I am honored and grateful to stand before you today. In the time I have with you today, I want to make several key points. These include rewarding a diversity of excellence among our members, developing preceptors as integral to the quality of the education we offer, a conspicuous acknowledgement that pharmacy is a science-based profession, a significant enhancement to our research and graduate education portfolio, and an enhanced balance of our advocacy portfolio.

When I began to formulate a leadership agenda, I consulted with American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) staff members all gathered around a table in Alexandria. I asked them for their views, but before they replied, Buzz Kerr said, “Brian, what’s bugging you? What’s important to you?” I immediately began to talk about what I and others believe has been an academic reward system that has become tilted in favor of scholarship. In some schools, faculty members with a large teaching load but without a major research expectation are not eligible for tenure, but colleagues with a more rigorous research expectation, sometimes even with time protected from teaching, are tenure eligible.

We aspire to excellence in all areas of our mission, but we are diverse in our passions and talents. Some of us are outstanding researchers and some of us are outstanding teachers, but we are not all outstanding researchers and teachers. Clearly, we need to all show productivity in various aspects of our work, including scholarship and publication. Our standards of accreditation also expect this. Excellence is worthy of reward wherever it exists, however. Part of our problem in this area is that our metrics for assessment of scholarship are far better than for other mission elements. Scholarship can be more easily and objectively quantified and it attracts resources.

If we value excellence in teaching, we need to measure it more reliably. We count our treasures. We measure what we value and we value what we measure. We need better, more reliable methods for the assessment of teaching excellence. Education is a central mission of academic pharmacy. Our goal is to evaluate and reward excellence in teaching in parity with excellence in scholarship.

I have asked Dr. Melissa Medina of The University of Oklahoma to chair the Academic Affairs Committee. She has a challenging set of charges. The work presented at yesterday’s Teachers Seminar will give them a head start on contrasting and defining scholarly teaching with the scholarship of teaching. They will evaluate the evidence for data-based assessment of excellence in teaching, not the traditional awards that are unreliable.

Here is the good part to me. As part of the same charge, I am asking Dr. Medina and her colleagues to recommend specific strategies to assess teaching excellence in parity with other elements of the academic mission. I have no illusions that I will change the culture of higher education in the next year, but we need to begin this conversation in a thoughtful manner. I am also asking them to recommend strategies that we can use to prepare graduate students and postgraduate residents for careers in teaching excellence.

Much of the final year of the professional degree program is conducted by preceptors who are often not full-time professional pharmacy educators, often volunteers. Their teaching contributions are just as important, just as integral to the quality of our students’ education as any other part of the curriculum. I have asked Dr. Betty Harris, now of Husson University, to chair the Professional Affairs Committee, with a goal to enhance and reward teaching excellence among our preceptors.

In my state, K-12 public schoolteachers can be recognized and rewarded as Master Teachers, a certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Many states do this. It is intended to measure and reward “mastery.” It is a great honor for them. The process is rigorous. They must prepare a detailed portfolio of evidence to document their teaching excellence, including the achievements of their students. It takes months of preparation and hard work. If their portfolio is accepted and approved, the State of Mississippi provides a salary enhancement for the 10-year term of the national certification. There are ceremonies and press releases. They are acknowledged in their communities. It is quite a thrill for them.

I have asked Dr. Harris and her colleagues to consider something similar for our preceptors. They will recommend a development program to cultivate pharmacy preceptors who aspire to a truly excellent and exceptional...
level of teaching. Their charges include a recognition system for preceptor teaching excellence.

Now, I would like to transition to relevance. Sometimes, when I am teaching, I talk to my students about takeaway points of learning. I say, “When you leave this room, I especially want you to understand this.” Well, this is one of those times. Pharmacy is a science-based profession. As my friend and colleague, Dr. Sandy Zito, once told me, “Pharmacy without science is merely well-intentioned caring.” Sandy, thank you for that wisdom. I hope we all agree that the foundation of pharmacy education is scientific.

Yet, AACP as an organization is perceived by some as an organization that serves mainly the practice and social and administrative sciences faculty and dean administrators. At times, I have heard that AACP does not serve the career advancement of our basic pharmaceutical science colleagues or even that membership in AACP by basic scientists is declining.

Let me say that the data do not support this observation. AACP is the only national association of pharmacy educators. No matter what your scientific or clinical discipline, AACP is the organization that addresses our common interests as pharmacy educators and scholars.

There is growth in the number of faculty members since the year 2000. Perhaps the curves do not have exactly the same slope, but the roster of basic scientists, total AACP members, and basic scientist AACP members also has grown.

In fact, although the percentage of the faculty members who are basic scientists has declined by about 3% over the last 11 years, basic scientists as a percentage of the total AACP membership and scientist AACP members as a percentage of the total basic scientist faculty are both increasing sharply over the past 3 years. I would also point out that AACP members as a percentage of the total faculty is at its highest point in this 11-year interval.

A message I want to transmit today is that AACP is prepared to assist faculty members in the advancement of their careers, including their scholarship, by engaging in this organization. A member needs analysis is now underway to better identify and serve our faculty members and institutions. Perhaps you have already participated in the telephone interview.

This brings me to Dr. Vincent Lau, our new Chief Science Officer who has just joined the AACP staff. He is a distinguished pharmacologist who most recently was chair of the Department of Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Houston. His arrival at AACP is a major addition to our staff that will advance our research and graduate education portfolio of services and programs.

Vince will serve as both chair and staff liaison of the Research and Graduate Affairs Committee (RGAC). RGAC will serve as a special advisory committee to Dr. Lau in his early years at AACP. Committee members were drawn from across all disciplines of the Academy. We have many shining stars in the research world of pharmacy education, many sitting in this room, but without disclosing all the names today, I guarantee you would recognize them as among our most distinguished and accomplished scholars, including past Volwiler and Dawson awardees.

My expectation is (and yours can be, too) that we will strengthen key relationships with funding agencies, scientific organizations, and leading scientists.

Pursuant to the recommendations of this year’s Research and Graduate Affairs Committee, charged by President Rod Carter and affirmed by a portfolio analysis of emerging opportunities, AACP will launch the Academic Research Fellows Program, conceptually modeled after the highly successful Academic Leadership Fellows Program. This is a level of national mentoring and scholar development that has never before been offered by AACP. Dr. Lau will also work to strengthen and support the recently formed Special Interest Group on Graduate Education.

To all faculty members and especially to the basic pharmaceutical scientists who may not have felt our association offered value, I say to you, “Come on home.” AACP is an organization that is ready to help you thrive in all respects.

I am delighted that Past President Marilyn Speedie of the University of Minnesota will chair the Argus Commission. I have asked the Argus Committee to answer several important questions related to my emphasis on relevance and the scientific foundation of pharmacy education.

First, what is core to the scientific foundation of clinical education? Second, how and when do we teach this vital foundational material? Third, how do we inculcate an attitude of inquisitiveness and scholarly thinking in our students and those of other health professions? Fourth, how can we nurture emerging scientists among our students and our talented young faculty members? Finally, what will keep our graduates from being technicians instead of professional clinicians?

Dr. Frank Cerra, also of the University of Minnesota, is probably the first first-year pharmacy faculty member to be appointed to chair a standing committee in AACP. Before recently joining the pharmacy faculty, he was Dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School and Senior Vice-President for Health Sciences. He is also a senior fellow in the College of Pharmacy’s Center for Leading Healthcare Change and will be working in Washington on health policy with the Association of...
Academic Health Centers. Frank is a friend of pharmacy education and a friend of pharmacy.

I have asked Dr. Cerra to chair the Advocacy Committee. He will have outstanding colleagues to bridge the leadership agenda themes of excellence and relevance and how our advocacy portfolio should be balanced with respect to education and science scholarship. I have charged the committee to recommend strategies to demonstrate the value of education and science scholarship to address our mission in communities where we serve, literally including the neighborhoods where we are located.

Finally, the Advocacy Committee will recommend strategies for implementing interprofessional education, an issue that remains a vexing challenge for many of our schools despite a growing literature and emphasis within AACP. As you may know, AACP is a sponsor of the Interprofessional Education Collaborative.

Colleagues, as our enterprise grows and aspires to ever-increasing excellence, we must develop, measure, and reward diverse talents. I promise to you, and I know I speak for other leaders and the AACP staff, when I say that we will offer a continuously improving portfolio to enhance our success, among all disciplines, in all mission areas. I am honored to serve, I am proud of our Academy and what you do every day, and I am humbled by our collective mission to improve health and relieve suffering.