At its meeting in July 2002, the AACP Board of Directors engaged in a discussion of challenges confronting existing and emerging colleges and schools of pharmacy, especially in the context of program quality and accreditation standards. These issues centered on the adequacy of resources to build, maintain, and enhance professional degree programs; strategies to facilitate and assess students’ professional development; the nature of faculty scholarship, the necessary environment for scholarly activities, and the relationship between scholarship and quality professional education; developments in distance learning and their implications for pharmaceutical education; and curriculum development and assessment of students and programs.

The Board of Directors decided in October 2002 to issue a call for AACP members interested in serving as authors for a series of papers on these specific, contemporary issues in pharmaceutical education. In choosing this strategy, the Board anticipated papers that would provide critical analyses, foster dialogue among AACP members, and inform future accreditation standard-setting activities and AACP program development. Papers were sought on the following topics:

- Fiscal and other resources, including an analysis of the fiscal, human, and physical resources necessary to support quality professional doctoral education in pharmacy.
- Student professionalism, including an analysis of professionalism in pharmaceutical education, its value within the context of pharmaceutical care, challenges to the development of student professionalism in academic pharmacy, and factors necessary to support student achievement of curricular outcomes related to professionalism.
- Developing and sustaining a culture of research and scholarship, including an analysis of the relationship between research and scholarly activity and quality professional education, and the appropriate extent and nature of research and scholarship necessary for the individual faculty member as well as the college or school as a whole to support quality pharmaceutical education.
- Curriculum development and assessment, including an analysis of contemporary issues in higher education and health professions education related to curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, student assessment, and program assessment, and factors necessary to assure quality instructional programs in pharmaceutical education.
- Distance learning, including an analysis of trends in distance education, its impact on achievement of the outcomes of professional doctoral education in pharmacy, and factors to be considered in measuring the quality of teaching and learning in a distributed environment.

Letters of interest were submitted prior to December 31, 2002, and subcommittees of the Board and staff selected authors for four of the five topics. No letters of interest were received for the paper on fiscal and other resources. It was determined at that time that such a paper might be completed at some time in the future, drawing from and relating to the content of the other four papers. It was expected that authors of each of the papers would comprehensively examine existing materials in the pharmaceutical education, health education,
and higher education literature, and compile evidence of what is required to deliver an effective program of professional doctoral education. Recommendations for consideration by pharmaceutical educators, AACP, and the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE) were specifically requested. Draft papers were peer-reviewed in May 2003 and presented in a discussion session during the AACP Annual Meeting in Minneapolis in July 2003.

Various AACP committees will consider these papers and their recommendations in 2003-04. The Academic Affairs Committee has been charged by President Robert A. Kerr to review the paper on curriculum development and assessment, along with other pertinent resources, to identify key suggestions and information to forward for consideration by ACPE in the accreditation standards and guidelines revision process, and to suggest appropriate program assessment measures, indicators, and processes that guide institutions in responding to “How do you know if you have a quality program?” The paper on developing and sustaining a culture of research and scholarship will serve as one of the background resources for the Research and Graduate Affairs Committee as it considers the relationship between research and scholarship and quality pharmaceutical education, identifies key suggestions and information to forward for consideration by ACPE in the accreditation standards and guidelines revision process, and suggests appropriate program assessment measures, indicators, and processes that guide institutions in responding to “How do you know if you have a culture of research and scholarship that supports a quality professional education program?”

It is anticipated that these papers will also influence discussions in which AACP engages as part of the Association’s outreach to others within the profession. During the July 2003 meeting between senior staff members from ACPE, AACP senior staff, and the AACP Board of Directors, it was determined the recommendations contained within the papers would serve as the priority focus in 2003-04 for the on-going, strategic collaboration between AACP and ACPE. The two organizations continue to explore strategies to enhance the synergy between their respective missions: quality assurance and monitoring of educational programs by ACPE and quality facilitation and promotion by AACP. In addition to the recommendations aimed at AACP and ACPE, there are recommendations contained within these papers to stimulate dialogue at the college and school level as well as among individual faculty members.