Message from the Dean

Dear Friends,

Let me begin by wishing you a very Happy New Year. St. John’s emphasis on Vincentian, metropolitan, and global issues makes us unique among universities, as well as health sciences programs. Students enroll in our programs because we emphasize the issues of urban healthcare, cultural competence, and underserved populations.

This marks the first edition of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences’ newsletter, which is intended to provide brief updates on the achievements of our students and faculty, while highlighting upcoming events we hope you’ll attend. This past year, our faculty, staff, and students demonstrated their commitment to St. John’s Vincentian mission through their involvement in University Service Day and other volunteer opportunities. They were also recognized for their outstanding achievements in teaching, service, and research.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our outstanding faculty for their professionalism and commitment to excellence and to offer my deepest thanks for the generosity of our students and alumni. The College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences is dedicated to finding new ways of engaging with our community. I encourage you to stay connected via social media and to update us on your accomplishments since graduating.

Sincerely,
Russell J. DiGate, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor
TOP STORIES

Doctor of Pharmacy Students Compete Locally and Nationally

Student organizations, under the direction of their advisors, host several annual local competitions on campus.

Langone Medical Center Invites Students to MRI Post-Graduate Internship

Ten members of St. John’s Class of 2015 will start a third round of interviews in March for selective, post-graduate internships in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) at NYU Langone Medical Center that qualify participants for a certification exam in the field and possible employment at the institution.

The competition is part of a continuing collaboration between NYU Langone and the B.S. in Radiologic Sciences in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at St. John’s. The candidates represent the second cohort of SJU’s radiology students to vie for the internships. They and the first cohort, 10 members of the Class of 2014, received exclusive invitations—along with students from LIU Post (Long Island University) and Stony Brook University—to interview for the positions.

Students in the first SJU cohort received their invitations in Fall 2013. They also participated in three rounds of interviews after attending a series of lectures on sectional anatomy conducted by University faculty. Ultimately, 16 members of that cohort competed for the 10 positions with students from other institutions. Six were accepted—a larger number than from the other universities.

These competitions identify our “best and brightest” in hopes that they will move on to represent the College in national competitions. Here’s a highlight of some of the competitions that took place this semester:

The Student Society of Health-System Pharmacy hosted its annual Clinical Skills Competition in October 2014. Eight teams competed, with judging by SJU faculty members Manouchkathe Cassagnol, Pharm.D., associate professor; Chung-Shien Lee ‘11Pharm.D., assistant clinical professor of clinical pharmacy practice; Maria Leibfried, Pharm.D., assistant clinical professor of clinical pharmacy practice; Nicole Maisch, Pharm.D., associate clinical professor of clinical pharmacy practice; and Maha Saad, Pharm.D., associate clinical professor of clinical pharmacy practice. Nataliya Sulyk ’15Pharm.D. and Diana Gristensko ’15Pharm.D., won first place. They will be sponsored by the College to compete nationally at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacy Mid-Year Clinical Meeting in Anaheim, CA.

The College also hosted a Medication Therapy Management (MTM) Business Plan Development Competition through a grant from Target Pharmacy. Teams were charged with developing solutions to current business problems in the area of MTM and “pitched” their idea to pharmacists from Target. Fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-year pharmacy students competed on seven teams. The first-place team winners were Richard Cho, Ji-Yeon Lee ‘15Pharm.D., Kevin Lin ‘15Pharm.D., and Hayeon Na ‘15Pharm.D., who were mentored by Christine Chim ‘11Pharm.D. The three top teams won cash prizes.

Throughout November, the American Pharmacists Association Academy of Student Pharmacists conducted its annual Local Patient Counseling Competition under the direction of William Maidhof ’03Pharm.D. and a faculty advisor, Danielle Ezzo ’03Pharm.D., clinical associate professor of clinical pharmacy practice. The winner of that Local Patient Counseling Competition will represent the College at the national competition held in March in San Diego, CA. He will receive a $1,000 travel stipend for participating in national competitions on behalf of the College.
Highlights from the AAPS Annual meeting

• St. John’s students made 10 poster presentations at the conference that were very well-received by the attendees.

• Abu Serajuddin, Ph.D., professor of pharmaceutical sciences, made two invited podium presentations. Serajuddin was the recipient of the 2014 Research Achievement Award in Manufacturing Science and Engineering at this year’s AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition, in San Diego. The association recognized his contributions to the field since joining St. John’s in 2008 and for his 30 years of work in the pharmaceutical field.

• Serajuddin also won the Catalent Research and Development Recognition Award.

• Simerdeep Singh GuptA ‘10GP, ’14Ph.d., was given the AAPS FDD Section Travelship Award and the Catalent Research and Development Recognition Award.

• YoChAnA SrivasTi ‘14gP received a 2014 AAPS Travelship Award.

• SuHAS gUmAStE, ’17PhArm.d., ’12MS won the Charles I. Jarowski Legacy Scholarship Award 2014.

• Pulkit Khatri ‘11GP, ’15Ph.d., received AAPS 2014 Student Chapter of the Year Award (First Place) at the AAPS Student Chapter Chairs Meeting.

From Brazil to Washington, D.C.: The Brazilian Scientific Mobility Project

The Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) is an initiative of the Brazilian government to grant scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students from Brazil to study at colleges and universities in the United States. Scholarships are awarded to students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. After completing an academic year at a host institution, the students return to Brazil to complete their degrees. As part of the University’s global initiative, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences has enrolled over 60 Brazilian students during the academic year.

Lais Meirelles Horta de Oliveira reflected on her SJU experience: In January 2014, I arrived in New York City to study pharmacy for one year at St. John’s University. It’s very challenging to leave your country, your family, and your friends and face the unknown, but this University makes me feel like I’m at home. The University is amazing and everyone is receptive, attentive, and willing to help you with any issues you may have. Among all the amazing experiences that I’ve had here, in October of this year I was selected to attend the 34th Alumni Insider’s View at Washington, D.C., with the College of Pharmacy. We visited the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the American Pharmacist Association (APhA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), guided by professionals who told us about the careers, roles, missions, and perspectives of each institution. During this program, we also had the opportunity to attend a student and alumni networking reception, followed by a Pharmacy Connect Dinner where we were joined by the president of St. John’s University, Conrado “Bobby” Gempesaw, Ph.D.

College Hosts Alumni and Friends Reception at AAPS Annual Meeting

The 2014 Annual Meeting and Exposition of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS) was held on November 2–6 at the San Diego Convention Center. About 7,500 scientists from around the world attended various seminars, workshops, roundtable discussions, and exhibits.
Students and faculty from the Physician Assistant program gathered in Rockefeller Plaza for the Today show in early October to celebrate National Physician Assistant Week. The week commemorates the physician assistant profession and the PA’s value to the health care field. Later in the month, students also reached the quarterfinals in the New York State Society of Physician Assistants (NYSSPA) Annual Fall Conference Medical Jeopardy! competition. Professors Danielle Kruger, Stacey Singer-Leshinsky, and Pamela Fernandez ’09GP presented CME lectures. Fernandez chaired the poster presentation session and, as part of the NYSSPA Education Committee, served on an intercollegiate faculty panel.

Student College of Clinical Pharmacy

The Student College of Clinical Pharmacy (SCCP) had a great semester with many opportunities to hear from great speakers; take part in a number of service events; meet alumni, students, and other members of the community; and take part in several activity fairs. SCCP held its first general body/clinical workshop in early September. Approximately 60 students attended the event. In early November, the second workshop was held and Dr. Jason Li, an alumnus of St. John’s University and one of the founders of SCCP, gave a presentation. Li discussed his experiences so far as a PGY-1 resident at North Shore. He answered questions on his day-to-day life at his residency, spoke about the match process, and explained why he decided to pursue a path in residency.

Master of Public Health Program Hosts Community Toy Drive

As the holidays approached, the Master of Public Health program in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences organized a toy drive for the children of the Briarwood Residence in Jamaica, NY, a nonprofit transitional residence that provides homeless families with health services, family counseling, substance abuse treatment, and vocational training. The facility currently houses 91 families and 176 children between the ages of 9–17. The children of this shelter are rarely accustomed to receiving gifts, so the St. John’s community was asked to make the holidays special for these wonderful children by donating toys.

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists

On September 28, the students from the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists participated in the Walk to End Alzheimer’s at Flushing Meadows Park, in Queens, NY. Christina Loccisano, a sixth year student in the Pharm.D. program, was featured in the opening ceremony for the walk, which was sponsored by the Alzheimer’s Association.

Physician Assistants visit the Today show and make it to the Quarterfinals at NYSSPA
ToxiCarnival is a toxicology outreach activity that uses a carnival theme to teach basic toxicology concepts to St. John’s University students. The event was hosted on October 31 as a joint venture between Tau Omega Chi (ΤΩΧ), the College of Pharmacy’s toxicology club, and the Mid-Atlantic Society of Toxicology’s (MASOT) Education and Outreach Committee. Tau Omega Chi members played an integral part in running the ToxiCarnival. They sold baked goods, provided prizes for the carnival games, and administered toxicology questions to participants in exchange for more chances to win prizes. Diane Hardej ’03Ph.D., associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences and chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the MASOT, created the ToxiCarnival event. It was a big hit with everyone who stopped by to enjoy the games and demonstrate their knowledge of toxicology.

Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists

The Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists hosted a presentation by Jonathan Sin, ’14Pharm.D., PGY-1 resident at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, and Christina Ng, ’14Pharm.D, PGY-1 resident at Montefiore Medical Center. They reviewed the electronic PhORCAS application process as well as requirements for students currently applying for residencies. In addition, both alumni provided guidance on how best to prepare for midyear and upcoming interviews.

Student Awards

- Ashwini Gore ’11Ph.D. won Travel Award from the Society for Free Radical Biology and Medicine
- Lokesha Sharma ’16Ph.D. won the Membership Award from the Mid-Atlantic Society of Toxicology (MASCOT)
- Michelle Zur ’14P, ’15GP won the Senior Student Research Award

More than 150 students and faculty from 20 colleges of pharmacy around the country gathered at the D’Angelo Center on St. John’s Queens campus for the 33rd Annual Conference of Graduate Research Association of Students in Pharmacy (GRASP) in June 2014. Several representatives of the pharmaceutical industry were also present. The conference theme was “The Future of Pharmaceutical Science: Industrial Shift from the West,” referring to the trend of pharmaceutical companies to move operations to Asian countries and its potential effect on the industry. The three-day event, hosted by graduate students at the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, served as a forum for pharmaceutical science graduate students to share their research and interact with peers and industry leaders. The major events of the conference included symposiums, workshops, poster and podium presentations, panel discussions, and an industrial pharmacy innovation lab tour.
Representatives from the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences participated in the 13th Annual University Service Day honoring the compassion and zeal of St. Vincent de Paul. More than 100 students, faculty, administrators, and staff provided service at nine service locations. Volunteers participated in music and recreational activities for children at St. Mary’s Hospital for Children; provided health-related educational outreach (“brown bag events”) at the Malverne Volunteer Ambulance Corps; collected unused and expired prescribed medications at NorthShore LIJ; provided companionship to the elderly at nursing homes; participated in fund-raising walks/runs for various health-related conditions (Queens Walk to End Alzheimer’s and the Brain Aneurysm Awareness Walk), among others. Conrado “Bobby” Gempesaw, Ph.D., president, and his wife Clavel, as well as Rev. Bernard M. Tracey, C.M., executive vice president for mission, also performed service with the College’s volunteers.

New York Cares Day

Thirty-five volunteers from the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences dedicated their time and talents to improving a local public school during the 20th Annual New York Cares Day on Saturday, October 18. The group, which included undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and administrators from the College, were assigned tasks that included painting murals, rehabilitating both indoor and outdoor play areas, organizing closets, and revitalizing the garden at PS 20 John Bowne Elementary School in Queens, NY. Sawanee Khongsawawatwaja, associate dean of administration and fiscal affairs, spearheaded the College’s involvement with New York Cares.
Faculty Highlights

- John Buscini, a pharmacist for CVS Health and a preceptor at the College, was one of the nine CVS/Pharmacy Preceptors recognized for outstanding commitment to the development of pharmacy intern.
- John Conry '98Pharm.D., assistant dean and clinical professor of clinical pharmacy practice, has been nominated as a Distinguished Fellow in the Academies of Practice.
- On December 2, 2014, the Urban Institute Outreach Initiative held its first flu clinic at the New Life Community Health Center in Elmhurst, NY.
- Preety Gadhoke, Ph.D., assistant professor of public health, published a paper in *Childhood* and a paper in *Ecology of Food Nutrition*, presented two papers at the American Public Health Association and American Anthropological Association. This year, she also received an Academic Service-Learning MiniGrant for homeless shelter projects.
- Tanaji Talele, Ph.D., professor of pharmaceutical sciences, published 17 manuscripts this year. His work was selected for the cover art of the August 14 issue of *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry*.
- Zhe-Sheng Chen, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pharmaceutical sciences, published 27 manuscripts and three book chapters and was an invited speaker at numerous international meetings this year.
- Sandra Reznik, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, published four papers this year, one of which was recognized by MDLinx.com. She also organized an international conference.
- Ashley T. Martino, Ph.D., assistant professor, published two papers this year and was named a fellow of STEM by the National Academies.
- Mary Jo Perry, assistant professor, published her second article on “Influenza Vaccination for Health Care Personnel” in the November/December 2014 issue of the *Journal of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists*.
- Zaidalynet Morales, instructor and clinical coordinator, spoke at the June 2014 ASRT Annual Meeting, held in Albuquerque, NM. As part of the education symposium, she presented a course on “Case-based Active Learning Strategies To Promote Effective Communication and Patient Assessment.”
- Olga Hilas, Pharm.D., associate professor of clinical pharmacy practice, will be featured on the American College of Clinical Pharmacy website in recognition of her contributions to the College and the profession of pharmacy.

ALUMNI NEWS

Clinical Laboratory Sciences Alumnus Named Preceptor of the Year

At this year’s certificate conferral ceremony, the Clinical Laboratory Sciences Program honored Angela Tomei Robinson as its Preceptor of the Year. Robinson is a double graduate of St. John's University, having received both a B.S. and an M.S. in Medical Technology. Since graduating with her bachelor's degree, she has worked at Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, NY. She began her career as a clinical laboratory scientist in the hematology laboratory at Winthrop University Hospital. Over the years, she has demonstrated her many skills and advanced within the organization. Today, Robinson is the associate director of the department of pathology and laboratory medicine. She is responsible for the laboratory information systems and the educational coordinator. She helped achieve licensure for clinical laboratory personnel in New York and worked tirelessly with the Professional Standards Coalitions for Clinical Laboratory Personnel over the 14 years it took to achieve this license through the NYS Department of Education. Today, she serves on the Clinical Laboratory Practice Board that advises the legislature on these issues.