A Message from the Dean

Dear Friends:

A pharmacy school curriculum by its very nature is under perpetual revision. At no time was this more evident than as the health care reform debate continued in Washington, DC and across the country. Thomas Buckley’s Public Health & Healthcare Policy course was “ground zero” for health care reform discussions on our campus. As he frequently told his students, “what I might tell you today, could change tomorrow.” His knowledge of health care politics and policy at both the state and national levels served to guide our students as they tried to understand the issues and their potential impact on them as both citizens and future pharmacists. It is faculty like Prof. Buckley that is the strength of our school: practitioners and scholars who can bring their knowledge, clinical experience, and research into the classroom.

We warmly welcome Drs. Ted Rasmussen, associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Stefanie Nigro, assistant clinical professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice, to our faculty family. Dr. Rasmussen’s research focuses on stem cells. Dr. Nigro’s area of specialty is primary/ambulatory care: her practice site will be at a community health center in New Britain. You’ll read more about her as well as other “pharmacy families” in this issue.

As an important component of their introductory pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs), our pharmacy students have been working with other USP fellows Kristyn Greco and Archana Rawat. Each year since the program’s inception in 1981, the United States Pharmacopeia (USP) grants six $25,000 fellowships to graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs for chemistry, pharmacy, or a related field in order to fund research that could yield significant results for the food and drug industry. In the past eight years, nine of the 48 fellowships granted have been to University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy students, among them Sandra Goss, Banu S. Zolnik, Upkar Bhardwaj, Archana Rawat, and Kristyn Greco.

Sandra Goss, now a pharmacokineticist for Abbott Laboratories, graduated from the University of Connecticut with a Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences in 2006. When she won the USP Fellowship in 2002, she said doors opened for her to take on unique biopharmaceutical projects that otherwise might not have been funded. Working under the direction of Dr. Robin Bogner, Dr. Goss studied biological factors in the gastrointestinal tract and calcium absorption, which were unlike any other projects being conducted in the lab at the time. These opportunities led her to discover her interest in pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics (PK/PD), which she has since made into a successful career.

Fellowship-funded projects led her to conduct a clinical study later in her graduate career at a center in Farmington, CT, where she sampled blood and urine for calcium levels. Like her projects in Dr. Bogner’s laboratory, this study’s uniqueness generated many obstacles. “No one in my department had ever done a study like this before, so there was no one to guide me,” Goss remembered.

Without a point of reference, she said, a study that could have taken less than six months with the proper experience ended up taking two years to complete. Despite the learning curve, however, Goss commented that she considers it her greatest accomplishment. While the study did not yield the results she expected, she said the experience and skills she acquired by conducting it were invaluable for a career in clinical PK/PD.

Beyond her experience in a clinical setting, Dr. Goss said the USP Fellowship also helped her to gain recognition throughout the university by important figures like Dean Robert L. McCarthy and former University President Philip E. Austin. She and the five other fellows were also invited to present their research to the members of USP at its Washington, D.C. office at the end of the year. “That was the first time I felt like I was educating someone else about my research,” she recalled. “That was a huge accomplishment.”

Dr. Goss became acquainted with UConn while still an undergraduate at the University of Mississippi, when, in 1996, she was offered a summer fellowship in pharmacaceutics led by Dr. Bogner. A few years after her...
**Dancing with the UConn Stars**

By: Eunice Omega

On October 23rd, the Husky Headliners showcased their first event of the year, Dancing with the UConn Stars. The event featured the UConn Ballroom Dance Team and the UConn Dance Company as well as UConn’s own batch of faculty stars, including President Michael J. Hogan and the School of Pharmacy’s own Dean Robert L. McCarthy.

The show opened with members of UConn Ballroom Dance Team doing a dance medley to Lady Gaga’s hit singles, at the end of which President Hogan was escorted to the stage flanked by dancers who acted as his own secret service dark shades and black suits included. The finale of the opening number concluded with Hogan and the dance team doing the electric slide. “As you can see I’m no Tom Delay,” Hogan said, referencing the former U.S. House Representative who was a contestant in the 9th season of the ABC network hit show “Dancing With The Stars.” A moment was taken to remind the audience that part of the proceeds of the night went towards Huskython, a student organization that raises money for the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center in Hartford.

The masters of ceremony, alumnus Lauren DellaFera, vice president of UConn Ballroom Dance Club and Mick Malak, professional dancer and teacher, graced the stage in true ballroom fashion to introduce the first act. From beginning to end, the night exemplified the hard work and mastery that these students embraced for the art of dancing.

Audiences were “wowed” by artful, fluid moves and dazzling and daring costumes. They moved to familiar music from artists such as DellaFera, Justin Timberlake, and Ricky Martin.

Pre-pharmacy and pharmacy students as well as faculty turned out in great numbers to support McCarthy and occupied the entire lower far right seating of the Jorgenson floor.

Students Colleen Tevan and Carlie Hershgolden with the assistance of Liz Anderson, director of marketing and communications at the School of Pharmacy, made masks of McCarthy’s image that were mounted on wooden sticks. Every pharmacy student and supporter had the masks in hand. Sharon Giovenale, pharmacy librarian and coordinator of the Pharmacy First Year Experience courses, was proud to see the support of the pharmacy community and wished McCarthy luck on his performance. During an intermission, McCarthy came out and greeted his many fans who waved their masks and cheered in response.

McCarthy said that during the summer he was approached by Rod Rock who asked if he would be willing to participate. Afterwards he experienced months of preparation with his dance partner Kailee Donovan, president of the dance team. “I’m a runner and I consider myself to be in good shape but those practices were intense,” McCarthy said. “I got a chance to see how hard these kids work.”

McCarthy’s family was also in attendance. His wife, Maureen, had not witnessed any of her husband’s practices and was excited to see how he would perform. “I hope he doesn’t fall down and doesn’t drop Kailee,” she joked.

Before each featured performance by faculty, DellaFera and Malak introduced short video clips that showed the “UConn Stars” at work with their partners. McCarthy made it known in his video diary that there are 12 deans at UConn and he was the only one who accepted the challenge.

Dressed in a soft pink shirt, black pants and white suspenders, he and Kailee danced the swing to ABBA’s song “Waterloo.” McCarthy kept in step with his dance partner. While Kailee danced by herself, he jokingly stood on the side and yawned showing that he wasn’t impressed with her advanced moves. With an unswerving smile spread across his face, McCarthy showed that he was having a great time.

After McCarthy was done, the entire audience gave the dean a standing ovation. The pharmacy community was the loudest of them all, waving their masks and cheering. 4 student and pharmacy learning community residential advisor, Justine Dickson, waved her hand sign made that read, “Trading in His White Coat for Dancing Shoes.”

McCarthy had to re-emerge with his partner and give a second bow. He undoubtedly had the best reception of the night.

Like Dr. Goss, Dr. Zolnik also felt very grateful for the opportunity to share her research with professionals from USP, and to ask and be asked questions in a real-life setting. Now that she herself is a professional in pharmaceuticals, Dr. Zolnik said that students should know they are considered a very important facet of science and should remember that they are a part of something great. She added students should consider themselves lucky to be a part of such “a beautiful school,” with “the best teachers, the best equipment, and the best facility,” and to continue to make their own luck in science.

Upkar Bhardwaj, a 2009 Ph.D. graduate, felt the same way about UConn School of Pharmacy when he applied to the program in 2003. Dr. Bhardwaj attended the University of Delhi in India for his undergraduate career, and after graduating in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science and Master of Pharmacy in pharmacology he decided he wanted to explore pharmaceutics, and was drawn to the UConn School of Pharmacy because of its prestigious departments, world-renowned faculty, and exciting research.

USP Fellows

Continued from Page 1

graduation from Ole Miss in 1997, she contacted Dr. Bogner about attending UConn for graduate school, and said that their relationship was one of the deciding factors in choosing UConn for her Ph.D.

Goss is not the only former USP Fellow who was drawn to UConn because of one professor. Baru Zolnik decided to come to UConn to earn her Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences in 1999 so that she could work under the tutelage of Dr. Diane Burgess. Dr. Zolnik graduated from Iowa State University in 1997 and completed UConn’s Ph.D. program in 2005. Her research in Dr. Burgess’ lab was focused on finding a standardized in vitro testing method for microspheres and in 2004, at the beginning of her final year of graduate school, she was awarded the USP Fellowship to support this research.

Dr. Zolnik now works for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the Office of Pharmaceutical Science as a pharmacologist, where she is a part of quality assurance procedures to ensure that drugs new to the market are functioning as they should be. This position ties in very closely with the research she did as a student at UConn. Dr. Zolnik said that finding a standardized in vitro testing method “would really fill a gap in research. It made me feel good to be involved in filling that gap,” she said.

While there is still no such testing method, Dr. Zolnik could not stress enough the importance of continuing to search for one. During her research in Dr. Burgess’ lab, she used a device called the USP Apparatus 4, which essentially mimics the human body to help researchers understand the performance of drug products. His research with this device yielded impressive results: Dr. Bhardwaj was actually able to design a novelty dialisys apparatus for the apparatus that would improve its release testing methods and minimize variations in data. He applied for a patent for the adaptor in March 2009, which is now being marketed by SOTAX Corporation, the company that makes the USP Apparatus 4. This kind of impacting discovery is a perfect example of the far-reaching results U.S.P. aims for in granting the fellowship each year.

During his time at UConn, Dr. Bhardwaj worked alongside Dr. Zolnik in Dr. Burgess’ lab, studying liposomes in a continued effort to find a standardized in vitro testing method for novelty drug forms, and was granted the USP Fellowship in 2005 to assist in his efforts. Dr. Burgess’ lab, he used a device called the USP Apparatus 4, which essentially mimics the human body to help researchers understand the performance of drug products. His research with this device yielded impressive results: Dr. Bhardwaj was actually able to design a novelty dialisys apparatus for the apparatus that would improve its release testing methods and minimize variations in data. He applied for a patent for the adaptor in March 2009, which is now being marketed by SOTAX Corporation, the company that makes the USP Apparatus 4. This kind of impacting discovery is a perfect example of the far-reaching results U.S.P. aims for in granting the fellowship each year.

Future Faculty

During the past academic year, our faculty members welcomed some new additions to their families. Send us your baby photos and you may see them in an addition of Aspiring Alumni.

See: Eunice Omega
Focus on Faculty - Michael J. Pikal

By: Eunice Omega

Pikal received his Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from the University of Minnesota. In 1966, he received his Ph. D. in physical chemistry from Iowa State University. In 1972, he became a research scientist for Eli Lilly & Company and began conducting his staple research on freezing technology.

Using a series of metaphors, Pikal compared pharmaceutical freezing technology to what people encounter in their everyday lives.

Within Professor Michael J. Pikal’s office there is a beaker that is filled with 600 champagne bottles, one for each doctoral thesis that he has advised. He jokingly puts his fingers over his lips indicating that there is little indication he will ever keep a secret but Pikal’s achievements could hardly be kept a secret, not after having received one of the most prestigious awards in pharmaceutical sciences, the AAPS Distinguished Pharmaceutical Scientist Award. “It’s an enormous honor,” Pikal said. “I am so humbled that someone out there appreciates what you’ve done over the years.”

The Distinguished Pharmaceutical Scientist Award is given by the Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), which is the largest professional scientific society within the pharmaceutical industry.

Pikal, who has gained many honors, including being the first Pfizer Distinguished Endowed Chair in Pharmaceutical Technology, humbly acknowledges his achievements. He stated that he didn’t want the recognition to change the friendly and supportive relationships that he’s built with both faculty and students over the years. When asked if anything has changed for him professionally after receiving the award, Pikal replied, “If what I have been doing resulted in this award, I probably shouldn’t change what I’m doing.”

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Academics has appealed to Pikal because of his nurturing skills and his well known ability to root out a problem rather than settling for a quick fix. Although Pikal has found his niche, he feels that there can be a bridge built between academia and industry that will help produce better products. The stronger relationships between industry and academia will also be beneficial for students, helping them to graduate with the right skill sets they need for various types of professions.

Pikal’s apparent passion for science and teaching allowed him to build behind his dedication to his family. He married Janice Klein of Bluffton, Minnesota while he was still in graduate school. They have five children, all of whom pursued careers within the sciences.

With so much accomplished, Pikal still has his eyes set on future endeavors. He plans to focus on freezing-drying process to design maximum product quality while minimizing product costs. He is also working with amorphous solids that will allow drugs, normally insoluble, to dissolve and be effective in tablet form.

Pikal’s charismatic and friendly attitude, paired with his devotion to the sciences and to his students, helped him to gain the respect of his colleagues. “I think it has been built by the committee and a tradition in the kind of science I wanted to do, which was pharmaceutical technology,” Pikal said.

He noted that UConn is strategically located near one of Pfizer’s research and development sites in Groton, CT. “I think it helps provide collaborations for research and ultimately potential opportunities for students.

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Greco said she is very grateful for the Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering in 2001, and has helped make the pharmaceutical sciences recognized as one of the best graduate programs on campus. I’m really thankful that I was recognized for two years for my research,” she said. “This is what I do to, regardless of whether people recognize me or not, but it’s always nice if someone takes notice of what I do and appreciates it.”

Overall, the success of the USP fellows has brought prestige to the School of Pharmacy and has helped make the pharmaceutical sciences recognized as one of the best graduate programs on campus.

Dean’s Message

Continued from Page I

health care professional students at migrant farm worker clinics in the state. Recently, we have begun to pair pharmacy alumni with our students at these clinics allowing them to work together in caring for this under-served patient population.

Despite the difficult financial environment, the School of Pharmacy awarded more than $170,000 in scholarships this spring, $30,000 more than last year. We are very grateful for the continued support of our scholarship sponsors. This year’s new scholarships include the Caspsano Fund, Grieble Family Fund, William M. Hait Family Scholarship, and the Bryan F. Zembrowski Pharmaceutical Industry Scholarship.

Several of our students participated in the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation 2010 Symposium, School of Pharmacy Urban Service Track Scholars, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Undergraduate Research Program. These programs provided a valuable opportunity for students to gain research experience and support their academic career goals.

It was a different story for Matt who has the natural academic talent for pharmacy but also has a great love of sports. “I wanted to be a football coach but my father gave me the logistics of making that career choice,” Matthew said. Matt, on the other hand, definitely wants to go to business school but is not sure if he wants to go towards industry, like his father, or into community pharmacy practice.

The legacy of the Papa family began in 1978 at Middlesex Memorial Hospital in Middletown, Connecticut. Joe Papa had just graduated from UConn and was working as a pharmacist when he met Nancy, a nurse. They were married in 1983 and their son, Chris, was born three years later. Two more sons, Matt and Adam followed in 1988 and 1992.

By: Eunice Omega

Christopher, Joseph, Nancy, Adam, and Matthew Papa are UConn True Blue! healthcare suppliers that manufacture and distribute over-the-counter and prescription pharmaceuticals as well as other consumer products.

With all his success, Papa has willingly given back to his alma mater by, in 2005, gifting a conference room to the newly built School of Pharmacy. He also helped to found the School of Pharmacy Advisory Board to bring together a diverse group of alumni and friends in order to provide excellent professional and graduate education and overall to improve the quality of healthcare. “Joe had humble beginnings and credits UConn for his success,” Nancy said.

As for the Papa boys, the future may not be so certain. Next year Chris will start his rotations which will include working in nine different locations over a nine-month span. He is interested in working within industry but isn’t sure if he wants to get further and get his MBA.

For the Papa family, the future may be just beginning. Joe said he will start seeing his patients in a retirement home and Matt plans to play for UConn Rugby Team and the family drives up to see his games and, when she can, Nancy also sends her boys care packages.

Matt, on the other hand, definitely wants to go to business school but is not sure if he wants to go towards industry, like his father, or into community pharmacy practice.

Either way, the Papa family is one that is very close. Nancy and Joe Papa reside in Morris County, New Jersey, though they travel away from their sons, but the family does what they can in order to keep in touch. Matt plays for the UConn Rugby Team and the family drives up to see his games and, when she can, Nancy also sends her boys care packages.

There is a 3rd Papa son, Adam, who is graduating this year from high school; though it seems that Adam won’t be traveling the pharmacy path like his father and brothers. “Adam most likely will come to UConn but I don’t know about pharmacy,” Chris said. “He’s really interested in history and World War II.”

Adam is also interested in business with his negotiation skills, Nancy could see him pursuing a law career. “Joe dreams about one day having his own pharmaceutical company where all three boys could work,” says Nancy.
Alumni Association News

From the Executive Secretary – Daniel C. Leone ’53

Save the Date for Homecoming!

Join the School of Pharmacy Alumni Association as we join with the UConn Alumni Association to celebrate homecoming on Saturday, October 2, 2010. The Huskies will face the Commodores of Vanderbilt University at Rentschler Field in East Hartford, CT.

Alumni Board

University of Connecticut Pharmacy Alumni Association

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Vice President
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Term Expires May 2012
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Keith Lyke ’92
Edward Sklanka ’74
Peter Tyczkowski ’78
Elliott Tertes ’62

Student Representatives
Brian Bachyrycz ’10
Carlie Hershgordon ’11
Catherine Ulbricht ’94 is Natural Standard CEO and senior attending pharmacist at Mass General Hospital. Natural Standard provides evidence-based information about complementary and alternative therapies.

Maria Summa ’94 was named the 2009 Daniel C. Leone Pharmacist of the Year and presented with the award at the CPA annual meeting.

Brad Curtis ’99 has been board certified in oncology. He is employed at Eastern Maine Medical Center.

David Crosby ’06 and Brandon Brodeur ’06 have become Board Certified Pharmacotherapist Specialists. They are employed by Eastern Maine Medical Center.

Aaron P. Hussey ’07 completed his pharmacy practice residency at UMass Memorial Medical Center in June 2008, has moved to Boston and works at Brigham and Women’s Hospital as a senior clinical pharmacist. He has also achieved BCP status from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy.

Meghan Wilkosz ’03 and Emmett Sullivan ’93 were installed as president and vice-president, respectively, of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association in October.

Leslie Matthews ’09 was elected chief PGY1 pharmacy resident at West Virginia University Hospital.

Sharad Murdanne PhD ’10 won the Pfizer Global R&D Achievement Award (PGRD’s highest honor). Dr. Murdanne commented that the educational and research training that he received at our institution and from Drs. Bogner and Pikal contributed significantly in making him a better scientist.
Career Change is the Focus of a Lunch & Learn by UConn Alumnus Richard Minoff
By: Eunice Omega

On November 11th, managing partner of 1 Global Partners, LLC, Richard T. Minoff brought a message about climbing the ladder of success for pharmacy students at the weekly interactive series Lunch & Learn. Although Minoff does not have a traditional pharmaceutical background he was happy to share his experience with pharmacy students. “I enjoy doing this,” Minoff said. “I’ve made some career mistakes so I like to mentor people to not make those mistakes or if they have, how they could learn from them.”

Minoff, who graduated from UConn in 1975, began the discussion by reminding about the intimidating position he was in his senior year. He graduated with a degree in political science and international affairs and initially wanted to obtain his Ph.D. in political science but couldn’t afford the tuition. Instead he decided to go to the Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. His company, 1 Global Partners, is a pharmaceuticals and life sciences consulting firm.

“Eight-five percent of graduating students will change their careers at some point in the future,” Minoff stated. He stressed that students shouldn’t be discouraged by this fact and that they should consider any opportunity handed to them. Minoff’s PowerPoint presentation documented the journey he took to find his ideal career. The titles of each chapter, such as chapter two, “Can’t I Find Something to Maintain My Interest,” showed how Minoff constantly evaluated each move he made. At each point on his career path he learned about what he didn’t like and what his interest were. “It’s really important to find out what you like to do and what you don’t like to do,” Minoff said. “If you’re not having fun, get out of that field of work.”

After a series of diverse jobs, Minoff discovered he had an interest in science and from that he began marketing drugs. In 30 years, Minoff said that he worked for nine companies, had 25 job assignments, launched over 75 brands, and worked for two Fortune 500 companies and two global communications agencies; but most importantly he felt that he’s touched lives. He shared a story about a woman who brought him to a cemetery where she should have been buried after battling leukemia, but due to a drug Minoff helped to brand and market, she is still alive today.

Kim Widmann, a P1 student, took Minoff’s message about hard work and self discovery to heart. After high school she worked for seven years before she decided to pursue pharmacy. “I enjoy attending the Lunch & Learns; it’s nice to get a perspective from those working in and outside of pharmacy,” Widmann said. “Its true what (Minoff) said, you have to constantly challenge yourself and reevaluate yourself.

Minoff ended his lecture by sharing this advice with students, “Start early, seek guidance and learn who you are. Challenge yourself and don’t be afraid to fall.”

We’re Wishing on a Star
Once upon a time in a Disney film, a little cricket named Jiminy was wishing upon a star with a puppet named Pinocchio. In the film, the Blue Fairy granted some wishes and Pinocchio became a real boy. We’re looking for some real stars who might grant the similarly deserving wishes of our talented faculty. If you are interested in becoming a School of Pharmacy Fairy Godmother, and fulfilling one of these, or another wish, you can contact Lisa Brown, assistant director of development, at 860-486-9542 or lbrown@foundation.uconn.edu.

Dr. Jill Fitzgerald is wondering what CE program participants really think. She is wishing for an audience response system to allow for more interactive continuing education programs.

Star Studded Computing Power
Estimated Cost: $300,000
Dr. Robin Bogner needs HPLC and Mass Spectrometry equipment to monitor drug and degradation concentrations. In-kind donations are welcomed.

Star Studded Spectrometry
Estimated Cost: $12,000
Researchers, Anu Babu, David Grant, Dary Kalonia, and Olga Vinogradova all process enormous amounts of data and need more computing power than that required to send the first rockets into space. They are wishing for an IBM Blade Center H with 6 Blades (2.8GHz processors; 256GB of RAM) and an IBM Data Back-Up Storage System N3300 Model AIO, and associated support to run their sophisticated software systems.

Dr. Jill Fitzgerald wishes to upgrade the video taping capabilities used in the Pharmacy Practice Lab. Students and volunteer “patients” are taped during mock counseling sessions to improve student skills.

Estimated Cost: $20,500
Dr. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Other
Name: Class Year:
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Home Phone: ( ) Work Phone: ( )
E-Mail Address:
Employer/Business Name:
Annual Dues $25.00  Life Membership $250.00 [Certificate to Follow]
Please make checks payable to UCONN PHARMACY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION and send with this form to UConn Pharmacy Alumni Association · 69 North Eagleville Road, Unit 3092 Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3092.

Super Star Alumni Support APhA Student Travel
By: Eunice Omega

Special appreciation is extended to the following alumni who supported student travel to the APhA convention in Washington, DC. You are super stars!

George F. Kirkpatrick Jr. ’71
John A. Capuano ’73
Janet Thompson ’83
Christopher R. Fortier ’03
Rachel S. Meyers ’05
Sandra E. A. Popp ’88
Richard T. Carbury Jr. ’75
Cynthia E. Huge ’75
V. Michael Guertin ’66
Allan D. Anderson ’62
Bryan J. Zembrowski ’07
Jacqueline M. Murphy ’78
Wennis Demetrius-Williams ’07
Renée S. Larouche ’09
Karl A. Niefeld
Edward Schreiner Jr. ’82
Daniel C. Leone ’53
Jose Manautou
Michael T. Moore ’94
David J. Cooper ’75
Ellen S. Jennings ’88
Robert L. Dana ’63
Lois Reynolds ’74
Edward Silver ’49

For more information about the Super Star Alumni Support APhA Student Travel, please contact Lisa Brown, assistant director of development at lbrown@foundation.uconn.edu. Donation are welcomed.

Super Star Alumni Support APhA Student Travel...
This is a big season for Stefanie Nigro. Not only is she a new pharmacy practice faculty member at the School of Pharmacy, she is also newlywed. Stefanie and Neil Tejwani (who met in college) tied the knot on October 24, 2009. For those “The Biggest Loser” fans, yes, that is Neil Tejwani from season four. In fact, it was Nigro who encouraged him to go on the show. Nigro says, “Being in the health profession, I was worried that he may not make it to age 30 as he had previously been diagnosed with high blood pressure and pre-diabetes. I heard of “The Biggest Loser” and encouraged him to at least send in an application... well the rest is history.” Television and marriage aside, the couple remains busy and successful, especially Stefanie who is taking on a new role here at UConn.

Only a few years out of college, one might wonder how this woman managed to accomplish so much in so little time, and how she got where she is today. Originally Nigro had not intended to enter the field of pharmacy. In fact, she had entered Northeastern University with the intention of majoring in criminal justice, but realized that this was not the career choice for her. “I could not envision what I would do with that degree,” explains Nigro. It was a pharmacist with whom she had previously worked that told her she could make a good pharmacist because she was “a quick learner and very personable.”

During her residency training Nigro took a teaching course that opened her eyes and pushed her toward an academic position at UConn. “To be honest, I was nervous to teach future pharmacists. What could I possibly teach them with only two years of experience?” The class, as Nigro says, was “the highlight of my training.” It taught her a new methodology of teaching and what it means to be an effective teacher. “It was there that I saw teaching and learning as a shared responsibility between teacher and student.”

Now, Nigro holds a Pharm.D. from Northeastern University. She graduated in 2006, and then pursued a full time community pharmacy position at CVS pharmacy in New York. “A residency was always part of my long term plan, but due to financial reasons, I decided to push it back almost two years,” she says. After this she completed post graduate training at Northeastern in affiliation with Harbor Health Services, Inc. which had an emphasis on ambulatory care and adult teaching. Awards are no exception to her accomplishments. As a student in 2006, she won the APHA One-to-One Patient Counseling Award, which is given to 20 pharmacists and five student pharmacists who demonstrate excellence in patient counseling and care. She also won a 2009 AAP/ Wal-Mart Scholarship. This allowed Nigro and her faculty mentor to attend the AACP Annual Meeting and AACP Teacher’s Seminar in Boston, Massachusetts.

The newest professional step for Nigro is right here at UConn as an assistant clinical professor in the School of Pharmacy. She will be co-coordinating both the Non-Prescription Medications course and the Introduction to Pharmacy Practice lab. She is also in the process of starting a clinical pharmacy services at the Community Health Center of New Britain, Inc. Her interests include promoting patient self-advocacy through health behavioral change/education, utilizing motivational interviewing techniques, delivering medication therapy management to underserved populations, diabetes care and management, increasing medication adherence rates, and utilizing various educational techniques to foster active learning in the classroom. She says, “I am passionate about promoting patient self-advocacy for their own health-care. I feel that this comes from being a caring pharmacist who has the ability to educate patients to give them the tools/knowledge to become their own health care advocate.”

In the next few years Nigro hopes to be “fully integrated at her practice site promoting the need for pharmacy expertise in the primary care setting,” and “to prove how valuable a pharmacist can be.”

From White Dress to White Coat

Dr. Stefanie Nigro, assistant clinical professor of pharmacy practice, enjoys her wedding day with husband Neil Tejwani. In her white coat, promoting pharmacy in the primary care setting is the focus of her practice.

First Year Experience Benefits Freshmen

By: Eunice Omega

Sharon Giovenale, FYE program coordinator and pharmacy librarian, proudly sat in the back of the class and watched the students of the Pre-Pharmacy Learning Community present the culmination of all they had learned that semester. Their final project was to work in groups and interview one faculty member with different backgrounds in pharmacy. Miliane Perez’s group interviewed an assistant clinical professor and learned all about her background in clinical pharmacy. Perez said that professionals come to class and speak about different aspects of pharmacy.

“You get to learn more in depth about other fields in pharmacy,” Perez said.

The Pre-Pharmacy FYE course is designed to assist pre-pharmacy students with the transition to higher education at UConn. “We really try to acclimate the students to the university and help them get used to the intense classes that they’ll be taking in the future,” said Giovenale. She felt that the students not only develop great relationships with each other but also with the faculty.

A few years after Giovenale acquired the position as FYE program coordinator, the class grew to three sections available to pre-pharmacy students living both within and outside the Pre-Pharmacy Learning Community. When asked how she felt this partnership was beneficial for the students, Giovenale stated, “I think there’s a lot of teamwork involved in these classes, even pharmacists must be involved in group work. They need to have the skills to interact with people.”

Rachel Mersan, P3 and a mentor for the FYE class, also lived in the Pre-Pharmacy Learning Community and said that most of the friends that she has now met in the community and her FYE class.

“I think living in the community and taking the FYE course gives students a leg up for when they apply to the School of Pharmacy.”

The soul purpose of the FYE course isn’t to only prepare students to enter into the School of Pharmacy. Giovenale has structured the course so that students can explore all types of career options before they make a definite choice. “They get a chance to explore a little bit. Some students decide to do something else and that’s fine,” she said.

By: Sara Muldoon

Student News Briefs

Graduate Students

Priscilla Encarnacao, a UConn MSp student graduate in Dr. Brian Aneskievich’s laboratory, won 3rd place in the poster session competition at the Northeast Chapter of Society of Toxicology.

Igor Gurevich, an American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education (AFPE) fellow in Dr. Brian Aneskievich’s laboratory, was awarded the 2nd place prize in the graduate student poster competition at the Mid-Atlantic Pharmacology Society (MAPS) meeting taking place in Philadelphia, PA.

Ekneet Sahni, a graduate student of Dr. Bodhi Chaudhuri, presented a podium presentation on “Estimation of Optimal Coating Performance Via Optimal Mixing Conditions in a Pancoater” in the session of “Agglomeration and Granulation” at the Annual Meeting of American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) held in Nashville, TN.

Sudhir Verma was one of five winners of IPEC Foundation’s Excellent Graduate Student Award at the AAPS Annual Meeting Award in Los Angeles.

Doctor of Pharmacy Students

P3 student, Sabina Allikhanov, served as the coordinator for the APhA-ASP Midyear Regional Meeting held in Hartford, CT. The UConn chapter recognized Sabina for her dedication and exceptional work.

P3 student, Janet Cho, after her summer research in Dr. Bodhi Chaudhuri’s lab presented a poster titled, “Non Intrusive Characterization of Powder Mixing using Image Processing Algorithms” in the Undergraduate Summer Research Symposium held at UConn.

Dr. Diana Sobieraj and P4 student, Craig Freyer, presented a poster, “Probable Drug Interaction between Prickly Pear Cactus, Glipizide, and Metformin in a Patient with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus,” at the ASHP Midyear Meeting.

P4 student, Nicole Jordan, will be part of the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center team at the Clarion Root Cause Analysis Competition.

P3 student, Kelly Sullivan, was elected as the APhA-ASP Regional Delegate for Region I. She will serve as the voice of her region and work towards promoting the region’s ideas and policies so that they may be represented at the APhA-ASP Annual Meeting.

P3 student, Danielle Voisine, was appointed to a national committee within ASGP, the Geriatric Academic Roundtable. She is the first student representative to ever be appointed to this committee.

Ten students attended SNPhA’s National Conference in Downtown Chicago supported in part by Walgreens Pharmacy. Members met with student chapter co-founder Keytsha Ambite, who is now a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
Congratulations Bruce Daniels and Andrea Morgan
the winners of
OPEN UP AND SAY AAHH!

Did you receive a USP fellowship while you were a student at UConn? Let us know so we can add you to our growing list!

SEND YOUR POEMS TO LIZ ANDERSON AT
pharmacymco@uconn.edu OR AT THE SCHOOL OF
PHARMACY, 69 NORTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD, UNIT 3092,
STORRS, CT 06269-3092.

Entries must be received by July 31, 2010.

It's Rhyme Time...

A poem you see, a poem you read
You may or may not like it, but it's time to begin.

If you're a poet, you have to show it.
If you're not, take out your pen.

About UConn Pharmacal It's time to begin,
A poem you see, take out your pen.

You really must show it! I'm sure you know it.
If you're a poet.

Fellowship Recipients
Calling All USP

Sanita Goss 2002-2003
Banu S. Zhink 2004-2005
Lipker Bramwadi & Anil Saluja 2005-2006
Shumet Hailu & Anil Saluja 2006-2007
Kristyn Greco 2007-2008
Kristyn Greco & Archana Ramesh 2009-2010

In this very spot, they might appear,
The best of the lot, I'm sure you will see.
Their names might be on top, or a mug, or a cap, or a t-shirt or two.
You might win ludge, you never know,
We're sure to judge.
The best of the lot, they might appear,
In this very spot!