In the Spotlight

Sheila Roberson, Director of Public Relations, 706-542-5303, roberson@rx.uga.edu
University of Georgia College of Pharmacy, Athens, GA 30602

January 29, 2013

**Two Students Selected for U.S. Navy’s Health Services Collegiate Program**
by Susan Herda, Student Affairs

While most students working toward their Doctor of Pharmacy degree begin job-hunting toward the end of their third year in the program, two second-year students have already found their niche and landed pharmacy positions that will undoubtedly lead to long and adventurous careers.

Sean Szad and Will Spence, PharmD Class of 2015, have been accepted to the US Navy’s Health Services Collegiate Program (HSCP) Medical Service Corps; they were two of only five selected from applicants across the country.

The two will be sworn in as petty officers on May 1 and will be paid according to their rank; they will also be able to enjoy the many benefits the Navy has to offer, such as medical care and commissary shopping, while completing their third and fourth years of school. Once they have graduated and passed the licensing exam, they will be commissioned as lieutenants and ordered to Officer Development School (ODS) in Newport, Rhode Island, for five weeks of training and then be sent to their first duty station.

Though the application process for the program began back in August, final word of their selection did not come until the second week in January, which made for many weeks of waiting and wondering. Both Szad and Spence kept in close contact with their recruiter, Lt. Paul Jordan, who was supportive and kept them informed through the many steps of the process. Jordan was enthusiastic about both candidates right from the start.

“The guys did all the little things that made them standouts,” Jordan said. “It’s a very competitive program. To have two of the five come from the same school is a huge accomplishment!”
One of the “little things” that Szad and Spence did was pay a visit to Naval Air Station Jacksonville during winter break.

“During our day at NAS Jax we were provided with the opportunity to visit all five of the different pharmacies: hospital, satellite, travel, clinical, and outpatient,” Spence explained. “We had the chance to speak with the pharmacists and hear the reasons for staying in the Navy and why they loved Navy Pharmacy as compared to other sectors. The overwhelming theme behind each of these interviews was how extremely satisfied each of these pharmacists was with their career choice. They explained the reasons behind their sentiment and I was able to take away a sense of the correctness of my initial decision to apply for the program.”

Szad had a similar reaction, saying, “I loved the sense of teamwork in the healthcare community on base. Everything seemed very cohesive and efficient, with opportunity for collaboration and communication to ensure optimal patient care.”

The idea of military service is nothing new to either Szad or Spence as both have family members who have served or are currently serving. Both of Szad’s grandfathers were military men, one in the Navy, the other in the Army; his dad served in the Army, and a cousin is in the Navy. “It’s always been something I’ve considered,” he explained, “and after getting in touch with Lt. Jordan and hearing more about the program, it definitely seemed like the path I wanted to go down.” He hopes to one day be stationed at Pearl Harbor.

The Spence family also believes in military service. “Serving in the military in general has always been in the back of my mind due to family members who served in the Navy and the Air Force. I was not aware that pharmacy and the United States Navy were compatible until fairly recently. As soon as I discovered the HSCP, I knew it was the perfect combination for me and that I had found my particular niche in the pharmacy field,” explained Spence, who would very much like to work at a naval hospital in either San Diego or Rota, Spain.

Once ODS training is complete the pair will most likely part ways, at least for a while, since there is little chance for two openings in the same location. But their paths will surely cross again either at home or abroad during what they both say will be long careers. They probably have not seen the last of their recruiter, either.

Lt. Jordan, who is a member of the nursing corps, remarked, “Without reservation I welcome Will and Sean into the Health Services Collegiate Program; I am proud to serve with them.”