Perlmutter honored with Weaver Medal

The energy of the radical student movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s inspired Cherie Perlmutter, the fourth recipient of the Lawrence C. and Delores M. Weaver Medal for Distinguished Contributions to Pharmacy Education, Research, or Outreach. Since joining the University of Minnesota in 1973, Perlmutter has been an administrator in the Academic Health Center and currently serves as an associate vice president and special assistant to Medical School Dean Alfred Michael.

“I saw the energy in health science students and wanted to channel it in positive directions,” said Perlmutter. Interdisciplinary education was key, and she was encouraged by mentor Lyle French, M.D., who was Vice President for Health Sciences at the time.

The post-Vietnam era was a time when the health science schools at the University were aligning their administrative structures to enhance interdisciplinary research, teaching and learning. The schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing, public health, and veterinary medicine were involved in this effort, but pharmacy was not. Many of the faculty were closely aligned with the chemistry department located across the street from Appleby Hall, the College's former home. With Lawrence Weaver, who was dean of the College at the time, Perlmutter worked tirelessly to include pharmacy in the emerging health sciences group. A strong pharmacy advocate, she persuaded state legislators to fund a new pharmacy building among the other health science buildings that were being built around the University's hospital and clinics.

Ultimately, the destiny of the College was at stake, and inclusion in the Academic Health Center shaped the clinical nature of pharmacy education as it exists today. Perlmutter's assistance while the College created the clinical curriculum of a new pharmacy degree—the Pharm.D.—as invaluable. "Cherie made so much of a contribution to who we are today," said Dean Emeritus Weaver. "She made sure we stayed on the right track."

In her early years at the University, Perlmutter also sought to unite students from the different schools. She helped create the Health Sciences Learning Resources Center, the Health Services Research Organization (now within the School of Public Health), the Council for Health Interdisciplinary Participation (CHIP), and the CHIP Student Services Center. "CHIP continues today to provide an environment that fosters the individual and professional needs and brings the students from across the health center together to work or simply have fun," says Dean Marilyn Speedie.

Today's clinical nature of pharmacy education and the well-accepted concept of collaborative education and research among the seven schools in the Academic Health Center are in large part due to Perlmutter. Honored to be the fourth recipient of the Weaver medal, Perlmutter acknowledged the spirit of its namesakes. "The Weaver name is intertwined with the success and reputation of the College of Pharmacy," she said. "And I am delighted to be associated with it."