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Assistant Dean for Admissions/Advising Renee Acosta
leads graduating students during May 2017’s
commencement processional.

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A letter from the dean

Dear UT Pharmacy Colleagues and Friends,

I get excited when it is time to send you another issue of the Longhorn Pharmacy Focus. It brings me great joy to share with you the significant accomplishments of our students and faculty. This issue brings that excitement, but it also brings sadness.

The cover shows Associate Dean Renee Acosta leading our 2017 Doctor of Pharmacy graduate professional. This graduation was particularly noteworthy in that then Senior Associate Dean Patrick Davis delivered the keynote address. After serving as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for 23 years, this keynote address marked one of his last ceremonial duties before returning to full-time faculty responsibilities. Pat’s departure from the Dean’s Office initiated a comprehensive review of academic affairs, with four individuals assuming new roles in the college: Renee Acosta, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; Diane Ginsburg, Associate Dean for Healthcare Partnerships; Bryson Duohon, Assistant Dean for Student Success; and Greg Caldera, Director of Admissions and Advising.

This issue of Focus represents another transition. Longtime Focus editor, Vicki Matustik, retired in August, and we are enthusiastic to announce Nick Nobel is our new Communications Coordinator and Focus editor. As Nick grows in this position, he will be examining all of the college’s communications, including Focus. Please contact Nick and tell him what you want to hear from the College of Pharmacy, as well as how you prefer to receive that information.

After graduation, White Coat Ceremony is my second favorite annual event in the college. White Coat marks students’ entry into the profession as student pharmacists. This year, 124 new Longhorn student pharmacists were cloaked by faculty and pharmacist alumni and family members. Following the cloaking ceremony, they all pledged their commitment to the profession and humanity by reciting the Pharmacist’s Oath for the first time.

Addictions education, research, and service have been a priority of the college for decades. The faculty and students continue to excel in this area. Several student pharmacists participated in nationally prominent training programs in addictions, and all P1 student pharmacists participated in interprofessional addictions modules. Professor Rueben Gonzales and Rick Morrisett were successful in having their NIH Alcohol Training Grant renewed. This federal training grant was initially earned by former College of Pharmacy Dean Steven Leslie, and the current award represents years 31 through 35 of this successful training program. Finally, Dr. Lucas Hill leads Operation Naloxone, which helps save lives by educating professionals and the public and providing naloxone to high-risk individuals and their significant others. This innovative program, led by faculty and students in both the College of Pharmacy and the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, recently received a large grant from Texas Health and Human Services to provide education statewide and provide naloxone to high-risk populations.

This issue also features major research achievements of two faculty: Dr. Ben Liu, Hitchings Regents Chair in Drug Design and Professor of Chemical Biology and Medicinal Chemistry, and Dr. John DiGiovanni, Sublett Chair of Pharmacology and Toxicology. Dr. Liu and colleagues from MIT received accolades for discovering an enzyme that produces substances that act against viruses, bacteria, and tumors. Dr. DiGiovanni and associates discovered naturally occurring substances that starve cancer cells. I find it most noteworthy that both of these discoveries involve naturally occurring substances. Pharmacognosy lives on!

Teaching is at the core of the college’s mission, and every spring we celebrate our outstanding teachers. Driven by a rigorous student selection process, the outstanding teaching accomplishments of numerous faculty were applauded by students and faculty colleagues. Most noteworthy of these was Dr. Richard Wilcox receiving the 2017 Outstanding Pharmacy Educator Award. This year’s award was particularly poignant in that Dr. Wilcox retired at the end of the spring semester.

The last several months have been marked by the deaths of several prominent alumni, faculty, and friends. We are always saddened when we lose a member of our Longhorn Pharmacy Family. Most difficult for those of us in the Dean’s Office is the recent death of Dr. Bill McIntyre. Although Bill retired from the college this summer due to health issues, we were all shocked to learn of his recent death. Our hearts go out to the families and friends of those who have passed, and may they be comforted by knowing that they have friends at the UT College of Pharmacy who care deeply.

As 2017 winds to a close, we look forward to 2018, which will be the 125th anniversary of the UT College of Pharmacy. Our college has come so far since it began in the basement of Old Red on The University of Texas Medical Branch campus in Galveston. We have some special activities planned to mark this milestone, and we look forward to sharing those with you.

I wish you the very best for the holiday season, and as always, “Hook ‘em Horns!”

Best regards,

M. Lynn Crismon, Dean
1. Pharm.D. graduate Elsi Tebedge (left)
2. Pharm.D. graduate Chuck Rapp.
3. Dean Crismon throwing up the horns.
4. Students taking a selfie.
5. Dr. Patrick Davis gives his keynote address to the graduating students.
Honoring the
Class of 2017

On May 19, 2017 in The University of Texas at Austin’s Bass Concert Hall, the College of Pharmacy celebrated the distinguished accomplishments of its students during the commencement ceremony for its 2017 Doctor of Pharmacy graduates.

Giving the student commencement remarks, class of 2017 president and graduating Pharm.D. student Bobby Lamontagne said of his College of Pharmacy experience, the “challenges overcome provide meaningful experiences that will shape our personal lives and professional careers in the future.” Class of 2017 Vice President Marilyn Mootz said after graduation she is “confident that the experiences in the classroom, in academics, and in life will prepare me for what is to come.”

Patrick J. Davis, Ph.D., gave the keynote address. As former Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, Davis oversaw the college’s curriculum assuring our student pharmacists are among the most prepared in their field as they approach graduation day. Commencement marked his last as Senior Associate Dean; he has chosen to return to the classroom full time beginning with the fall 2017 semester.

Mootz led the crowd in a rousing rendition of “The Eyes of Texas” before the Longhorn Band Brass Quintet accompanied the graduate’s procession out of the concert hall. Though the Pharm.D. class of 2017 has moved on from the College of Pharmacy to bigger and better things, its lasting legacy and accomplishments will leave a mark on The University of Texas at Austin for many years to come.

2017 Class Officers

President, Robert L. Lamontagne - Bobby was a member of many organizations and served as President of Pharmacy Council. His classmates chose him as “Most Likely to Succeed” two years in a row. Bobby also participated in research while a Pharm.D. student. His research focused on motivation factors for ethnic minority students in selecting pharmacy schools. This research was presented at a national and international meeting. He also co-authored a chapter on legal and ethical aspects of practice.

Vice President, Marilyn Mootz - In addition to chairing several committees in various organizations, Marilyn was Vice-President of Pharmacy Council, Vice-President of Phi Lambda Sigma’s Pharmacy Leadership Society, Treasurer of the National Community Pharmacist Association (NCPA), and served on the COP strategic planning committee. Her research comparing ceftriaxone and daptomycin in sepsis and bacteremia resulted in co-authorship on four original abstracts/posters, one encore abstract/poster, and one manuscript (of which she is the first author).

Secretary/Treasurer, Tyler Varisco - Tyler participated in research that surveyed 1,000 Texas pharmacists to assess the impact of hydrocodone containing products (HCP) rescheduling on pharmacy practice. Tyler was instrumental in developing the survey and he pre-tested it with pharmacists. In addition to Littlefield Research Day, Tyler presented his project at APhA in 2016 and the results are published in the Journal of the American Pharmacist Association (JAPhA). Tyler will enter the Ph.D. program at the University of Houston in fall 2017.
Doctor of Pharmacy
2017 Graduates

Gallissara Agavatpanitch
Michelle Aguirre
Maliha Afsun Ahmed
Elizabeth Marie Alvarez
Emily Kay Anderson
Andre Nicholas Arizpe
Art Armendariz, Jr.
Laleh Azarnoush
Sarah Northcott Barnes
Zachary Joseph Beal
Prakash D. Bhagudas
Alex Christopher Bishop
Taylor Dawn Blasig
Rachel Suzanne Britt
Angelica Janice Burgos
Felicia Tovar Cabello
Joy Noolum Chang
Esther Joyce Chao
Andrea Lynne Chase
Dennis Weiting Chen
Pinhui Chen
Haemy Chung
Brittany Blair Corbell
Miguel Alejandro Cortez
Thinh Dam Dang
Aanika Das
Paige Elizabeth Davies
Matthew Rocha Davis
Taylor Alexandra Dean
Monica Thuy Trang Do
Nicole Dominguez
Jonathan Enchinton
Martha Frances Evans
Beau R. Faulkner
Ginger Rae Garza
Liana Garza
Monica Alejandra Garza
Sarah Lauren Gervais
Morgan Ashley Griffin
Tyler Bo Hall
Sarah Alexis Hallowell
Kelly Hang
Jose Antonio Hidalgo
Yoko Hirase
Jack Walter Huang
Leslie Chen-Wei Hung
Joel Isaais
Melanie Marie Jabalie
Scott Victor Jermain
Julie John
Timothy Shelton Johnson
Katharine Jou
Arpita Pradip Kabaria
Michael James Kent
Siwon Kim
Amanda Kristine Kitten
Christina Aileen Kruse
Shane Patrick Kyral
Phuong Tuy Lam
Robert L. Lamontagne
Hangyul Lee
Jeremy Leing
Anjanette Thetford Lelko
Zachary David Lewitz
Kim Shin
Chang Liu
Kristyn Brooke Loggins
Lily Luong
Jennifer Kim Thu Ma
Natalia L. Malesa
Nikhil Mantravadi
Brittney Lynn Medenwald
Brittany Kwamboka Monene
Marilyn Lee Mootz
Jacob Nicholas Morado
Karyn Elaine Nafey
Joycelyn Ng
Amelia Ngo
Brenda Ngo
Man-Khoi Pham Nguyen
Ngan Thao Nguyen
Kelly Michelle Niemiec
Jibin Nan
Xin Ying Serena Oh
Jaclyn S. Ong
Samit B. Patel
Isaac Joseph Perales
Trisha Renee Petticrew
Cameron Stuart Pickard
Ryan Allan Popp
Lauren Michelle Ramos
Charles George Rapp, V
Cagney B. Reeves
Summer Huddleston Reyes
Mauricio Victor Rivera
Roel Rodriguez Jr.
Heather N. Rozea
Sarah Ann Rumbellow
Haley Alexis Runegberg
Neela Rahim Sadruddin
Jigarkumar L. Satasia
Jonathan T. Spinks
Casey Marie Stauffer
Ellie Kate Studdard
Christine Su
Michael Taing
Esli Wesene Tebede
Adrian Thomas
Matthew Tjandra
Brian Kassra Torabi
Anh-Thu Phan Tran
Lilian Quan Tran
Beatriz Ugalde
Laura King Ulrich
Tyler Jordan Varisco
Nicole Katherine Wilson
John Walter Witucki
Feefelobari Peace Yorka
Jason Adam Zehden
Kajia Zheng
Wenbei Zhou

Graduated August 2017

Sitara Paladugu
Hosun Ryu
White Coat Ceremony

After 2017 commencement and the long summer break, the College of Pharmacy honored the incoming class of Doctor of Pharmacy candidates in the annual White Coat Ceremony. The event took place August 28, 2017, in the Texas Union Ballroom, and featured a procession of excited incoming students as they begin their first steps to becoming pharmacists.

Sponsored by the Pharmacy Council, College of Pharmacy, and The University of Texas at Austin, the annual ceremony welcomed the new class of Pharm.D. candidates to the college. The event culminated in the ceremonial cloaking, in which faculty, alumni, and family members donned the incoming students in their pharmacist white coats. The occasion marked an important initiation into the world of pharmacy.

Dr. Phuoc Anne Nguyen, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, was slated to give the keynote address, but the ravages of Hurricane Harvey prevented her from attending. Fortunately, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Dr. Diane Ginsburg stepped in to give an emotional speech about her own family health experience and the irreplaceable role a pharmacist gives to provide hands-on and life changing guidance and knowledge to a person in need.

The ceremony marked a long and challenging road for the Pharm.D. candidates of 2021, but as incoming students come into one of the most distinguished and top-ranked pharmacy schools in the world, it will ultimately prove a rewarding experience.
Of Mothers and Sons
A shared love of pharmacy

Donna’s Story

My story began as I entered The University of Texas at Austin. I was considering pursuing medicine and was looking for a complementary major that would help me in medical school. My counselor suggested pharmacy. As I came to the end of my bachelor in pharmacy program, I realized what drew me to medicine was, in fact, my interest in the medicine itself. I began thinking that the Pharm.D. program may be a better fit for me.

I reached out for advice to Lynn Crismon, who at that time was head of the clinical division. Lynn shared with me the roles/jobs of a clinical pharmacist and the responsibilities clinical pharmacists have in patient care. After my conversation with Lynn, I made the decision to pursue the Pharm.D. I followed with a residency and fellowship under his direction in psychiatric pharmacy.

I was a psychiatric clinical pharmacist for nine years at Scott & White Hospital in Temple before taking a medical science liaison position with Pfizer, Inc. I have been with Pfizer for 18 years. Looking back, I am grateful to the UT Austin counselor who suggested pharmacy and to Lynn for sharing his insight into the world of clinical pharmacy.

Today I share my profession with my two sons. I can honestly say, however, that the decision for them to pursue pharmacy was their choice, not mine.

I am often asked, “How did you get your boys to do pharmacy?”

My response is, “Ask them – I didn’t persuade them.”

Sharing the same profession, albeit 30 years apart, keeps me in tune with challenges faced by today’s students. To the boys’ dismay, they don’t get much sympathy from me when they talk of how difficult and time consuming pharmacy school is. We spend time discussing how treatment paradigms have changed. They often remind me that “the current guidelines” are different from what I remembered being taught! It’s fun bantering back and forth. It keeps me abreast of changes.

The other two members of our family – my husband who is an engineer and my daughter who is a freshman in high school – probably know more about pharmacy than they ever dreamed/wanted to know!

—Donna Jermain, B.S. Pharmacy ’86, Pharm.D. ’89
Scott Speaks

As a kid, I always knew Mom was a pharmacist, but I never completely understood what her job really entailed. I definitely knew she wasn't behind the pharmacy counter verifying and dispensing prescriptions. She started her current job with Pfizer when I was in first grade, so most of my memories stem back to her traveling a lot as a medical science liaison.

As a kid, I never felt particularly drawn to the profession of pharmacy. I didn't even understand what it meant to be a pharmacist. In fact, growing up I was more drawn to become an engineer like Dad. My dad is the most hands-on handyman I've ever met, and as a kid most of my memories revolve around helping him build this and fix that around the house.

In fact, it was not until high school that I realized my interests did indeed revolve around the field of pharmacy. My strengths in school were math and chemistry, and I loved any course that integrated those subjects. Pharmacy seemed a natural choice because it is a marriage of math and chemistry, and I knew my mom would know how to help me get where I wanted to go in this field. She helped me get my first pharmacy job with CVS Pharmacy at age 16. I have not looked back since. I expedited undergrad-uate school so that I could start pharmacy school as soon as possible. I finally knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life.

Since starting pharmacy school, talks around the dinner table tend to eventually circle around the field of pharmacy. It's great to share this profession with my mom and brother and it's even more fun because we all have extremely different stories.

The path I've chosen differs significantly from the path Mom took 30 years ago. Pharmacy school has been a unique experience for me since joining the Pharm.D./Ph.D. program. This program marries the typical Pharm.D. curriculum with outside the classroom research with the intention of graduating with dual doctoral degrees in 6-7 years (rather than four years for a Pharm.D. and then another 4-6 years for a Ph.D.).

Eventually, I see my path paralleling Mom's by making my way into industry, but only time will tell just how similar our careers. All I know is I have the most supportive mom who is always willing to go above and beyond to see me succeed in whatever discri-pline I choose. It just so happens that it is a shared love in pharmacy.

—Scott Jermain, Pharm.D. ‘17

And Brian’s Turn

I never had a master plan for what I was going to do with my life. Attending college was never a question, but my major in college and subsequent career afterwards was always up in the air. I have always been interested and performed best in math and science, so ultimately, pharmacy ended up being a good choice for me.

Throughout my childhood—summers especially—I vividly remember Mom on conference calls as Scott and I played around the house. I never tried eavesdropping on her conferences because, as a six-year-old, I had no idea what half of the words coming out of her mouth were or what they meant. In hindsight, I am convinced most of them were drug names because they did not even sound like English.

What drew me to pharmacy was not understanding the subject matter of her calls, but rather hearing her talk about her job and how much she loved it. As someone who didn't know what I wanted for a career, seeing how much my mom loved the profession and her work helped convince me that I might like this as well.

I am thoroughly enjoying sharing this profession with my mom and Scott. They are great resources and an even better support system. Being in pharmacy school gives me a greater appreciation for Mom's accomplishments and how much she remembers (although some of the drug monitoring parameters have changed since her school days). I am really thankful for her passion for this profession and being so influential in my decision to pursue pharmacy. I cannot wait to continue learning and see where pharmacy takes me!

—Brian Jermain, Pharm.D. Candidate ‘19
Four students study addiction at alcohol treatment program

Four student pharmacists from The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy were selected to attend weeklong summer programs to study addiction and its treatment. The events are sponsored by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.

Students Janci Addison, Claire Brandt, Kaitlin Kennedy and Mandy Renfro were selected to participate in the Foundation’s Summer Institute for Medical Students (SIMS). Kennedy attended a session in late May in Center City, Minnesota, while the other three traveled to Rancho Mirage, California, for sessions in May through July.

In 2014, the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation expanded its experiential immersion program—which up until that point had included only medical students—to also include two pharmacy students from UT Austin. The cost to attend for both students was covered by a longtime member of the college faculty, Dr. Carlton Erickson, and his wife, Eunice. Erickson has devoted his career to addiction studies – first as a researcher and most recently as a communicator, helping to expand knowledge of addiction studies and treatments by teaching research scientists how to discuss their work to lay audiences. Each summer since 2014, one or two UT Austin pharmacy students have attended the summer program at no cost to them. This year marks the first time the invitation has been extended to four UT students.

During their weeklong experience, students lived and learned in groups of 16 alongside top medical students from across the nation. This year, applicant reviewers were so impressed with the pharmacy student applications that the decision was made to expand the number of pharmacy student participants. So far, UT Austin is the only college of pharmacy in the country whose students have been invited to participate in the SIMS program.

“After two years of successful pilots with The University of Texas College of Pharmacy, we decided to award the college more than two SIMS positions this year,” explained Joseph Skrajewski, executive director of medical and professional education at the Foundation. “This commitment by Hazelden Betty Ford is a major step to ensure that the future of pharmacy is better prepared to address addiction. We are proud of the work we do to advance professional education and look forward to continuing to do so for many years to come.”

Erickson said the Foundation’s expanded invitation fits well with the college's longstanding commitment to addiction studies. In addition to Erickson, the college faculty includes several other addiction researchers who are involved in collaborative research with addiction specialists throughout the university and beyond. The college's neuropharmacology and addiction specialty includes seven faculty members whose research focuses on mechanisms of how mood-altering drugs, including alcohol, produce their rewarding and behavioral effects through changes in brain function at multiple levels of analysis. Erickson himself leads the college's Addiction Science Research and Education Center. Many of these faculty members are also affiliated with the university's Waggoner Center for Alcohol and Addiction Research.

“Such training is long overdue, since physicians, pharmacists, nurses and social workers all play critical roles in caring for SUD patients.”

-Dr. Carlton Erickson

UT student pharmacists explore addiction studies alongside UT students in nursing, social work and the university's new Dell Medical School through an inter-professional education (IPE) class introduced last year. Erickson and several of the addiction re-
searchers led students in the IPE class through a module on substance use disorders (the clinical term for addiction) and its treatment this spring.

The module is designed to translate SUD research into practical elements delivered to students through active learning, team-based approaches. Rather than the traditional lecture format, video vignettes were incorporated to illustrate the pervasiveness of stereotypes and implicit bias toward those with substance use disorders. Evidence of the diagnosis, neurobiology and treatment of SUD was presented through short video bursts.

Erickson says SUD issues are especially important for these future practitioners to consider given the misconceptions in the media, general public, and many health care providers concerning addiction. In fact, like the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, the American Society of Addiction Medicine led an initiative that saw addiction medicine lectures and even courses starting to appear in curricula in the various professional programs including medicine. UT’s Dell Medical School, Erickson said, is in the forefront of team-based training in addiction medicine.

“Such training is long overdue, since physicians, pharmacists, nurses and social workers all play critical roles in caring for SUD patients,” Erickson said.

Additionally, the college sponsors the Student Pharmacist Recovery Network (SPRN), a student group that provides resources to help fight stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction.

“SPRN taught me so much in the last year about drug addiction from the physiology of the addiction in the brain to the benefits of harm reduction,” said Janci Addison, one of UT’s SIMS scholars this summer. “I have come to an epiphany that the best way to help substance users is to lower the stigma surrounding drug misuse and addiction. If we, health care providers, educate the public on drug use, the public may not be as judgmental and substance users will feel more inclined to reach out for help.”

In addition to medication compliance, Addison said she wants to spread a message of acceptance within the community.

“The validity of my message will be strengthened by the SIMS program,” she said. “The SIMS program will provide me with the resources I need to understand addiction objectively. In addition, I want to be around other health care professionals that can not only help me become a better pharmacist, but also an advocate for substance users who cannot see sobriety in their future.”

“Addiction does not discriminate — it can affect anyone — even students.”
-Samuel Palka

Samuel Palka attended the SIMS program in 2016. “It was eye opening to see lawyers, doctors and other successful individuals at Hazelden Betty Ford,” he said. “Addiction does not discriminate — it can affect anyone – even students.”

“People with substance use problems are not people of weak character, which many people seem to believe. Instead, they are people who are suffering from a disease and can recover with proper treatment and motivation. I am grateful this experience allowed me to see it this way,” Palka continued. “As a future pharmacist, it is imperative for me to be cognizant of medications and behaviors associated with addiction as well as resources to which I can refer patients in need. Thanks to the SIMS program, I realize that my intervention and non-judgmental attitude have the potential to save future patients from this disease.”

Anyone interested in learning more about addiction studies within the UT College of Pharmacy should contact Dr. Erickson at carl.erickson@austin.utexas.edu.

Individuals interested in sponsoring one of the SIMS scholarships for a UT student pharmacist should contact Susan Brown, assistant dean for development and alumni relations, at skbrown@austin.utexas.edu.
The art and science of discovery took center stage at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy on April 11, 2017.

Lectures by distinguished researchers kicked off the 13th Annual Louis C. Littlefield Celebrating Pharmacy Research Excellence Day. The event began with the distinguished faculty lecture presented by Dr. Robert O. Messing, professor of pharmacology and toxicology and associate dean for research in the Dell Medical School. Messing is internationally recognized for his research deciphering signaling pathways and circuits that regulate behavior in rodent models of addiction, anxiety, and depression. His presentation was entitled “New Lead Compounds for Treating Alcohol and Nicotine Addiction.”

Messing's presentation was followed by the keynote scientific lecture presented by Dr. John W. Kozarich, chairman and president of ActivX and chief scientific advisor for Kyorin. Kozarich, who is also an adjunct professor of chemical physiology at The Scripps Research Institute, discussed “ChemoProteomic Tool Development for Personalized Medicine.”

Following the two lectures, Dr. John Richburg, associate dean for research and graduate studies, announced winners of the abstract competition. Winners from the four categories were invited to make a brief presentation regarding their research.

“The four trainee abstract winner presentations and poster presentation award winners reflect the cutting-edge research performed in college,” said Richburg. “This year’s Celebrating Research Day was a tremendous success with a record breaking 215 participants attending the meeting.”
Abstract winners and their topics included:

- **Undergraduate Program** – **Sabrina Van Ravenstein** (mentor, Dr. Kevin Dalby), “MKK4/JNK2 Down-Regulation in NSCLC Suppresses Tumor Growth and Metastasis.”


- **Graduate Program** – **Fan Meng** (mentor, Dr. Feng Zhang), “Self-Association of Rafoxanide in Aqueous Media and a Novel Method for Preparing Armorphous Solid Dispersions.”


Following the presentations, the poster session was open, displaying 118 research projects outlined through poster presentations. Poster winners were awarded near the conclusion of the poster session. Categories and winners included:

- **Undergraduate Program** – **Alexander Chick** (mentor, Dr. Andrea Gore), “The Plasticity of Gene Expression and DNA Methylation in the Hypothalamus of Aging Female Rats.”

- **Professional (Pharm.D.) Program** – **Ralph Gallega** (mentor, Dr. Grace Lee), “The Virulome of Community-associated S. aureus Associated with Skin and Soft Tissue Infections and Nasal Colonization.”

- **Graduate Program** – **Sabin Kshattry** (mentor, Dr. John DiGiovanni), “Depletion of Extracellular Cystine and Cysteine by a Mutagenized Human Enzyme Causes Ros Mediated Cytotoxicity in Panreatic Cancer Cells.”

- **Resident Program** – **Nina Vadiei** (mentor, Dr. Tawny Smith), “Impact of Gabapentin Adjunct Use with Benzodiazepines for the Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal in an Inpatient Psychiatric Hospital.”

Celebrating Research Excellence Day is named in honor of Dr. Louis C. Littlefield, longtime faculty member and administrator within the UT College of Pharmacy. Like Dr. Littlefield, the day honors and celebrates discovery at all levels.
Jade Scott has dreamed of going to pharmacy school for several years. “As a kid, my parents didn’t like me to give me medicine when I was sick,” she says. “As I became older, I finally took some and liked how it instantly made me feel better. Since then, I became very excited to understand how it works in the body.” The third-year undergraduate student at The University of Texas at Austin is a nutrition major with a focus in pharmacy.

Scott had some help along her way to becoming a pharmacist. Rachel Raia is a Ph.D. Pharmaceutical Sciences student in the College of Pharmacy’s Health Outcomes & Pharmacy Practices division. Raia has mentored Scott on her path to pharmacy. Through her hard work, dedication, and professional guidance, Scott recently earned an Intellectual Entrepreneurship Kuhn Award. Each student receives a $1,000 stipend made possible by Michael and Alice Kuhn.

The Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) Pre-Graduate Internship Program, housed within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and the Moody College of Communication, has awarded 20 students with IE Kuhn Awards for the fall 2017 semester. The award supports first-generation and/or economically-disadvantaged college students in their academic pursuits and further enriches their pre-graduate school internship experience (e.g., traveling to conferences, potential graduate school visits, research endeavors, supplies, books etc.). The DDCE provides a matching stipend to the interns’ graduate student mentors.

Scott says the IE Kuhn Award will provide “the resources to understand pharmacy school and the aspects of it.” At the end of the opportunity, she hopes “to become even more excited about the possibility of pursuing a career as a pharmacist.”
A team of three UT student pharmacists placed among the elite programs in a national Clinical Research Challenge (CRC).

The event, sponsored by the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP), attracted more than 80 teams from colleges across the country. The UT team was one of the eight CRC finalists.

Participating on UT’s team were student pharmacists Austin Green, Laura Roccograndi, and Elwyn Welch. Dr. Tyler Gums, assistant professor of health outcomes and pharmacy practice, served as clinical research challenge advisor for the UT team. Dr. Chris Frei, associate professor of pharmacotherapy, and Dr. Lucas Hill, clinical assistant professor of health outcomes and pharmacy practice, serve as co-advisors of the college’s Student College of Clinical Pharmacy (SCCP) organization.

The team project was titled, “Pharmacy-led multidisciplinary approach to decrease 30-day readmission in congestive heart failure (CHF) patients.”

“Austin, Elwyn, and Laura demonstrated superb clinical research competence,” said Gums. “Grant writing usually carries a vast learning curve, but these students were able to place competitively right out of the gate. They’re naturals.”

The Clinical Research Challenge is a competition for first and second year pharmacy students designed to test their skills in critical literature analysis and research proposal development.

The recognized team advanced from the local competition by earning the top score on a journal club exam that tested their ability to analyze primary literature. In the National Round 1, the team competed in another journal club exam and moved forward by placing in the top 40 of the competing teams. The UT team competed in National Round 2 by submitting a letter of intent outlining their research. They successfully advanced from this round by placing in the top 20 of the competing teams.

In the final National Round 3, student teams submitted a full research proposal demonstrating the value of a transitions of care program. The UT team was selected as finalists ranking among the top 8 research proposals.

“These students proved themselves to be remarkably skilled in critical literature analysis,” said Dr. Hill, adding that they “further demonstrated impressive stamina by navigating the letter of intent and research proposal rounds.”

Hill added that this year’s team built upon the success of the UT team that competed in last year’s inaugural CRC competition including Jaynish Amin, Beatriz Cajade, and Baneen Noorali.

Pharmacist intervention plays significant role in improving patient outcomes

Pharmacist intervention in helping physicians and patients manage high blood pressure shows significant outcome improvement, particularly among patient populations traditionally deemed the hardest to manage.

Dr. Tyler Gums, assistant professor of health outcomes and pharmacy practice, led the study which indicates pharmacists play a significant role in outcomes among patients in ethnic and lower socioeconomic populations.

The population groups are viewed among the most challenging to manage due to genetic propensities, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic challenges, the researcher said.

“Within these populations are genetic indicators that lend people to be susceptible to high blood pressure.

The study was a follow up examination to an earlier study that demonstrated overall improvement in patient outcomes with pharmacist intervention.
Learning Together

Furthering team care through interprofessional education

On a typical late summer afternoon, students and professors in The University of Texas at Austin's programs of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and social work came together for a gathering that was anything but typical: the first official class focusing on interprofessional education (IPE) in health care.

More than 300 students and faculty representing the four disciplines filled the Texas Union ballroom to hear an overview of the course and listen to stories about what happens when health care is administered through professional collaboration and what happens when those collaborations are not present or fail.

The group was divided into teams with student representatives from each of the disciplines led by a faculty member from one of the programs. Throughout the fall, the teams came to understand the expertise and contributions of each discipline and looked closely at breaking down preconceived perceptions about the various fields. As the course progressed, groups focused on various disease states and explored how each discipline makes vital contributions to patient care.

Dr. Veronica Young serves as director of interprofessional education for UT’s College of Pharmacy. She has worked with her counterparts in medicine, nursing, and social work to develop the first year of what they anticipate will eventually be an integral component of each year of the students’ academic career.

“We see clearly how putting the patient as the central focus of care leads to optimal outcomes,” she explained. The more traditional model of care had professionals operating in silos, often having very little interaction with other members of the care team. Today we recognize the value of truly working as a team with the patient always as the central fo-
Furthering team care through interprofessional education

The interprofessional model, she explained, pulls the strengths of each profession into a collaborative circle that leads ultimately to safe, high quality, accessible, patient-centered care. Realizing optimal practice of interprofessional education requires that students begin the process of working collaboratively with other health care providers during their education and training so that team-based care is integral to their practice as they enter the professional arena.

Representatives from the various health care professions see such potential in the interprofessional care model that it has been endorsed by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy as well as the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Association of Schools of Public Health and the American Dental Education Association. Each has called for implementation of interprofessional education modules into the curriculum of their respective disciplines.

Before the class began last fall, interprofessional education had centered around extracurricular or volunteer activities such as health fairs involving representatives from the various colleges and schools. While efforts such as the college’s highly successful Project Collaborate have advanced the notion of interprofessional collaborations, the arrival of the university’s new Dell Medical School was an ideal opportunity to incorporate the interprofessional educational component into the curriculum.

The team approach is seen as beneficial for all care models, however its benefits are clearly evident when the condition is complicated or difficult to treat such as substance use disorders (SUD).
Dr. Carlton Erickson, professor of pharmacology and toxicology and special assistant to the pharmacy dean, led the interprofessional class through a SUD module pulling from his more than 45 years of experience studying the effects of alcohol on the brain. Erickson says SUD issues are especially important for these future practitioners to consider given the misconceptions in the media, the general public, and among many health care providers concerning addiction disorders. In fact, the American Society of Addiction Medicine led an initiative that has seen addiction medicine lectures and even courses starting to appear in medical school curricula.

UT’s Dell Medical School, Erickson said, is in the forefront of team based training. “Such training is long overdue, since physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and social workers have struggled to work together and understand the boundaries and overlap in services among these healthcare disciplines,” Erickson said.

A three-hour addiction care module was incorporated into the second semester of UT’s IPE curriculum. The module was written and developed by a team consisting of authors Erickson (pharmacy) and Mary Velasquez (social work), along with clinical instructors Veronica Young and Lucas Hill (pharmacy).

The module consists of a brief survey of student knowledge and beliefs about drug addiction (including alcoholism, more scientifically known as alcohol use disorder, AUD); video vignettes illustrating outdated beliefs about what addiction and alcoholism were thought to be; and two 5-minute videos of instruction on where drug addiction occurs in the brain, as well as an overview of types of treatment available for such patients. In a preceding three-hour module, students gain in-depth training about MI (motivational interviewing); how to change beliefs and behaviors of patients who are overusing illegal drugs and prescription medicines; and how to intervene on such patients using research-proven principles involving screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT).

“Physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and social workers have been encountering patients with SUDs forever, and have never understood how to “handle” such patients,” Erickson said.

In addition to the IPE module, addiction studies are prominently included within the College of Pharmacy with a total of nine faculty members involved in research on drug addiction who collaborate with yet more addiction scientists throughout the campus. The college’s current curriculum includes nine hours of lectures on drug addiction in the three-semester pharmacotherapy course.

Beyond the classroom, pharmacy students have the opportunity to join the student organization Student Pharmacist Recovery Network (SPRN) to learn more about mental illness and drug addiction through a speaker series that draws lecturers from the university and community treatment organizations. SPRN is also involved in two offsite training programs for pharmacy students including the Hazelden Betty Ford Center’s Summer Institute for Medical Students (SIMS), and the APhA Institute on Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies (i.e. The Utah School).

Students selected to attend either institute have benefitted from scholarships to cover their costs. Cost for the Utah program ranges from $325 to $550 while one week at the SIMS institute averages $4,000. Costs for students to attend the programs are funded from students themselves, sponsors including the Texas Pharmacy Association, and donors such as Erickson and his wife, Eunice, who have been instrumental in providing funding especially for the SIMS program. This year the Ford Center has expanded the number of pharmacy students it accepts into the SIMS program from two to four.

“While we are delighted to be able to make this advanced training experience to our students, our scholarship needs have jumped from $8,000 per year to $16,000 at SIMS alone,” Erickson said.

Persons interested in assisting with the cost of sending students to these learning experiences should contact Susan Brown in the college’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations at skbrown@austin.utexas.edu or by telephone at (512) 475-9758.
Discovery describes enzyme that fights viruses, bacteria, tumors

Dr. Hung-wen (Ben) Liu, professor of chemical biology and medicinal chemistry at The University of Texas at Austin, is part of a team of researchers that has discovered the structure, biochemistry and function of a natural chemical catalyst, or enzyme, that produces products that act against viruses, bacteria and tumors.

Work by the team from UT Austin and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) provides the first structure of a B12-dependent radical enzyme and the first evidence that this important group requires B12 to create products. A paper outlining their discovery appeared recently in *Nature* magazine.

Radical—S-adenosylmethionine (SAM) enzymes, coined the “poor man’s B12”, have been a focus of biochemical researchers for 10 to 15 years. A subset of 7,000 enzymes from this group, known as B12-dependent radical enzymes, is involved in the biosynthesis of natural products such as chlorophyll.

Work by Liu and his research team describes one enzyme in this subset known as OxsB.

“It is like selecting Legos to use to build a house. You want to know what a piece will do before you add it.”

-Dr. Hun-wen (Ben) Liu

“The starting material is very common—the nucleic acid in our DNA—and a fairly straight-forward reaction leads to an unusual product with a ring contraction that is an antiviral agent against Hepatitis B, herpes, HIV, and also has antimicrobial and anti-tumor activities,” says Liu. “This class of enzymes can clearly show some novel chemistry. This research expands the capability of this class of enzyme—they are not just for methylation, but for many other functions.”

It was a long and complicated piece of detective work to reverse engineer from a product with potentially beneficial properties and figure out the way it is created. The reaction not only needs B12 and OxsB, but also requires another enzyme, OxsA, in order to work. The research was previously published in PNAS.

“It is like selecting Legos to use to build a house. You want to know what a piece will do before you add it,” says Liu. “In the same way, we need to know the function of the proteins and see whether they are suitable for the construction of a molecule.”

Authors of this research included Jennifer Bridewell-Rabb and Catherine Drennan of MIT and Aoshu Zhong and He G. Sun of UT. The research was funded by The National Institute of Health and the Welch Foundation.
DiGiovanni joins LIVESTRONG team

John DiGiovanni, the Coulter R. Sublett Endowed Chair in Pharmacy, has been appointed as associate director of basic research at the LIVESTRONG Cancer Institutes of the Dell Medical School effective May 1.

DiGiovanni will maintain his primary faculty appointment as professor of pharmacology and toxicology within UT’s College of Pharmacy as he assumes his position with LIVESTRONG.

In his new role, he will be responsible for coordinating basic cancer research across the Institutes’ research programs in collaboration with cancer researchers on the UT Austin campus. He will also serve as co-chair of the research center's Basic and Translational Research Working Group.

The Institutes launched in 2014 with a $50 million pledge from the LIVESTRONG Foundation to The University of Texas at Austin's Dell Medical School.

DiGiovanni is director of the university's Center for Molecular Carcinogenesis and Toxicology and chairs the Chemo-Dietary Prevention Study Section of the National Institutes of Health. He has a highly-visible and internationally-recognized research program focusing on understanding cancer development and progression with the goal of identifying targets and mechanisms for cancer prevention and treatment.

"John brings extensive experience to this position having served in several leadership roles, including serving as a program leader within the UT MD Anderson Comprehensive Cancer Center prior to joining the faculty here at UT Austin," said Gail Eckhardt, associate dean of cancer programs and director of the LIVESTRONG Cancer Institutes.

“I am excited to be a part of such a dedicated community of cancer researchers at UT Austin,” said DiGiovanni. “Together, we look forward to filling the gaps in cancer diagnosis and treatment to improve outcomes for all patients.”

DiGiovanni follows Dr. Carla Van Den Berg in accepting a joint appointment between LIVESTRONG/Dell Medical School and the College of Pharmacy. Van Den Berg accepted her appointment in February to serve as co-director of the Developmental Therapeutics Laboratory. The College of Pharmacy will remain the primary academic home for both DiGiovanni and Van Den Berg.

The laboratory will house multiple investigators who seek to collaborate with researchers across the UT Austin campus to provide access to cancer resources needed for anti-cancer drug development including patient derived xenograft tumor models.

“One of our primary goals with creation of the Dell Medical School was to develop interprofessional education and interdisciplinary research between our programs,” said Dr. M. Lynn Crismon, dean of the UT Austin College of Pharmacy. “The appointments of both Drs. DiGiovanni and Van Den Berg to leadership positions within the LIVESTRONG Cancer Institutes are ideal examples of the types of collaborations that we are seeking. I am confident that through these collaborations we will develop new treatments for cancer and improve the quality of life for a countless number of individuals.”

■
A new study from Dr. John DiGiovanni, professor of pharmacology and toxicology, and his colleague, Dr. Stefano Tiziani, assistant professor of nutritional sciences, identifies several natural compounds found in food, including turmeric, apple peels and red grapes, as key ingredients that could thwart the growth of prostate cancer, the most common cancer afflicting U.S. men, and the second leading cause of cancer related death in men after lung cancer.

Their findings were published online in *npj Precision Oncology*. The paper outlines the study that uses a novel analytical approach to screen numerous plant-based chemicals to look for synergistic combinations instead of testing a single agent.

“For some time, scientists have suspected that increased consumption of natural compounds may play a role in starving cancer cells and potentially preventing cancer formation,” said DiGiovanni, one of the key researchers on the project. “Our study illustrates that finding the most effective combination of those bioactive agents greatly increases the effectiveness.”

“After screening a natural compound library, we developed an unbiased look at combinations of nutrients that have a better effect on prostate cancer than existing drugs,” said Tiziani. “The beauty of this study is that we were able to inhibit tumor growth in mice without toxicity using several combinations of natural compounds identified in the screen.”

These compounds found in the study minimize one of the risk factors for cancer, inflammation within the body. People who have chronic inflammation because of chronic infection, autoimmune disease or conditions such as obesity have a higher cancer risk because of damage to normal cells.

The researchers first tested 142 natural compounds on mouse and human prostate cancer cell lines to see which inhibited cancer cell growth when administered alone or in combination with another nutrient. The most promising active ingredients were then tested in an animal model on tumor growth: ursolic acid, a waxy natural chemical found in apple peels and rosemary; curcumin, the bright yellow plant compound in turmeric; and resveratrol, a natural compound common to red grapes or berries.

“These nutrients have potential anti-cancer properties by themselves and are readily available,” says Tiziani. “We only need to combine them together to achieve a more effective inhibition of prostate cancer growth.”

“The findings are very encouraging,” DiGiovanni continued. “For many patients, the more traditional cancer treatments have sometimes felt as debilitating as the disease they were battling. This approach to battling cancer cells appears to lead to fewer harsh side effects while still being very effective at inhibiting tumor growth.”

The new research paper also demonstrates how the plant-based chemicals work together. Combining ursolic acid with either curcumin or resveratrol prevents cancer cells from acquiring something that they need to grow, the amino acid glutamine. This novel and unexpected finding: blocking the uptake of a nutrient needed by prostate cancer cells with nutrients that are commonly in the human diet, could lead the research group to find other natural compound combinations that could more effectively starve cancer cells of this and other nutrients in the future.

Funders of this research include that National Institutes of Health and the University of Texas System. The experiment was designed, analyzed, and written with coauthors Alessia Lodi and Achinto Saha, both from UT Austin. Additional authors include Xiyuan Lu, Bo Wang, Enrique Sentandreu, Meghan Collins, also from UT Austin; as well as Mikhail Kolomin of The Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston.

**Starving cancer cells**
Dr. Richard Wilcox, professor of pharmacology and toxicology, was named 2016-2017 Educator of the Year for the College of Pharmacy. The announcement was one of several teaching awards to college faculty announced at the student-sponsored awards ceremony.

Educator of the Year – Dr. Richard Wilcox

Richard Wilcox, professor of neuropharmacology, first joined the college faculty in 1979. Over the course of his approximately 40 years in education, he has focused on the basis of neurological and psychiatric disease. He was recipient of four teaching awards as well as an advising award.

He teaches in the Pharmacotherapy III course and facilitates PT labs in both spring and fall. In addition, he teaches graduate courses in neuropharmacology and biomedical pharmacology covering topics including seizures, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, insomnia, anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and addictions plus basic science for dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin.

“I love helping students learn,” he said, “especially seeing how what they learn about model diseases can be applied to other diseases that they will study on their own. I love seeing how they can put together complex information, integrate both preclinical and clinical data, and synthesize it all into an informed treatment plan, but I most love seeing them enjoy learning.”

P1 Teaching Excellence Award – Dr. Carla Van Den Berg

Dr. Van Den Berg, an associate professor of pharmacology and toxicology, teaches a new course in the first-year curriculum titled “Normal Physiology, Pathophysiology and Drug Targets.” Her research focuses on growth factor signaling in breast cancer and intracellular kinases in breast cancer metastasis.

“Implementing new courses can be difficult at times, but the faculty felt this was an important change in the first year of the curriculum,” she said. “I have been extremely impressed with how constructive the pharmacy students have been in helping me improve the course throughout the year. It’s definitely been a team effort and very rewarding for me to work with both the students and faculty. This type of effort makes me especially grateful for the P1 students’ teaching recognition.”
P2 Teaching Excellence Award – Dr. Jamie Barner

Dr. Jamie Barner, professor of health outcomes and pharmacy practice, teaches a second-year class on pharmacy and the U.S. health care system. Her research interests include examining the impact of pharmacy services on patient outcomes, understanding factors that affect health care utilization and outcomes, and examining factors associated with medication adherence. She serves as chair of the Division of Health Outcomes and Pharmacy Practice.

“One of my favorite rewards as a faculty member is when students are able to apply what I have taught them to real world issues,” she said. “One of my active learning exercises involves identifying patient assistance programs for a fictitious “Uncle Ben” who has difficulties paying for his prescription medications. I have had many students share with me that they used what they learned in this exercise to aid a patient, family member, or even themselves. I really am honored and appreciate the students who took the time to submit a nomination.”

P3 Teaching Excellence Award – Dr. Laurajo Ryan

Dr. Ryan is a clinical associate professor in the Division of Pharmacotherapy in San Antonio. She practices in the area of adult internal medicine, primarily in the acute treatment of the hospitalized patient. Her principal interests include diabetes, nutrition, and cirrhosis.

“The clinical material the students must learn during their P3 year is particularly difficult, so being selected to receive the P3 teaching excellence award is a testament to the dedication our students have for both learning and to their future patients,” she said. “I am very honored and humbled.”

Teaching Assistant Award – Hannah O’Mary

Hannah O’Mary is a graduate student studying with Dr. Zhengrong Cui. In fall 2016, she served as a teaching assistant in the biopharmaceutics course and in spring 2017 worked with the integrated basic and applied pharmacokinetics course. “I am still very honored and surprised by this award,” she said. “I certainly did not expect it.”

Regarding her work as a teaching assistant she continued, “I find it rewarding because I remember what it’s like to be a student in this program and I can relate to the students’ experiences. These students are my future colleagues in the field, so it's really neat to play some small role in their education and future contributions to pharmacy.”

IPPE Preceptor Award – Dr. Lucas Hill

Dr. Hill is a clinical assistant professor of health outcomes and pharmacy practice. He joined the college faculty in 2015. At the college, Hill is director of the Operation Naloxone Service Learning Program. He instructs classes including Non-prescription Pharmacotherapeutics II and the Pharmacotherapeutics III Addiction Module. He is co-director of the Foundations for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice.

“I was honored to be recognized by our outstanding student pharmacists and to see quotes from their heartfelt nominations,” he said. “Collaborating with them to develop and implement Operation Naloxone has been the greatest joy of my professional life!”
High Achievement

UTRGV’s Dr. Lydia Aguilera gains highest standard of certification for pharmacists
Visitors to Dr. Lydia Aguilera’s office are greeted by a wall full of framed educational accomplishments, recognitions of her achievements and thankful notes from her pharmacy students at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Now, at age 60, the director of the UTRGV/UT Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program has added another level of expertise in her field by achieving board certification in ambulatory care pharmacy from the National Board of Pharmacy Specialties (BPS).

“Gaining the certification builds your foundation of knowledge. It’s a review, but you also learn new things – and knowledge is power – allowing you to not only help your patient, but also your team of doctors, nurses, dieticians and other healthcare team members,” said Aguilera, a clinical associate professor who has headed UTRGV’s cooperative program since 2010.

Board certification through the BPS is recognized as the highest standard for determining which pharmacists are qualified to contribute at advanced levels of practice.

Board Certified Ambulatory Care Pharmacists (BCACPs) focus primarily on the special needs of patients who may have concurrent illnesses and take multiple medications, and who often administer these drugs themselves or with the assistance of a caregiver at home.

The BPS website says 148 pharmacists in Texas have an Ambulatory Care Board Certification, and only eight in the Valley have that certification.

Dr. M. Lynn Crismon, dean of the UT Austin College of Pharmacy, said BPS board-certified pharmacists stand out as the most qualified to take on today’s expanding expectations of patients, physicians, employers and others who recognize the increasing need for a team approach to healthcare.

“A native of Edinburg, she attended then-Pan American University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Houston in 1980. She returned to the Valley and became a practicing pharmacist and independent pharmacy owner for many years, but through her role as a preceptor for pharmacy school students, she learned to love teaching.

“A native of Edinburg, she attended then-Pan American University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Houston in 1980. She returned to the Valley and became a practicing pharmacist and independent pharmacy owner for many years, but through her role as a preceptor for pharmacy school students, she learned to love teaching.

“I enjoyed the feedback from the students; I enjoyed teaching and learning from them about their needs,” she said.

Aguilera returned to school at age 50 to earn a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Florida, and began teaching full time in 2009 at then-UT-PA’s cooperative pharmacy program.

The cooperative program, which has students taking their pre-pharmacy courses at UTRGV, two years of pharmacy coursework at UT Austin’s College of Pharmacy and returning to UTRGV for their final coursework and rotations, is helping to build a talented pharmacy workforce for South Texas that understands the language and culture of the com-
munity.
“We know our people and our needs because they are our families, they are our neighbors,” Aguilera said.

Since its inception in 2001, the program has graduated more than 100 pharmacists as of 2016, with 80 percent of those graduates staying in the Valley or Laredo.

In 2013, the program was lauded by Excelencia in Education as a top doctoral program in the nation in advancing education achievement for Latino students in higher education.

In 2016, U.S. News and World Report ranked the UT Austin Pharmacy program from which her students graduate as the third-best in the nation.

Aguilera carries her passion to develop pharmacists who are sensitive to the community’s needs into her daily classroom and research.

She has a special interest in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) – therapies that are outside the scope of scientific medicine but may be used in the treatment of disease and ill health. Examples include natural products, yoga, deep breathing, chiropractic manipulation, meditation, and others.

“I prepare a lecture for my students on beliefs and herbs that are used by the Hispanic population here,” said Aguilera, who has surveyed many Valley yerberías to learn more about what illnesses people seek treatment for and which products or alternative treatments are recommended and used.

“The Texas Medical Association has recommended that physicians ask patients about their use of CAM in therapy. So I tell my students to be proactive in discussing CAM treatments with patients, but to ask with an attitude of tolerance and respect,” she said.

Certified in medication therapy management (MTM), Aguilera also provides MTM training to her students and other Valley pharmacists. As a pharmacist and MTM, she serves as a consultant with the Salud y Vida program, which provides chronic care management for qualified RGV participants with uncontrolled diabetes but no insurance.

As a first-generation college graduate herself, and knowing the financial burden of going to pharmacy school, Aguilera has set up scholarships at UTRGV to support the program’s students.

“Every day, I can’t wait to get here because I know I am going to meet another student who is right where I was, who might need guidance, support and a role model,” Aguilera said. “That is what I do to help them reach their goals and be successful.”

-Written by Gail Fagan and courtesy of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Photos by Paul Chouy.
Faculty Accolades

**Operation Naloxone**, an initiative addressing the opioid crisis through resources and overdose prevention, recently received a grant from the Texas Health & Human Services Commission in the amount of over $1.15 million. The grant goes toward supporting opioid overdose prevention activities from July 2017 through August 2018. The grant provides funding for enhancements to its website, development of free online continuing education for healthcare professionals, purchasing and dissemination of naloxone, and statewide educational presentations.

Operation Naloxone is an interprofessional collaboration between The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, and Texas Overdose Naloxone Initiative. It includes faculty leadership from the College of Pharmacy including Lucas Hill, Nile Barnes, Kirk Evoy, and Veronica Young. ■

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley College of Pharmacy faculty Drs. Yasar Tasnig and Bianca Cruz, along with their co-authors Shawn Saladin and Robert Perez, were awarded the McCay Vernon Outstanding JADARA Article Award for their article published in the *Journal of the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association* (JADARA) during 2015. ■

Drs. Kentya Ford and Kirk Evoy’s proposal was selected for funding by the Arlyn Kloesel Endowment for Excellence in Pharmacy Practice. The title of their grant proposal is “Addition of a Quit and Win Program to Intensive Smoking Cessation Therapy in an Underserved Hispanic Population.” Recipients of the Arlyn Kloesel Award were selected by an external review committee consisting of Ph.D. graduates from the College of Pharmacy’s graduate program in Health Outcomes and Pharmacy Practice. ■

Drs. Veronica Young of the College of Pharmacy’s Division of Health Outcomes and Pharmacy Practice was recently selected as an mHealth Scholar for the 2017 mHealth Training Institute (mHTI), a competitive training program for digital and mobile health researchers.

Moczygemba’s research program focuses on working with communities and health-systems to mitigate health disparities by developing patient-centered interventions to optimize medication-related health outcomes along the continuum of care. She uses qualitative and quantitative techniques and quality improvement principles to assess the clinical, economic, and humanistic impact of emerging care models. ■

Dr. Diane Ginsburg, assistant dean for student affairs, is one of three finalists for a lifetime leadership award sponsored by *Pharmacy Times* magazine and Parata Systems, a company that develops automated technologies for pharmacies.

Ginsburg is among 30 finalists nationwide in ten categories for the Next-Generation Pharmacist Awards that recognize outstanding pharmacists, technicians, student pharmacists, and industry advocates. Award winners were announced in August at the 8th annual ceremony. All finalists are featured in the July 2017 issue of *Pharmacy Times*. ■

Clinical Associate Professor Dr. Veronica Young has been selected as the founding Director of the UT Austin Center for Interprofessional Practice & Education. Dr. Young will work with the UT Austin Health Professions IPE Steering Committee currently consisting of the Dell Medical School, School of Nursing, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, and College of Pharmacy to develop health professions interprofessional education, scholarship, and service across the UT Austin campus.

Dr. Young will actively engage as many partners across campus as possible so that the center encompasses as many faculty, staff, and students as possible who have an interest in interprofessional health education, scholarship, and service. The other members of the IPE Steering Committee are Barbara Jones, School of Social Work; John Luk, Dell Medical School; and Gayle Timmerman, School of Nursing. ■
Dr. Bill McIntyre passed away on Thursday, November 3. Bill earned his B.S. and Doctor of Pharmacy degrees from Wayne State University, with residencies at Providence Hospital in Southfield, Michigan and the University of Kentucky Medical Center. He first came to UT in 1991 to complete a fellowship in cancer immunology on our UT Health San Antonio campus in 1991. He went on to establish a distinguished career at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), University of Kentucky, and University of Texas Pan-American (UTPA) (now Rio Grande Valley). At UTPA, Bill served as an Assistant Dean in the College of Pharmacy for our Cooperative Pharmacy Program with UTPA. He subsequently became Dean of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services at UTPA. He later returned to UAMS to be the Director of the Area Health Education Center – Southwest in Texarkana. Bill returned to The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy in 2009 as Associate Dean for Clinical Programs and Clinical Professor.

Dr. Thomas Gerding was born on February 11, 1930 and passed away on Tuesday, July 4, 2017. He attended the University of Notre Dame for a year before transferring to Purdue University where he earned three degrees: his B.S., Masters, and Ph.D. in Pharmacy. Dr. Gerding served in the U.S. Army Medical Services Corps at Brooke Army Medical Center Fort Sam Houston Texas during the Korean Conflict. Tom was a longtime member of The University of Texas at Austin's College of Pharmacy Advisory Council.

John and Beverly Carson of San Antonio, both 76 years old, passed away Friday, July 7, 2017, at 9:00 pm. Their tragic, single car accident occurred on a scenic country road between Gonzalez and Seguin. They were returning to San Antonio from their beloved family ranch.

In 1969, John and Beverly opened Oakdell Pharmacy. The pharmacy was an integral part of their entire life. They had a strong sense of service for others in the community and created deep friendships with people all over the country. Professionally, John served in leadership positions in pharmacy on the local, state, and national level which led him to become one of the most influential independent pharmacy owners in the nation. John was a longtime member of The University of Texas at Austin's College of Pharmacy Advisory Council.
Doris Smith, an emeritus member of the College of Pharmacy Advisory Council, passed away on the morning of Tuesday, September 19, 2017, in Houston, Texas, after a short illness. Mrs. Smith was the widow of Glenn Smith, a long-time supporter of the college. Glenn was employed by Behrens Inc.

Nancy Ann (Barrett) Hollingsworth, wife of Advisory Council Member Lonnie Hollingsworth, passed on September 22, 2017. She was born in Mangum, Oklahoma in 1934. Nancy married the love of her life, Lonnie Hollingsworth, and lived in Honolulu, Hawaii while Lonnie was stationed at Pearl Harbor. She and Lonnie then lived in Austin, Texas, where she helped put him through pharmacy school at the University of Texas. She and Lonnie made their way to Lubbock where they opened L&H Pharmacies, Inc.

James Daniel McKinley, Jr., was born January 5, 1924, in De Queen, Arkansas and died September 29, 2017, in Houston. James graduated from San Angelo High School and San Angelo College and then served in the U.S. Army 51st Ordnance Ammunition Company in New Caledonia during World War II. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Pharmacy, magna cum laude, from the University of Texas in 1948 where he was a member of Rho Chi (National Pharmaceutical Honor Society). He was awarded a Master of Science Degree in Pharmacy from the University of Maryland and a prestigious Certificate of Residency in Hospital Pharmacy from The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore in 1950 following a two year internship in their hospital pharmacy department. He was a registered pharmacist in Texas for 50 years.

He founded and served for 33 years as the Director of the Pharmacy Division of The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. He started the department in 1950 and was the sole pharmacist for four years as the hospital was being built in the Texas Medical Center. He led the pharmacy division at M.D. Anderson from its inception to national prominence in the field of hospital pharmacy with over 200 staff members.

James was honored as the recipient of The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy Alumni Association 2014 Legend of Pharmacy Award which is given annually to a distinguished individual who has made legendary achievements in the pharmacy profession.

Richard Mark Cadle, born February 3, 1958 in Las Cruces, New Mexico, died in Houston on March 26, 2017, after a brief illness. Richard attended Monterey High School and was graduated from Monterey Peninsula College and received a doctorate of pharmacology from the University of the Pacific. He was an assistant professor, Baylor College of Medicine, and adjunct assistant professor, The University of Texas, University of Houston and Texas A&M College of Pharmacy. Richard served in the United States Navy for 23 years, serving in the medical service corps, retiring as a captain in 2010.
**Alumni Updates**

Jill Kolesar (Pharm.D. ’94) recently delivered the presidential address at the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) annual meeting in Phoenix.

Brandon Patterson (Pharm.D. ’08) was awarded the Wiederholt Prize by APhA during the APhA Annual Meeting this weekend. The award recognizes the best paper published in the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association* (JAPhA), within the past two calendar years, describing original investigation in the areas of economic, social or administrative sciences. Patterson was selected in recognition of his paper, “Rural access to clinical pharmacy services,” published in the September 2014 issue of the JAPhA.

Dr. Abigail Justiss, daughter of Mark Zamutt, will be finishing her ob/gyn residency at Ohio State in Just and start working in Bellingham, Washington in August. Second child, Hannah Aline Justiss, born March 31.

**Homecoming Awards and Tailgate**

Pharmacy alumni descended to The University of Texas at Austin campus on October 20-21, 2017 to talk of years past, watch some Texas Longhorn football, and be awarded for their vast accomplishments in the world.

Alumni came to The University of Texas Club that Friday for the College of Pharmacy’s Alumni Reception and Awards Ceremony. Connie Gelineau was awarded the Distinguished Young Alumnus Award, presented by previous winner Eric Ho. Dennis Wiesner received the Legend of Pharmacy Award, presented by last year’s Legend, Gay Dodson. To round out the evening, Dean M. Lynn Crismon presented Jeanne Waggener with the William J. Sheffield Outstanding Alumnus Award.

Saturday brought the annual tailgate. With an 11 a.m. kickoff against Oklahoma State, alumni came to the College of Pharmacy Courtyard to eat breakfast tacos, sip mimosas, and meet with student groups. Though the Longhorns weren’t able to squeak out a victory, pharmacy alumni earned a winning homecoming weekend with old friends and new.
Calendar

November 2017
12-15  AAPS meeting, UT reception
22-25  Thanksgiving holiday

December 2017
3-7    ASHP mid-year meeting, UT reception
11     Last class day
22     Winter break begins

January 2018
2      Winter break ends
15     Martin Luther King Jr. Day (University Holiday)
16     Spring classes begin
25     125th Anniversary Celebration Kickoff

February 2018
5-6    CE Pharmacy Leadership Symposium

March 2018
12-17  Spring Break

May 2018
4      Last class day
18     Commencement

Giving to the college

If you wish to learn more about giving back to the college, honoring a loved one with a gift, or establishing an endowment, contact Susan Brown, assistant dean for development and alumni relations at skbrown@austin.utexas.edu or go to sites.utexas.edu/phralumni/giving to learn more.

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Pharmacy Leadership Symposium 2018

February 5 & 6, 2018
Stephen F. Austin Intercontinental Hotel
Austin, Texas

Visit http://sites.utexas.edu/cpe-lead for more information.