MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Though we are gearing up to welcome students back on to campus later this month, I'm still enjoying summer days in Spokane. Going to Grapevine, Texas for the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) during a heatwave certainly made me thankful to live in the Pacific Northwest. The Lone Star State provides a whole different level and kind of heat experience. The AACP meeting was a terrific opportunity to reconnect with peers across the nation and discuss our common successes and challenges in academic pharmacy. The college was well represented at this meeting on topics ranging from diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism efforts, to leadership and pharmacogenomics. Thank you, Jennifer Robinson, Russ Crutchley, Julie Akers, and Megan Wilson for representing WSU so well and being thought leaders in your fields.

One of the highlights of my summer was being able to attend the Health Physics Society annual meeting, which was held in the Spokane Convention Center in July. This was an
international meeting of health physicists right here in the Lilac City. Our team of faculty members, Sergei Tolmachev, Maia Avtandilashvili, and George Tabatadze, and postdoctoral fellow Martin Sefl gave outstanding presentations on their work involving the disposition of uranium and plutonium in the body of individuals after occupational exposure. Maia also gave a nice talk on disposition of beryllium in the occupationally exposed. Although beryllium is not radioactive it is widely used in the nuclear power industry and in weapons production. Beryllium is carcinogenic in rodent models, particularly in lung after inhalation exposure. Sergei, Maia, George, and Martin are all based at the United States Transuranium and Uranium Registries (USTUR) in Richland. Many people are surprised to hear the WSU College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (CPPS) is also home to USTUR, but our faculty members and research personnel there are rock stars in the health physics world. They do fantastic work, are well funded by the Department of Energy, publish cutting-edge work, and are just superb colleagues. Also at the meeting was Sara Dumit, one of the alums from the CPPS graduate program who did her PhD work at USTUR, who now works at Los Alamos National Laboratories. Sara is also a rock star and has won just about every award a young scientist in health physics can win. Congratulations to Sara and thank you to everyone at USTUR for representing the college in this highly specialized and important field.

Our Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) and Summer Research Fellowship (SRF) students are highly engaged in summer research projects with various faculty in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. I am always amazed at how much work these young scientists can accomplish in 10 weeks, working alongside, and with the strong mentorship of, CPPS researchers. This summer program will conclude on Friday, August 12 with Research Day, during which all SURF/SRF students will present their work publicly. The program is run by Kay Meier, with lots of help from CPPS staff, and is generously funded by Jim ('57) and Diann Robbers ('57 Ed.) and a grant from the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics to Dr. Meier. Thanks to all involved—you are having a strong and durable impact on the next generation of scientists and faculty members. I speak from experience: the time I spent in Tom Murray’s lab (then a WSU neuropharmacologist) during pharmacy school completely changed the trajectory of my career.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and I look forward to updating you on our back-to-school activities in the September newsletter.

Sincerely,

Mark Leid, Professor and Dean
WSU College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Third-year pharmacy student Ghazal Meratnia does not particularly enjoy the spotlight. She likes to keep things low key, but in many ways she’s an everyday hero for hundreds of Afghan refugees living in Washington state. Aside from being a full-time pharmacy student at WSU, Ghazal has served as a certified medical interpreter for Washington state for the last 10 years. Most of her clients are Afghan refugees who recently arrived to the Spokane area and are receiving medical checkups.

“It’s been an amazing journey,” said Ghazal whose family immigrated more than 10 years ago to the United States from Iran, a country which shares a border with Afghanistan, but is still culturally different. Ghazal is fluent in Farsi, which is similar to a dialect spoken in Afghanistan known as Dari. “Because I’m not from Afghanistan, and a bit of an outsider, I feel like the refugees I work with are more willing to open up to me,” said Ghazal, who now calls Spokane home.

Her journey as an interpreter has taken her to all areas in the medical community including hospital birthing rooms where she has witnessed three lives come into the world. She says the nature of her work is to bridge the communication gaps between providers and patients and become an advocate for the families she serves, “You get to see physicians‘ frustrations and you get to see different ways to approach patients and patient care,” explained Ghazal who says the experience has changed her perspective as a health care provider.

Working as an interpreter has allowed her to connect with health care providers across Spokane and the Inland Northwest. Through constant interactions and interpretation sessions with physicians, Ghazal has also gained confidence when speaking to physicians on rotations, a common fear pharmacy students face during the experiential learning phase of their education.

“As a female interpreter, [Ghazal] is invaluable with our women health visits,” said Georgina De la Garza, one of the physicians Ghazal has collaborated with at Unify Community Health to help with medical checkups for refugees. “What sets Ghazal apart from traditional interpreters is her health care background
as a pharmacy student. This means she can better explain medications and conditions to our patients and always asks intelligent questions about obstacles they might encounter with their treatment."

“Ghazal is the flagship of what the next generation of these Afghan refugees can be,” said Bob Redmond (’65), a retired pharmacist who was put in charge of managing the medical affairs of one family who fled Kabul in August 2021 when the Taliban took over the capital of Afghanistan.

Ghazal and Bob met while she helped an Afghan refugee family of nine (a husband and wife with their four daughters and three sons) translate during many medical visits at Unify and CHAS clinics. The two have been working together since March to help this family get acclimated to their new home in the Pacific Northwest. According to Bob, Ghazal has been a role model for the family. “What’s inspiring about this whole story is how she relates to those kids. They look at her and they can see their future possibilities.”

Since she was a child, Ghazal always dreamed of becoming a health care provider. When she received her letter of admission from the college, she cried. She graduated with her master’s degree in public health from Eastern Washington University and her entry into pharmacy school brought her one step closer to her passion for working in health care.

“WSU gave me a confidence of being good enough as a pharmacy student by giving me a same day admission and a scholarship...My message to all refugee, or immigrant students, or pretty much anyone, is to never give up. No matter how many closed doors you face, just keep believing in yourself while working hard and staying honest and magic will happen. I wholeheartedly believe in that, and that’s what I learned from my parents originally but then experienced it in life for myself, too,” she said.

Ghazal will be starting her third year in pharmacy school this fall. She hopes to continue to hone her medical advisory and communication skills to better serve future patients. When she is not studying to become a pharmacist, completing a rotation, or working with refugee families, Ghazal interns at Walgreens.

“No matter what position I end up in, an independent pharmacy in a small town, a clinical pharmacist at a huge hospital, or just a human being on a daily basis, I want to continue to be the change I wish to see in the world, by spreading kindness, love, trust, honesty and improving health equity. I want to be a motivator for my patients, even when they do not have a support system or a reason to continue to improve their health.”
Although he originally wanted to be a veterinarian, it's clear that WSU alumnus John Oftebro, class of 1965, found his life's calling as a pharmacist. He began his career as a staff pharmacist for a chain in Seattle, two stints for independent pharmacies, then a short time as a hospital pharmacist, but eventually continued working in independent pharmacy where he discovered his true niche. Eventually, John purchased Kelley-Ross Pharmacy and expanded it to six locations all over the Seattle area and became one of the pioneers of clinical pharmacy and innovation. He credits his success to building relationships, taking risks, and not just filling prescriptions.

On October 7, 2022, John's 50-year career as a pharmacist and leader in the pharmacy profession will culminate in his recognition as the R. Keith Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award recipient for the WSU College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. It’s an honor that John says he could not be more grateful to receive. But before all the success, came some tough decisions and lots of hard work. Ultimately, these pieces helped make his opportunities for success.

When John graduated from high school in 1960 and was considering the veterinary medicine program at WSU, he was influenced by a close family friend, and a pharmacy student at the University of Washington which turned his attention to pharmacy, and of

By Kelly Sylvester

PROMINENT ALUMNUS TO RECEIVE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

AUGUST 9, 2022 CONNIE.YOUNG

John Oftebro in 1967 pictured outside Kusler's Pharmacy, one of the first independent pharmacies where he was employed following
John recalls, “I’d never spent much time in any pharmacy because my folks were healthy people, but I knew that Sandy, who introduced my parents, was a pharmacist who owned his own pharmacy and loved his career. I liked that. And I liked science and to study and learn new things, so pharmacy was starting to look like a good choice.”

John enrolled in Skagit Valley College for his pre-pharmacy first year and traveled to Pullman in the spring to check out the College of Pharmacy (as the college was known at the time before its name was changed to the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences in 2019). His tour guide was Dean Allen I. White and John was sold on the college and granted admission on the spot by the dean! John credits his favorite professors, Mel Gibson, Charles Martin, and Theodore Sokolowski with the guidance and encouragement he needed to advance through the gauntlet of chemistry and other sciences, and then onto and successful completion of his degree. John said the bonus was making lasting friendships for life with classmates and Cougs, and of course, enjoying the campus atmosphere and culture that helped develop such a strong appreciation for his education at WSU.

While at WSU, John had a summer job at an independent pharmacy in his hometown Mount Vernon and experienced his first mentor, Steve Wells. After graduation, and along his career path were mentors Don Kusler and John’s business partner, Rod Sampson at Kelley-Ross Pharmacy who were also leaders in professionalism, business and relationships that would provide the backbone of John’s ownership career. His experience fostered his love of mentoring dozens of pharmacy students as well. John said that mentoring his son, Ryan, was probably most rewarding.

John’s commitment to building relationships with customers, as well as the pharmacy community and its partner organizations, is legendary. One of the most important lessons John tries to instill in the pharmacy students he has mentored over the years is that advocacy for the pharmacy profession is critical to future success. He doesn’t just preach this; he has spent years in leadership positions with organizations such as the Washington State Pharmacy Association president and was president of the WSPA Foundation for thirty years. He has also served in leadership positions for the American College of Apothecaries and has served on the college’s Dean’s Advisory Council since 2009.
“I have always believed you have to show up if you want to make a difference. And I believe in these organizations and the work they do, not just for pharmacists, but for the betterment of our communities and public health.” Among John’s many honors for pharmacy service is the Bowl of Hygeia Award, Alumnus of the Year for the college, and the WSU Foundation Outstanding Service Award. He and his wife Deborah are recognized at the benefactor level for the WSU Foundation. John founded the Class of ’65 Endowed Scholarship and he and Deborah have endowed the Oftebro Family Scholarship as well.

When he is honored on October 7, John will be joined by his wife, Deborah, and other family members including his son, Ryan, who is the current president of WSPA and a pharmacy alumnus of the UW School of Pharmacy. Ryan owns Kelley-Ross Pharmacies now that John is retired, and John said he is proud of how Ryan and his partners have also grown the business and on the cutting edge of pharmacy innovations.

“I’ve been very fortunate to have the life I’ve had and the career I’ve had. I owe a lot to WSU and the college. I will always be grateful for the education, connections, and friendships I made during my lifetime as a Cougar pharmacist and WSU alumnus. And of course, as always, I have to finish by saying Go Cougs!”

Proceeds from the Crimson Gala will benefit the John Oftebro Leadership in Innovation Scholarship Endowment, which will be awarded to a top fourth-year pharmacy student who is exceptional in advocacy, engagement, and innovative ideas for pharmacy practice.

The R. Keith Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award was established in 2017 to honor Professor Keith Campbell, class of 1964, who served as a professor at the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences for 40 years. Professor Campbell was the first recipient of the award, which was subsequently named for him. The prestigious award recognizes a track record of excellence in pharmacy, patient care, advocacy, research, service and mentoring or teaching. In 2019, William Gaskins, class of 1969, was named as the second recipient of the award. John Oftebro is the third recipient.

The Crimson Gala takes place as part of the college’s Reunite Pharmacy Reunion Weekend on October 7-8, 2022. Class reunions will take place during the Crimson Gala, with pharmacy building tours on Saturday, October 8 and a viewing party for the WSU vs. USC game later that day at Flatstick Pub. Full details can be found at https://pharmacy.wsu.edu/homecoming/ or by calling 509-368-6675.
First-year student pharmacist Bradley Brown, age 22, is one of five students in the inaugural class in the rural health track. The track is part of the college’s Rural Health Initiative to recruit, educate, and embed pharmacists in rural communities across Washington state.

I was raised in Rochester, Washington, the youngest of 13 children, where I grew up in a 100-year-old farm house. Rochester is a rural agricultural community with a population of about 2,500 situated between Seattle and Portland. Like many rural communities, everyone in Rochester willingly lends a hand to help a neighbor. This town has raised me as much as I was raised by my family, which is why I aspire to return to a rural community to grow my family and build a career.

At the age of 14, I always knew I wanted to become a pharmacist. I surrounded myself with smart people. My best friend growing up is now a mathematician and I fell in love with organic chemistry in high school. With my love of chemistry, I knew that the two pathways for me was either pharmacy or becoming a physician. Work-life balance was an important factor for me which is why I chose to pursue my doctor of pharmacy degree. I also wanted to go into rural health care because access to health care was always a challenge living in a small town. For example, my mother had colon cancer and it was always a day trip if she wanted to receive chemotherapy or a consultation. The only medical care in the community was the occasional ambulance rushing to the nearby casino in acute situations.
From the ages of 18 to 20, I also lived and worked in the Navajo Nation in the Four Corners area, which refers to the four borders where New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah meet. Like many rural towns, the closest hospital was about a 2.5-hour drive. Diabetes was common in the community, and the relatively older population seemed to indicate that most of the younger generation had left the reservation for job opportunities elsewhere. It was difficult to find anyone between the ages of 25 to 40 on the reservation. Working in the Navajo Nation sparked my interest in behavioral health pharmacy and hopes to one day work with the Indian Health Service (IHS), a division of the US Department of Health and Human Services which provides direct medical and public health services to members of federally-recognized Native American tribes.

When I returned to Washington, I started working as a behavioral health technician at a rehabilitation center helping people to recover from addiction and substance abuse. Patients struggled with both mental and behavioral health and my daily tasks included handing out medication, accompanying patients to the emergency room, and overseeing the overall well-being of the people in the rehabilitation center. Although the work was intense, physically and mentally, there were a few patients who were diamonds in the rough. The facility was a rotating door of recovery and relapse, and I had to learn how to balance my disappointment and encouragement all in the same breath.

Though I know that working as a pharmacist in a rural area limits the number of people I see, I wholeheartedly believe that I will make a more profound difference in people’s lives through individual care. My best days are when I feel like I’ve made a difference in someone’s life. It’s times like these when my job doesn’t feel like a job, and I want to have that feeling for the rest of my life. For these reasons, I am pursuing a career in patient-centered care in a rural setting.
A NOTE FROM JULIE AKERS

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Where did July go? I feel like I blinked and August is here. People not in academia will sometimes ask how I spend my time in the summer and if I enjoy the months off. After I finish laughing, I explain how summer is typically busier than when students are on campus, filled with conferences, presentations, meetings, and research. This July was no exception.

We tried something new this year related to our affiliate residency programs and onboarding new residents and, so far, have had positive reviews. In place of a multi-day onsite training program, which posed travel challenges for some of our affiliate residency programs around the state, we held a residency overview meeting on July 8 to describe the program, answer questions, and allow the residents time to get to know one another. The residency directors had their own breakout session and provided valuable feedback to our team related to future sessions and ways to support preceptor development. Thank you to all who attended!

Several faculty, staff, and an academic fellow joined Dean Leid in Grapevine, Texas for the AACP annual meeting. Not only did CPPS have several poster presentations, but many faculty gave oral presentations as well. I am so proud of our team and their contribution to the advancement of pharmacy education. Also, shout out to Kim Mickey, director of student services, and Jennifer Miller, assistant professor and co-chair of the admissions committee, for getting to Grapevine early and
spending two days in the admissions workshop. The ideas you came home with will have a positive influence on our program for years to come.

The Rural Health Initiative (RHI) has been moving along at a furious pace. Megan Undeberg, associate professor and director of rural health education, and Kimberly McKeirnan, associate professor and director for the Center for Pharmacy Practice Research, have been extremely busy building the RHI curriculum and research program that will begin August 2022. After reviewing the four-semester curricular plan I almost want to go back and go through it myself (note I said almost!). Angie Stewart, associate dean for rural health, and I have been meeting with potential collaborators, with many more meetings scheduled. While we have met with people from critical access hospitals to independent pharmacies to discuss rotations and preceptor development, we also learned about rural health programs already in place through the WSU medicine and nursing programs. We look forward to collaborating with our health science campus colleagues in providing an interprofessional experience for students, faculty, and most importantly the citizens of Washington state.

It is now time to transition to finalizing details for orientation week, welcoming our new incoming first-year students, and getting back to the classroom. Enjoy the warm weather while it is here!

With my best and, as always, Go Cougs!

Julie Akers, Associate Dean of External Relations
WSU College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Spotlight on Success

WSU faculty named to Washington State Academy of Sciences
Pharmaceutical Sciences
Associate Professor Bhagwat Prasad is one of six Washington State University faculty members named a new member of the Washington State Academy of Sciences!
Read more »

Young scientist Sara Dumit earns back-to-back awards for her interdisciplinary research
Pharmaceutical Sciences alumna Dr. Sara Dumit is among the leading theorists working on the modeling of plutonium decponsoration and the development of chelation models.
Read more »

Remember to send in your Wave the Flag photos
Send in photos of yourself and your loved ones as you “Wave the Flag for Pharmacy!” for the chance to win a can of Cougar Gold cheese and bottle of Dedication Red wine* from Cougar Crest Winery.
See photos & full rules »

Upcoming Events

White Coat Ceremony
August 19 | 1:00 p.m.
Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox
Spokane, WA

Crimson Gala
October 7 | 6 p.m.
Spokane, WA
PHILANTHROPY FOCUS

A new scholarship endowment has been established at the college in honor of Lorraine (Tschetter) Vedvig, who graduated in 1947 at the top of her pharmacy class. The scholarship was established in her memory by her brother-in-law, John Wiess, a WSU alumnus from the class of 1950, who majored in Police Science and Administration. John said he wanted to honor Lorraine as a tribute to her character, hard work, and loyalty to their entire family.

Lorraine and her mother owned and operated Tschetter’s pharmacy in Spirit Lake, Idaho for several decades, until Lorraine’s retirement in the early 1990s. Even in retirement, John said she was still working just as hard as ever, volunteering in the community, working for the city on whatever needed to be done, and providing care to senior citizens in the local retirement home. Lorraine passed away in 1994 at the age of 69. The scholarship will benefit a student interested in independent pharmacy and community service.

Alum Updates

On a recent trip to Boise, Senior Director of Development Kelly Sylvester met with several alums in the area, including Mark Filicetti ('87), who is the Director of Clinical Trials at St. Luke’s Hospital, and Michael Dickens ('91), who also works at St. Luke’s, and is nearing retirement. Michael shared some great stories about his favorite mentor, John Swenson ('68), from his turn as a resident under John’s leadership many years ago. Also attending the event were Starla Higdon ('99), and her husband Jon Higdon, a WSU engineering alumnus; and Ken Webert ('88), who works in immunology at UCB in Boise.
We were also able to connect with **Amanda Wright** (’17) who lives in the Boise area and works in oncology pharmacy at St. Luke’s. Congratulations to Amanda and we will be back in Boise soon! You can read Amanda Wright’s first-person account of what she’s been up to below:

It’s been a busy few years since graduation! I matched at St. Luke’s Boise Medical Center for PGY1 (post-graduate year one) and early committed to the PGY2 in oncology at St. Luke’s Cancer Institute (Mountain States Tumor Institute at the time). I completed residency in 2019 and stayed on with St. Luke’s. During my PGY2 I worked on a collaborative practice agreement for the oral chemotherapy office as my major project. This allowed pharmacists to sign for oral chemotherapy refills based on information from provider notes of continuation of therapy and make adjustments to prescriptions for renal or hepatic function, toxicity, drug-drug interactions, and dose rounding. This allowed us to shorten our turnaround time of prescriptions as we were not waiting for days for a provider to sign the new prescription. I was able to publish a few papers on this project, received a 2020 Innovator Award from ACCC, and spoke at national conferences for both ACCC and NCODA about this project. I have worked in the oral chemotherapy specialty pharmacy, inpatient oncology pharmacy- serving as the lead pharmacist for this floor for one year, and now I’m working in one of the SLCI chemo infusion clinics.

Want to be listed in our alum updates? Send us your career information or let us know what you’ve been up to at pharmacy.gocougs@wsu.edu!

**Other News**

**WSU’s Gleason Institute awards money for neurodegenerative disease research**

Pharmaceutical Sciences Assistant Professor Travis Denton’s research team was among four teams to receive more than $160,000 in seed grant funding from the WSU Spokane Steve Gleason Institute for Neuroscience.

[Read more from Spokane Public Radio](#)
FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

PUBLICATIONS

Pharmacotherapy Clinical Professor and Director of Quality Assurance Improvement & Accreditation Preparation Terri Levien and J. Roberts and Marcia Fosberg Distinguished Regents Professor of Pharmacotherapy and Director of the Drug Information Center Danial Baker published, “Drug evaluation – bebtelovimab: preliminary evaluation,” in Wolters Kluwer Health’s The Formulary Monograph Service (FMS) in June 2022. Wolters Kluwer Health is a drug and health information publisher, the FMS is a resource used in the formulary decision making process for hospitals and managed care systems on recently released and investigational drugs.


Emily Hitt (PharmD '22), Regan Smith, Terri Levien, and Danial Baker published, “Drug evaluation – Nivolumab and Relatlimab-rmbw (Opdualag),” in the FMS in August 2022.


Regan Smith, Terri Levien, Danial Baker published, “Drug evaluation – vonoprazan, amoxicillin (Voquezna Dual Pak) and vonoprazan, amoxicillin, clarithromycin (Voquezna Triple Pak),” in the FMS in September 2022.
Danial Baker published, “Drug utilization evaluation – vonoprazan, amoxicillin (Voquezna Dual Pak) and vonoprazan, amoxicillin, clarithromycin (Voquezna Triple Pak),” in the FMS in September 2022.

Pharmacotherapy Vice Chair & Allen I. White Distinguished Professor Joshua J. Neumiller, and two co-authors published, “GLP-1 receptor agonists in the treatment of patients with type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease,” in Kidney and Dialysis in May 2022.


Ayesha Ahmed and three co-authors published, “Is glyceryl trinitrate, a nitric oxide donor responsible for ameliorating the chemical-induced tissue injury in vivo?,” in Molecules, a peer-reviewed scientific journal, in July 2022.


PRESENTATIONS

Research Associate Sandhya Subash (Prasad lab) presented the poster, “Proteomics-informed improved IVIVE of aldehyde oxidase mediated drug metabolism: The use of relative expression (REF) and intersystem extrapolation factor (ISEF),” at the Gordon Research Conference (GRC) in July 2022.

SERVICE

Joshua J. Neumiller was featured on the episode, “Future type 2 diabetes drugs: exciting and a little scary,” of the Medscape InDiscussion Type 2 Diabetes Podcast on July 12, 2022.

Joshua J. Neumiller and two others held a panel discussion titled, “Clinical update: treatment intensification with non-insulin therapies,” as part of the Hands On: Tips to Improve Diabetes Care
Webinar Series by the American Diabetes Association on August 9, 2022.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES AND MOLECULAR MEDICINE STUDENTS

Deepak Ahire (Prasad lab) presented the poster and oral presentation, “Role of UGT2B17 in the metabolism of prescription drugs and steroids is underappreciated,” at the inaugural Gordon Research Seminar (GRS) in July 2022.

DOCTOR OF PHARMACY STUDENTS


Emily Hitt (PharmD '22) with faculty co-authors Regan Smith, Terri Levien, and Danial Baker published, “Drug evaluation – Nivolumab and Relatlimab-rmbw (Opdualag),” in the FMS in August 2022.

Washington State University was selected as one of the top ten teams in the Good Neighbor Pharmacy National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) Pruitt-Schutte Student Business Plan Competition. Student pharmacists Kennedy Erickson, Jeannie Ko, Michael Asfha, and Kayla Huber made up the team with faculty advisors Julie Akers, Nicole Rodin, and Damianne Brand.