



VCU

School of Pharmacy

A PUBLICATION FOR VCU AND MCV ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

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A New Generation of Leadership

K.C. Ogbonna, new associate dean
for admissions and student services

PAGE 16





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DEAN'S MESSAGE

To our VCU and MCV Alumni,

As we approach the summer, and my third year as dean comes to an end, I am more optimistic about our school's future than ever. We have advanced into the Top 20 ranking for colleges and schools of pharmacy by the U.S. News & World Report and continue our ascent in the amount of federal funding received.

I continue to be impressed by the warmth and generosity of the alumni I meet across the state of Virginia and the country, including many who came back to Richmond for Reunion Weekend '17. Our alumni are among the most committed and involved I have ever encountered. As we enter into the sixth year of the school's Make It Real fundraising campaign, I am grateful for all of the gifts we have received and confident we will be successful in achieving our \$12 million goal.

Since our last publication, the School of Pharmacy has launched several new initiatives. The Center for Compounding Practice and Research, after several years in development, recruited class of 1982 alumna Barbara Exum as director. This state-of-the-art training center is already offering continuing education sessions on USP compliance, sterile and nonsterile techniques, as well as compounding certificate programs.

I am also pleased to announce that Dave Dixon was recently appointed director of our Center for Pharmacy Practice Innovation. Dave has been a member of our faculty since 2012 and serves as an associate professor in ambulatory care and as vice chair for clinical services in the Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science. The CPPI is going to be instrumental in addressing some of the key questions that we have within our profession and, more importantly, how our profession interacts with other health professions in the broader picture of health care.

The Richmond Health and Wellness Program—spearheaded by alumna Patricia Slattum, director of our Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program, and Pamela Parsons, the School of Nursing's director for practice and



Marian and Tom Hutchens, class of 1962, chatted with Cecily and Joe DiPiro during the Reunion Weekend 2017 Pharmacy Student-Alumni Mixer at The Jefferson Hotel.

community engagement—has been recognized by the university as an iCubed initiative for inclusion, inquiry and innovation. The interprofessional RHWP, which provides on-site health services to residents of Richmond senior housing facilities, is one of only five programs universitywide to be selected for iCubed designation. We will receive funding from VCU to hire faculty members for this program.

One of the most significant changes the school has experienced is the retirement of Thomas Reinders after 42 years of service. Tom's legacy of service to VCU pharmacy students and the profession is impressive. As tribute to Tom, and in an effort to ensure that his name be forever a part of the VCU School of Pharmacy, the pharmacy class of 1977 has endowed a scholarship in his name. Thanks to their thoughtful generosity, we will present a student with the Tom Reinders Scholarship in perpetuity! We are indebted to Tom for his years of service and truly stand on his shoulders to achieve accomplishments today and in the future.

We are very fortunate to have a new associate dean of admissions and student services, Kelechi C. Ogbonna. K.C. was recruited from our faculty, where he had served in the Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science. I am excited to see where he takes our admissions and student services efforts.

If you have not been on campus lately, please come to visit us. While much has changed at the School of Pharmacy, our focus remains on our students.

With best regards,

Joseph T. DiPiro, Pharm.D.

Dean, VCU School of Pharmacy
Archie O. McCalley Chair



VCU SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

Reunion Weekend 2017

CLASS OF 1967

Celebrating its
50th reunion at
Sam Miller's.



CLASS OF 1962

Celebrating
55 years!



PHARMACY Mixer

Pharmacy Student-Alumni
Mixer at The Jefferson Hotel.



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CLASS OF 1992

Class of 1992 graduate Nitin Patel and family hosted his 25th reunion — and the gold rush dancers!



JEFFREY C. DELAFUENTE

Paying back and paying forward makes the most of opportunities



Jeff Delafuente works on his paddleboarding skills at an estuary off Fort Myers Beach in Florida.

“It’s pay back and pay forward. ... I just don’t think I would have been able to do [what I’m doing] without the opportunities afforded by VCU.”

Emeritus professor Jeffrey C. Delafuente made a remarkable commitment to the VCU School of Pharmacy following his retirement in 2014. He chose to establish the Jeffrey C. Delafuente Pharmacy Scholarship Fund with a \$200,000 bequest to the school.

The decision, he said, was a simple one: “It’s pay back and pay forward. ... I just don’t think I would have been able to do [what I’m doing],” he said, “without the opportunities afforded by VCU.”

Now, future generations of students will have similar opportunities when they receive a Delafuente Pharmacy Scholarship. As Delafuente once told members of the Student Association of Consultant and Geriatric Pharmacists, “Opportunities are going to come your way—seize the day!”

After 16 years with VCU School of Pharmacy, most recently as associate dean for academic affairs, Delafuente left Virginia for Fort Myers, Fla. “I’m living in a resort community and have a marvelous lifestyle!” he said. “And the opportunities I had at VCU helped me get where I am right now.”

Not only was he able to retire “in style,” but his previous connections and responsibilities garnered more recent attention from the American Pharmacists Association. During his tenure at VCU, Delafuente had worked with APhA and the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (of which he served as 2013–14 president) to develop a national medication therapy management certificate program.

So in addition to spending long days in the sun perfecting his paddleboarding technique, he has traveled—at the behest of APhA—to teach medication management classes in Beijing and Guangzhou, China, as well as numerous cities across the United States.

Before arriving at VCU, Delafuente had worked for pharmacy and medical schools in Florida and Missouri. In 1998, VCU School of Pharmacy’s then-Dean Victor Yanchick hired him to establish a geriatrics program “second to none.” Yanchick later noted that Delafuente had “picked up the program and run with it.”

The school’s Pharm.D. curriculum now requires a geriatrics rotation and offers a Certificate in Aging Studies. The Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program is dedicated to improving drug therapy outcomes in older adults while becoming a nationally recognized leader in the field.

Dean Joseph T. DiPiro is impressed by Delafuente’s gift: “Jeff’s commitment to create a scholarship to support VCU pharmacy students in perpetuity is a tremendous gift that speaks to his generous character and deep commitment to the profession. His gift will support VCU pharmacy students forever.”

To learn more about making a planned gift to the VCU School of Pharmacy or establishing a scholarship, contact Ellen Carfagno, director of development, at (804) 828-3016.



The SPAN membership includes (front row, from left) Sydney Prezioso, Amanda Vaninwegen, Stephani Halloran and Clarrisa Cho; and (top row, from left) Jyness Williams, Danielle Hess, Carrie Carter, Giovanni Zanota, Elizabeth Stump, Caroline Jones and Hannah Sharpe.

STUDENT PHILANTHROPISTS ALUMNI NETWORK

SPANning the bridge between student life and giving for life

Two years ago this spring, a group of VCU School of Pharmacy students came together in hopes of contributing something special to the school community. They were looking to increase the culture of philanthropy among the student population by raising awareness of the role private philanthropy plays in all aspects of academic pharmacy: from student scholarships to endowed professorships to capital improvements.

The result was SPAN, the Student Philanthropists Alumni Network. All 2015–16 class presidents—Jyness Williams (P1), Giovanni Zanota (P2) and Skyler White (P3)—as well as Student Executive Council president Phil Jan were asked to help identify a few students from each class who might be interested in participating. “We had meetings to brainstorm ideas and discuss potential challenges,” Williams said.

Now that SPAN is active and growing, Corrie Sanders, class of 2018, explained that “we want to provide opportunities for students to participate in philanthropic activities that benefit the school and to be engaged with alumni who are actively giving back.

“Our hope is that students will understand the importance of giving back once they are out in the workplace.”

The group’s first sponsored event was a Beat the Dean Challenge. Part of VCU’s 2016 Broad Street Mile 5K, the race encouraged pharmacy students and faculty to vie for the title of “Fastest in the School.”

“We had a lot of student participation and enthusiasm at the Beat the Dean Challenge and are excited to expand upon the challenge for next year,” Williams. “Dean DiPiro was so gracious and excited—and that got us excited!”

SPAN members also coordinated a student/alumni mixer for Reunion Weekend 2017 and are planning an incoming student/alumni gathering for this fall.

In addition to building a culture of philanthropy among pharmacy students, Williams noted, SPAN is serving as a valuable networking source for both students and alumni.



David D’amico (left), class of 2018, emerged victorious in the Beat the Dean Challenge with the title of “Fastest in the School.”

TERRI HUBBARD POWERS

Scholarship a fitting tribute inspired by parents' hard work, dedication

For VCU School of Pharmacy alumna Terri Hubbard Powers (B.S. '78), establishing a scholarship in memory and honor of her parents made perfect sense.

She and her husband, Tom Powers, recently funded the H.J. and Dot Hubbard Scholarship for pharmacy students who have demonstrated financial need and academic merit. "As I'm coming toward the end of my career," she explained, "I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude for how I got here. I owe my parents."

It also made perfect sense for the scholarship to be founded at her alma mater. "I think VCU is one of the top schools in the country," said Powers.

Her career has been in community retail pharmacy, and she currently works for Martin's Pharmacy. Powers credits her parents for instilling in her a strong work ethic and an awareness of the importance of education. Her mom, a schoolteacher, and

her dad, a purchasing agent for a paper mill, made sure that all four of their children received an education—even though three of them (including Powers and her twin sister) were in school at the same time.

"Times were tight, and when Mom realized she would not be able to return to teaching and raise the kids, she came up with the idea of cooking and selling the super extra-large peanuts from my grandfather's farm, using her own special recipe."

Some of her first customers were the five pharmacies in the area, said Powers. "I remember delivering 10-cent bags of peanuts to them."

Peanut deliveries are not what led Powers to a career in pharmacy. Her connection to health care began as a young teen while working part-time in a doctor's office, influenced, even

then, by the way the physician worked with the local community pharmacist to help patients. Today, it's called collaborative practice to improve patient outcomes.

"I know my parents were very supportive and always proud of my decision to become a pharmacist," Powers said.

In turn, she is proud of the fact that the business her mother had started with a deep-fat fryer in her own home kitchen expanded, through the years, into a manufacturing plant and business, Hubbard Peanut Co. ("Hubs—since 1954") in Sedley, Va. Her father continued working at the paper mill even after he, too, joined the peanut business.

"He was instrumental in designing the equipment that Mom needed to cook the many pounds of peanuts to fill the orders. We all grew up working in the business



Family ties: The Hubbard family celebrated Thanksgiving, circa 1959, with a traditional turkey dinner. Left to right: Terri, mom Dot, dad H.J., Sandra and Lynne. (Brother Harvey had not yet been born.)

“There are a lot of parents who love and sacrifice for their kids. I am humbled when I think about how much better my life has been because of mine.”



and, except for me, eventually made our way back to the business at one time or another. It's going on 63 years, and it is still owned by us.”

Although Powers lost her mother 15 years ago and her father five years later, she well remembers how they gave much of themselves to the community, whether serving at church and on boards or making donations. “My father quite frequently doled money out to someone who he knew had a financial need.”

The generosity she observed in her parents also figured into Powers’ decision to create a scholarship in their names.

“We didn’t face the loans that students do now,” she said. “I recently attended an event where Dean Joseph DiPiro talked about the need for scholarships and came away thinking, ‘How can I pull together what I want to do?’”

“There are a lot of parents who love and sacrifice for their kids. I am humbled when I think about how much better my life has been because of mine. Not having kids of my own to educate, wanting to honor Mom and Dad, and wanting to give back to a profession and a school that had done so much for me—it all came together, picture-perfect!”

In a happy twist of fate, Powers received the H.J. and Dot Hubbard Scholarship draft agreement on the day her mother would have turned 91. “I loved receiving it on her birthday!” she said.



Terri and Tom Powers (top) wanted to honor her parents with a pharmacy scholarship in their names. Her parents, H.J. and Dot Hubbard, are pictured circa 1950, before they started their family.



Newly named to School of Pharmacy endowed professorships are Mike Hindle (from left), Patty Slattum and Doug Sweet.

PROFESSORSHIPS

School of Pharmacy names three new endowed professors

The VCU Board of Visitors approved the investiture of three professors at the School of Pharmacy with endowed professorships.

Endowed professorships and chairs recognize, encourage and reward excellence in research, teaching and leadership by providing a stream of renewable income. They also allow the school to attract and retain the best academicians in the field.

Peter Byron, who retired in 2015 after 27 years with the school's Department of Pharmaceutics, explains why he was inspired to endow the Peter R. Byron Distinguished Professorship.

"It is not commonly appreciated that the research component of any faculty member's job is a largely self-funded endeavor," he said. "As the Department of Pharmaceutics chairman for 15 years, I saw up-close the difficulty that young faculty often experience trying simultaneously to teach, fund their laboratories and create their own research reputations."

He became convinced that the best way to ensure that the school's and its faculty's reputations would stay strong would be to create endowment funds devoted to attracting, maintaining and enabling professors with strong research talents to establish themselves at VCU.

In the case of the Victor A. Yanchick Professorship, inspiration was derived from the donor's scholarly interests. "We endowed a professorship because geriatrics has been a major focus of mine during my academic career," said Yanchick, who retired in 2014 after serving as dean of the school for 18 years. "I have a longstanding interest in caring for the elderly and their medical needs."

Establishing a professorship was a long-range goal; Yanchick had begun growing the endowment 10 years earlier with the aim of providing the school with sustained leadership so that the geriatrics program could continue to grow. Having been the recipient of an endowment himself gave him a deeper appreciation of what such a gift can accomplish.

Although School of Pharmacy alumnus E. Claiborne Robins (B.S. '33) died in 1995, his legacy lives on in the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professorship. He and his wife Lora endowed the professorship in 1987 to ensure excellence in pharmacy education and innovation in pharmaceutical research. Peter Byron held the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professorship until his retirement.

Many congratulations to our three newest professorship recipients.

Mike Hindle

Peter R. Byron Distinguished Professorship

Endowed by Peter R. Byron

Professor, Department of Pharmaceutics; Ph.D., pharmaceutical sciences, University of Bradford, United Kingdom



Peter and Sian Byron

"I was honored to be the first recipient of the Peter R. Byron Distinguished Professorship. Pete has been a friend and mentor for 20 years. He supported and encouraged my development as an independent scientist from my times as a postdoc in his lab and then as a faculty member. His work laid the foundations of the Aerosol Research Group at VCU. It is an internationally recognized center of aerosol drug delivery research whose reputation I look forward to further enhancing with this support.

"My primary research interests are novel aerosol drug delivery devices, in vitro particle size analysis, aerosol characterization and inhaler design. My vision for this endowment is to continue Dr. Byron's legacy by using it to support all Aerosol Research Group faculty and students (as he did) to advance the mission of improving the way in which we deliver drugs to the lungs and to train the next generation of pharmaceutical scientists."

Patty Slattum

Victor A. Yanchick Professorship

Endowed by Victor A. Yanchick

Professor, Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science, and director, Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program; Pharm.D./Ph.D. pharmaceuticals, VCU School of Pharmacy



Victor A. Yanchick

"Last year was another excellent year for the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program, which began with Dr. Yanchick's vision to better prepare pharmacists to improve the care of older adults. We presented our ASCP-guided curriculum mapping of geriatrics content in the VCU Pharm.D. curriculum at the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists' Annual Meeting. I was proud to be part of the team that revised the curricular recommendations.

"The VCU Pharm.D. curriculum, culminating with a required geriatrics APPE, is among the most robust in the nation in preparing pharmacy students to care for the growing aging population. The graduate students and faculty in the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Research Group presented their research at the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research annual meeting, the Virginia Governor's Conference on Aging, the Gerontological Society of American annual meeting and the American College of Clinical Pharmacology annual meeting. This professorship strengthens the program, supporting our graduate and professional students and their research in geriatric pharmacotherapy."

Doug Sweet

E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professorship

Endowed by E. Claiborne Robins

Professor and chairman, Department of Pharmaceutics; Ph.D., biology, University of Michigan



Claiborne E. Robins

"It is a great honor to be appointed to the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Professorship. My intent is to use these resources to provide additional support to the graduate students working in my laboratory. The support takes many forms, including funds to travel to scientific meetings to present their research findings and to network with other scientists; supplemental coverage of student stipend, tuition and/or fees; and purchase of specialized reagents or equipment necessary to complete their dissertation research.

"The research in my laboratory is focused on identifying and characterizing organic solute transporters, specifically organic anion transporters (OATs) and organic cation transporters (OCTs). A better understanding of how OATs and OCTs function will provide unique insight into drug efficacy and toxicity, drug-drug interactions and human disease states."

Existing professorships and chairs

Additional endowed professorships and chairs at the School of Pharmacy include the Alfred and Frances Burger Professorship, endowed by Alfred Burger and held by Richard A. Glennon, chairman of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry; the Nancy and Ronald McFarlane Professorship, endowed by alumni Nancy and Ronald McFarlane (both B.S. '80) and held by Donald Brophy, chairman of the Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science; and the Archie O. McCalley Dean's Chair, endowed by the late alumnus Archie O. McCalley (B.S. '27) and held by Dean Joseph T. DiPiro.

To learn more about School of Pharmacy professorships and chairs or how to support them, visit scholarships.pharmacy.vcu.edu/professorships. If you would like to consider creating one yourself, contact Ellen Carfagno at (804) 828-3016 or emcarfagno@vcu.edu.

GERIATRICS

Ever-growing Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program focuses on health *and* wellness

As VCU School of Pharmacy's Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program expands, so do opportunities for students interested in pursuing a career that incorporates this special patient population. Last year, Jenna Clemons Short was accepted as the school's first PGY2 geriatric resident in one of fewer than 20 such residencies available nationwide.

Short, a 2015 Pharm.D. graduate of the school, knew she eventually wanted to specialize in geriatric pharmacy. But while serving as a PGY1 pharmacy practice resident with Riverside Health System in Newport News, Va., she was disappointed by the lack of PGY2 residencies focusing on geriatrics in her native Virginia.

"When I saw the posting for the new geriatric-focused PGY2 residency at VCU, I knew I had to apply!" Short said. She was confident that she would learn much from the mentors she had while working on her Pharm.D. degree.

SOP faculty member and alumna Patty Slattum (B.S. '85, Pharm.D./Ph.D. '92) is among those mentors. As director of the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program, Slattum explained that the residency, which began last fall with K.C. Ogbonna as director, is a 12-month program designed to prepare participants to provide quality care for older adults in the inpatient, outpatient and long-term care settings.

Having had experience in teaching and research, Slattum said, residents who complete the program will be well-suited for careers in academia. Required rotations—with the Richmond Health and Wellness Program, Brookdale Imperial Plaza Senior Living Community, Virginia Geriatric Education Center Faculty Development Program, the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists and more—also will help them meet their specific career goals. And elective rotations are available in any number of locations, including

Right: The Student Association of Consultant and Geriatric Pharmacists holds an annual "Senior Prom" at Riverside PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) in Richmond.

Below: Third-year Pharm.D. student Jade Le worked with a patient at the on-site wellness clinic at Dominion Place, an apartment complex for eligible low-income elders.





Elizabeth Young spent one of her fourth-year Pharm.D. rotations at Imperial Plaza — a retirement community with 900 residents in independent living and 150 in assisted living — and its in-house pharmacy.

VCU's Ambulatory Care Clinic and Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Clinic, the School of Pharmacy's Center for Pharmacy Practice Innovation and the Richmond Center for Healthy Hearts.

Other PGY2 resident opportunities range from didactic and foundations laboratory teaching to working with faculty and students on global outreach experiences and mentoring student organizations.

The school's second PGY2 geriatric resident, whose tenure will begin July 1, will have a similar but even more interprofessional experience within the context of VCU's new Institute of Inclusion, Inquiry and Innovation (iCubed). The Richmond Health and Wellness Program serves as the foundation for the Health and Wellness in Aging Populations core of iCubed, and the ultimate goal for the PGY2 residency is to make it fully interprofessional, bringing together residents from the Schools of Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Work for advanced training.

One of the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program's primary aims is to provide experiential environments for all students as well as residents. In August, the Health and Wellness in Aging Populations core—the only iCubed core to include pharmacy faculty—will begin to build upon what RHWP has accomplished thus far.

Slattum and her colleagues continue to write grants to support RHWP's five locations and to expand beyond current health services into wellness programs. For example, a recent grant from UnitedHealthcare enabled a partnership with FeedMore hunger programs to provide hot meals on clinic days at three of RHWP's locations. "We are assessing social isolation and health outcomes by dealing with food insecurity issues," Slattum said.

The PGY2 geriatric residency, RHWP and iCubed efforts all are interconnected pieces of a much larger whole within the context of Geriatric Pharmacotherapy. Each part of the program dedicates itself to the goal of improving health and wellness for underserved, urban, aging populations.

OMICS

Collaboration is key in the omics community

Are you familiar with “omics”? It’s the analysis of large amounts of data representing an entire biological set of some kind. But it’s also an informal reference to fields of study whose names end in o-m-i-c-s. Within the last five years, VCU School of Pharmacy has been building its own omics crew among three research groups:

Genomics

Genomics is the study of the structure, function, evolution and mapping of genomes, or sets of genes. Helmed by Joseph McClay, the School of Pharmacy’s genomics lab aims to leverage the power of modern biotechnology to improve drug treatment. McClay and his team focus on disorders of the central nervous system, combining techniques from genetics, neuroscience, informatics and pharmacology.

Proteomics

Proteomics is the systems-level study of protein expression, interaction, modification and degradation for a given organism. Adam Hawkridge’s group is interested in developing innovative mass spectrometry-based technologies while studying the onset and progression of cancer, particularly ovarian and lung cancers.

Metabolomics and lipidomics

The study of all the small molecules in the body at the systems level is the primary focus of Dayanjan Wijesinghe’s laboratory. These studies are focused toward the understanding, early diagnosis and evidence-based treatment of critical illness and injury. The lab also focuses on pharmacometabolomics, an area that investigates variations among individuals’ metabolic response to drugs. These studies help identify the optimum drug combinations at the correct dosage forms to maximize treatment while minimizing side effects.

Hawkridge, McClay and Wijesinghe recently sat down together to discuss why interdisciplinary collaboration is the name of their game.

“We are doing different levels of analysis—genes, proteins and metabolites—using similar tools” explained McClay. “But the technologies are changing rapidly. You have to keep up because they become obsolete very quickly.”



Learn more about the research of Joseph McClay (left), Dayanjan Wijesinghe and Adam Hawkridge: Visit pharmacy.vcu.edu, click on “Directory.” Search by individual name, then click on “Research Website.”

“The omics that the three of us do are cutting-edge,” noted Wijesinghe. “To do that kind of research, you need a centralized infrastructure.”

That’s why the school made the decision to advance these technologies by hiring scientists with the appropriate backgrounds and then equipping them with what they need to stay current ... such as mass spectrometers.

“These are big investments,” Hawkridge said. “But they are being made because of their importance. Hiring us required buy-in from the school with the long-term vision that we can work with existing faculty.”

“It’s not niche research. You need the capability to work with lots of folks. ... The School of Pharmacy recognizes the need to hire people in these core areas of technology who can interface with people in the school and outside, as well.”

Within the school, as an example, a McClay lab study of psychiatric drug response is using proteomic technologies to examine the effects of antipsychotics on the brain. And all three omics labs work with VCU School of Medicine partners to obtain samples for analysis.

The omics labs are stocked, but faculty researchers also know when to reach out so as to further the value of the school’s investments. Sometimes, McClay noted, it’s more cost-effective to do the basics in-house and send samples out, especially when trialing a new instrument or technology.

Wijesinghe emphasizes the importance of sharing these technologies with new generations of clinical laboratory scientists while simultaneously conducting cutting-edge research that can change—and save—people’s lives. “A lot of this,” he said, “will feed through into pharmacy practice.”

PHARMACEUTICAL ENGINEERING

VCU schools partnering toward pharmaceutical engineering program

VCU School of Pharmacy, in partnership with the School of Engineering, is on its way toward developing what could be the first doctoral pharmaceutical engineering program in the country.

The proposed program would offer a truly integrated platform including hands-on participation in interdisciplinary research projects under the direction of leading experts within the pharmacy and engineering schools.

Pharmaceutical engineering, simply put, applies engineering concepts to the development, manufacture and regulation of pharmaceutical products. "Pharmaceutical engineers fulfill a key role in a wide range of finished dosage form manufacturing and packaging, including sterile products, biologics, solids, liquids and topical dosage forms," said Steve Hamilton, director, global technology services, Pfizer.

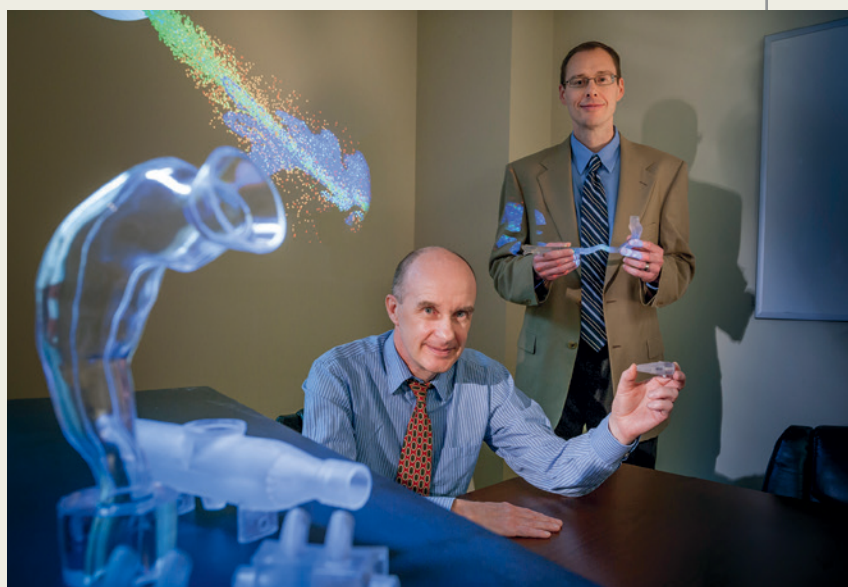
Pharmaceutical engineers' role, he said, can start with the production of the active pharmaceutical ingredient and continue through to the completion of packaging and distribution. "They are instrumental in taking a bench-scale process to commercial scale, creation of protective and functional packaging and the construction of facilities."

The School of Pharmacy's Department of Pharmaceutics chairman, Doug Sweet, explains that the scope of the program, as planned, would encompass all of the processes involved in the conversion of chemical and biological

compounds into pharmaceutical products ... from conception, research and design through operation scale-up, manufacturing, formulation, packaging, quality assurance, marketing, distribution and regulatory aspects.

Collaboration between the Schools of Engineering and Pharmacy has been well-established. Former department chairman Peter Byron and pharmaceutics professor Mike Hindle's

Doug Sweet (top), chairman of the School of Pharmacy's Department of Pharmaceutics and Sandro da Rocha, director of pharmaceutical engineering for the School of Pharmacy



Mike Hindle (left), School of Pharmacy, and P. Worth Longest, School of Engineering, have collaborated on a number of research projects over the years to improve aerosol inhaler mouthpiece technology and more.

Aerosol Research Group collaborations with P. Worth Longest, a professor in the School of Engineering's Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, have received national recognition and significant funding from the NIH, FDA and others.

Pharmaceutics associate professor Masahiro Sakagami also has worked with biomedical engineering associate professor Rebecca Heise on her Commonwealth Health Research Board grant, investigating the development of extracellular matrix hydrogels for lung regeneration. The success of these collaborative research projects demonstrates the growing need for scientists cross-trained in pharmaceutical engineering.

VCU's proposal for the pharmaceutical engineering Ph.D. program was approved by the Board of Visitors in May and has been submitted to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia for review.

As Sweet explains it, each school would have a pharmaceutical engineering lab, with professor Sandro R.P. da Rocha and professor Thomas D. Roper as directors of pharmaceutical engineering for their respective schools.

"The curriculum would be very flexible," da Rocha said, "so as to accept students from a variety of backgrounds, including pharmaceuticals, engineering, biological chemistry and related bachelor's, master's and professional programs."

"The pharmaceutical engineering program would combine the strength of our two schools at VCU to form what could be a pre-eminent program in the country," said School of Pharmacy Dean Joseph T. DiPiro. He said he would expect such a program to attract faculty and students from around the world.

"We have a unique opportunity here to develop an exceptional program that can improve health through the synergy of two disciplines."





“My passion is in health care administration. It’s not for the faint of heart, if you don’t like change. But I expect to be in it for all of my career.”

MICHAEL ELLIOTT

A passion for people powers alumnus’ health care career

“When you are passionate about something, it’s easy to stand up tall and talk proudly and articulately about it. I know my purpose in life is to help others, to share my story ... and I take that very seriously. There are a lot of opportunities out there to make sure that you put something positive into the life of each person you engage with, on a day-to-day basis, rather than take something away.”

There, in a nutshell, you have VCU alumnus Michael Elliott: enthusiastic about his life, passionate about his career and, as chief operating officer and senior vice president of Centra Health, an emerging leader in the world of health care.

Had you met Mike as a child, you might not have pegged him an up-and-comer. He recalls being very shy. “I had a speech impediment when I started kindergarten and wore big ‘Coke bottle’ glasses, as they used to call them. I liked to stay to myself.”

But his own journey has given him insight when he sees others who haven’t yet come out of their shells. “If you can help someone find their purpose,” he says, “it becomes a catalyst for them to become more outgoing and to learn they are here to serve one another and not themselves.”

A native of Virginia’s Hampton Roads, Elliott traces his interest in pharmacy back to visiting his grandmother in the hospital, finding himself “enamored of all that was going on” there. He volunteered at a medical center where he was to shadow a physical therapist but ended up shadowing the pharmacist instead.

“He just gave me the greatest experience,” says Elliott. “He described what pharmacists do in hospitals. Then I saw all these drugs lining the wall. I said, ‘Do you know something about all these drugs?’ He said yes!”

On a Navy ROTC scholarship as he began college, Elliott was encouraged to consider a career as a nuclear submarine officer. But by that time he was hooked on pharmacy. Leaving the scholarship behind, he entered VCU School of Pharmacy and graduated with the class of 2002.

“I had an absolute ball,” he reminisces. “What I love about our school is that not only did you get great scholastics, you also had the opportunity to grow as an individual outside the classroom ... and there are some very rich experiences you get by being involved in organizations such as SVSHP, VASP [now known as APhA-ASP] and SNPhA.”

Professor David Holdford notes that Elliott was instrumental in developing a national, award-winning leadership week for the Beta Nu chapter of the Phi Lambda Sigma leadership fraternity. Leadership Week has been an annual event at the school since then and has been emulated by chapters at other schools nationwide.

Elliott also benefited from a “host of great professors,” including Holdford and Norman Carroll (“I really related to those guys”) as well as fellow SOP alums Kelly Goode (“She has made a huge impact on the whole profession”) and Barbara Exum (“I took an elective from her, and she was fantastic”).

Left: Michael Elliott was guest speaker for the School of Pharmacy's 2016 Hooding and Diploma Ceremony.

Right: All of the Elliotts! Donovan, Michael, Evan, Lashelle and Christian.

Below: On the job at Centra Health.

Elliott's extracurricular life also included his wife-to-be, Lashelle, who originally had a softball scholarship but transferred to VCU to major in education with a focus on English. The couple, who met playing basketball in junior high, were married during one of Elliott's fourth-year rotations.

As a clinical pharmacist with Sentara Healthcare in Norfolk, working with VCU alumnus Mark Szalwinski (B.S. '85 pharmacy and M.S.H.A. '90) and Tim Jennings inspired Elliott to learn more about business and the business aspects of health care. That led to his enrollment at the VCU School of Allied Health Professions.

A master's in health administration, Elliott explains, is basically an M.B.A. except the case studies involve health care. "VCU has so many jewels," he says. "I was blessed to matriculate in nationally ranked programs right down the street from one another!"



Other work experiences at Optima Health Plan and at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, where Szalwinski became a mentor, allowed Elliott to move out of the pharmacy and into other units. "Seeing how all the pieces of a health system work together spoke to me."

After serving as interim vice president at Sentara Leigh for six months, he thought, "Wow, I can do this! I can add to the team. It just opened up my world quite a bit."

Given the chance to join the Lynchburg, Va.-based Centra Health in 2012, Elliott saw an opportunity for growth. He joined Centra as vice president for operations, quickly moving to senior vice president for operations and then into his current position. He's happy to report that Centra is making a positive impact: "We spend as much time on how to make people healthy and making sure they don't end up in the hospital as we do in treating them."

"We will always be there when they fall ill, but I love the fact that our focus is on keeping people healthy. ... Over the last decade, the emphasis is not only in providing volume of service but value of service."

In his "spare time," Elliott serves on the Virginia Board of Pharmacy and as chairman of the board of directors of HumanKind. He loves experiencing Lynchburg—"a beautiful place with restaurants galore and a vibrant downtown"—with his wife, who teaches high school English, and their three sons: Christian, 14; Donovan, 11; and Evan, 8.

Describing his sons' own interests, Elliott says, "My passion is in health care administration. It's not for the faint of heart, if you don't like change. But I expect to be in it for all of my career."

"I've had great mentors and great training. I want to have input in the changes to come and to bring the reality of patients into the conversation. I want to serve as an advocate."

KELECHI "K.C." OGBONNA

A new generation of leadership



Last October, the VCU School of Pharmacy announced the appointment of Kelechi "K.C." Ogbonna as associate dean for admissions and student services.

"We are very fortunate to have Dr. Ogbonna as our new associate dean," said Dean Joseph T. DiPiro. "He brings a wealth of talent, energy and ideas to the position. He has been an exceptional faculty member and emerging leader."

Ogbonna joined the School of Pharmacy in 2012 as an assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes

Science, where he gained recognition for his work as a co-investigator and core faculty member with the interprofessional Richmond Health and Wellness Program. RHWP is part of the school's national award-winning Pharmacist Collaborative Care and Outreach in the Community program.

As a faculty preceptor, Ogbonna worked with more than 100 Pharm.D. students who have participated in RHWP since its 2012 inception. He also has served as director of the school's PGY2 Geriatric Residency Program during its first year.

As the new associate dean, he follows professor emeritus Thomas P. Reinders, who retired last August.

"Situated within an academic medical center, I believe we are uniquely positioned to leverage our nearly 120-year tradition of graduating change agents that are tasked with leading the pharmacy profession," Ogbonna said. "I am working with students, faculty, staff and alumni to share our story, build on the foundation established during Dean Reinders' tenure, and recruit the pharmacists of tomorrow."

Prior to his arrival at VCU, Ogbonna was an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy and an inpatient staff pharmacist with the VA Connecticut Healthcare System.

He earned his Pharm.D. degree at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences and completed a PGY1 residency in pharmacy practice and a PGY2 residency in geriatrics through the VA Connecticut Healthcare System. This year, he earned his master of science degree in health administration from the VCU School of Allied Health Professions.

Nationally, Ogbonna serves as chairman of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's Geriatric Special Interest Group and is past chairman of the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists' Educational Advisory Committee.

Giovanni Zanota, a rising fourth-year Pharm.D. student and 2016–17 president of the Student Executive Council, said he loves having Ogbonna as the new associate dean. "He is very understanding of student needs, passionate about the profession, and he serves as an outstanding role model for our students."

"This position is a great match for Dr. Ogbonna's talents," agreed DiPiro. "We all are benefiting from his appointment."

"Situated within an academic medical center, I believe we are uniquely positioned to leverage our nearly 120-year tradition of graduating change agents that are tasked with leading the pharmacy profession."



Left and above: K.C. Ogbonna works with current Pharm.D. students (pictured) as well as prospective students.



K.C. Ogbonna (center) recently chatted with students (from bottom, clockwise) Corrie Sanders, Gia Dulai, Cameron Pretlow, Precious Dadzie, Giovanni Zanota and Nik Buela in the student commons area of the Smith Building.

Changing trends in pharmacy school recruitment

Why are Pharm.D. programs nationwide working so hard to expand their reach?

K.C. Ogbonna, associate dean of admissions and student services, addressed this hot topic during a recent School of Pharmacy faculty retreat.

While the traditional role of pharmacist has changed dramatically, not everyone understands what that new role entails. Interest in other health careers, such as physician assistant and physical therapist, is on the rise. And the number of U.S. pharmacy schools has grown by leaps and bounds.

As a result, pharmacy schools must show further value to continue competing for high-quality applicants. Moreover, Ogbonna says, the profession must continue to tout the positive impact pharmacists have, as medication experts, on patient outcomes.

One way the SOP is working to fill future classes is to tap more into VCU's undergraduate population. Currently, Virginia Tech provides the School of Pharmacy with 31 percent of its students, followed by VCU at 27 percent and the University of Virginia at 15 percent.

Ways to make inroads with current VCU students include a pre-health mentorship program, pharmacy pop-ups, shadowing opportunities and pharmacy faculty speakers in undergraduate science classes. A Twitter account (@VCUPharmAdmit) specific to prospective students has been launched, and pipeline programs for middle school, high school and college students have proved effective.

While VCU School of Pharmacy is no exception to the fewer-applicants trend, Ogbonna reports it typically receives

800 to 1,000 applications each year. Of those, 250 to 300 students are offered on-site interviews with an optimum class size of 140.

At the same time—and perhaps paradoxically—the number of pharmacy graduates nationwide has increased exponentially. So another cause, or pause, for concern is whether these graduates are getting jobs. Ogbonna notes that Virginia remains a top destination for pharmacists, with a pharmacist involuntary unemployment rate of 1 percent.

The news on the job front looks good for VCU: As of early May, about half of the Pharm.D. class of 2017 had accepted positions in the field, and about one-third had been accepted by PGY1 residency programs, fellowships or graduate schools.

To recommend a prospective pharmacy student, contact the Office of Admissions and Student Services at pharmacy@vcu.edu.

THOMAS P. REINDERS

Reinders recognized for decades of service to school and profession

For many years, VCU School of Pharmacy students—prospective, current and long graduated—have known Thomas P. Reinders as “Dean Reinders.”

As of the last few months, they also can refer to him as professor emeritus, the recipient of APhA's 2017 Gloria Niemeyer Francke Leadership Mentor Award and the man in whose honor the class of '77 endowed a student scholarship.

During the class's 40th reunion in April, alumnus Tom Buckle (B.S. '77) said, “We wanted to recognize Tom because he has done so much for the class of 1977 and for so many pharmacists.”

Reinders arrived at VCU in 1974, the same year the class of '77 hit campus. Alumna B. Ellen Byrne (B.S. '77 pharmacy, D.D.S. '83, Ph.D. '91 medicine), recalls, “We were in a B.S. program, and Tom Reinders had a Pharm.D. degree. That was a new concept to us.

“He was an outstanding teacher, interested in the students, and got to know each of us. He was fun and funny. It never surprised me that he became a leader in the school!”

Joining the faculty as an instructor, Reinders also served as director of pharmacy for MCV Hospitals from 1984 to 1996 while concurrently serving many of those years as the School of Pharmacy's assistant dean for clinical affiliations.

He was named associate dean of admissions and student services in 1996 and held the position till last August. In sharing the news of Reinders' retirement with the school, Dean Joseph T. DiPiro wrote, “He has done so much for our students, and he has been responsible for recruiting excellent students to come here.”

During Reinders' tenure, the students he mentored numbered more than 5,000, in addition to 100 pharmacy residents. He also has helped students nationwide better pursue their career goals with his book, “The Pharmacy Professional's Guide to Resumes, CVs and Interviewing.” (Part of his retirement, thus far, has been spent preparing the fourth edition for printing.)

His awards over the years have included the Bowl of Hygieia Community Service Award, the VCU Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching and University of Cincinnati College of Pharmacy Distinguished Alumnus Award. Both VPhA and VSHP named him Pharmacist of the Year.



Tom Reinders (holding big check, left) was surrounded by class of '77 celebrants and scholarship donors, including fellow check-holders Tom Buckle (center) and Ellen Byrne.

A fellow of the APhA Academy of Pharmacy Practice, one of Reinders' greatest joys outside the university was his 25-year affiliation with the U.S. Pharmacopeia, where for several years he chaired the Expert Committee on Nomenclature, Safety and Labeling.

An inveterate storyteller, Reinders has garnered more than enough tales while at the school to last him the next four decades. One of his “talking buddies,” alumnus Al Schalow (B.S. '61), said, “We can talk for an hour on the phone. He is so well-versed in so many things.

“It was always important to Tom to not only to see his students through school but to continue to interact with them when they were in their careers. ... When you know a person for years and develop a rapport, you kind of know what's in their heart, what motivates them. He was in the right job. It couldn't have been a better fit.”

To make a contribution to the Thomas P. Reinders Scholarship, visit support.vcu.edu/give/pharmacy.

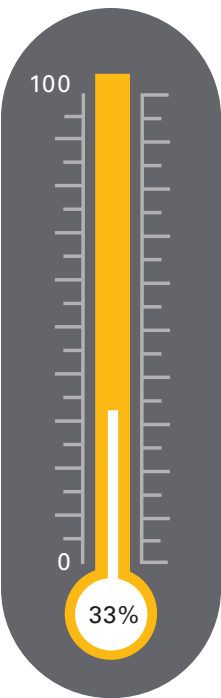
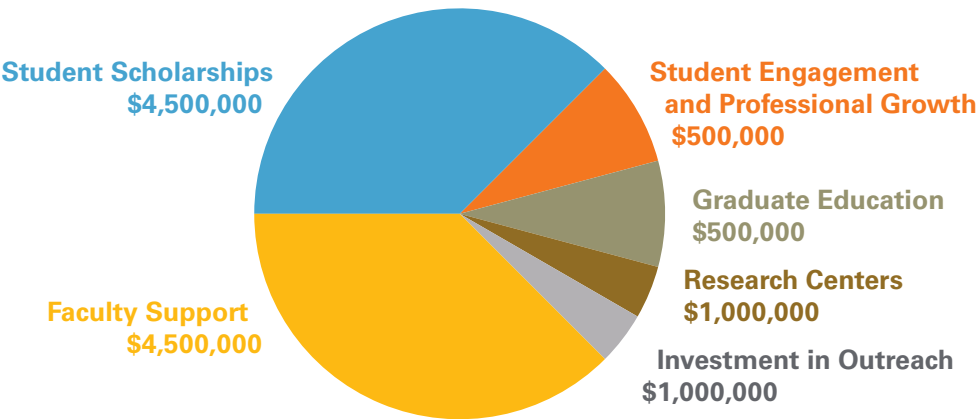
MAKE IT REAL CAMPAIGN

Where we are and what we can achieve, with your help

Thank you to all of our donors who have contributed over \$4 million in support of pharmacy education and research at VCU through the Make it Real Campaign.

Our Goals

The VCU School of Pharmacy seeks to raise \$12 million by 2020 in support of our students, faculty and community engagement initiatives.



Dollars Raised (to Date)

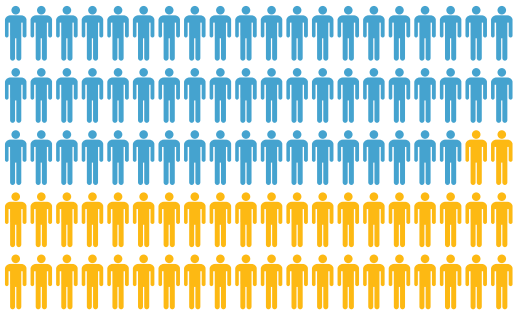
- Philanthropic Grants: \$930,476
- Estate Gifts: \$605,000
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33% of our \$12 million goal

Donors

1,677 donors have contributed to the School of Pharmacy Make it Real Campaign

58% (978) of these donors are School of Pharmacy alumni



To make a gift, please contact Ellen Carfagno at (804) 828-3016 or emcarfagno@vcu.edu.



Jackie and Tom Rorrer (sitting, from left) met the student recipients of scholarships: Katherine Taylor (standing, from left), Richard T. Jacobs Memorial Scholarship; and Omar Hassan, William Russell Garnett Scholarship; along with Kalyann Kauv (next to Rorrer), William W. and Patsy S. Gray Scholarship, at the 2017 MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Dinner. They were joined by Alvin Bryant (standing, right), VCU assistant director of undergraduate advising, and his wife Christine Dorsey Bryant (sitting, right).

Ways that you can support the school

The VCU School of Pharmacy needs and welcomes gifts of all types and sizes. The school's development office is ready and willing to work with you and your financial advisor to maximize the impact of your contribution: your investment in the future of pharmacy. We are committed to wise stewardship and honoring your wishes for the use of donated funds. Our giving advisors stand ready to work with you to design your giving strategy to maximize your impact

Securities

Give appreciated securities and gain tax benefits

Giving appreciated securities is an easy way to support the VCU School of Pharmacy and derive considerable tax benefits, including:

- A charitable tax deduction equal to the fair market value of the securities at the time of your gift
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Planned Gifts

Establish a lasting legacy

Plan for your future while helping the School of Pharmacy plan for its own. Planned giving donors create living legacies, forge enduring partnerships and help shape our future. Whether you memorialize a loved one, support talented students or underwrite pioneering faculty research, you choose how we will benefit from your generosity.

Major Gifts

Make a major difference

The impact of major gifts is apparent everywhere across the MCV Campus: in new buildings and comprehensive programs, in the strength and vitality of our research endeavors, in our learning environments, and in the quality of our students, faculty and patient care.

Major gifts can offer you naming opportunities, which are available throughout the School of Pharmacy for everything from physical facilities to new technology, research funding to program development, endowed scholarships, professorships and chairs.

A named gift is the most enduring way to honor the memory of a loved one or to permanently link your name with the pharmacy school or program.

Annual Fund

While endowment funds help ensure long-term financial stability, the annual fund is the school's only renewable source of unrestricted dollars—dollars that are dedicated to scholarship support. The annual fund contributes to excellence in pharmacy education at VCU School of Pharmacy by making scholarship dollars available to current students.

The Galen Society

The Galen Society is composed of alumni and friends who support the School of Pharmacy at the leadership level of \$1,000 and more. Galen Society members are invited to an annual reception and dinner in their honor. Membership is based on annual outright contributions to the School of Pharmacy, regardless of designation, between July 1 and June 30.

Galen Society Levels of Giving

Legacy	\$25,000 and above
Cornerstone	\$10,000 to \$24,999
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Matching Gifts

If you and/ or your spouse are employed by a company that matches charitable gifts to institutions of higher learning, you may want to obtain a matching gift form from your human resources office to maximize your contribution to the School of Pharmacy. The Galen Society recognizes company matches.

To find out more about ways to make a gift to the School of Pharmacy — or if you have questions — please contact our development office at (804) 828-3016. Or you may make a gift online by visiting support.vcu.edu/give/sopdonorreport.

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(Degrees with years attached indicate VCU or MCV School of Pharmacy alumni.)



Pharm.D. students Giovanni Zanota (second from left) and Brooke Brown, two of the recipients of the Russell Fiske Sr. Scholarship, met Fiske's son and daughter, Eric Fiske and Linda Fiske Wehrle, during the 2017 MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Dinner. The dinner, sponsored by the MCV Foundation, unites students with the donors who make their scholarships possible.

Thank You.

A total of \$684,000 was distributed in student scholarships in 2016–17, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

In addition to scholarships, alumni giving supports student activities and faculty teaching and research. It also provides a key resource for excellence in programming. As a result, the school remains a leader in pharmacy education nationally and worldwide. With your renewed support, we continually strive to be the best.

Become a champion for pharmacy education by making a gift to your alma mater. **Visit support.vcu.edu/give/pharmacy to make your secure gift.**

Again, thank you for all you do to support our students, faculty and programs.

Gifts to the School of Pharmacy are tax-deductible.