologies available to clinicians and scientists will continue to explode, providing new opportunities for those who are willing to learn, integrate, and dream of the possibilities. It is critical that we have future graduates with this intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit who are playing important roles in the rapidly advancing and changing areas of health care and wellness.

Our current accreditation standards and guidelines for the education of pharmacists are indeed comprehensive and thorough, but as we continue to focus on more and more specific, required, and recommended elements,

are we losing the opportunities for developing and further enhancing the intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit of our graduates? Do we have enough opportunities in our educational programs for students to tap into their intellectual curiosity or to develop their entrepreneurial spirit? To what extent are pharmacy students offered the opportunities for independent study guided by our faculty members not in 1 or 2 isolated semesters, but rather throughout their course of graduate professional study? To what extent do we encourage our students to explore and enhance existing practice opportunities by promoting their entrepreneurial spirit in classrooms, laboratories, and practice experience sites? We are certainly fortunate to have national programs such as the NCPA Pruitt-Schutte Student Business Plan Competition and the Clarion National Case Competition for our students, yet these types of programs are often for a limited number of students and outside the normal course of their professional study. We have awards, honors, and recognitions programs that recognize outstanding students for their academics, leadership, community outreach, clinical skills, and research skills, to name a few, but how many that focus on students who have demonstrated an intellectual curiosity and/or an entrepreneurial spirit? These students may not necessarily be the most academically talented students or most active students in leadership and organizational roles, but they also bring an important element to our colleges and schools, and contributions of these students to the current and future success of our programs should not be overlooked.

History time and again has shown us that many successful individuals have embodied this intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit. We also have many excellent examples of contemporary individuals in pharmacy

education, pharmacy practice, and pharmaceutical and biomedical research who have demonstrated these traits. We should be providing opportunities for these individuals to share their stories with pharmacy students, including not only their achievements but also how they were able to overcome adversity and disappointments throughout their career on their way to success. It is through interactions with such individuals that our students can realize that even the most successful individuals have also had failures and challenges in their professional journey. It is these failures that are often critical to motivating these individuals to stay intellectually curious and to maintain their entrepreneurial spirit on their way to subsequent successes. We all can speak to our own individual failures and challenges that have enabled us to grow both professional and personally and have formed the foundation for our own intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit. As we move forward in the continued improvement of our educational programs and in the next generation of accreditation standards, it is critical that we incorporate opportunities to stimulate, enhance, and improve students' intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit for pharmacy to maintain its role as a key member of innovative, creative, and dynamic models and systems of health care and health care delivery.

References

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