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Mentors Are the Key to Success—Residency in the Rearview Mirror

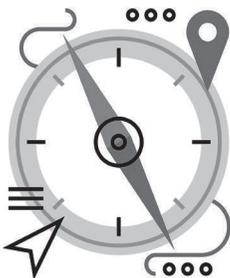
Brian credits his successful residency selection, training, and now his career beginnings to several influential mentors. He sought out a variety of mentors starting in his first year of pharmacy school to help direct his career path.

Brian is currently Manager, Clinical Operations, at the University of Virginia Health System, in Charlottesville. He received his PharmD at the University of Kansas and his postgraduate year 1 (PGY1)/PGY2 MS health-system pharmacy administration (HSPA) residency from the University of Virginia Health System in Charlottesville.

Brian's advice is: ***Be present. Before you leave work each day, walk through the offices and see what people are working on and ask questions. Get involved in their projects; this will help build your experiences and decision making skills.***

Dear Pharmacy Colleague,

I can now say, without hesitation, that I am confidently pursuing the most fitting pharmacy career path for my talents and interests. However, I wasn't always certain what career path I wanted to pursue within the pharmacy profession. When I look in



my rearview mirror, I am convinced that without the presence of influential mentors my pharmacy career would look much different. When the time comes to start evaluating your career options as a pharmacist, look no further than one who has gone down the same path before you. I can say with assurance that mentorship has been the key to my success in determining the direction I wanted to pursue in the pharmacy world.

During my first year as a pharmacy student, I obtained an internship at a hospital and was privileged to work with leaders in the field who saw potential in me and wanted to maximize my impact within the profession. Their willingness to teach and inspire the next generation, while taking time out of their schedules, was influential in my future career decisions. I was able to have discussions about pharmacy career pathways for both clinical and administrative residencies. It was over breaks in my internship that my mentor inspired me to create short- and long-term goals for my professional career.

At this time, I also acquired an immense amount of information on pros and cons for each residency type through my mentor sharing his past experience. During the three-year-long internship and relationship with my mentors, it became evident to me that I wanted to pursue a health-system pharmacy administration residency that would also provide advanced clinical training and learning opportunities. I then looked at specific residency programs that would help me achieve my goals of having a global impact on patients and advancing the practice of pharmacy.

MAKING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS TO GUIDE YOUR WAY

Analyzing the many outstanding organizations that offered a health-system pharmacy administration residency was my next challenge. In examining the residency programs, I was struggling to decide which program was best for me. Fortunately my mentor encouraged me to revert back to the short- and long-term goals that I had created and to use them as a lens to look through when reviewing the programs. Using those goals as a guideline, I was able to see what residency programs aligned best with my determined purpose and career path. The programs offered at the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting made me realize *many* programs had excellent learning opportunities to help me achieve my short- and long-term goals. In addition to the experiences I would receive at the residency site, my mentor recommended that I also evaluate the programs based on the learning environment and the personal fit within the program. I remember my mentor saying, “*You don’t want to go to a residency site where you can’t be yourself for two years.*” Alignment of goals and personal fit were the driving factors that helped me in assessing which programs to apply to for an onsite interview.

When it came time to rank the residency programs, I wanted a program that would push me out of my comfort zone, expand my clinical skills, and advance my administrative knowledge and decision-making. I wanted a program where I could see the potential to advance from a learner to a leader in the department. It wasn’t until onsite interviews that I was able to see the passion of the program from discussions with the directors. One of the program directors really inspired me to pursue my career at that organization when he said, “*In this residency we will push you to occasionally fail, but you will fail in a safe environment that will teach you to learn from*