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# EDITORIAL

This particular issue of CHIMIA is dedicated to the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Basel, and contains contributions ranging from the history of pharmacy in Basel, to education and high-tech research in modern drug design and development. Basel, as one of the world capitals of the pharma industry, offers an optimal environment for pharmaceutical sciences. All this originates from the long-lasting pharmaceutical tradition of our town, and is recognized in the introductory article 'Pharmacy in Basel'.

This issue presents our department in a time of great change with respect to its research as well as teaching activities. In the year 2000, the department moved from its original location at the Totengässlein in the center of the picturesque old town of Basel to the new Pharmacenter, which offers excellent research facilities and teaching conditions. An additional benefit is the location of the department in the immediate proximity to the Department of Chemistry, the Biocenter and the University Hospital, facilitating collaborative efforts in life science projects.

At present, the department body of teaching and research consists of three full professors, a professor of dual appointment, two titular professors, 75 doctoral students and 10 staff positions. Because of a steady increase in the number of students during the past few years, the department is now provided with the opportunity to grow by three professorships, settled in three highly pharmaceutically relevant disciplines: molecular toxicology, pharmaceutical care and biopharmacy. In a multidisciplinary endeavour, the research groups of, and those associated to the department, present their research activities covering various aspects of the drug discovery and development process. This includes topics ranging from target identification to computational pharmaceutical chemistry, lead optimization, drug formulation, toxicity as well as pharmacoepidemiology, clinical pharmacy, and pharmaceutical care.

The course of study in pharmaceutical sciences enjoys a remarkable popularity responsible for a steady increase in the number of students, with over 80 freshmen in fall 2005. In total, around 300 students currently study Pharmaceutical Sciences at our university. Our curriculum, which is now fully compatible with the Bologna Declaration, offers degrees at the Bachelor, Master, and PhD levels. An increasing number of diploma students from our department are continuing their studies at the PhD level to be prepared for positions in the pharmaceutical industry and in research institutions. In our teaching obligations, we gratefully acknowledge the support from our colleagues from chemistry, biology, physics, and mathematics. Furthermore, due to the considerable teaching support from our colleagues at the University Hospital, we can focus on a patient-oriented education in our Master of Pharmacy degree. On the other hand, our planned Master program in Pharmaceutical Sciences will exceedingly benefit from the spatial proximity to the experts at the pharmaceutical industry, which guarantees access to the latest developments in the drug discovery process.

In a series of contributions, some selected examples of our constant efforts for quality in teaching are presented. One contribution describes a collaborative effort with the Mendeleyev University in Moscow for the establishment of an excellent teaching environment for both theoretical and practical courses in pharmaceutical technology. It is also shown how the students receive feedback to their learning efforts in the multi-award-winning, blended learning environment ***pharmasquare***. A third article describes, how in a practical course, students come in contact with the elements of modern drug design and the lead optimization cycle. Finally, the introduction of the students to various aspects of pharmaceutical care – an additional important component of the study course – is presented.

Over the years, the department has established numerous national and international collaborations with academic groups, but also with partners from the pharmaceutical industry. In addition, scientists of the department are actively participating in several European Union projects. For graduates and postgraduates trained at our department, excellent job opportunities are available. They are hired for a multitude of professional activities, ranging from the traditional pharmacy to challenging positions in industry and academia. Additional diverse positions are provided by the health care system.

Recently, the rectorate of the University of Basel started a faculty-spanning initiative with the goal to bundle all pharma-related activities at our university in a joint venture covering projects of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Biocenter, the Swiss Tropical Institute, the University of Applied Sciences (FHNW), and the University Hospital. This is thought to be a natural course of action to complement the world leading pharmaceutical industry of Basel from an academic point of view. Thus, for the first time in its history, our department will be embedded into an academic surrounding dedicated to pharmaceutical sciences.

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