

Prescription for Success

By Charlene Hankinson



Sitting in his office in the newly renovated Davis Street building, Donald Stansloski, R.Ph., Ph.D., dean for the School of Pharmacy, speaks in calm and modulated tones, but his passion about the pharmacy program he has helped create is clearly evident.

The doctor of pharmacy degree, commonly referred to as a Pharm.D., is The University of Findlay's first professional doctorate. The idea of starting a pharmacy program was a number of years in the making, with Stansloski hired in 2004 to provide leadership in founding the program. His qualifications include more than 30 years of experience in pharmacy education at the University of Nebraska and Ohio Northern University.

Findlay's pharmacy program is based on the direct entry or "zero plus six" model, in which students matriculate directly from high school into the six-year program, graduating with a doctorate. According to this model, students do not have to re-apply to the pharmacy program again after being accepted as freshmen. Carefully chosen for their potential for success, students are assured progression in the program as long as they continue to meet academic criteria and other standards.

He noted that on the first day he meets with new students, he says, "Look to your left, look to your right. Those are the people you are going to graduate with." From the beginning students are encouraged to form study groups and to help each other learn. "You're meant to collaborate in your education because we believe in your practice you will have to collaborate," Stansloski tells them.

While students at Findlay find a supportive and encouraging environment, they still have to work hard. "It's not easy," he stated. "It's 18 hours of hard-core science for five years and then a year of clinicals. It's a hard program. If it were easy, everyone would do it." Introductory courses in pharmacy are offered the third year, with advanced core courses for professional practice in pharmacy taken during the fourth and fifth years. The sixth year is devoted to pharmacy practice rotations in areas such as general medicine, geriatrics, toxicology and cardiology.

Stansloski outlined three approaches to pharmacy education currently in use in the United States. First is

The University of Findlay was the first new pharmacy school to be approved in Ohio in 100 years. With Findlay's pharmacy program graduating its first class in 2010, it has the opportunity to begin fresh with a model of education that is formulated to emphasize student success and professional collaboration.

Doctor of Pharmacy Program



The six-year doctor of pharmacy degree includes two years of basic sciences and general education courses, introductory courses in pharmacy the third year and courses in professional pharmacy practice during the fourth and fifth years. The sixth year is devoted to pharmacy practice rotations.

a “two plus four program,” with students taking two years of pre-pharmacy education before competitively applying for a limited number of seats in four-year pharmacy schools. The second model is a zero plus six program that overenrolls the freshman class. These programs must find ways to discourage a significant percentage of students from continuing in the program. In that case, Stansloski pointed out, “You’ve built an enrollment policy based on a sense of failure in somebody.”

In the third case, Findlay’s model accepts 60 freshmen for 60 spots in the professional third year. “We do not overenroll the freshman class,” Stansloski emphasized. “We have absolutely no desire to lose any of those students,” he stated.

In addition to fostering student success, the pharmacy program has a philosophy of professional collaboration infused throughout. Stansloski noted that the role of the pharmacist is greatly expanding and that collaboration with other health care professionals is becoming the norm. “We believe that the route to patient safety runs through a collaborative practice,” he said.

Stansloski also believes in collaboration among the faculty. He involved his faculty as team members in determining the curriculum, the nature of clinical education and even the office design, which is open and accessible. All courses are taught in teams.

“We have remarkably highly qualified, highly motivated people,” Stansloski said of the pharmacy faculty, noting that several have two doctorates, two have written nationally accepted textbooks and two are past presidents of the Ohio Pharmacy Association.

“To be able to attract this level of faculty to a new school has been amazing.”

No new school of pharmacy can be established without the proper accreditation. The University of Findlay was given approval from the Ohio Board of Regents and the Higher Learning Commission and has been awarded candidate accreditation status by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

Full accreditation of the doctor of pharmacy program cannot be considered until the first students have graduated from the program, which is slated for 2010. However, all current prospective graduates are qualified to sit for the pharmacy licensure examination in all 50 states and may continue with graduate education or advanced clinical residencies for fellowships in pharmacy.

Stansloski is quite optimistic, noting that the evaluation by the ACPE was very positive, with Findlay meeting all standards except for those that cannot be assessed until the first class has graduated. He also sees a bright future for employment in pharmacy careers for students. Shortages of pharmacists are predicted indefinitely as practitioners take a more active role in managing the drug therapy of patients and collaborating with other health care professionals. “That role is increasing exponentially,” he noted.

Pharmacy students have a very solid scientific background and have been instilled with people skills, he said. “A professional who is trained in that way is bound to be attractive, whatever happens in the world of the future,” Stansloski observed. “They are always going to be in demand.”