



## A Lesson to be Learned

### Book Review



By Eric Edmonds, MSIII UC Davis School of Medicine

***KEYS TO THE ASYLUM: A Dean, A Medical School and Academic Politics***, by Daniel K. Bloomfield, MD, New Medical Press, Champaign, IL, 488 pp, 2000. ISBN: 0-9701022-0-8

"There were many times when I would have liked to throw up my hands in disgust and walk away, but I had learned long before... that resigning in high dudgeon rarely gets the job done. It makes the one who resigns feel morally superior and good for a few days, but it really plays into the hands of the antagonists. "Political survival requires uncommon perseverance, acceptance and absorption of setbacks, careful planning, and above all, keeping the goal in mind. The eye must be fixed on the prize."

From day one, Dr. Bloomfield's goal was to establish a complete four-year curriculum medical school at Urbana-Champaign. That goal was realized amid many uncertainties and tribulations by keen, bulldog leadership. Bloomfield had to wade through the murky waters of crippling budgets and cutthroat competition from sibling medical schools.

Early students excelled despite the precarious program. Bloomfield nurtured this success by allowing the medical students firsthand experience with actual patients through the practices of a volunteer staff of community doctors.

After establishing a creditable one-year basic science program at Urbana-Champaign, he took the next step toward a full four-year program. Little did he know that it would take 14 years. During this time, Bloomfield went head to head with many a foe and forged many a friendship. Despite numerous budget crises, problems with accreditation and internecine infighting between the four sibling schools, Bloomfield managed to keep his eye on the goal and get the job done.

Bloomfield originally set out to write a documentary on the construction of a medical school. At his editors' suggestion, he included fewer facts and more anecdotes from his real life adventures.

As a future physician, I could not help but relate to the bewildering lunacy of the asylum that was the University of Illinois College of Medicine. Having never sampled academic medicine and politics outside our own asylum that is the greater Sacramento area, it is good to know that we are not alone.

It is also good to know that a solution may be forged with the right personalities at the helm. Dr. Bloomfield does not take all the credit for establishing the medical school at Urbana-Champaign. Many individuals had to step up and do their part.

This book is for those who are interested in experiencing the asylum second-hand to better prepare themselves for battle in their own asylum. Candid and well-written, "Keys to the Asylum" offers an opportunity for us all to become better attuned to the life in the academic jungle of medical education.

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