

## VIEWPOINT

### Rethinking Our Human Resources

Wallace A. Marsh, PhD, MBA, MSE,<sup>a</sup> and Gayle A. Brazeau, PhD<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of New England College of Pharmacy, Portland, Maine

<sup>b</sup> Editor, *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*

In the book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins wrote about “getting the right people on the bus” in order for a company to excel.<sup>1</sup> Many have argued it’s not simply about getting the right people on the bus, it is also about getting the right people into the right seats.<sup>2</sup> Is it time to rethink how the academy is recruiting, hiring, and developing its human resources? Are current policies and attitudes holding us back as we move forward in our educational, research, clinical service, and college, university, and professional service missions?

Several issues pose challenges when getting the right people in their seats on the bus or even filling the available seats on the bus in academia. We are certainly all aware of the challenges associated with the faculty member shortage in certain disciplines given the increased requirements of new accreditation standards and the increased number of pharmacy programs combined with the current promotion and/or tenure systems in place at many of our institutions. With the expansion of the number of pharmacy schools, opening of satellite campuses at existing schools over the past 20 years, and the expansion of class sizes, the need for faculty members is high.

The monthly e-mail received from American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) related to career and position opportunities shows constant vacancies at all levels of the faculty and administrative ranks. Moreover, the number of graduates of social and administrative sciences programs may not be able to keep up with demand for faculty slots.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, there are faculty member shortages in the pharmaceutical science fields and increasing challenges in recruiting graduates to academia.<sup>3</sup> The rise of PharmD/PhD programs may have an impact on this problem in the future though it is not clear if they will fill the needed gaps.<sup>3</sup>

We suspect that most faculty members likely have examples of interdepartmental or intradepartment conflict that have resulted in challenges or the inability to achieve the goals of the school or of various departments. Incivility can exist between faculty members, with staff members, or with students in daily interactions or for long periods of time in schools. Are we missing the most key question when dealing with individuals who consistently

demonstrate incivility to others in our programs? Specifically, should we be asking what the costs to other individuals and to our institutions are when we tolerate either short-term or long-term incivility?

Two articles by the Harvard Business Review highlight the cost of incivility in the workplace.<sup>4-5</sup> They suggest the following “costs” to productivity: employees are less creative, get fed up and leave the organization, up to 50% and deliberately decrease their effort and disengage from the workplace, and damage can be done to the business’s customer relationships (in pharmacy this could be our students, external preceptors, and potential employers for students). Given the difficulties with the faculty shortage, we can’t afford to have faculty members leave schools or the pharmacy academy and/or decrease their productivity in classrooms, clinics, or research laboratories.

David DeWolf argues that one should look at an equation that measures productivity vs aggravation.<sup>6</sup> He asserts that it takes an enormous amount of production to outweigh aggravation even for a company’s top performers. Pharmacy education is not immune to the challenges related to incivility and its impact on our primary customers, our students.<sup>7-8</sup> With the prevalence of social media and ubiquity of cell phone cameras, just about any act of incivility among faculty members can be posted somewhere on the Internet quickly after the incident. Even witnessing one act of incivility causes customers to generalize this occurrence to the whole organization and makes it less likely they will do business with the organization in the future.<sup>4</sup> While students are already invested once they matriculate—and given the difficulties of transferring—they are not likely to leave. However, negative social media posts and recommendations to friends may deter potential future students from applying to a given program.

An additional challenge with getting the right people in seats may involve the current tenure system, which can limit optimizing our most important resource, faculty members. While the tenure system has many advantages, it can serve as a detriment to change if it caters to individuals who consistently demonstrate incivility or lack of

productivity. Most universities have the option to remove tenured faculty members if there is evidence of immoral behavior, lack of duty fulfillment, or incompetence in their duty, but this often requires an extensive and involved course of action even with the presence of a formalized post-tenure review policy. For current processes of annual reviews, as well as promotion and/or tenure reviews, perhaps we should be asking the extent to which individuals are civil to others in our schools through one-on-one conversations, e-mail or text conversations, social media or in committee or other group interactions.

What lessons can we learn from the business community? A business adapts to meet challenges through difficult decision making in the area of personnel, namely making determinations of who meets current or future goals. While a complete discussion of the role of tenure is beyond the scope of this Viewpoint, we wonder to what extent the academy will overlook the importance of civility in our schools when conducting annual performance reviews or when reviewing individuals during promotion and/or tenure or post-tenure processes.

There are indeed other issues we need to consider as we look at human resources and the potential for incivility in our schools. An additional challenge that seems to be occurring is the presence of too many faculty specialists in our schools. In a Viewpoint published earlier this year, Scott made an excellent argument for the need for more “utility infielders.”<sup>9</sup> He argued that the change in Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education standards will require faculty member to train students in areas such as innovation and entrepreneurship for which not all schools may be equipped at the moment. We believe the majority of faculty members, whether they are in the pharmaceutical, biomedical, clinical, or social-administrative sciences, have the ability as educators to teach most topics across the broad discipline within the doctor of pharmacy curriculum given adequate preparation time. Isn't this the definition of life-long learning? Specifically, faculty members wanting only to teach their area of specialization and resisting advancing their skills as an educator in other areas may become problematic for our educational mission. To what extent does lack of civility or collegiality result from some faculty members being asked to do

more because others refuse to expand beyond their area of expertise?

We need to get people who promote civility and collegiality even during challenging times in the right seats on the bus. We need faculty development programs that allow professional growth and enhancement of interpersonal skills. Having been involved on numerous search committees at various institutions, we don't recall often asking questions about an individual's willingness to change or how they respond when asked to change. In our hiring processes, in our day-to-day interactions, and in our performance reviews and promotion activities, we need to remember the words of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a seventeenth-century poet and letter writer, who said “Civility costs nothing and buys everything.” Furthermore, we need to take a cue from the business world and ask questions not only of potential faculty members but also of existing ones seeking tenure regarding general skills like adaptability, civility, collegiality, and willingness to change and work as part of a team.

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