

An Interview with Tom Baillie, new UW School of Pharmacy Dean

As Tom Baillie prepared to begin his first year as UW School of Pharmacy dean, he took time to answer the *Washington Pharmacy's* questions about his experience, the school's relationship with WSPA, and the future.

WP: What relationship do you envision between the School and the Washington State Pharmacy Association?



TB: I believe that it is vital that the School develops a strong strategic relationship with the WSPA, and that the interactions between the two groups become more formalized and less dependent upon individual contacts. The School has a clear responsibility to train the next generation of pharmacists, many of whom will practice in the State of Washington, and an effective partnership between the WSPA and the

School will be to the benefit of all our citizens as we address the current shortage of licensed pharmacists. The School has enjoyed a remarkable level of support from members of the WSPA, notably in providing experiential opportunities for our students, and it is incumbent upon us to build upon this goodwill and ensure that the School is fully aware of, and responsive to, the needs of WSPA members.

WP: You spent 14 years working for a pharmaceutical company. What lessons learned in the private sector will help you in your new role as Dean?

TB: I learned a great deal from my time at Merck, much of which will be equally applicable to academic administration and the management of a large, multi-national corporation. Perhaps the most important lesson learned from my time in industry related to the development of leadership skills, and the recognition that leadership has many different dimensions, all of which need to be mastered! Industry places much more emphasis than academia on developing leaders and honing their people and business management skills, which results in more focused approaches to issues and better alignment around strategic goals. The challenge in a university setting, of course, is to realize the benefits of effective leadership while simultaneously preserving the academic freedom upon which innovative thinking is so critically dependent.

WP: Five years from now, where would you like to see the UW School of Pharmacy?

TB: In five years' time, I hope to have made substantial progress in resolving some of the most pressing issues now faced by the School, that include a serious shortage of space (for both education and research), low faculty salaries, and inadequate support for the professional programs to fully satisfy new accreditation standards. On the research front, I anticipate that the School will remain highly competitive with respect to extramural grant funding, and that new programs will be in place that reflect the current trend towards translational science and inter-disciplinary collaboration. We will have continued to build upon the enviable reputation of the School in terms of the high quality of our faculty and staff, as well as the thorough training of our students, and we will be broadly recognized as one of the foremost schools of pharmacy in the nation.

WP: What is the most important thing you have learned professionally? Personally?

TB: From a professional standpoint, I have always been struck by how much can be accomplished, both in research and teaching, when individuals with quite distinct areas of expertise come together to work on a common objective. In the pharmaceutical industry, for example, close collaboration between scientists from many different disciplines is critical, in the absence of which new drugs simply could not be brought to market. The UW School of Pharmacy, I am happy to say, has a strong tradition of inter-disciplinary teaching and collaborative research, which have contributed to its high standing among peer institutions. I am a strong believer, therefore, in collaboration at all levels which, in uncertain economic times, will distinguish those schools that thrive from those that struggle to survive. On a personal level, I have found throughout my entire career that the people from whom I have learned the most are those whom I have been charged with supervising! My students and postdoctoral fellows at the UW, and my direct reports at Merck, taught me an enormous amount, for which I always will be grateful. I look forward to learning even more during the coming years from the faculty and students at the UW. I am truly delighted to be back at this great university!