School of Pharmacy Hosts Inaugural Research Day

February 2010 was marked by the first School of Pharmacy Research Day. The effort was spearheaded by a group of graduate and pharmacy students.

“As a basic science graduate student, I wanted to learn more about the research being conducted in other departments in the school,” said Michael Seminerio, one of the coordinators of the event. “I had attended research retreats sponsored by other programs, and thought why don’t we have one in pharmacy?”

Seminero, together with fellow pharmaceutical and pharmacological sciences graduate students Matthew Robson, Neel Shah, Elvonna Atkins and pharmacy student, Mark Medina, coordinated the Research Day. The group was supervised by Rae Matsumoto, Ph.D., associate dean for research and graduate programs.

The primary purpose of the event was to provide a forum for presenting on-going research projects to fertilize the exchange of information across disciplines.

The program highlighted 11 oral presentations and 42 posters by faculty and students in the School of Pharmacy and affiliated programs across the Health Sciences Center and the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health.

In addition, a careers panel featured Steven Turner, founder and chief executive officer of a biotech company, Michael Davenport, Ph.D., senior director of clinical pharmacology of a contractual research organization conducting clinical trials, and Andrew Coop, Ph.D., chair of the pharmaceutical sciences department at the University of Maryland. The speakers shared their perspectives on developing careers in these diverse settings, and conducted a lively question-and-answer session with the audience.

“This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the research being conducted in the School of Pharmacy and to provide more opportunities for students and faculty to share their passion for science with each other and our colleagues on campus,” said Matsumoto. “The students did a great job and we look forward to making this an annual event.”

The Research Day was sponsored by the School of Pharmacy and the Health Sciences Center Office of Research and Graduate Education.
Graduate Students Go Global: Summer Research Tour in China

Last August, two graduate students from the laboratory of Bingyun Li, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Orthopedics and graduate faculty in the pharmaceutical and pharmacological sciences program at WVU, toured four cities in China. Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, the tour was part of a drive to strengthen and facilitate an ongoing international collaboration in research and education in advanced biomedical devices that was initiated in 2006.

The group from WVU included Bingyun Li, Ph.D., Franklin Shuler, M.D., Ph.D., Nina Clovis, Therwa Hamza, Ph.D., student, and Heather Ogle, M.S. student. In Shanghai, the group visited the Donghua University Nanomaterials Research Center. In Suzhou, the tour group visited Soochow University and the Department of Orthopedics at Soochow Hospital. In Beijing, the group met with the President of Beijing Sports Medicine Hospital.

Based on the complementary expertise between Li’s group which specializes in nanomedicine and the expertise of his Chinese collaborators in manufacturing, a unique project was established to develop advanced biodegradable metal devices for biomedical applications.

Graduate student Therwa Hamza noted that “our group advertised our research work and education at WVU to the Chinese community.” She also added that “the tour provided the U.S. students and scientists unique training and educational opportunities for professional growth and networking through international collaboration.”

In total, the WVU team gave nine presentations during the trip. More details on further collaborations were discussed during their meetings and stronger working relationships were forged.

Tour participants (l to r) Jinyou Lin, Jianyong Yu, Therwa Hamza, and Xiaufeng Wang

Bergy Lecturer Highlights the Importance of Healthcare Research

Management and Economics at the University of Minnesota, served as the 64th annual Bergy Lecturer.

Schondelmeyer is the director of the PRIME Institute and head of the Department of Pharmaceutical Care and Health Systems at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Schondelmeyer’s talk underscored the importance of evidence-based research in policy decisions related to national healthcare reform. “The Rho Chi Society was very excited to have Dr. Schondelmeyer as our 2010 Bergy Lecturer,” noted faculty host Lena Maynor, Pharm.D., assistant professor of clinical pharmacy.

“Dr. Schondelmeyer’s pharmacoeconomic research has been very influential in the progression of medication therapy management,” continued Maynor. “His comments regarding pharmacy’s role in healthcare reform were insightful and relevant to everyone in attendance.”

The Gordon A. Bergy Lecture was initiated in 1964 to bring eminent educators, scientists, and professionals in pharmacy to West Virginia. It is sponsored by Gordon Bergy, Ph.D., professor emeritus at the WVU School of Pharmacy.
School of Pharmacy Welcomes New Faculty Members

Kimberly Kelly, Ph.D.
The WVU School of Pharmacy welcomes two new faculty members to its ranks: Kimberly Kelly, Ph.D., and Usha Sambamoorthi, Ph.D.

Dr. Kelly joins the Department of Pharmaceutical Systems and Policy in the School of Pharmacy and the Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center.

She received her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in social and health psychology from Rutgers University, and her M.S. in genetic counseling at Indiana University.

Dr. Kelly completed a postdoctoral fellowship in cancer control and behavioral science at the University of Kentucky.

She then served as a member of the Department of Molecular Virology, Immunology, and Medical Genetics, and was affiliated with the Department of Psychology, Health Behavior and Health Promotion at The Ohio State University.

Through her research, Dr. Kelly hopes to understand how best to enhance appropriate decision-making about health behaviors in elevated risk populations to accomplish optimal health outcomes.

Usha Sambamoorthi, Ph.D.

Dr. Usha Sambamoorthi joins the Department of Pharmaceutical Systems and Policy in the School of Pharmacy as a professor.

Dr. Sambamoorthi received her Ph.D. from the University of Madras, India, and is an economist specializing in epidemiological and health services research.

Dr. Sambamoorthi’s research focuses on different dimensions of health care issues in chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, mental illnesses, and substance abuse disorders in general U.S., Medicaid, Medicare, and veteran populations.

Dr. Sambamoorthi’s research also examines disparities in healthcare by gender, racial/ethnicity, age, and disability. She is internationally known for her work on disability.

Congratulations Winter Ph.D. Graduates

Two students recently earned their Doctor of Philosophy degrees through the Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences: Kimberly Houser-Kelly and Cody Peer.

Kimberly Houser-Kelly is from Ashland, Ohio. She completed her dissertation, “The role of NADPH oxidase in blood-brain barrier dysfunction following stroke in aged rats,” under the mentorship of Dr. Jason Huber. Dr. Kelly is currently a postdoctoral fellow conducting neurotoxicology research at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Cody Peer is from North Huntington, Pennsylvania. He completed his dissertation, “Properties of a dehydroalanine analog of glutathione: a reactive electrophilic busulfan metabolite,” under the mentorship of Dr. Patrick Callery. While at WVU, Dr. Peer was the recipient of numerous awards including an Outstanding Research Award in the Basic Pharmaceutical Sciences and a Stitzel Award from the School of Pharmacy.

Dr. Peer is currently a postdoctoral research fellow in clinical pharmacology at the National Cancer Institute, which is part of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

We congratulate our newest Ph.D.s and look forward to them making significant contributions to society through their research.

The Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences welcomes five students to the program: Jason Healy, Jonathan Klabnik, Matthew Robson, Michael Shimko, and Ami Vyas.
Notes from Dr. Matsumoto

With more than half of the external funds to WVU now coming from the NIH, we have had to adapt rapidly.

The new 9-point scoring system was introduced last year to expand the range of scores of potentially fundable grants.

New grants are also now allowed only one revision. Other major changes are summarized below.

The research section has new, shorter page limitations, which are about half of what was allowed in the past. The R01 has been reduced to 12 pages, and the R03/R21 to 6 pages. The research strategy now consists of significance, innovation, and approach sections to better align with review criteria.

Modifications to the biosketch information have also been implemented, including a personal statement and limits on the number of publications highlighted. This is now expected to be customized to each proposal, so templates require constant revisions.

The resources and facilities sections also now request a description on how the scientific environment will contribute to the success of the specific project proposed.

Never has it been more important to read and follow the instructions, then double-check everything!

With all of the new guidelines, start early, re-check often, and ask questions when in doubt.

Program Continues to Help Community Learn “More About…” Their Health

The WVU School of Pharmacy welcomed community members to its “More About…” program.

The March program featured heart health, with a focus on hypertension.

“This program is very important,” noted Diana Vinh, Pharm.D., director of the WVU School of Pharmacy Health Education Center. “Hypertension is often called the ‘silent killer’ because there usually aren’t any symptoms of high blood pressure unless it is extremely elevated.”

Featured speakers included Lena Maynor, Pharm.D., assistant professor in clinical pharmacy, who talked about medications for treating high blood pressure.

Vinh also discussed the value of nutrition and exercise in maintaining a healthy blood pressure, including reading labels on canned foods to ensure healthy choices.

Michael Morissette, R.Ph., Ph.D., assistant professor in exercise physiology, described on-going research to identify new treatment strategies for developing novel medications for cardiac hypertrophy.

Pharmacy students also performed blood pressure screens for audience members.

To view earlier issues of the Research Quarterly, please visit our website at: http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/sop/research/index.html

The Research Quarterly is a publication of the WVU School of Pharmacy Office of Research and Graduate Programs. For more information, please contact 304-293-1450.

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