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UGA College of Pharmacy Expands Degree Programs

The University of Georgia College of Pharmacy will offer a new degree program this fall for students seeking a Bachelor of Science in the Pharmaceutical Sciences degree. The new program is among only 18 such programs in the country and only the second in the Southeast.

“This program, as well as others across the country, responds to the growing need for highly skilled life sciences professionals to support research, development and manufacturing operations in the pharmaceutical industry,” said Michael Bartlett, a professor of biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences who chaired the committee that developed the curriculum.

The field of life sciences, which includes the pharmaceutical industry, ranks as the fifth largest employer in the state of Georgia and is the fastest growing segment, at a rate of more than 20 percent per year, added Bartlett, noting that supplying a trained workforce is critical to the continued success of the industry in this region.

“Currently many employers in this industry must train staff after they’ve been hired and would be supportive of potential employees receiving specialized education in advance for work in this regulated environment,” he said. “Moreover the degree could easily integrate with the College’s master of science program in regulatory affairs, already in place.”

The pharmaceutical sciences represent the collective basic sciences that underlie the field of pharmacy and are rooted in the discovery and development of therapeutics. The program will blend the fundamentals of basic sciences with the increasing complexity of the interactions of therapeutic agents with living systems, he added.

The program’s four-year curriculum begins with a strong foundation in mathematics and the basic sciences of chemistry, biology and physics through the university’s existing undergraduate offerings. Advanced course work in pharmaceutical sciences will include aspects of drug design, mechanisms of action, drug targeting and delivery, pharmacology, toxicology, drug development, manufacturing, quality assurance and regulatory compliance. Laboratory work will be dedicated to pharmaceutical manufacturing and to basic biological testing and quality assurance/quality control testing of pharmaceutical products. Finally undergraduate research to enhance students’ laboratory research skills will complete the degree requirements.

“Our expectation is that undergraduate research will be a significant component of this degree program and enhance career path development,” said Bartlett, adding that the program supports the emphasis UGA has placed on the development of therapeutic agents with the founding of the Center for Drug Discovery in 2006. “A key part of the College’s strategic plan involves working with industry in Georgia to create regional areas of strength and meet the healthcare workforce needs of the state.”

“With this new degree program on the bachelor of science level, the College is more closely tied to the university’s undergraduate programs,” added Bartlett. “In addition the College now has a complete portfolio of professional, undergraduate and graduate degrees to support the pharmaceutical industry from the discovery and development of new therapeutic agents through to the delivery of these agents to patients.”

Space within the College is currently being renovated to accommodate the new program.