



**PRESS RELEASE: New Curriculum Emphasizes Interprofessional  
Collaboration, Patient-Centered Care**

**Sandy C Gholston** to: Archive

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Included below is a press release regarding the impact of new curriculum in the College of Pharmacy at Ferris State University that is designed to emphasize the importance of interprofessional collaboration and patient-centered care. Any questions about this release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, News Services and Social Media Manager.

To read the online version of this story, visit:

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2012/september/curriculum.htm>

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**New Curriculum Emphasizes Interprofessional Collaboration, Patient-Centered Care**

BIG RAPIDS – The 2011-12 academic year already has seen a series of new developments within Ferris State University’s College of Pharmacy. In addition to its new Grand Rapids instructional facility and new dean, the College of Pharmacy has implemented a new Pharm.D. curriculum designed to keep it at the leading edge of pharmacy instruction.

The new curriculum integrates course work and emphasizes interprofessional collaboration and practical experience, in line with recent national shifts in pharmacy studies. In Fall 2009, the College of Pharmacy welcomed its first class under a new curriculum that provides all of these benefits.

“Pharmacy is in a period of transition right now — going from a product-centered profession to a patient-centered profession where we’re much more concerned about optimizing medication therapy for the individual patient,” explained Pharmacy professor Curtis Smith. “The changes to Ferris’ curriculum are designed to support graduates as they enter practice settings in the future, where the pharmacist in a pharmacy is responsible for reviewing and monitoring patients’ drug therapies for appropriate dosing and drug interactions, as well as administering vaccinations and providing preventative health information.”

The updated Pharm.D. program integrates material from once-separate courses to more directly connect their concepts. Classes such as Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacology have been combined to create a new course, Drug Action. New Infectious Disease courses, which students begin in the second year of the Pharm.D. program, combine information from foundational areas of study including microbiology, pharmacognosy, chemotherapeutics and pharmacotherapeutics, so that students learn interrelated information about diseases, their causes, drugs and drug

therapy in a more concentrated way.

The new curriculum also integrates topics across multiple courses to help students retain information and strengthen critical thinking skills. The Infectious Disease courses are presented in a structured, two-course sequence so that students have the opportunity to relate concepts between the two courses and connect them to their other work in the program, a feature which promotes retention and active learning.

“We intend to deliver course material with a lot more active learning — getting the students engaged,” said Dean Stephen Durst. “Active learning keeps students more interested.” Changes to instructional style also reflect this aspect of the new curriculum.

Courses such as pharmacotherapeutics, once lecture-based, consists primarily of group work that encourages problem-solving and critical thinking, so that graduates are better-prepared not only to help address a patient’s health problem but to help identify it in the first place.

“It’s problem-solving, but it’s also problem recognition, and that’s of equal importance,” explained Durst. “Many times, a patient may not even know what the problem is. Pharmacists need to be able to tease that out and then help develop a solution.”

In addition to helping students acquire the necessary critical thinking skills, active learning methods such as group work foster the collaborative approach that modern pharmacists need to provide the best possible care. When Pharm.D. students engage in course work as a group, they develop the attitudes and skills that will enhance their future interprofessional interactions with the physicians, specialists, nurses and others who, together, form a patient’s health care team.

“With a team-based learning experience and perspective, students gain stronger problem-solving skills and work together better, which will help them in the future, in practice,” added Durst.

Another facet of the curriculum designed to help students gain perspective is the two-year Longitudinal Patient sequence, designed to help students relate to the experiences of their patients. Most Pharm.D. graduates are young adults, and many have not experienced serious illness first-hand. The course, taken in the second and third years, helps students relate to patients and families facing difficult diagnoses and increasingly complex medical information. Equipped with a more personal understanding of patients’ experiences, Ferris Pharm.D. graduates are prepared to communicate with and serve them more effectively.

Expanded practice experience is another benefit of the new Pharm.D. curriculum. Students complete newer, earlier practice experience in community pharmacies and hospitals during the summer of the program’s first and second years.

The experience provides a frame of reference for courses such as the Longitudinal Patient and are another new area of special emphasis for the Pharm.D. curriculum.

“Early practical experience allows students to compare the information they’re learning in the classroom to what they have seen in a practice setting,” said Smith. “Instead of just book

knowledge, something they have read on paper, they have experienced it first-hand and are much likelier to learn it in greater depth.”

Traditionally, students performed practice experiences and clerkships in their third and fourth years of Pharmacy studies.

Practice experience in the program’s first and second years gives greater relevance to students’ subsequent course material and clinical experience.

“It introduces students to more practical components of Pharmacy earlier and better prepares them for the early experiential work that they do now in the curriculum,” Smith added. With its new curriculum in place, the College of Pharmacy is ready to provide new generations of pharmacists with the preparation they need to have fulfilling professional careers and to make a significant impact on the patients and community they serve.

To learn more about the College of Pharmacy, visit:  
<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/colleges/pharmacy/homepage.htm>

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