

# Gamecock Pharmacist





DEAN STEPHEN J. CUTLER

## DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

As we enter this holiday season, I am reminded of what an unusual past few months we have experienced, a time that impacted us, both personally and professionally. It is at times like this that I am most grateful to our faculty and researchers, as well as our staff who have worked tirelessly to make this semester a successful one, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you read through this issue of Gamecock Pharmacist, I hope you will have a much greater sense of the significant role our college has as we navigate through the pandemic. The development of the Saliva Assay Free Expedited (SAFE) testing in Phillip Buckhaults' lab is one of the most impactful tools we have to help curtail the spread of the virus. The SAFE Test allowed us to mitigate the spread among our students and our community, and will be shared out to other colleges and universities across our state thanks to a \$16.7 million grant. Carolyn Banister put in countless hours to guide our lab to CLIA certification, making it one of the few such certified labs among colleges of pharmacy. We also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Michael Wyatt, Michael Shtutman and Diego Altomare, and the many student volunteers who have supported our COVID-19 initiatives.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank our many supporters of the college, whether it be through the generous philanthropic support, volunteering your time and expertise for virtual presentations to students, providing white coats for our new P1s, or lacing up your shoes for our virtual 5K Rxun and Walk.

You have been there for us in this most unprecedented year and we are grateful. Your steadfast commitment to our students and college has helped strengthen our resolve, elevate our ambitions and continue to move our college to the forefront of well-deserved national recognition.

### For Carolina,

**Stephen J. Cutler**  
Dean of the College of Pharmacy



### FALL 2020

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### ON THE COVER

*Top row, left to right:*

**Thayra Rios Schad**, '22, Pharm.D. candidate

**B. Celia Cui**, Ph.D. candidate

**Michael D. Wyatt**, professor and interim chair, Department of Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences

*Middle row, left to right:*

**Carolyn Banister**, research assistant professor

**Stephen J. Cutler**, dean

**Tai Ying Lee**, '22, Pharm.D. candidate

*Bottom row, left to right:*

**S. Scott Sutton**, professor and chair, Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences

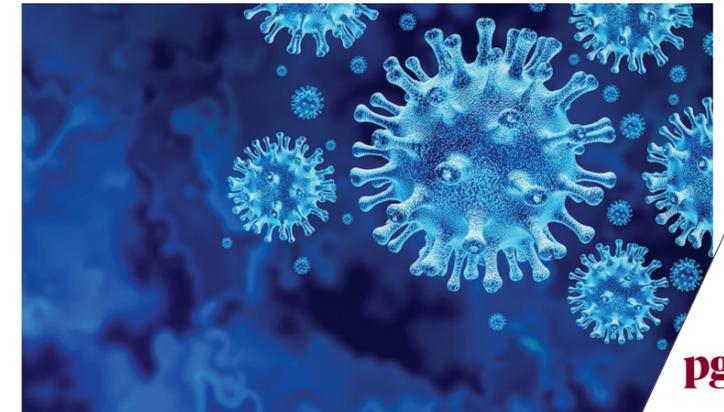
**Mide Oyindamola Olorunfemi**, '22, Pharm.D. candidate

**Daniel A. Brown**, senior director, Instructional and Information Technology

### Communications and Public Affairs

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## TREMENDOUS GROWTH

Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program maintains commitment to excellence

BY DOUGLAS PITTMAN | Associate Professor, Director of Graduate Studies

The Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy has recently seen tremendous growth and change.

Several new faculty and students have been welcomed, and we have bid a fond farewell to many graduating students entering into outstanding research opportunities.

The number of graduate students in the program has more than doubled over the past five years. In the Department of Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences, research opportunities are being provided in neuroscience, cancer biology and drug development. Faculty in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences are providing outstanding training opportunities and guiding the growth of the Pharmacy Administration track.

Our graduate program could not function without the investment provided by the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. We are also grateful for funding that supports scholarships for our graduate students such as the support generously provided by The Ritedose Corporation. Should you have interest in providing similar scholarship support for our graduate students, please contact Terry Dixon in our development office at [dixont@cop.sc.edu](mailto:dixont@cop.sc.edu).

During the current pandemic, quite a few graduate students have been assisting with the development of the virus testing protocols as well as supporting the university's current testing efforts. These students are showing the same dedication and care that each of us learned to implement in the course of our own training.

During one of my last conversations with Ms. Diane Wise, she handed me a notebook full of faculty meeting minutes, some dating back to at least 1978, documenting the creation of the current graduate program. I am amazed by the solid foundation and challenging curricula that was developed so many years ago; the basics of which are still followed today. As the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program looks toward an exciting future, we remain proud of our history and are thankful that you continue to be a part of it.

## Bidding a Fond Farewell

Creek, associate dean for research, retires after 33 years at UofSC

Kim Creek arrived at the University of South Carolina in 1987 as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

He later moved to the School of Medicine Columbia and then spent the last 10 years — initially as vice chair, then as chair and associate dean for research — at the Department of Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences with the College of Pharmacy.

"I often joke that I'm probably the only person to have tenure in three different schools at the university," Creek quips.

Research into the human papillomavirus has been a central focus throughout Creek's career.

"To see the research progress from when we first started working on it some 30 years ago, to learning how the virus works, and then developing a vaccine in that time frame is quite remarkable," he says. "My satisfaction is that I played a small part in that."

Creek has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles, served as a mentor for 18 doctoral students, and served on the

graduate student advisory committee for 76 South Carolina students who received their master's or doctoral degrees.

His greatest satisfaction with the College of Pharmacy stems from the growth of the department's faculty size by more than 50 percent over the past 10 years.

"We have been successful in assembling a talented, world-class group of scientists who are making important discoveries that have an impact on South Carolina and the world," Creek says.

Dean Stephen J. Cutler lauds the profound impact that Creek has had on the department and college also, in terms of advancements in teaching, research and service.

"Dr. Creek has led the college's efforts in research and has been successful in doubling the amount of money received through extramural grant awards," Cutler says. "Further, the number of scientific publications from faculty members in the College of Pharmacy is among the highest of any school or college at the University of South Carolina."



Lucia and Kim Creek



From left to right: Hippokratris Kiaris, Kim Creek and Igor Roninson

## UofSC researchers lead efforts to conduct diagnostic saliva testing



## STEPPING UP AGAINST COVID-19

From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders from across the University of South Carolina campus came together to determine the best methods to keep students, faculty and staff safe while continuing to provide the best educational experiences. That's where College of Pharmacy and School of Medicine researchers stepped in.

Knowing that the ability to maximize the numbers of COVID-19 tests conducted would be key, Phillip Buckhaults, Michael Shtutman and Michael Wyatt from the College of Pharmacy, and Dr. Helmut Albrecht with the School of Medicine Columbia, began working on developing a test that could provide much quicker results than nasal swab tests, leading to the development of the Saliva Assay Free Expedited (SAFE) test.

To provide diagnostic results, the lab had to undergo a rigorous Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) certification process led by research assistant professor Carolyn Banister.

"She has worked 18 hours per day, seven days per week for months, putting her scientific research on hold in order to do something good for the university and the community," Buckhaults says.

There have been important lessons learned from this experience, including the high incidence of asymptomatic carriers.

"It turns out that most college-age people are either mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic carriers of the virus. We have discovered this by SAFE testing and have been able to isolate people who would not otherwise know they were positive," Buckhaults says. "This undoubtedly has already limited the spread to other more vulnerable members of our Gamecock family."

Buckhaults believes other important information related to convalescent plasma therapy will come out of the testing.

"The supply of plasma donors is limited, because most people who have life-saving antibodies simply do not know that they do," he says. "SAFE testing has created a large supply of potential donors among our students. If enough of our students donate their plasma, UofSC will make very important contributions to science and medicine."

The CLIA-certified lab will also provide new opportunities for researchers and students long after the pandemic has ended, such as the ability to deploy diagnostic testing for future medical needs.

"University scientists will have a mechanism by which they can bring their lab-developed tests to the clinical market," Buckhaults says. "For scientists focused on translational research, the CLIA lab will serve as an important bridge between the bench and the bedside for years to come."

Buckhaults also credits the leadership of Dean Stephen J. Cutler.

"He has led from the front and bottom to top, from helping with sample collection, recruiting volunteers, helping to test the necessary software, working in the lab, but also working behind the scenes at the highest levels of university, state and federal levels to make this early dream in June a reality in August," Buckhaults says. "Alumni should be proud of what our Gamecock family is doing to meet the challenge."



Carolyn Banister



Phillip Buckhaults

“Alumni should be proud of what our Gamecock family is doing to meet the challenge.”

PHILLIP BUCKHAULTS

# PHARMACY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## Pandemic elevates role, highlights flexibility of pharmacists as health care providers

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges across the health care profession, from providers working diligently to diagnose and treat patients to researchers developing accurate and rapid testing.

The pandemic has also brought the role of pharmacists to the forefront, as they work side by side with physicians and allied health professionals to determine the appropriate course of treatment and counsel patients on the best methods to protect themselves and their families. That role will continue to grow in importance as pharmacists are called upon for their contributions as health care providers.

**Julie Ann Justo**, associate professor in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy, specializes in infectious diseases. She

has been working on the front lines of the pandemic, providing patient care and serving on national and statewide committees to consult on treatment guidelines and drug allocation councils for COVID-19 patients.

“Through this entire pandemic, we have tried to maintain consistency in our standards for patient care,” Justo says. “It strips away all the clutter and reveals what the job of a pharmacist truly is — to optimize medication management and minimize safety issues.”

“We are using our skills to manage people’s fears and help maintain a high quality of care. It is important that we hold up good science when providing that care.”

**Carl Dunn**, ’85, is a part-time master instructor for the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center within the College

of Pharmacy. He has spent most of his career as a hospital pharmacist, with extensive experience in IV admixture and chemotherapy preparation.

Dunn notes that the role of the pharmacist has become more flexible since the onset of the pandemic.

“Teamwork with other pharmacists and communication with the public are even more important,” Dunn says. “I think the public has always seen us as the experts when it comes to their medicines, but I see them reaching out to us even more. Pharmacists have been underutilized in the past, but I think we will see a push for expanded roles in the hospital and the clinical setting.”

From the community pharmacy perspective, **Greg Mayer**, ’77, owner of Apothecare Pharmacy in Batesburg-



**We as pharmacists are now being asked to join the conversation rather than having to ask to join.**

**– JULIE ANN JUSTO**



Leesville, South Carolina, says he and his team have always focused on developing a close relationship with their customers and patients.

“Because we are in a more rural setting and have quite a few senior patients, they have always accepted us in that role of trusted health care provider,” Mayer says.

Mayer saw that his patients had many questions about the best ways to avoid contracting the novel coronavirus.

“We have third-generation family members who come to us because they respect the information that we provide. They have developed a confidence in our knowledge and our professionalism,” he says.

**Kyle McHugh**, ’95, is president of McHugh Pharmacy Group, with community pharmacies located across South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. McHugh also noticed changes to his company’s business model, especially in how patients began ordering their medications.

“Because patients are trying to avoid going out as much, many have transitioned to ordering 90-day supplies of their medications,” McHugh says. “That means we have to anticipate staffing needs around those cycles.”

Both Mayer and McHugh predict an expanded role for their pharmacies now that pharmacists can administer childhood vaccinations.

Because of the recent decrease in childhood immunizations attributed to the pandemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services authorized state-licensed pharmacists to administer childhood vaccinations. This provides patients with more options to protect the health of their children.

“Doctors have so much on them that they were more than happy for pharmacists to provide flu shots, and I think they’ll be just as happy for us to do childhood vaccinations,” McHugh says.

Pharmacists also have the ability to provide diagnostic testing, something McHugh is exploring as each of his pharmacies has received a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments waiver. The waiver allows his pharmacists to conduct certain tests, such as for COVID-19, in addition to more common tests such as cholesterol, glucose, flu and strep.

Justo hopes the message that pharmacists are some of the most trusted health care providers will continue to spread.

“As pharmacists, we are well-positioned to not only provide care to our patients, but to also help guide the conversation on a national scale about medication efficacy and safety,” she says. “We as pharmacists are now being asked to join the conversation rather than having to ask to join.”



**JULIE ANN JUSTO**



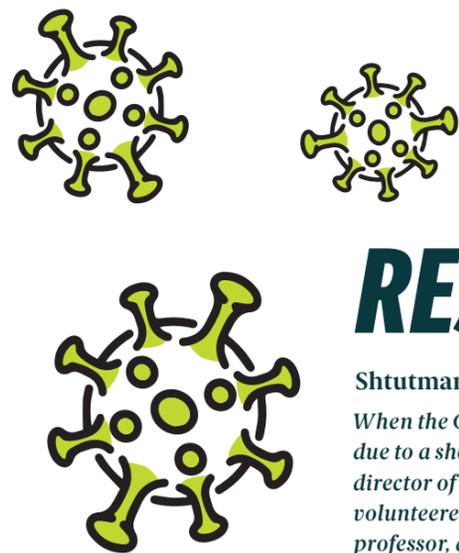
**CARL DUNN**



**GREG MAYER**



**KYLE MCHUGH**



# RESEARCHING THE VIRUS

Shtutman's group conducts testing, generates data on COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March of this year, testing was not readily available due to a shortage of equipment and expertise. **Michael Shtutman**, associate professor and director of the Functional Genomics Core at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy, volunteered his team's services. The team includes **Diego Altomare**, core manager and associate professor, and **Hao Emily Ji**, manager and bioinformatician. The College of Pharmacy asked Shtutman to talk about the significance of their work.

**Q:** Tell us more about the work being done with COVID-19.

**Shtutman:** The Functional Genomics Core (FGC) within the COBRE Center for Targeted Therapeutics at UofSC, led by Igor Roninson, is an academic research core and not a medical diagnostic facility, but we had the necessary equipment and expertise to conduct COVID-19 testing. We volunteered our services and equipment usage and began working with Prisma Health to set up and carry out COVID-19 testing as a research study. FGC has conducted COVID-19 testing of Prisma Health professionals and employees of UofSC and their families, at no cost, carrying out more than 3,500 tests.

In addition to testing for COVID-19 infection, FGC began sequencing of the virus genome in different test samples. This analysis throws light on the route of transmission and virus mutations that occur in our state's population; such mutations may affect the infection rate and severity of the disease.

**Q:** How might studying genetic variances among COVID-19 patients make a difference in how health professionals can better understand the disease and the overall treatment and care of patients?

**Shtutman:** There is accumulating evidence that genetic variations in the human or viral genomes

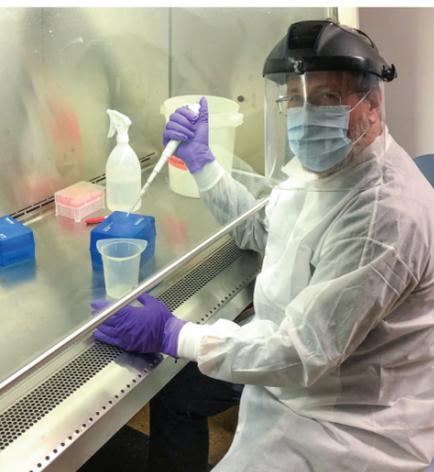
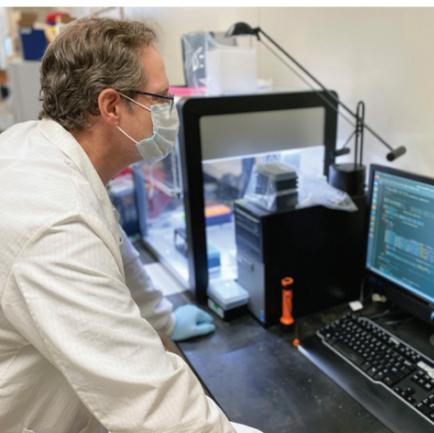
affect the severity of the disease. We are generating the data on genetic variations, which health professionals correlate with the severity of the disease. Much less is known about individual variability in the response to the treatments for COVID-19, but we hope that our study will help to identify patients who will respond better or worse to specific treatments.

**Q:** How has the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) supported the research you are doing?

**Shtutman:** Without the COBRE there would have been no infrastructure to fight COVID-19 at UofSC. The COBRE efforts to create genomics capacities at UofSC have provided all the necessary infrastructure and expertise. COBRE also provided a grant to support the development of a safe cell culture system to test different drugs for efficacy against SARS-CoV-2, without having to use BSL-3 facilities, none of which are currently available in South Carolina. In collaboration with a group of computer scientists led by Ilya Safto, we are working to find a new artificial intelligence approach to identify drugs that may be efficient against COVID-19.

**Q:** What is the end goal of your research?

**Shtutman:** Our goal is to find a way to stop the spread of SARS-CoV-2.



# FINDING A CALLING

Justo embraces service, scholarship, teaching in impactful career



**Julie Ann Justo** always knew her professional career would involve working in the sciences. "My mom is a nurse in Miami, and I used to follow her around as a child, learning all the various professions in the hospital. In college, I developed an interest in working with infectious diseases," she recalls. That interest has grown into an impactful career at the University of South Carolina. Justo's expertise has been highlighted on a statewide and national scale as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bolstered by her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Florida in 2009, Justo began her PGY1 residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago the following year, where her mentors encouraged her to pursue a fellowship. She followed their advice and completed a three-year infectious diseases

pharmacotherapy fellowship at UIC College of Pharmacy. During that time, she also earned a master's degree in clinical and translational science from the UIC School of Public Health. Justo's interest in infectious diseases grew while in pharmacy school. During her fellowship, she also realized she has an affinity for teaching.

"I never pictured myself as a teacher or academician. I fully intended to do two years of residency and go into a clinical pharmacy specialty," says Justo, who had the opportunity to give a didactic lecture to 160 first-year pharmacy students. "After that lecture, I had the feeling of walking on cloud nine. It was the same feeling that I get when I counsel a patient and they understand what I shared with them. I started to think I wanted more of that."

It is fortunate that Justo's last interview for a position was with the UofSC College of Pharmacy.

"I knew the college wanted a clinical academician. The moment I set foot here, I knew it aligned perfectly with my career goals," she says.

Today, Justo balances a six-month clinical practice at Prisma Health Richland Hospital with six months of teaching at the College of Pharmacy. She made her mark during the pandemic as the only pharmacist in the nation invited to serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Remdesivir Consultative Committee. Justo also serves on the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control COVID-19 Clinical Advisory Council on remdesivir allocation in South Carolina.

Justo also shared her expertise via educational videos and podcasts to other pharmacists through the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists and is a core member of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Collaborative of South Carolina.

"What made me want to come to the College of Pharmacy is the people," Justo says. "I've always appreciated the culture and the environment. Our faculty consistently go out of their way to congratulate everyone on a personal or professional accomplishment, and I always know I can reach out to any faculty member for help or support. We are a family."

# TRACKING COVID-19 OUTCOMES



## Bookstaver assembles team to follow virus treatments

Not long after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, **Brandon Bookstaver** recognized that not only did researchers need to find a treatment for patients affected by the novel coronavirus, they would also need to learn as much as possible about the treatment's effectiveness and the long-term impact of the disease.

Bookstaver, associate professor at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy, along with co-principal investigator Dr. Sharon Weissman of the School of Medicine Columbia, and a team of co-investigators from the College of Pharmacy, School of Medicine and other health care facilitators throughout South

Carolina, established the South Carolina COVID-19 Treatment Outcomes Registry. The registry objectives include determining COVID-19 treatment patterns among South Carolina hospitals, assessing short-term safety and effectiveness outcomes among the pharmacologic treatment approaches, and assessing long-term safety and effectiveness outcomes in patients following their hospitalizations. Clinicians, regulatory agencies and research scholars will benefit from the invaluable data.

As researchers continue to work on treatments, which are still considered experimental, as well as a potential vaccine, many unknowns remain about COVID-19 that Bookstaver hopes the registry can help to answer.

"Does it affect diabetes after six months? Does it increase your stroke risk?" he asks.

His goal for the registry is to follow COVID-19 patients long-term to see if there are any predictors of what may have happened during their infection, what treatment they may or may not have received, and how that contributes to both short- and long-term outcomes.

"Once it's created, it will be a living registry that we hope will provide information about the impact of the disease 30 to 40 years down the road," he says. "And we will make it available for other researchers and clinicians."

The registry has received some seed funding through the UofSC Office of the Vice President for Research and from a private family foundation located in the upstate of South Carolina. Researchers are seeking additional funding for this project that will impact the COVID-19 research base in South Carolina for years to come.

▶ If you would like to support the registry, please contact Terry Dixon at [dixont@cop.sc.edu](mailto:dixont@cop.sc.edu).

# Lessons from an Entrepreneurial Alumnus



## Ameer shares college's impact on his journey to CEO

We sat down with **Gibran Ameer, '02, CEO of VirtueTechnologies, Inc. and VirtueRN, LLC**, to learn more about how his experiences at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy shaped his career.



**Q:** What is your favorite memory or experience at the college?

**AMEER:** There were so many great memories as a Gamecock, from the tailgate Saturdays to the friendships made that I still have today. If I had to narrow it down, it would be the letter of acceptance into pharmacy school.

Without that initial acceptance, my life's journey would have been incredibly different.

**Q:** How did your company get its start and how has it evolved?

**AMEER:** We saw a need to impact a specific place in software development for electronic ordering of home medical equipment (HME) for hospice patients. The business has evolved to also offer logistics solutions for the HME, home infusion and specialty pharmacy market. Under the VirtueTechnologies umbrella, VirtueScript is the electronic logistics solution module for WellSky, which dominates the home infusion market with brands like CPR+ and CareTend. We saw opportunities to leverage our knowledge and talent to develop to a broader market need.

**Q:** What are the most important lessons you've learned along your entrepreneurial journey?

**AMEER:** Make sure you are thorough in everything you do, in every aspect of your professional career. Keep your eyes open for opportunity. Ask for advice and guidance, do your homework and

take calculated risks early. Even if it's a little later in life, have a plan that gives you the best probability for the desired outcome.

**Q:** What inspires you professionally and personally?

**AMEER:** It is to make a difference by doing good. That can be building game-changing software that aids in delivering more efficient services that impacts patients and pharmacies in a positive way, or personally by being a good partner, father and friend to my circle.

**Q:** What has been the biggest challenge for you as an entrepreneur and business owner since the pandemic's onset?

**AMEER:** Not being able to be social in person to foster culture has been a challenge. However, because of technology, we are able to accomplish everything we have set out to do during COVID. Our team is able to work completely from home by replacing ordering and home deliveries from a paper-driven process to an electronic format. It has moved up pharmacy understanding and adoption of these solutions by years. Electronic ordering and contactless deliveries are here to stay.

**Q:** What is your message to fellow pharmacy alumni about staying engaged and supporting the college, and what does it mean to be part of the Gamecock family?

**AMEER:** Get involved. Networking not only with your peers, but great ideas, inspiration come in all kinds of packages. I am garnet and black proud. Being a Gamecock is being part of a family with common professional roots.



## Remembering a Legacy

### The Leon and Betty George Endowed Scholarship Fund

**Leon George** graduated in 1954 from the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy. That same year, he married Betty Thomas and settled in Blythewood, South Carolina, where they would raise their five children – Michael, Mel, Mark, Mary Elizabeth and Melissa.

Leon began his pharmacy career as a soda jerk and pharmacy deliveryman at Campbell's Drugs while still in college. He stayed on after graduation as an official pharmacist. A career of more than 50 years would take him to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Fairfield Memorial Hospital and Columbia Regional Care Center.

Throughout his career, Leon lobbied for safe pharmacy practices through his leadership roles with the Fifth District Pharmacy Association, South Carolina Board of Pharmacy, South Carolina Pharmacy Association, Three Rivers Health System and South Carolina Board of Pharmacy Examiners. His dedication to the profession of pharmacy was much appreciated as he received multiple accolades and awards throughout his career from many of these same organizations.

More importantly, Leon and Betty instilled strong values through their faith and family.

"We grew up in a home with loving and supportive parents," says their daughter, Elizabeth George Parker.

Their parents' passing, Betty in April 2019 and Leon in May 2020, encouraged their children to fondly recall their parents' affection for Columbia and their father's love for his alma mater, which had a tremendous impact on his successful career and inspired their children to establish an endowed scholarship in memory of their parents.

"It made perfect sense to endow a scholarship in our parents' names," says Elizabeth, noting her father would be humbled and her mother proud to help the next generation of caring pharmacists.

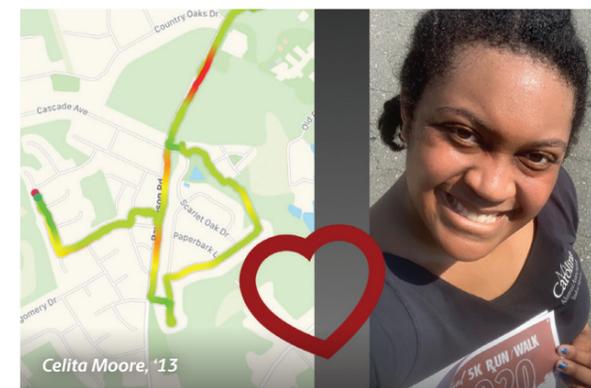
"We hope that through this scholarship, many more young people will realize that they, too, can pursue the pharmacy career they can be passionate about," Elizabeth adds. "The College of Pharmacy is on the cutting edge of technology while maintaining high expectations of professionalism and compassion. Young people know the value of this incredible professional program, and it is an honor for us to assist them by endowing a scholarship."

 If you would like more information about establishing a scholarship in the College of Pharmacy, contact **Terry Dixon** at [dixont@cop.sc.edu](mailto:dixont@cop.sc.edu).

# COLLEGE EVENTS

## VIRTUAL 5K RUN AND WALK

Twenty-six alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the College of Pharmacy took part in the college's inaugural Virtual 5K Run and Walk on Sept. 1-7. Participants ran and walked outside, on a treadmill, during a Peloton class, even with CrossFit Soda City. Funds raised support the College of Pharmacy Carolina Fund.



Celita Moore, '13



Elliot Turner, '11



From left to right: Nicole Bookstaver, '13, Madeline Dean, Tai Ying Lee, Nishi Patel and Shivani Patel



Madeline Dean with patient

## SC COUNTS DAY

Alumni and students from the College of Pharmacy joined efforts for SC Counts, a statewide day of service to provide flu vaccinations, voter registration, COVID-19 testing and census counting in underserved areas of the state.

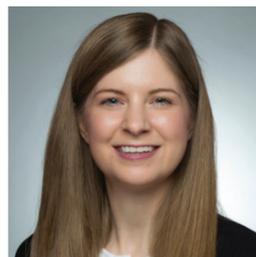
COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

# NEWS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ALUMNI



**Krutika Mediwala**, '15, received the New Practitioner award from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy Infectious Diseases PRN.



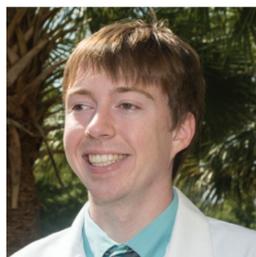
**Angela Bingham**, '10, was elected as a Fellow of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy.



**Tracy Macaulay**, '03, was elected as a Fellow of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy.



**Cmdr. Ryan Buff**, '07, has been honored with the 2020 Managerial Excellence Award by the United States Public Health Service Pharmacists.



**Tyler Wagner**, '19, was named a recipient of the Phi Lambda Sigma-American Federation for Pharmaceutical Education First Year Graduate Scholarship.



**Lindsay Cobbs**, '92, was named chair of the Kennedy Pharmacy Innovation Center.

FACULTY & STAFF



**Julie Ann Justo** is the only pharmacist in the nation asked to serve on the United States Department of Health and Human Services Remdesivir Consultative Committee. She also serves on the South Carolina DHEC Covid-19 Remdesivir Clinical Advisory Group and S.C. Pandemic Healthcare Ethics Advisory Council.



**Kevin Lu** was selected as a Fellow of the International Society of PharmacoEpidemiology, ISPE, and was named chair of the Drug Policy Committee at the American Public Health Association.



**Jill Michels**, '96, has been appointed to a three-year term for the Board of Directors of the American Board of Applied Toxicology.



**Jordan Cooler**, '16, was a finalist for the Innovative Practice Award by the College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists.



**Brie Dunn** was recognized as the Phi Lambda Sigma Outstanding Chapter Advisor.



**Dr. Jun Zhu** received a \$3.96 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, his second consecutive grant.



**Tessa Hastings** was selected as a 2020 National Institutes of Health Disparities Research Institute Scholar.



**Lorne Hofseth** has been appointed to serve on the university's Council for Research Excellence and served as TEDxUofSC speaker in October.



**Betsy Blake** was named Distinguished Practitioner and Fellow of the National Academies of Practice.

► Do you have news to share with your fellow alumni? Send us your updates at [bit.ly/cop-class-notes](https://bit.ly/cop-class-notes)



AARON DRUMGOOLE



JORDAN JONES



TAI YING LEE



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SHANNON LEIGHTON

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“The experience thus far in the UofSC College of Pharmacy has been eye-opening and rewarding. The college does a great job of exposing you to the vast world that pharmacy encompasses. I have met some great people throughout the program and can't wait to see all that is in store these next few years.”

'23

“The College of Pharmacy has given me an amazing opportunity to learn from such highly respected individuals and is full of opportunities to get involved and make connections within the field of pharmacy. I am incredibly grateful to have professors that genuinely care for their students and want to see us do the best we can.”

'22

“Gamecock pharmacy truly broadens my horizons and prepares me well for this rewarding journey. Students at the UofSC College of Pharmacy are able to receive phenomenal education and experiential experiences from renowned faculty members and preceptors throughout the Pharm.D. program. Interprofessional practice, clinical assessment, research involvement and career mentorship also enrich student life with innovations and personal, professional growth.”

'24

“I chose the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy because of the vast opportunities and progressive care programs offered. I truly believe that through this school, I will be able to become the best pharmacist I can be. I am honored to be joining such an incredible and impactful profession as pharmacy and could not do so without the incredible staff, faculty and alumni of UofSC.”

'23

“Throughout this tumultuous year, I have surprisingly had an amazing time growing as a future pharmacist. UofSC COP is taking a holistic approach towards student involvement and its curriculum. I am most excited about the school's emphasis on diversity and inclusion. UofSC COP is providing countless opportunities for students, faculty and staff to broaden their knowledge and awareness about a myriad of issues impacting many individuals.”

'22

“At UofSC COP, I have access to world-class faculty members from diverse pharmacy practice areas. Our faculty members are very approachable and prepare students to be well-rounded pharmacists who will shape the future of the profession. I love that students can create their own paths and are supported by the COP with resources, and faculty and staff who are always willing to help to achieve those goals!”

'22

“I am very thankful for the opportunities to thrive at the UofSC College of Pharmacy. The immense support system and resources we are provided allow us to immerse ourselves into college life and take advantage of the numerous opportunities the pharmacy profession has to offer. Within the College of Pharmacy, you can create your vision, stay focused and make your goals come true.”

'22

“I feel proud to be a Latina in this College of Pharmacy during these troubling times. The faculty has tried to make sure that it is a safe place for all races and people of different backgrounds. During the summer, I was able to be a part of the Diversity Inclusion meetings, and everyone that participated was heard and respected.”



### Carrie Smoak | '04

“Your connection to the UofSC College of Pharmacy doesn't end when you graduate. Pharmacy is a transformational science. It turns knowledge into action, chemicals into cures and students into dedicated professionals. It changes health care, it changes pharmaceutical care and it changes lives. Everything we do has a purpose — to impact people's lives. That's what makes being a Gamecock pharmacist so special!”



### Walter Hughes | '79

“Looking back on my time spent at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy instills in me an incredible sense of gratitude. I owe so much to the university for all the preparation received for my career, the long-lasting friendships and camaraderie that exist 40-plus years later. It is important to recognize this by supporting the College of Pharmacy and future generations of pharmacists.”



### Merissa Baxter | '16

“The College of Pharmacy represents one of the most challenging, rigorous and rewarding experiences of my life. When I think about the College of Pharmacy, I think of my graduate research and the invaluable training I received. It is the place that laid the foundation for me to obtain the science career I always wanted. It means endurance and achievement.”



### Michael Scruggs | '15

“I am excited to watch my alma mater take the 'pulse' of pharmacy by collaborating with alumni and quickly invest deliberately back into students — this is how we truly transform our role in health care. I support the College of Pharmacy because investing in the futures of students is the most profound investment you can make in your profession.”



### Jonathan and Sara McFall | '12

“We choose to support the College of Pharmacy because giving back to the profession is a great way to help it continue to grow and reach new heights. It also allows us to stay connected to the community that made us a family.”



### Kendall Tucker | '17

“The College of Pharmacy provided me with a wealth of opportunities to grow professionally and personally. I look back at my time at the college fondly and with pride for the education that was provided to me. I support the college so that others can experience this as well.”



### Mike McShea | '80

“Supporting the College of Pharmacy allows us to be engaged with past and future COP pharmacists and beyond. We are bonded by a unique geo-academic life experience, helping us to shape the future of pharmacy and to expand our opportunities that ultimately result in achieving our personal and professional goals. The college enabled me to develop foundational skills that enhanced my career, which has been a journey encompassing diverse professional experiences.”



### Myra Randolph | '83

“The College of Pharmacy is and always will be an essential part of the medical community. The pharmacist is actually the person that most patients seek out to ask questions. As a retail pharmacist, I am able to give back to my community. I use my platform to educate those who may not really understand the importance of their medication therapy. I am proud to be a graduate of the UofSC College of Pharmacy.”



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**I am made of  
unwavering pride.**

Joe Smith, '49 & Mary Jo Smith-Dyches, '87



A year after graduating from the College of Pharmacy, Joe Smith, '49, opened Peak Pharmacy in Newberry County, where he has served the community for 70 years. Following in her father's footsteps — both as a Gamecock and as a pharmacist — his daughter, Mary Jo Smith-Dyches, joined the pharmacy after graduating from the college in 1987. Together, they have served generations of South Carolinians, and their impact continues today. **I AM SOUTH CAROLINA.**