

Chapter 1

Is an Academic Career a Good Fit for You?

Of all of the career paths you can follow in pharmacy, why would you want to be a faculty member at a college of pharmacy? It's a fair question, with many good answers.

According to the American Pharmacists Association's Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals, several themes recur among the clinical practitioners, pharmaceutical scientists, and economic, social, and administrative scientists who pursue careers in academic pharmacy. These professionals enjoy:

- **Teaching and working with student pharmacists.** Nothing keeps you “young at heart” more than interacting with a group of students.
- **Learning.** They have an inquisitive nature. Academia appeals to the type of pharmacist who, when presented with a new issue or problem, immediately wonders, “Why or how did this issue come to be?” or “What can we do now that would be better than what was done in the past?” Academic pharmacists enjoy the challenge of staying on top of new knowledge in their fields, especially when it comes to working with students.
- **Solving problems through innovative thinking.** They often design experiments and collect data to evaluate the value of each new approach, whether they are in the laboratory, clinic, hospital, pharmacy, or classroom.
- **Variety.** They seek positions that require them to perform a diverse range of activities, from giving lectures and precepting students to carrying out research and serving on committees. They are comfortable handling multiple tasks, often at the same time.

- **Autonomy and flexibility.** Academic pharmacists are self-directed and like to set their own schedules regarding where and when they perform their work.
- **Working in teams.** Pharmacists in academia work with others in a variety of ways, such as teaching in teams in the classroom, serving on committees that provide direction to their organizations, and performing research and other scholarly projects that discover, integrate, and apply knowledge.
- **Prestige.** Professionals in academia are held in high esteem by pharmacists, other health care professionals, and the community in general.

Academicians recognize that their careers may not offer the highest salaries in the profession, especially at the entry level, but they realize that their careers come with many tangible and intangible benefits, such as those cited above. Most faculty members feel that the value of these benefits more than makes up for the difference in salary they could earn in other settings.

Many Roles Outside the Classroom

A professor lecturing to students from the front of the classroom is usually the first, and often the only, image that comes to mind when we think about a faculty member. Although teaching is an essential function for most college of pharmacy faculty, you can hold many other positions that may or may not put you at the head of a classroom full of students. These include:

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- **Administrators** such as deans, assistant and associate deans, department chairs, and program directors.
- **Research scientists** who work in laboratories, clinics, and offices.
- **Experiential education specialists** who identify, develop, and evaluate practice sites and preceptors suitable for introductory pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs) and advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs).
- **Laboratory instructors** who assist students as they acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to practice.

- **Pharmacy practitioners** who serve as preceptors for students undergoing IPPEs and APPEs.

In later chapters, this book will provide more information on the background and qualifications necessary to pursue a position at a college of pharmacy. Most of these positions require additional education and training beyond the doctor of pharmacy (PharmD) degree, but some do not.

The Demand Continues

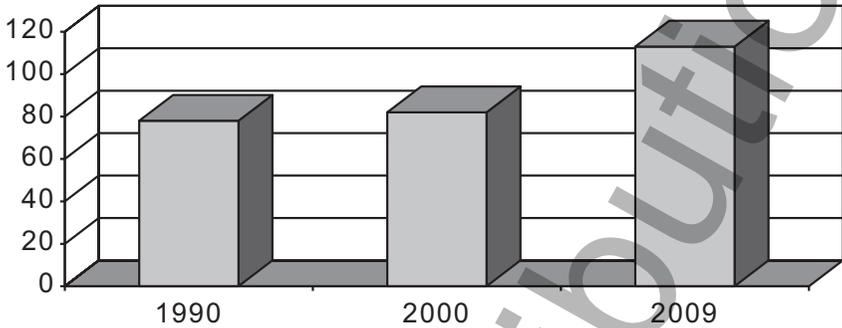
Pharmacy faculty will continue to be in demand. Society needs pharmacists with an ever-broadening scope of practice, especially in the area of patient care. Yet society can't begin to meet the demand for pharmacists without a sufficient number of colleges of pharmacy and, most important, without the faculty members to teach pharmacy students. Drug therapy is an ever-increasing aspect of health care, with the number of prescriptions filled in the United States more than doubling between 1995 and 2010. And legislation such as the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Medicare Part D) and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Health Care Reform) expands the pool of people with access to prescription medications, medication therapy management, and other clinical services that pharmacists provide.

As the "Baby Boom" generation born between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s reaches retirement, the demand for pharmaceuticals, pharmacists' clinical services, and pharmacy education is certain to grow.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP), the number of colleges of pharmacy, first professional degree students, and faculty members have all increased substantially since 1990 (see Figure 1-1). Projections by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Adequacy of Pharmacist Supply Report show that the demand for pharmacists and pharmacy services will continue to increase as the population grows, ages, and increasingly relies on medications to manage both acute and chronic health conditions.

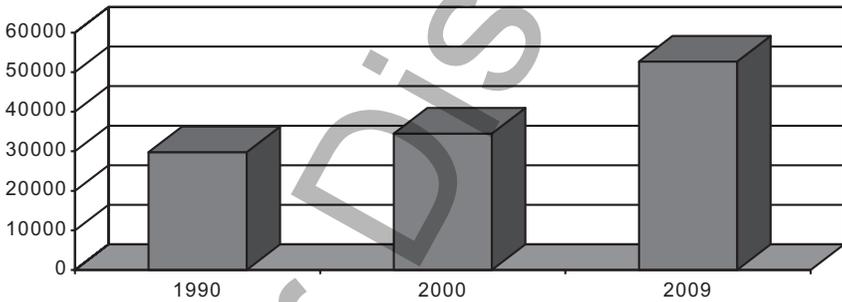
While the increased number of pharmacy schools, faculty, and graduates has helped to address shortages that existed earlier in the decade, projections indicate that the demand for pharmacists, as well as for colleges of pharmacy and faculty members, will remain high. Figures 1-2 and 1-3 show how the numbers of pharmacy faculty and students increased over the two decades surrounding the turn of the 21st century.

Figure 1-1 | Number of Schools of Pharmacy - 1990–2009



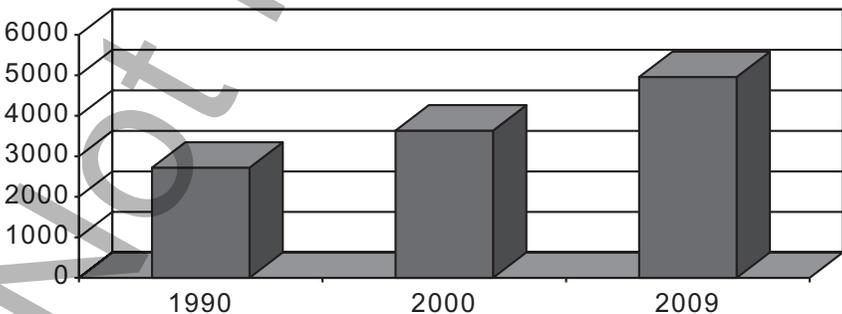
Source: American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

Figure 1-2 | First Professional Degree Students - 1990–2009



Source: American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, Institutional Research Data (www.aacp.org/resources/research/institutionalresearch)

Figure 1-3 | Number of Full-Time Pharmacy Faculty - 1990–2009



Source: American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, Institutional Research Data (www.aacp.org/resources/research/institutionalresearch)

Implications for You

What does this ongoing need for pharmacists mean for you? The keys to a long and enjoyable career in any field involve not only continued demand for particular services, but also for a set of knowledge and skills necessary to achieve success. If you are interested in academia, you should have many opportunities, because new pharmacists need to be recruited and trained on an ongoing basis. And as medical knowledge and pharmacy practice evolve, pharmacy educators will be on the forefront of discovering new knowledge and educating both patients and students. This requires pharmacy educators to continue learning themselves.

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The remainder of this guide will provide information about what college professors are expected to do, how universities and colleges are structured and operate, and steps you'll need to take to start down the path toward a career in academic pharmacy. You'll get advice from successful faculty members from a variety of backgrounds.

Finally, you will learn what you can do to ease your transition into the role of a pharmacy faculty member and discover resources available to help you achieve success. Pharmacy faculty members who reviewed this book before publication said it contains details they wish they'd known before starting their careers. I hope it gives you knowledge at the start of your career that others had to gain by trial and error later on.

Where to Find More Information on Attributes of and Demand for Pharmacy Educators

American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals

www.pharmacist.com

This program provides resources that allow pharmacists to assess their own interests and then learn about careers in pharmacy matching those interests. Many colleges of pharmacy offer the program as a live workshop

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for their students. Interested students and pharmacists can also access the materials online at the URL above and search the Career Pathway Evaluation Program section.

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) – Academic Pharmacy’s Vital Statistics

www.aacp.org/about/Pages/Vitalstats.aspx

AACP regularly gathers data from U.S. colleges of pharmacy, including the numbers of students enrolled in their programs, the types of programs they offer, the number and type of faculty members employed, and annual salary and benefit trends.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Adequacy of Pharmacist Supply Report

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/pharmacy/supplyadequacy.htm>

This report presents the results of a study performed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2004 assessing the adequacy of pharmacist services and identifying trends likely to impact demand for these services up to 2030.

Pharmacy Manpower Project

www.pharmacymanpower.com

The Pharmacy Manpower Project (PMP) collects, analyzes, and disseminates information on the supply and demand for licensed pharmacists in the U.S. A key component of the PMP website is the Aggregate Demand Index (ADI), which collects data from a panel of pharmacy employers to track changes in pharmacist supply and demand across practice settings and regions on a monthly basis.