April 10, 2012

Beth Phillips Named Teacher of the Year 2012

Over the course of her 16-year career, Beth Phillips has learned that teaching, service and scholarly activity all go hand-in-hand in the making of an accomplished academician and clinical faculty member. Most recently her teaching expertise was recognized by students and peers at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy when she was named the College’s Teacher of the Year for 2012.

“All teachers probably experience those ‘aha!’ moments when they see their students really grasp the concepts being presented,” said Phillips, a clinical associate professor and director of the PGY-2 ambulatory care residency program at UGA and the Athens Veterans Affairs Clinic. “Those moments are wonderful and validate our efforts, but I also appreciate how different aspects of my career intermingle to form an academic endeavor that complements and strengthens each other.”

Phillips teaches in a variety of didactic and experiential courses within the College and especially enjoys teaching in small groups. Her passion, she said, is helping students apply their book knowledge to real-patient cases through active learning strategies.

“For example, in Pharmacotherapy I brought in a real case from my practice site and a mock patient,” she said. “The students took turns interviewing the patient to gain pertinent information, such as symptoms, family history and medications, to determine appropriate drug therapy. In this manner, students really learn how a patient may present with certain symptoms and how drug therapy may change based on patient interaction, rather than just telling or teaching the students this information.” She has also developed several simulated patient activities in the Clinical Skills Laboratory series where the students gain even more hands-on experience.

Two years ago Phillips developed an elective for students who want to advance their education through postgraduate residency programs and want help gaining the skills they need to apply for residencies.

Phillips has focused her career efforts on developing residency programs in ambulatory care pharmacy, most recently in Athens after she joined the pharmacy faculty in 2007. She had previously developed two other residency programs and has trained more than 50 PGY-1 and PGY-2 residents, along with completing two residencies herself, one in pharmacy practice and another in ambulatory care.

“My residencies confirmed my desire to pursue a clinical faculty position that would allow me to teach in the classroom and also work with patients,” she said, adding that her career has evolved over time with more opportunities for leadership activities designed to drive the profession forward.

“When students become residents they’re already excited about the pharmacy profession. They’re seeing the enjoyment of direct patient care and making a difference,” she noted, adding that she appreciates being able to use patient cases from her clinical practice as teaching points in the classroom and being able to keep her clinical skills current through direct patient care.

“All of these avenues, teaching, patient care and scholarship, work together to make me a better clinician and a better teacher,” she said. “It’s a full-circle approach to learning and teaching. Our educational endeavors and scholarly pursuits allow us to provide better care to our patients and our patient care activities provide learning opportunities for our students and residents.”