



## FROM THE EDITOR



Her phone call was an opportunity we didn't want to waste. Our daughter, just days into her first term as a college freshman, was asking for advice. She'd heard about a new section of a math class that, although challenging, intrigued her. What did we think? Should she go for it?

Of course, she didn't want her dad and me to tell her what to do. I think she really wanted us to help her calculate the risk involved: itself a risky task for parents. Although we may think we can be objective, we're too familiar with her personality—and too close to our own hopes and dreams for her—to be impartial. It was a tough call.

That's when my husband recalled an article from *Scientific American* about new theories in cognitive science on how people become experts. Researchers had studied the mental processes of chess grandmasters, but the findings were applicable to top performers in sports, math, music, even medicine. These individuals engaged in "effortful study," defined as "continually tackling challenges that lie just beyond one's competence." Their expertise wasn't due to innate ability; they were highly motivated and worked hard, very hard.

When I read "The Expert Mind," I was interviewing four faculty members of the College of Pharmacy for a feature story on the proliferation of awards they'd recently received. Yihua Bruce Yu, Ph.D., honored with a U.S. Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, told me how he was motivated by senior faculty members in his department who constantly pursue new directions in their research: "They do set high standards for me, but their achievements tell me that I can do the same thing." Mentoring is essential, but so is an environment that fosters collegiality, not competition. Diana I. Brixner, newly elected president of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research who earned her Ph.D. from the U in 1987, is energized by the "powerful" collaboration she's rediscovered here.

It's not limited to the College of Pharmacy. Mary Beckerle, Ph.D., profiled in this issue as the new executive director of the University's Huntsman Cancer Institute, explained how scientists take risks when they feel like they're respected and trusted in a supportive environment. That motivates them to "take the next step"—a phrase with multiple meanings for physician-poet Gaël Yonnet, M.D. He "walked" through graduation at the School of Medicine last May in a wheelchair. He knows what it means to push himself mentally as well as physically, and he is quick to credit his classmates and faculty for their support.

We have a tradition of collegiality here at the health sciences center: a community of expert minds—researchers and clinicians, faculty and students—ready to work together. That's the kind of environment that helps motivate each of us to keep challenging ourselves. And that makes for success, as well as inspiration. Good advice for a daughter, too. ▣

SUSAN SAMPLE