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Neville Named Teacher of the Year 2014

“I believe that good teachers make difficult things seem simple,” said Michael Neville (’92), 2014 recipient of the Teacher of the Year award at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy, about his teaching philosophy. “I get students to explain difficult topics in their own words and I try to do the same thing when I teach them.”

“Whether I’m teaching in a large lecture hall or in small groups in the skills lab I want students to be able to think on their feet, and sometimes I put them on the spot. I’m less concerned about them always getting the right answer and more concerned about their ability to think through the problem critically. I intentionally set students up to struggle with some exercises so that they can flounder, feel unsure, and learn from their mistakes,” added the clinical associate professor.

He went on to explain that he was not a great student himself so he can better understand and relate to students who also struggle with academics.

Neville’s first experience as a teacher began in 1996 when he held a joint appointment teaching undergraduate and graduate nursing pharmacology at Emory School of Nursing where he taught in large classroom settings of 100+ students. He also directed the PGY1 pharmacy residency program at Emory HealthCare.

“I was so ill prepared for teaching that I attended many teaching conferences, read lots of books and learned from more experienced faculty members,” he said, noting that after graduation from pharmacy school in 1992, he completed a one-year clinical pharmacy residency, followed by three years as a clinical pharmacist at Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta.
In 2008 he joined the College faculty and began coordinating the pharmacy care laboratory portion of the skills lab courses. He teaches important skills such as patient counseling, use of drug information resources, aseptic compounding, medical record evaluation, and inter-professional communication that are commonly used by community and hospital pharmacists. In the classroom he likes to give students the opportunity to practice and use their skills in simulated practice environments.

His students have applauded him for his enthusiasm and humor, his helpfulness and his ability to incorporate practical knowledge and experiences with patient care, and his use of innovative active learning strategies.

Neville also serves as a preceptor and pharmacy team leader at Mercy Health Center, which he describes as “a unique training ground where we care for underserved patients. Students get to see how privileged they are. We work with patients who have no food, no shelter, no transportation, and no insurance. In that setting supporting patients to achieve health goals and adhere to medication presents unique challenges.” “I enjoy teaching and inspiring learners to develop confidence in their abilities. It’s so much fun for me to see the ‘lights come on’ when students grasp concepts and begin to develop confidence in their abilities,” he said, adding that he’s also interested in curriculum development and the possibility of a career change into academic administration someday. He is currently a Fellow of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and immediate past chair of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Laboratory’s Special Interest Group.

As Teacher of the Year he will receive a $1,000 salary adjustment, pending approval by the Board of Regents, recognition at University Honors Day and a trip to the American Association of College of Pharmacy (AACP) annual meeting to be recognized as Teacher of the Year.