

Spring 2016

# NSU Sharks Rx-Spring, 2016

College of Pharmacy

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## HIV/AIDS

Adherence Research  
Impacts Caribbean  
Descendants



Caribbean Sea

## NSU SHARKS

Volume 2, Number 1

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# Upcoming Events



## June 8–26

Travel Study and Continuing Education—Drug development and distribution in Spain and the E.U.

## June 30–July 2

Florida Pharmacy Association annual meeting in Fort Lauderdale

## July 1

College of Pharmacy Alumni Reunion, 5:00–6:30 p.m., at the Marriott Harbor Beach Hotel in Fort Lauderdale

## July 3–10

College of Pharmacy Alumni Going to Alaska Education at Sea

## July 22–23

Continuing Education—Physical Assessment Institute and alumni lunch/social at the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus

## August 5

College of Pharmacy Alumni Reunion, 6:00–7:30 p.m., at SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida

## August 5–7

American Association of Health-System Pharmacists annual meeting, at SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida

## September 17–18

Continuing Education—Initial Consultant Pharmacist License and alumni lunch/social at the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus

## September 30

Career Development Pathways—Pharmacy professions showcase and class of 2017 student interviews

## October 6

American Pharmacist Month Distinguished Alumni Forum (Alumni Engagement Series): “From Student to Alumni to Professional” at the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus

## November 4

College of Pharmacy Shark Pride Alumni Homecoming Reunion at the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, 6:00–9:00 p.m.

## November 5–6

Continuing Education—Fall classic and alumni lunch/social at the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus

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For more information about these events, please contact: Carsten Evans, Ph.D., executive director of continuing education and professional affairs, at [carsten@nova.edu](mailto:carsten@nova.edu) or (954) 262-1306.

Alumni Events: Contact Mislady (Millie) Vélez, M.S., director of alumni development and professional affairs, at [copalumni@nova.edu](mailto:copalumni@nova.edu) or (954) 262-1674.



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# Message from the Dean



We are tying up another wonderful academic year filled with many NSU College of Pharmacy (COP) achievements, some of which we proudly highlight in this edition of *NSU Sharks Rx*. Our students, alumni, and faculty and staff members continue to excel, and the college is thriving. NSU's COP is building its reputation as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, and we have the right team in place to further our growth in this area.

In addition to *NSU Sharks Rx* magazine, we have initiated the *Sharks Rx* electronic newsletter in order to provide news in a more timely fashion. Please make sure you are receiving the newsletter, as it contains updates on college activities, including alumni events and news. I have been fortunate to spend more time with our alumni this year. It was especially wonderful to see so many alumni at our homecoming 2015 reunions in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Everyone had a great time, and I hope to see many more of you at our 2016 reunion events.

Please continue to submit your updates and news to [copalumni@nova.edu](mailto:copalumni@nova.edu). As alumni, you are role models to the current students and play a vital role in ensuring the college achieves its mission and vision, so please stay connected.

The College of Pharmacy spent the last year developing strategic priorities that will help advance the college further toward fulfilling our mission: "To educate and develop practitioners and researchers who, through their leadership and entrepreneurship, will transform the profession of pharmacy." Our faculty and staff members, students,

alumni, and many other stakeholders participated in our strategic planning sessions, "Achieving Our Shared Legacy," to identify our five main strategic priorities (page 5), which build on our strengths. We need our alumni to help us achieve our goals.

The NSU Center for Collaborative Research (CCR) has opened, providing state-of-the-art space and equipment for several of our faculty members and student researchers. The CCR encourages interdisciplinary research and will provide necessary facilities to further strengthen NSU's research enterprise. Tours of the CCR will be provided during the Florida Pharmacy Association meeting in July. The official opening of the center will be held in fall 2016.

Other plans include a full curriculum review for both the Pharm.D. and the Ph.D. programs and increased outreach to Central and South America. A new master's degree program—the Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Affairs—will begin in the fall of 2016. Additionally, students now have the ability to complete concurrent master's degrees in biomedical informatics, public health, and business administration. We continue to provide opportunities for our students to be entrepreneurs who are prepared for the future practice of pharmacy.

I look forward to visiting with you at one of our upcoming events. Continue sending us your updates for the *Sharks Rx* newsletter. I am so proud of all of your successes. Thank you for being a part of NSU's College of Pharmacy.

Go Sharks! Fins Up!

Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D.  
Dean, College of Pharmacy  
Nova Southeastern University

# NSU COP Strategic Priorities

## **SP 1: Visionary Education**

NSU College of Pharmacy will transform pharmacy education by providing an engaged and innovative environment in which entrepreneurship, leadership, critical thinking (problem solving), teamwork, and interprofessional education are interwoven into curricular and cocurricular activities. Students will be prepared for new practice environments that do not yet exist.

## **SP 2: Changing the Practice**

NSU College of Pharmacy will advance the practice of pharmacy by graduating pharmacists who are comfortable practicing at the top of their license and by being strong advocates for the profession.

## **SP 3: Research and Training Enterprise**

NSU College of Pharmacy will grow the research enterprise by conducting cutting-edge, sponsored research and training the next generation of scientists.

## **SP 4: Globalization**

NSU College of Pharmacy will impact pharmacy education, research, practice, and health care on a global scale.

## **SP 5: Effective Leadership and Embracing People**

NSU College of Pharmacy will ensure we have the talent and leadership to execute our vision and mission.

# Chancellor's Communiqué



**A**s I have discussed in previous messages, Nova Southeastern University has been undergoing a transformation related to the realignment of various academic programs. This realignment has created an ancillary benefit, allowing the Health Professions Division (HPD) colleges to look into establishing new baccalaureate and certificate programs that can help channel new students into the graduate and first-professional degree programs.

Currently, about 80 percent of NSU's undergraduate matriculants are biology majors, with many of them seeking opportunities to gain preliminary exposure within the HPD to our pedagogy, labs, and research methods. As a result, the soon-to-be eight HPD colleges are working diligently to establish these types of opportunities.

For example, the College of Medical Sciences created a program that allows undergraduate biology majors to attend presentations in the anatomy lab during a two-week summer session. This initiative provides a wonderful opportunity for undergraduate students to involve themselves in activities that may lead them to pursue specific careers within the health professions.

In an effort to provide additional educational opportunities to first-time college students, a number of bachelor's degree programs are being proposed or developed within the HPD colleges in areas such as nutrition, medical education, and public health. The establishment of new certificate programs that will enhance the educational mix, such as one for pharmacy technicians, is also being considered.

After reviewing some recent admissions data regarding students who matriculate into the HPD programs, it has become evident that these students know our university is going through a positive academic realignment. Many of these students have also expressed to our admissions teams that they believe NSU is a very holistic and interprofessional academic entity.

NSU is at a very exciting point in its history. As we continue to enhance our educational offerings and enrich our reputation, the significance of these advancements will be of tremendous value to us in the future. As a result, we will attract exceptional students to our programs and recruit additional first-rate faculty members and researchers to teach and prosper in our colleges.

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.  
Chancellor, Health Professions Division

# HIV Cross-Cultural Education and Research Touches Lives



Silvia E. Rabionet, Ed.D., counsels a patient on medication adherence.

By Gail Bulfin

**Imagine a professor** whose whole focus is to prepare health professionals, pharmacists, and researchers to be better at what they do. Imagine how effective medical professionals could be if they could talk to patients in a manner that provided more honest information while, at the same time, making the patient feel more at ease.

Nova Southeastern University has just such a professor whose mission is to prepare her students to be the most effective clinicians and researchers they can be: Silvia E. Rabionet, Ed.D., who serves as an associate professor in the College of Pharmacy (COP).

Rabionet was born in Cuba, but spent most of her early and professional years in Puerto Rico. She received her bachelor's degree from the elite Mount Holyoke College, which is one of the prestigious Seven Sisters of liberal arts colleges for women. Her interests in psychology and

*(continued on next page)*



education paved the way toward a subsequent Master of Education degree from Harvard University.

While at Harvard, she became more aware of the global fate of those who were vulnerable in society. “Your life is established when you are born,” she said. “Your luck is attached to your birth. I wanted to change the system so that people are empowered to change their lives.”

Upon returning to Puerto Rico, she joined the University of Puerto Rico Graduate School of Public Health to develop and support educational programs and began to focus on the idea of faculty development—a passion she continues to embrace to this day.

Rabionet started writing and receiving grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to train faculty members in new and emerging topics. While seemingly more common today, topics such as geriatrics, developmental disabilities, tobacco use, hurricane preparedness, and HIV were considered new and emerging trends. “I was tasked with helping faculty members incorporate these new competencies into their curriculum, allowing them to become scholars of teaching these new topics,” she explained.

After returning to Harvard to complete her doctorate, Rabionet specialized in higher education administration and social policy. During that time, she developed models for reform and implementation of faculty development programs based on innovation and curricular change.

Since 2007, and with help from a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant that she still manages, Rabionet began to focus on preparing faculty members and researchers to become more effective at their research, especially with HIV/AIDS populations. It was during this time that she met Andrés Malavé, Ph.D., the former dean at the College of Pharmacy, who facilitated her move to South Florida and established a partnership between NSU and the University of Puerto Rico.



**From left: Silvia E. Rabionet, Ed.D.; Akesha Edwards, Pharm.D., Ph.D. candidate; Lauren Romero ('16); and Chloe Tamargo ('17)**

A major part of that collaboration involves support for junior researchers—mostly young faculty members and Ph.D. students—in the behavioral aspect of HIV. This partnership continues to grow with the current dean, Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., and students from the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus and the Puerto Rico Regional Campus participating alongside faculty members in many of Rabionet’s ongoing projects.

Both a professor and a researcher, Rabionet sees this as a perfect opportunity to continue her mission of change and improve the training of the next generation of health professionals. “As HIV transitions to becoming more of a chronic illness/disease, it has a long-range impact on the patient and the community,” she explained, because the earlier the patient adheres to the medication program, the better the outcomes. “The pharmacist is in the perfect place to guide the patient throughout the many phases of medication management.”

In addition to maintaining an affiliation with the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, Rabionet serves as program director of the Mentoring Institute for

HIV and Mental Health Research, where she is sponsored by an NIMH grant (R25 NIMH) for HIV. According to the NIMH, the AIDS research training grants promote multidisciplinary research and research training on mental health issues related to HIV/AIDS among underrepresented, racially diverse, and ethnic communities. They also help reduce the disproportionate burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on these populations.

In 2013, Rabionet was part of a team of Caribbean researchers with well-established HIV clinics who were successful in receiving a grant to investigate the adherence of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in three countries with different languages and unique cultures—Jamaica, Haiti, and Puerto Rico. The project receives funds from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The HAART study allows NSU faculty members and students to play a major role in studying the sociobehavioral aspects of care within a defined geographical region. In addition, it allows Rabionet to empower her graduate students to be on the front line for this type of research. Junior faculty members, along with Ph.D. and Pharm.D. students from the aforementioned three cultures, participate as researchers. Understanding cultural barriers to dispensing medicine is critical in managing disease and illness. Managing the progression of those with chronic illness is just as important. Early results indicate that patients feel more comfortable with professionals of the same background. Rabionet said the researchers are sensitive and compassionate toward the patient. “It is amazing to see how the students transform their views as they engage in interviewing patients,” she said.

Among the lessons learned in the clinics, NSU student researchers in Florida and Puerto Rico begin to understand the importance of having conversations with their patients about cultural stigmas, depression, poverty, depth of illness, side effects, housing challenges, risky behaviors, and perceived lifestyle restrictions—all potential roadblocks to effective drug therapy commitments. “The end of the epidemic is in their hands. If patients adhere to their medication protocols, we can end this disease,” Rabionet said.

*(continued on next page)*



**“The role of the pharmacist in public health is critical and optimal. NSU pharmacy**

**students are in a unique position to understand the vulnerable communities they serve so they can eradicate disease and change the world.**

**”**

—Silvia E. Rabionet, Ed.D.

More recently, the HAART Trans-Caribbean project has been expanded to study adherence among the HIV population of Caribbean descent living in South Florida. Leading this effort in a local HIV clinic is Trinidadian-born Akesha Edwards, Pharm.D., who is a College of Pharmacy Ph.D. student. “She is an emerging scholar because of her excellent research, her work ethic, and her ability to integrate an interdisciplinary group of research assistants,” said Rabionet, who couldn’t be more proud of Edwards’ dedication.

Rabionet travels to Puerto Rico multiple times a year to work with fellow researchers and her students. She also uses technology such as Skype and other telecommuting tools to be available on an as-needed basis.

Research, student empowerment, innovation, diversity, and community are key pillars within the NSU mission. Last year, NSU received more than \$76 million in external funding for research projects.

While NSU’s College of Pharmacy began in 1987, public health training was not stressed in the curriculum until 2007. “The role of the pharmacist in public health is critical and optimal,” Rabionet said. “NSU pharmacy students are in a unique position to understand the vulnerable communities they serve so they can eradicate disease and change the world.” 🍷

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*Silvia E. Rabionet, Ed.D., is an associate professor in the NSU College of Pharmacy Department of Sociobehavioral and Administrative Pharmacy and an American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy research fellow. She also teaches public health at the Pharm.D. and Ph.D. levels.*

**NSU IS LEADING THE WAY** in preparing dental and pharmacy students to be even more effective in the development of community health care. And there is no more challenging chronic health issue than HIV/AIDS.

Elizabeth Shepherd, Pharm.D., M.B.A., assistant dean, and Joshua Caballero, Pharm.D., associate professor and vice chair of pharmacy practice, have spearheaded an innovative interprofessional elective—through a collaboration with the College of Dental Medicine and the College of Pharmacy—to place students at an HIV dental clinic where the only patients they see are those who are HIV positive.

The focus is on delivering effective health care to a population whose illnesses range from newly diagnosed to long-term maintenance. Oftentimes, sitting in a dental chair provides the perfect opportunity to learn how best to administer and track the effectiveness of the medications the patient is taking.

This elective for pharmacy and dental students includes both classroom and clinical experience. Lectures prepare students for interaction with the patients and HIV medications, including psychiatric complications of patients with HIV, before students are introduced to the dental clinic and patients. The clinic is funded through a Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program grant (administered by HRSA) and prepares future clinicians with the experience of dealing with issues as varied and important as HIV medications and their side effects.

The pharmacy students, in their role as the medication experts, are able to obtain complete medication profiles for these HIV patients. One of the interesting discoveries the students have learned is that many patients are very knowledgeable about their medications, allowing the pharmacy students to have a deeper discussion about the effectiveness of the drugs. Through reflective exercises, NSU students are able to understand their own personal experiences with HIV patients and their role as interdisciplinary team members.

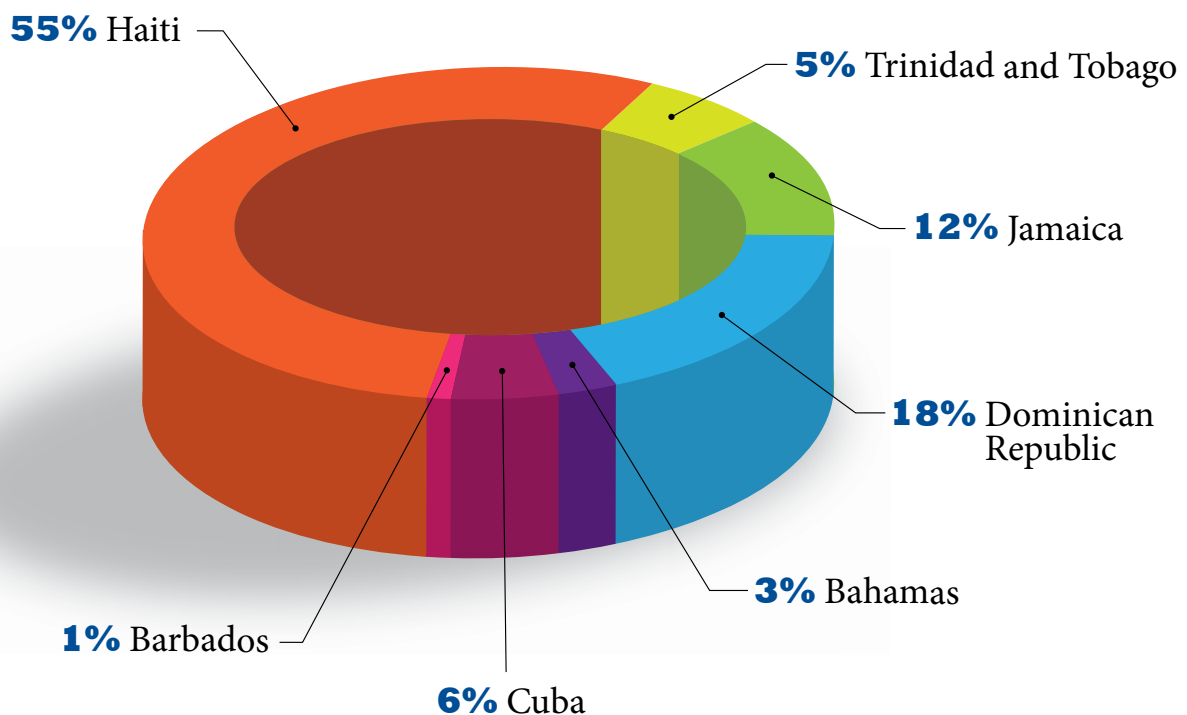
Shepherd credits the culture at NSU for allowing such an innovative program to flourish. “Our pharmacy program is very student centered,” she said. “We are always looking for innovative ways to educate students on the diverse medical needs of the population.”

Upon completion, pharmacy students have even more confidence and expertise in delivering quality pharmaceutical care to HIV dental patients.

“  
We are always looking for innovative ways to educate students on the diverse medical needs of the population.  
”

—Elizabeth Shepherd, Pharm.D., M.B.A.,  
assistant dean

## People Living with HIV in the Caribbean, 2013



Source:  
UNAIDS 2013 estimates

# Pharmacy Alumnus Receives Notable Accolade

By Lona O'Connor

WHEN 1997 ALUMNUS Christopher G. Lynch, Pharm.D., M.Ed., enters the lecture hall, it is as if he never left. He envelops his former professor David Gazze, Ph.D., in a tight bear hug, offers encouragement to student pharmacists, and eagerly gives his email address to one student who wants to talk later about a career in the military.

“If you told me 20 years ago that I would be here today to accept an award, well, who’d a think it? I would have said, ‘Thank God I graduated,’” he joked. “I never, ever expected this.” Lynch returned to Nova Southeastern University in November 2015 to address students on the spirit of giving and to receive the NSU 2015 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award, which honors alumni who have achieved great success.

Reflecting on his career, he challenged the pharmacy students. “I found my purpose—to teach. What is your purpose?” he asked them. “Who are you, and how are you using that to give? The worst thing you can do is go in, do your shift, and go home. Reach out beyond what you’re doing now. I want you to get out there and lead, even if it’s the drive-through on the night shift or helping your fellow students.”

His list of accomplishments is long: He is a 28-year navy man who enlisted at age 17 and recently retired with the rank of commander. After practicing and teaching at several bases in the Southeast, in 2005, Lynch became the first navy pharmacist to earn a master’s degree in educational leadership. Then, at the Naval School of Health Sciences in Portsmouth, Virginia, he directed training programs for technicians in pharmacy, radiography, and hemodialysis.

In 2007, on the hospital ship *USNS Comfort*, Lynch led Partnership for the Americas—a humanitarian medical training mission with a team of military, federal, and international civilian pharmacists. The team dispensed more than 160,000 prescriptions in 12 Latin American countries. He also directed a joint military pharmacy training program in Texas and spent 18 months in clinical support services at the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. His most recent achievement was completing a pharmacy leadership program in June 2015.

Lynch, who returned to NSU twice in 2015 to present on leadership and teamwork, earned advanced qualifications in executive medicine and as an education and training specialist. During his recent visit to NSU, his lapel carried several pins highlighting his achievements, which include being awarded a Meritorious Service Medal, five Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and two Naval Reserve Meritorious Service Medals. He is an active member of the American Pharmacists Association, the Pharmacy Technician Educators Council, the Phi Lambda Sigma Pharmacy Leadership Society, and the Phi Delta Chi Pharmacy Fraternity.

His extensive achievements in pharmacy, education, and leadership were condensed by his son into a heartwarming video that was shown at Lynch’s navy retirement ceremony. “I cried my eyes out,” said Lynch when he viewed the video. “I can’t believe I’m here, but I had the venue to do it. Giving will get you where you want to go.” What touched Lynch most at his retirement ceremony was “not the medals, not the accolades,” he said. “What meant the most to me were the people who came from halfway around the world.”

“We are trained to such a high level that we can relate to just about anyone in the medical profession.”

—Christopher G. Lynch, Pharm.D., M.Ed.

As he rose through the ranks, Lynch was on track to reach the rank of captain. But he came to the realization that it would take considerable time away from his wife, Jennifer, and children, Ryan, Sean, and Lauren. As a result, he stepped off the advancement track. “I gave myself a day to get over it,” he said. “But I needed to keep the balance in my life.”

His next role is to continue as an educator and a guide for young pharmacists. Lynch’s new civilian position will be as director of the experiential program for pharmacy students at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Bradenton, Florida, which also brings him back to the Gulf Coast town where he grew up.

A physician bluntly told him, “You pharmacists don’t know who you are. We need you to take a role. I challenge you to get out there and lead.” Not surprisingly, Lynch was already on board with that idea.


One of his goals is to increase the number, training, and responsibilities of pharmacy technicians who can perform many of the duties of a Doctor of Pharmacy. Pharmacists are then freed up to work at the higher end of their expertise and take their places as full members of medical teams.

Lynch was a key player in a groundbreaking partnership between the Veterans Health Administration and the Department of Defense for the development of a \$4-million series of computer-based training courses for entry-level pharmacy technicians and those in continuing education programs. After all, as Lynch points out, a great deal of medical treatment, from infections to cancer, involves medication. And pharmacists work with doctors at all points on the medical spectrum, giving them a valuable and broad perspective on treatment.



Top:  
Lynch with family at the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award ceremony

Above:  
From left: Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D., HPD chancellor; Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., dean; Ray Ferrero, Jr., J.D., NSU chancellor; Christopher G. Lynch, Pharm.D., M.Ed., commander, Medical Service Corps, United States Navy (retired) ('97)

“We are trained to such a high level that we can relate to just about anyone in the medical profession,” Lynch said, citing instances where he and other pharmacists have been fully integrated members of hospital medical teams. The new job in Bradenton puts him in the perfect position to influence a new generation of pharmacists to take their place as knowledgeable members of medical teams. “When it’s about people, I am laser-focused,” he concluded. “I want to teach, help, and mentor.” 

# Alumna Helps Develop Collaborative Video Game for the Health Professions

## Nontraditional Fellowship Touts Teamwork

By Arnie Rosenberg

**L**arisa Odessky's postgraduate fellowship is out of this world—literally. Since receiving her Pharm.D. from NSU's College of Pharmacy in 2014, Odessky has been immersed in a virtual world dedicated to interprofessional collaboration. As a fellow with the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), she has been a writer, content developer, and lead researcher with Professions Quest—the company created by the AACP to develop and market its groundbreaking video game, Mimycx.

Odessky was graduating and looking for a nontraditional fellowship just as the AACP was launching its effort to create this online educational resource for students from every health care field to help reinforce the core competencies they all share. “I knew that traditional fellowships weren't for me, and this gives me freedom of creativity,” said Odessky. “The game is designed for all 16 health professions, and everyone can play. It's not testing clinical knowledge; it's testing their team-working ability.”

Take any of four domains—values and ethics, for example—and Odessky creates characters and scenarios and puts a team of students in the middle of the story. If players try to navigate the twists and turns of the plot alone, they'll lose. But once they learn to collaborate—virtually, in this case—they answer questions, solve the mystery, and move to the next level.

In the process, they're validating and reinforcing lessons learned in their classrooms in far-flung corners of the country and around the world. “It's a Sherlock Holmes type of investigation,” Odessky explained. “You cannot proceed without being an active participant. And the team cannot proceed from one scene to the next without all members completing their task of being collaborative together.”

For pharmacy education, Mimycx couldn't have come along at a better time. Beginning this year, interprofessional collaboration and education become a requirement for pharmacy schools' accreditation.

Odessky's unconventional fellowship shouldn't be surprising given her unconventional path to pharmacy school. She came to the United States from Odessa, now Ukraine, at age 11. As she was earning her health sciences degree from Florida International University, she also owned and managed a nail salon. All that helped her land the AACP's first Professions Quest fellowship.

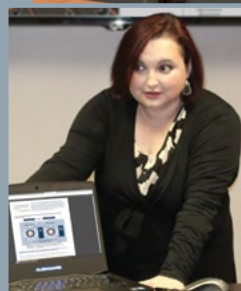
“What Larisa brings to the table is that she had some life experiences,” said Ruth Nemire, Pharm.D., Ed.D., AACP associate executive vice president and Odessky's fellowship supervisor. “She had the vision that this is what students would want to help health education change, and she could write the stories that could be created into a game. Her willingness to be adaptable and flexible, and embrace everybody in the organization, is what makes her special for us.”



**“I want to be one of the leaders of interprofessional education and come up with new ways of teaching. I will be teaching, no matter what I’m doing. I want to make a difference.”**

—Larisa Odessky, Pharm. D.

“I’ve never been afraid of being a trailblazer or stepping over that line first,” said Odessky, who completes her two-year fellowship in June. Within a few years, she said, she envisions a medical student in Saudi Arabia playing Mimycx with a pharmacy student in Ukraine and a radiology student in South Africa. Her own future is becoming clearer as well.



Top, Larisa Odessky, Pharm.D., shares new program ideas with a colleague. Above, an image from the video game, Mimycx, is shown. Left, Odessky presents at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy.

“I want to be one of the leaders of interprofessional education and come up with new ways of teaching. I will be teaching, no matter what I’m doing. I want to make a difference.” ☞



# NSU Alumnus Leads Dean's Advisory Board

By Lona O'Connor

Anthony Alfonso, R.Ph., M.B.A., radiates energy and drive with a smile. In a fast-paced conversation, his foot taps lightly but constantly as he outlines his numerous plans for the future. “I’m a bit on the obsessive side,” he admits with a grin.

Alfonso did not even allow himself downtime during a noncompete period after he sold his supplement manufacturing company in 2015. He immediately set to work opening a couple of CrossFit franchises, the fitness system that spurs his new enthusiasm. He also began manufacturing lotions and creams and investing in real estate.

“He has more energy than me,” said his daughter Megan, who graduates in April 2016 from the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) College of Pharmacy. “I don’t know how he does it.”

Alfonso, who received his M.B.A. from Nova Southeastern University in 1995, was named the first chairman of the NSU College of Pharmacy Dean’s Advisory Board.

As head of the advisory board, he will assist the college’s dean—Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D.—to guide its future.

The Dean’s Advisory Board consists of a group of entrepreneurs whose vision and experience help identify strategic projects and provide sage advice to the dean. “The members of the advisory group are diverse entrepreneurial leaders upon whom I depend to ensure the college is at the forefront of pharmacy education, practice, and research,” said Deziel. “Several of our recent projects and strategic initiatives are a direct result of discussions from our board meetings. I feel privileged to work with such a talented group of individuals.”



#### Dean's Advisory Board Meeting I to R:

James L. Dettore, M.B.A., chairman and chief executive officer, Brand Institute, Inc. | Reinaldo Santamarta, B.B.A., CEO, Unipharma, LLC | Anthony Alfonso, R.Ph., M.B.A. ('95), chair, Dean's Advisory Board | Hugo Pérez, B.S., managing director, United Data Technologies, Inc. | Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., dean | Patrick Hawthorne, R.Ph. ('94) | Taeho Oh, R.Ph., M.S., vice president and director of pharmacy, chief pharmacy officer, US Rx Care and Health Care Consultant | Gerald W. B. Weber, B.Sc., president and chief executive officer, Saladarity | Jim Springer, B.S., regional vice president, Rx Ownership, McKesson Corporation | Deborah Brown, Pharm.D. ('00), president, Pharmacy Consulting LLC

#### Not Shown:

Richard Ashworth, Pharm.D. ('99), president, Pharmacy and Retail Operations, Walgreens | Armando Bardisa, Pharm.D. ('97), owner/CEO, South Miami Pharmacy | Geronimo Dimitreto, owner, CEO/president, Algae to Omega Holdings, Inc. | Jesús Gil, owner, Pharmaceutical Corp., Puerto Rico | Michael Kaplan, Pharm.D. ('99), president, Medic Pharmacy | Raúl Rodríguez-Font, CPA, president, Drogueria Betances/LGI, Puerto Rico | Albert García, R.Ph., M.S.H.L. ('06)

“The dean said, ‘Bring us what you see out there, and let’s see how our education can integrate with today’s real world,’” said Alfonso, who received his pharmacy degree from FAMU’s College of Pharmacy in 1986. “I’m an entrepreneur right out of the block, and I bring that knowledge to NSU, which is very willing to accept that. Dr. Deziel, especially, is willing to listen and act.”

Alfonso is pleased with the diversity of experience of his fellow advisory board members, who work in community pharmacies (chains and independent), hospitals, the

pharmaceutical industry, manufacturing and distribution, and business. He anticipates that the board’s next meeting will be a brainstorming session, with at least part of the discussion focusing on changes in the profession.

“When I graduated from pharmacy school, pharmacists were a rare breed. You could get a job anywhere because there was high demand,” he explained. “Since then, more universities are producing more pharmacists who are seeking not just employment, but expanding their role in the medical world.”

A wonderful role model for upcoming pharmacists interested in entrepreneurial opportunities, Alfonso moved from traditional pharmacy practice into nontraditional roles in manufacturing and nutritional supplements early in his career. His most recent interest has him researching the medicinal properties of cannabinoids, the chemical components of marijuana. He became interested in medicinal cannabinoids several years ago, after his cousin's son experienced relief from frequent daily seizures by using medicinal marijuana. Besides their well-known uses as pain relievers and appetite stimulants, cannabinoids are being investigated for a wide variety of treatments for inflammatory disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and cancer treatment, among others.

In addition, Alfonso is reading up on crossbreeding and cloning strains of cannabis to increase their medicinal strength while minimizing their psychoactive effects. If all goes as planned, he will be at the forefront of research and manufacturing of medicinal cannabinoids in Florida.

"This is going to be one of the biggest things," he predicted. "Pharmacists need to know about this." That includes the NSU pharmacy students who visit his plant as part of their advanced pharmacy practice experiential rotation schedule to learn manufacturing and quality control of medicines and supplements. He also schools them in what he sees as the bright future of medicinal cannabinoids. "When they walk out of my rotation, they know," said Alfonso. "We run them through a whole process on cannabis."

The son of Cuban parents who came to the United States in 1954, Alfonso has always been attracted to the business side of pharmacy. After graduation, he started his career working in retail pharmacies. Within 10 years, Alfonso rose to the rank of director of pharmacy at UnitedHealthcare, overseeing pharmacies and urgent care centers. After suffering drug and alcohol addiction, he took a nine-year leave from pharmacy to build a dietary supplement business.



**Anthony Alfonso, R.Ph., M.B.A. (95), chair,  
Dean's Advisory Board**

Having now been clean for 18 years, Alfonso is frank about the dangers of drug use among pharmacists and is quick to share his experience with student pharmacists. In the spirit of paying it forward, Alfonso recently spoke to 250 pharmacy students about the danger of drug addiction in their profession, providing information on support systems that exist for students or practitioners who find themselves in trouble.

Alfonso lost a considerable amount of money in a bad business deal several years ago. Anxious and unable to sleep one night, he turned on the television and saw a group of children with Down syndrome, which put his personal troubles in perspective. Two weeks later, he



**Besides their well-known uses as pain relievers and appetite stimulants, cannabinoids are being investigated for a wide variety of treatments for inflammatory disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and cancer treatment, among others.**

incorporated a new business, which soon grew from 1 employee in a room to more than 500 employees working in a 215,000-square-foot manufacturing facility.

In 2014, Alfonso was the winner of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Top Minority Business Award in the Executive of the Year category. He was also a 2014 finalist for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the manufacturing category.

In 2015, Alfonso sold his vitamin production business, Nutri-Force, to the Vitamin Shoppe chain for \$85 million. Announcing the deal with Alfonso's company, Vitamin Shoppe CEO Tony Truesdale praised the Nutri-Force management team and the quality of its products, including soft-gel capsules, which had previously been considered almost impossible to produce in the high humidity of South Florida.

But success is not all about hard work and making money. "If you ask me, here's the most important thing in building

a business: I never missed a single one of my daughters' games," said Alfonso. His daughter Megan will be taking her pharmacy board examinations in 2016, and Alfonso hopes she will go into business with him. "I would love to teach her," he said. "She's savvy, and she's a negotiator."

The feeling is mutual. "Plan A has always been a family business. I'm doing some research on (cannabinoids) now," Megan said. "I can't wait to see what we can do together to further the field."

Michele, Alfonso's other daughter, is a fifth-grade history teacher in Miami; but, over the years, she has also worked in her father's business in advertising and in event planning. "He had high expectations of us, so I definitely had to fulfill that, and he taught me my work ethic," she said. "He's a very hard worker. When he sets his mind to something, he does it. But it's always fun." 🍷

# Tenacious Student Driven by a Purpose

By Ellen Wolfson Valladares

**O**ne might wonder how Nour Samra, a class of 2017 Pharm.D. student, does it all. She is consistently at the top of her class, the recipient of numerous scholarships, the president of the NSU chapter of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA), an intern at Target Pharmacy, and more. To find the answer, one must first understand what truly drives Samra to lead, achieve, and succeed.

Samra's path to the NSU College of Pharmacy (COP) was anything but ordinary. She was born in Wichita, Kansas, but spent most of her young life in Miramar, Florida. Then, in her last year of high school, her family decided to move back to its native country, Syria, living in Damascus for six years until the conflict there escalated. In the summer of 2012, her parents made the difficult decision to return to Florida, and the family left Damascus just two days before the war caused the airport to close.

For Samra, the move meant leaving the pharmacy program in which she was enrolled at Arab International University, even though she was close to graduating. Back in the United States, she looked for a way to finish what she had started. "I was passionate about pharmacy in Syria, and I was willing to do whatever it took," she explained. "I knew NSU had a pharmacy program, but it was discouraging at first because the school couldn't take most of my credits."

Samra was determined to get into NSU's COP as quickly as possible, and although it should have taken four semesters to complete her remaining prerequisites, she completed 60 credit hours in only two semesters, having to enroll in two different universities to avoid maximum enrollment policies. "When I'm determined about something and excited, I get a little delusional. But I did it," she said. "And I only got one B. Other than that, I got straight As."

She took the PCAT entrance exam and interviewed with NSU even before she had completed the required classes. "I was so lucky to be given a chance," Samra said. "When I got the phone call that I'd been accepted, I literally began to cry."

Samra started the Pharm.D. program in the fall of 2013 and has not slowed down since. She is in the top 5 percent of her class and takes on numerous leadership roles. In addition to being president of the SNPhA, she is a student board member on the Broward County Pharmacy Association, vice president of Rho Chi, a student ambassador in the Dean's Ambassador Program, a peer mentor, treasurer of the Muslim Association of Students in Health Care, and more. She has also been awarded numerous prestigious scholarships, including the Tylenol Future Care Scholarship, the Kroger Endowment Scholarship, the Richard and Hannah Stern Endowment Scholarship, the Publix Endowment Scholarship, and the Walgreens Diversity Advancement Award.

Over the years, Samra has applied for more than 60 scholarships and encourages her fellow students to do the same, not only to defray costs but also to open up more opportunities. The scholarships, honors, and awards have helped her take full advantage of all NSU has to offer. “NSU has polished me significantly,” she admitted. “One thing the college focuses on is patient counseling and care, and that is a huge perk for me. Everything I’m involved in has developed me as a person and a leader. I’ve grown a lot. It’s nice having these opportunities.”

Michelle A. Clark, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, has worked closely with Samra as the SNPhA faculty adviser and says Samra is an exemplary student with a bright future. “I have gotten to know Nour on multiple levels. She has the warmest personality, always has a smile on her face, and is very professional,” Clark said. “She is a natural leader with innate characteristics that enable her to stand out and be effective. I consider her to be one of the future leaders of the pharmacy profession.”

Retelling her story and expressing her appreciation for all NSU has done for her, Samra recently presented to the Dean’s Advisory Board. “Nour is an amazing student who possesses a wonderful spirit and a tremendous work ethic,” said Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D. “Her presentation to the Dean’s Advisory Board was moving and inspirational, leading one of the advisers to exclaim that we should bottle and sell her winning personality. Nour’s sincerity, gratitude, and compassion are a combination that will help her make a difference in this world.”

For Samra, all the hard work has a purpose: to ultimately help others who need it. “When you experience war, it gives you a higher appreciation for everything,” she said. “I was the same as everybody else. I was entitled. I grew up in the United States.”

The Pharm.D. student said, “I never valued things as much



**Everything I’m involved  
in has developed me as  
a person and a leader.**

**I’ve grown a lot. It’s nice  
having these opportunities.”**

—Nour Samra ('17)

as I do now. When you have motivation, it changes the way you view things. One of the reasons I wanted to continue in health care is so I can go back and help the refugee population. Even in the United States, people don’t realize how many underserved communities exist. Once you have that passion and realize, ‘I’m not doing this for myself, I’m doing it for other people,’ it gives you great energy.” 🍷

# Scholarships Help Students at Palm Beach Campus

By Arnie Rosenberg

**“**I am very appreciative of your support of my education,” wrote second-year student Phuong Huynh to Raj Mantena, R.Ph., the pharmacist-turned-entrepreneur whose \$50,000 contribution recently endowed a second scholarship at the NSU College of Pharmacy’s Palm Beach Campus. “Your generosity has inspired me to help others and to give back to the community,” she said. “I hope one day that I will be able to help students achieve their goals, just as you and Dr. Khanfar have helped me.”

That note embodies not only the intent, but also the spirit of the endowed scholarships established specifically for Palm Beach pharmacy students. “Some students come here and experience financial difficulties during the course of their studies,” explained Nile M. Khanfar, Ph.D., M.B.A., assistant dean at the Palm Beach Campus. “We ask the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus to help out, but we live in a very wealthy area. We needed to start doing something, so we started the funds.”

Khanfar not only got the scholarship fund established in 2014, but he also made the first contribution—\$12,000. With Mantena’s contribution and \$25,000 from Jesus Gil, president of Gil Pharmaceutical Corp., the endowments are well on their way. But Khanfar understands there’s more need, and he has his sights set higher. “We need a minimum of \$1 million,” he said. “If we invest that, and get \$50,000 a year, that’s five \$10,000 scholarships. Then we can help students and attract students specifically to Palm Beach.”

According to the college’s dean, Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., the Palm Beach endowed scholarships serve a dual purpose, as they not only help students in need but also create a new opportunity for giving. “Our distance campuses have different needs, and different donors might be



**“Your generosity has inspired me to help others and to give back to the community.”**

—Phuong Huynh ('18)



*Pictured (from left): Sarah E. Linn ('19); Nile M. Khanfar, Ph.D., assistant dean, Palm Beach Campus; Jane Clare Miller ('18); Mark Byrne ('19)*

interested,” she explained. “The original intent in setting them up was to provide a way to engage alumni, especially those from the distance campuses. We can tell them, ‘Your donation isn’t going to get lost in the bigger pool; your donation goes specifically to the campus you graduated from.’”

Specific Palm Beach scholarships can help in recruiting as well. While scholarships at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus serve a wide range of potential students, these funds will allow the college to tell applicants, “If you agree to go to the Palm Beach Campus, we can support your tuition in a better way than we can if you attend the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus,” Deziel said.

Moreover, boosting the Palm Beach endowed scholarships will help the college meet its goals in the university’s capital campaign, which was launched in January.

Khanfar is intent on continuing to build the scholarships for Palm Beach. “The minimum for an endowment is \$25,000, but the reality is that with \$25,000, if you invest it at 2 or 3 percent, how much money are you going to get? It’s really not much,” he explained. “I want to build these funds to \$50,000, and then to \$1 million, \$2 million, and \$3 million. I just want to help our students.” 🍷

**“Your donation isn’t  
going to get lost in  
the bigger pool;  
your donation goes  
specifically to  
the campus you  
graduated from.”**

—Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., dean

Visit us at  
[realizingpotential.nova.edu/give/](http://realizingpotential.nova.edu/give/)



# Shark Pride Homecoming Reunion

**O**n November 6, 2015, the college hosted its inaugural All Alumni Homecoming Reunion. Efforts were made to connect the more than 4,500 alumni worldwide and included identifying volunteers from each graduating class to act as class agents, who were charged with helping to recruit their colleagues for the reunion, as well as other college events. Because alumni were encouraged to bring guests, the event included many family members, friends of the college, and professional colleagues.

Everyone enjoyed drinks and appetizers as they reconnected with one another and with many of their favorite faculty members. Among the alumni present were David (Rick) Upsom, Pharm.D. ('93), who showed up with his 1993 student ID from Southeastern University of the Health Sciences. Also present were father-daughter alumni Steven Fass, Pharm.D. ('93), Jennifer (Fass) Gershman, Pharm.D. ('06), and Andrea (Fass) Levin, Pharm.D. ('09), who showcased how the college embraces family and continues to provide education to multiple generations.

The college's dean, Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., provided a heartfelt message to the group, thanking alumni, faculty and staff members, administrators, and friends for making the college the success it is today and for participating in the "Achieving Our Shared Legacy" strategic process. Highlighting the college's contribution to a transformative and innovative profession, Deziel challenged everyone to become more involved in moving the college toward its mission and strategic plan.

NSU's College of Pharmacy continues to be committed to establishing even more meaningful alumni outreach and connection. The fact that Isabelle Thony, Pharm.D. ('14),



2015 Alumni Homecoming Reunion—Lisa M. Deziel, Pharm.D., Ph.D., dean, and David Rick Upsom, Pharm.D. ('93), (showing student ID card to Deziel)

traveled three hours from Orlando, Florida, on a rainy Friday to attend was a tribute to the efforts made by both the college and its graduates to make the event successful. In addition, students in the Dean's Ambassador Program, who are selected to represent the college at its events and are committed to the college's success, were present to meet and greet alumni and participate in the reunion.

Planning for this year's All Alumni Homecoming Reunion, which will be held Friday, November 4, 2016, is already underway. Additional information will be posted on the college's website and via email communications. For more information on alumni news and events, or to become a class agent, please visit [pharmacy.nova.edu](http://pharmacy.nova.edu) or email [copalumni@nova.edu](mailto:copalumni@nova.edu). 🍷

# Donations made to the College of Pharmacy are used to promote student life and scholarships.

## College of Pharmacy Scholarship Funds

- Apotex Corp. Scholarship
- Broward County Pharmacy Association Scholarship
- Cardinal Health Scholarship
- CVS Caremark Charitable Trust, Inc. Scholarship
- CVS Hispanic Scholarship
- Foreman Endowed Scholarship
- Gil Pharmaceutical Endowed Scholarship Fund
- National Council for Prescription Drug Programs Foundation Scholarship
- Paul and Ellen Magalian Endowed Scholarship
- Publix Pharmacy Scholarship Endowment Fund
- Raj Mantena, R.Ph., Endowed Scholarship
- Richard and Hannah Stern Endowed Scholarship
- Sheila Tischenkel Pharmacy Endowed Scholarship
- Vernon Robinson, Sr. Changing Lives Memorial Scholarship
- Walgreens Nivia Santiago and Georgia Lehoczky Endowed Community Scholarship
- Walgreens Richard Ashworth Endowed Community Scholarship
- Walgreens Roy Ripak and Georgia Lehoczky Endowed Community Scholarship

For information on giving opportunities, contact Shannon Brown, director of development, [COPdonations@nova.edu](mailto:COPdonations@nova.edu), (954) 529-6776.

## The college recognizes the following lifetime donors:

### \$50,000 and Above

- Anonymous
- Ruben Berrocal
- Community Foundation of Broward
- CVS Charitable Trust, Inc.
- CVS Pharmacy, Inc.
- Droguería Betances, Inc.
- Hunt & Gross, P.A.
- Institute for the Advancement of Community Pharmacy
- Nell McMillan Lewis\*
- Frederick Lippman
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- Robert L. McGuire\*
- Royal Dames of Cancer Research, Inc.\* ▲
- Standard Process, Inc.
- Enrique A. Nieves Vásquez
- Volkron Research LLC
- Walgreens Company (now d/b/a Walgreens Boots Alliance)

### \$25,000-\$49,999

- A2 Milk Company
- Anita and Jesus Gil
- Gil Pharmaceutical Corp., Ponce, Puerto Rico
- Life Extension
- Publix Super Markets, Inc.

### \$10,000-\$24,999

- Apotex Corp.
- Cardinal Health

- Children's Leukemia Research Association, Inc.
- Lisa M. Deziel
- Janssen Scientific Affairs, LLC
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- National Association of Chain Drug Stores, Inc.
- Neolpharma, Inc.
- Emerson Oberlin
- Target Corporation
- Walgreens Company, Puerto Rico
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- Wyeth-Ayerst Pharmaceuticals
- Zeneca Pharmaceuticals

### \$1,500-\$9,999

- Acai Associates
- Alpha Zeta Omega Pharmaceutical Fraternity
- Lillian Arce de Malavé ('01)
- Nilda E. Banchs ('01)
- Baptist Medical Arts Pharmacy
- Barry & Judy Silverman Foundation ▲
- Broward County Pharmacy Association
- Deborah A. Brown ('01)
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- Carsten Evans
- Farmacia el Tuque
- Richard Finkel ('92)
- Florida Pharmacy Foundation
- Steven Harris

- Alicia Harvey ('15)
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- Neurological Research Institute, LLC
- Daniel Mahiques Nieves
- Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation
- Pfizer, Inc.
- PPSC
- PRESENT e-Learning Systems, LLC
- Venessa Price-Goodnow ('98)
- Roche Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
- Judy and Barry Silverman ▲
- Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, Inc.
- Sunbeam Television Corp.
- Super Farmacia Rina
- Super Farmacia Vanga
- University of Miami
- Amy Yasko

\*Rumbaugh-Goodwin Institute for Cancer Research

▲ Member of Fellow's Society: Shark Circle (university-wide cumulative giving of \$1,000,000+)

# Alumni News



2015 All Alumni Homecoming Reunion group



From left:  
Alexandra Pérez, Pharm.D. ('05), with son Nicolas;  
Shirin Madzhidova, Pharm.D. ('13); and Maumer Drebo,  
Pharm.D. ('14)



From left:  
Sara Eltaki, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy  
practice; Andrea (Fass) Levin, Pharm.D., ('09); and  
Steven Fass, Pharm.D. ('93)

# SHARKS Alumni Society

The College of Pharmacy (COP) is establishing the COP Sharks Rx Alumni Society. The society's overall purpose is to help support the college through the knowledge, skills, financial resources, and participation of its alumni; communicate the college's goals and achievements to others; and promote a spirit of unity and investing in the future of pharmacy education among alumni and friends. Alumni networks, whether they meet face to face, online, or through virtual communications, are a critical link between alumni and the NSU COP, while providing opportunities for alumni to maintain an active role in the life of the college by

- establishing and maintaining a closer connection between the college, alumni, and friends
- advancing the interests and welfare of the college and its stakeholders
- promoting alumni participation in the development and advancement of the institution through financial support
- providing opportunities for alumni to network
- engaging with the college in diverse and innovative ways

The Sharks Rx Alumni Society will provide programs that attract a diverse group of alumni while maintaining a meaningful connection. The society will be established based on a variety of different factors, including

- affinity with a specific program, such as the Medicinal Garden
- professional industry
- geographic concentration
- entrepreneurship
- innovation
- stage of life (recent graduate or seasoned professional)

For more information, or to discuss your interest in participating in this endeavor, please contact us at [copalumni@nova.edu](mailto:copalumni@nova.edu).

We value your ongoing involvement in “Achieving Our Shared Legacy.”

# Alumni News

## 1997

**Christopher G. Lynch**, Pharm.D., M.Ed., recently accepted the position of director of experiential education at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Bradenton, Florida. He previously served as a commander in the U.S. Navy's Medical Service Corps.

## 2001

**Antonia Zapantis**, Pharm.D., M.S., is the new pharmacy clinical coordinator at Delray Medical Center in Delray Beach, Florida. She previously held the position of director of experiential education at NSU's College of Pharmacy.

## 2004

**Nicholas Mordwinkin**, Pharm.D., recently accepted the position of senior manager of corporate strategy at Ultragenyx Pharmaceutical, Inc., in the San Francisco Bay area of California. He is the cofounder of Curium.

## 2005

**Christian Buettner**, Pharm.D., BCPS, earned his M.B.A. degree from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in 2015.

**Kalumi Ayala Rivera**, Pharm.D., has been selected by the Colegio de Farmacéuticos de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Pharmacist Association) as the recipient of the 2015 Distinguished Young Pharmacist Award. This award acknowledges young pharmacists for their individual excellence and outstanding contributions to the pharmacy association and the community.

## 2007

**Elizabeth (Gelber) Sherman**, Pharm.D., and her husband, Benjamin, welcomed their first child, Lily Celeste, in February.

## 2009

**Danielle (Talleri) Land**, Pharm.D., accepted the position of clinical pharmacist practitioner at UNC Health Care in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in December 2015. She previously served as the clinical pharmacy coordinator at South Bay Hospital in Sun City Center, Florida.

## 2010

**Puneet Kulhari**, Pharm.D., and his wife, Vibha, welcomed a baby girl last December.

## 2014

**Carlos González Mercado**, Pharm.D., has joined the counterterrorism and emergency coordination staff as the program manager/emergency coordinator for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

**Scott L. Kjelson**, Pharm.D., presented at the Johns Hopkins Healthcare Business Association in Baltimore, Maryland, in March and was awarded Best Speaker of the Day. The conference highlighted different perspectives within the health care industry, and Kjelson's topic, "What is the ideal state of health care? What role does industrialization play?" discussed the pharmacists' role as health care innovators.

## 2015

**Antonio DeLeon**, Pharm.D., was promoted to pharmacy manager at a CVS Health location in South Florida last October.

**Sheila Montalvo**, Pharm.D., presented a coauthored abstract, "Expanding Primary Care Treatment of Hepatitis C Through Telemedicine," at the Infectious Disease Society of America's IDWeek 2015 held last October in San Diego, California. Montalvo served as the project's primary author, which reflects a collaboration between the NSU College of Pharmacy, the University of Miami, and the University of South Florida. **Elizabeth Sherman**, Pharm.D. ('07), assistant professor of pharmacy practice, served as one of the abstract's authors.



Members of the class of 2015 prior to the commencement ceremony

## Commencement 2015 Overview

The 220-member Pharm.D. class of 2015 participated in the annual commencement ceremony at NSU's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus on May 19, 2015. The event was held at the Arena at the Don Taft University Center and marked the first year commencement ceremonies were held on campus. Parents and guests were able to enjoy the beauty of the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus while celebrating their loved one's achievements.

Thirty-two class of 2015 students secured first-year post-graduate residencies in hospitals and health systems from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Medford, Oregon. Additionally,

Kyati Desai, Pharm.D., received an industry fellowship at Rutgers/Bayer Consumer Care Product Development in Morristown, New Jersey, while Alexander Shaw, Pharm.D., received a critical care/nephrology research fellowship at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

On May 20, during the 2016 commencement ceremony, 231 Pharm.D. and 2 Ph.D. students will participate in commencement activities on campus. The class of 2016 represents the diversity of the college, with students from 15 U.S. states and 7 countries. We look forward to posting updates on them in our upcoming publications. 📄

# Pharmacy News

## Ph.D. Program Celebrates Inaugural Graduates

By Ellen Wolfson Valladares

**S**ince the College of Pharmacy (COP) launched its Ph.D. program in 2010, it has continued to grow and currently boasts 43 students that hail from around the country and the world. David Mastropietro, Ph.D., now an assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences at NSU COP, became the first to earn his doctoral degree in drug development (pharmaceutics) in 2014. Recently, two additional graduates—Ahmad Nour and Diena Almasri—both of Saudi Arabia, received their Ph.D.s after completing the social and administrative pharmacy sequence.

“It’s a proud moment to see our first graduates completing the program,” said Peter Gannett, Ph.D., associate dean of research and graduate education, who is responsible for overseeing the Ph.D. program. “The program is growing and developing. And it’s still in its infancy. We are looking to keep expanding our research capabilities and gain recognition on a national level.”

Gannett explained that the Ph.D. program includes three sequences: molecular medicine and pharmacogenomics; drug development (pharmaceutics); and social and administrative pharmacy. The doctoral students are evenly balanced among the sequences and are involved in cutting-edge research at NSU.

“What makes our program unique is the people who comprise it, the research they are doing, and the expertise of the faculty members we have,” Gannett said. For instance, various research projects are being conducted on the causes, predictors, and possible treatments for breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and autism.

Mastropietro, who worked as a pharmacist for 13 years, took advantage of the Ph.D. program to “see what was on the other side of the fence.” His doctoral work included researching abuse deterrent formulations (ADFs), or drug designs that would help prevent drugs from being abused through crushing, snorting, or injection. “The abuse of prescription drugs is a big problem, and there are ways to prevent that type of abuse,” he said.

In fact, Mastropietro was a coinventor in one international patent application (PCT), six U.S. provisional patent applications (patent pending), and nine NSU invention disclosures for the drug designs he has been researching. Additionally, he has seen interest from pharmaceutical companies in his product. After receiving his Ph.D., Mastropietro said he was thrilled to be offered the chance to teach at NSU and is enjoying continuing his research, working with students, and sharing his personal experiences as a pharmacist.

Meanwhile, Nour and Almasri have headed back to Saudi Arabia to share their knowledge. “They were here as part of a wonderful program between NSU and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, which provides scholarships for Saudi Arabian students to study at NSU and then bring their expertise back to their country, to help build an infrastructure to train their own pharmacists,” Gannett said. “We are working to create more programs like this with other countries, too. It’s a win-win situation. They come here to be trained so they can improve pharmacy education and industry in their country, and we host students who conduct incredible research. It works on both sides.”



**Peter Gannett, Ph.D.,** associate dean of research and graduate education, center of front row, poses with Ph.D. students.

**Jordan Spaw, Ph.D. candidate,** spends time speaking with Peter Gannett, Ph.D.

As for the future of the Ph.D. program, Gannett said his goal is to keep it growing and move it to the next level. He hopes to add more faculty members, expand research, and delve into interprofessional research with NSU's other colleges. He also is excited about the prospect of participating with NSU's new Center for Collaborative Research.

"Biological problems don't just occur from one perspective. The human being is a complicated system," Gannett said. "By collaborating with others in medicine, neuroscience, and even oceanography, we can explore unlimited possibilities." 🍷





# Pharmacy News

## Students Benefit from Travel-Study Opportunities

Students at the college continue to enjoy the opportunity to travel with faculty members and study the practice of pharmacy in another country.

Last June, 22 students were accompanied by Ana María Castejón, Ph.D., associate professor, and Elizabeth Shepherd, Pharm.D., M.B.A., assistant dean, as they studied for two weeks at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. Under the tutelage of faculty members at Comenius University, students studied the Slovakian health care system, phytotherapy, herbal food supplements, herb-drug interactions, pharmacognosy, molecular modeling and drug policies, and legislation.

In addition, students visited hospital and community pharmacies, botanical and medicinal gardens, wholesalers, and distribution centers and engaged with Slovak

pharmacists and students. The travel study concluded with visits to Vienna, Austria, and Florence and Rome, Italy. This life-changing experience helps students and faculty members appreciate the diversity of various health care systems and the opportunities it provides for collaboration and interprofessional exchange. While in Slovakia, Shepherd and Castejón provided lectures to students and faculty members at Comenius University on medication therapy management.

This is the second year students have had the opportunity to travel and study with faculty members in Slovakia. In addition, over the past four years, students and faculty members from Comenius University in Bratislava have attended NSU COP and studied in the Pharm.D. program or participated in research with faculty members.



Left, students prepare to tour a health clinic in Bratislava with Elizabeth Shepherd, Pharm.D., M.B.A., assistant dean (fourth from right in blue shirt).

This year, students will travel to Spain with Shepherd and Jesús Sánchez, Ph.D., associate professor and a native of Granada, Spain, to study with faculty members in Salamanca, Spain, and visit pharmaceutical sites in Salamanca, Madrid, and Granada. Past travel study programs have visited China, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Puerto Rico, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. 🇸🇰

Below, COP students review specimens in a lab at Comenius University.

Bottom, a group takes time out to enjoy the Slovak countryside.



## Publications and Presentations

**Peter Gannett**, Ph.D., associate dean of research and graduate education, coauthored a paper, “Selection of Single-Stranded DNA Molecular Recognition Elements Against Exotoxin A Using a Novel Decoy-SELEX Method and Sensitive Detection of Exotoxin A in Human Serum,” in the October 2015 issue of *BioMed Research International*.

**Stephanie Gernant**, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice, coauthored a paper, “Development and Evaluation of a Multidisciplinary Controlled Substances Committee Within a Patient-Centered Medical Home,” in the November/December 2015 issue of the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*.

**Anastasios Lymperopoulos**, Ph.D., FAHA, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, together with Pharm.D. student **Katie A. McCrink** ('18), published a research editorial, “The Clinical Implications of Beta1-Adrenoceptor Pharmacogenetics for Heart Failure Therapy,” in the July 1–August 28, 2015, online issue of *The Pharmacogenomics Journal*.

**Faculty members and students** from the college presented eight scientific posters at the 2015 American College of Clinical Pharmacy Global Conference, in San Francisco, California.

## Promotions

**Anastasios Lymperopoulos**, Ph.D., FAHA, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences

**Hamid Omidian**, Ph.D., professor of pharmaceutical sciences

## New Faculty Members

**Sarah Alameddine**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice

**Stephanie Gernant**, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice

**Genevieve M. Hale**, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice

**Tina Joseph**, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice

**Julie I. Marin**, Pharm.D., assistant professor/director of experiential education and pharmacy practice

**Ashley A. Mathew**, Pharm.D., instructor/academic facilitator of pharmaceutical sciences

**Margarita Miranda**, J.D., academic facilitator/instructor of sociobehavioral and administrative pharmacy

# Pharmacy News

## Employee Milestones Commemorated

Each year, NSU recognizes employees who have reached milestone years of service. This year, the college is proud to celebrate the following employees who have contributed to the growth of the College of Pharmacy through their ongoing dedication.

### 20 YEARS

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**Graciela Armayor**, Pharm.D., M.S., assistant professor of sociobehavioral and administrative pharmacy and director of curriculum development, received her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Florida College of Pharmacy in 1987 and a Master of Science degree in Health Professions Education from Nova Southeastern University in 2006. She completed a joint clinical residency in internal medicine/cardiology at the University of Florida and the Gainesville Florida Veterans Administration Hospital in 1988. She is also a board-certified pharmacotherapy specialist since 1996. Armayor currently coordinates and teaches the Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System courses to first-year students. Her research focuses on pharmacy workforce issues and the development and evaluation of innovative instructional and assessment methods for health professions education.

*(Tampa Campus)*

### 15 YEARS

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**Jolanta M. Czerwinska**, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences and director of educational technology, received her Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Gdansk, Poland. She designs and develops computer applications used by the college and supports the university's vision of the use of technology in education. Czerwinska's research interests include educational technology, web application development, mobile app development, learning theories, database management, and instructional design.

*(Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus)*

## 10 YEARS



**Nile M. Khanfar, Ph.D., M.B.A.**  
assistant dean and associate  
professor of sociobehavioral  
and administrative pharmacy  
*(Palm Beach Campus)*



**Kyle M. May, M.S.**  
administrative assistant  
*(Palm Beach Campus)*

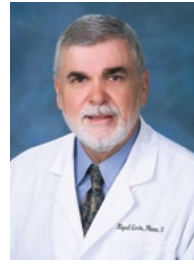


**Blanca I. Ortíz, Pharm.D.**  
assistant dean and assistant professor  
of pharmacy practice  
*(Puerto Rico Regional Campus)*



**Jorge Varela, Pharm.D.**  
academic facilitator/instructor  
of pharmaceutical sciences  
*(Palm Beach Campus)*

## 5 YEARS



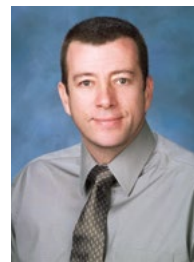
**Miguel Acosta, Pharm.D.**  
pharmacy manager, NSU  
Pharmacy Clinic  
*(Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus)*



**Frances M. Colón-Pratts, Pharm.D.**  
clinical assistant professor of  
pharmacy practice  
*(Puerto Rico Regional Campus)*



**Ioana Popovici, Ph.D.**  
assistant professor of sociobehavioral  
and administrative pharmacy  
*(Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus)*




**Jesús Sánchez, Ph.D.**  
associate professor of sociobehavioral  
and administrative pharmacy  
*(Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus)*

# Pharmacy News

## M.S. in Pharmaceutical Affairs Established

In the fall of 2016, the Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Affairs degree program will be available to students. This two-year graduate program is designed for individuals interested in the acquisition of knowledge and skills associated with pharmaceutical agents. The degree will prepare students for positions in academia, managerial or sales positions in the pharmaceutical industry, contract research organizations, managed care organizations, health care systems, and government agencies.

Graduates will be able to critically analyze issues related to the production and use of pharmaceuticals and act as leaders in the field. The degree program will also act as a bridge for students interested in additional preparation prior to pursuing a Pharm.D. or Ph.D. degree. Information on applying to the master's program is available at [pharmacy.nova.edu](http://pharmacy.nova.edu). 


## Apotex Corp. Offers Student Internships

Apotex Corp.—the largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company, with U.S. headquarters in Weston, Florida—in collaboration with Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy (NSU COP), provided an opportunity for students to pursue internships in regulatory affairs, marketing, or product-formulation development.

Five students from the class of 2017—Charles Aljon Agabin, Leah Bensimon, Mary Obeng, Nirav Patel, and Adam Steinberg—were awarded internships in the summer and fall of 2015 and were able to get hands-on, behind-the-scenes experience of how the company supports the profession of pharmacy and communities in which its facilities are located. According to Kiran Krishnan, Ph.D., vice president of U.S. regulatory affairs at Apotex, COP interns provided useful and substantial recommendations to the team, which valued their contributions and input.



Adam Steinberg ('17), with members of the Apotex Corp. team

“The internship at Apotex has been a truly rewarding experience, both personally and professionally,” said Steinberg after he completed his internship. “Words cannot fully express my gratitude to Apotex and NSU COP for providing me this opportunity to learn the regulatory side of the pharmaceutical industry.” 

# Top 10 Pride Points

- 1** The college, established in 1987, was the first college of pharmacy in South Florida.
- 2** The college has campuses in Fort Lauderdale/Davie, Palm Beach, and Puerto Rico.
- 3** Pharmacy students can earn concurrent master's degrees in business administration, public health, and biomedical informatics.
- 4** From July 1 through December 31, 2015, the college received approximately \$750,000 in sponsored awards, enabling our faculty members and students to conduct ongoing funded research in areas such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, brain disease, autism, psychopharmacology, abuse-deterrent medications, sublingual emergency medications, adherence, and compliance, with a focus on diverse patient populations.
- 5** The college supports more than 20 professional student organizations that provide opportunities for leadership development at the three campuses.
- 6** The college's alumni hold leadership positions worldwide within the profession.
- 7** The college was the first at NSU to receive patents, including two U.S. patents and two international patents.
- 8** The college recently started the only PGY2 pharmacy residency in Transitions of Care on the East Coast, the first pharmacy fellowship in Accountable Care in the nation, and a joint PGY1 residency in Community Pharmacy specializing in oncology and immunologic disorders with a local specialty pharmacy.
- 9** Health Professions Division Chancellor's Scholarships in the amount of \$240,000 were awarded to 28 students. Additionally, more than \$30,000 in various individual and corporate scholarships have already been awarded during the 2015–2016 academic year.
- 10** Ongoing contributions and partnerships have helped the college provide the support and involvement critical in executing its mission and helping the college continue to develop the nation's most promising pharmacy graduates for roles as future leaders in global health care.

# NSU News of Note




Johannes W. Vieweg, M.D., FACS

## College of Allopathic Medicine Names Founding Dean

Johannes W. Vieweg, M.D., FACS, was named as the founding dean of NSU's College of Allopathic Medicine, which is aiming to welcome its first class of M.D. candidates in 2018, once it receives appropriate accreditation.


Vieweg joins NSU from the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, where he served as the Wayne and Marti Huizenga Endowed Research Scholar's Chair, director of the UF Prostate Disease Center, and chairman of the Florida Prostate Cancer Advisory Council. "Dr. Vieweg has a stellar reputation as a physician leader and researcher, and with his guidance, NSU's College of Allopathic Medicine will be home to a strong M.D. program that complements NSU's existing D.O. program in the College of Osteopathic Medicine and helps meet the growing need of physicians both in our community and on a regional and national level," said

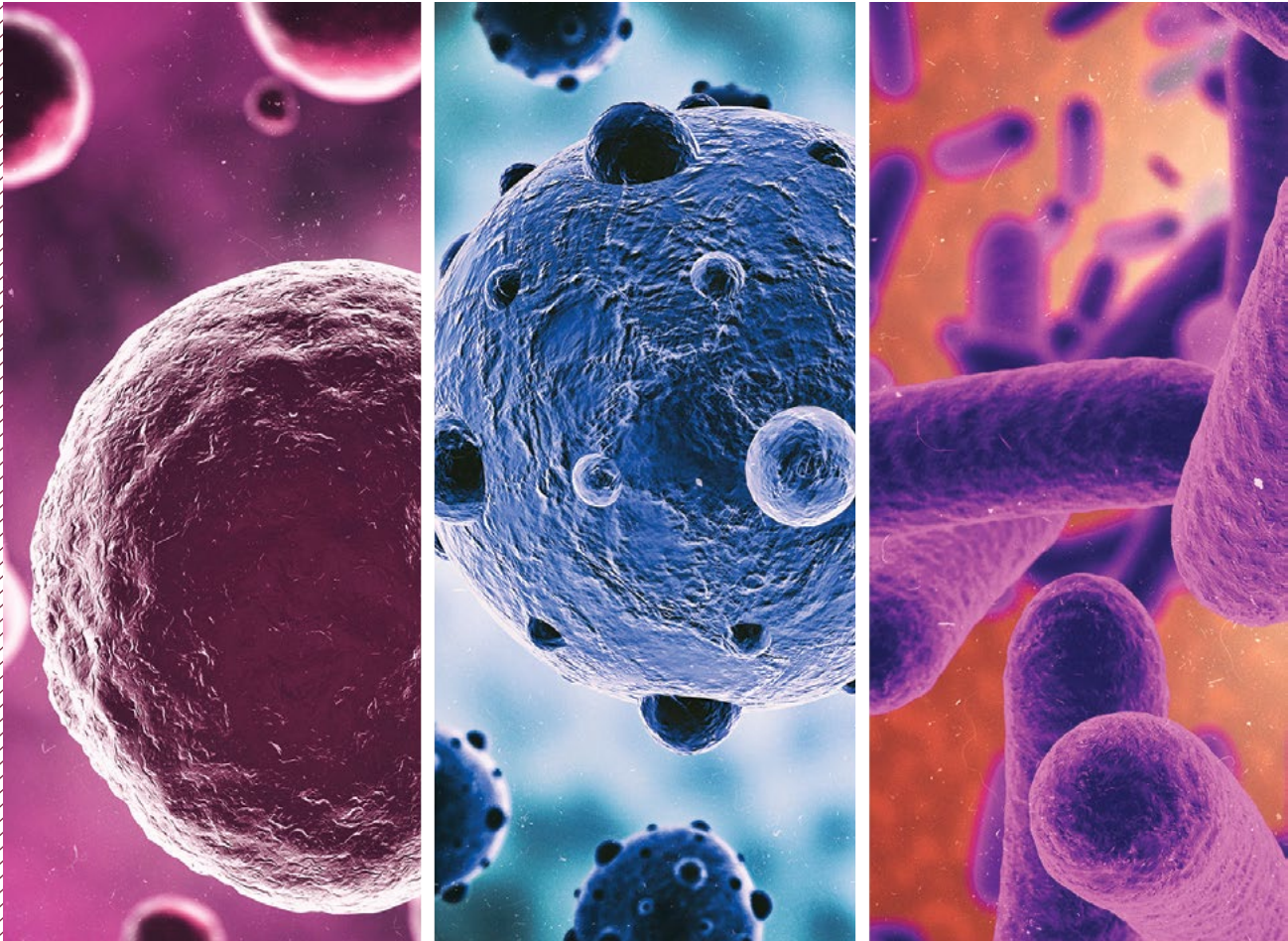
George L. Hanbury II, NSU president and chief executive officer.

The College of Allopathic Medicine will be the eighth college in NSU's Health Professions Division, which includes the colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Dental Medicine, Nursing, Health Care Sciences, Medical Sciences, Pharmacy, and Optometry. 

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## Title V Grant Targets STEM Education

NSU received a \$2.6-million award from the U.S. Department of Education that will target science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education for Hispanic students. The grant will be used to expand baccalaureate educational opportunities in STEM programs for Hispanic or Latino students and students from ethnically diverse populations. NSU is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. This award, which is the third such grant received by NSU in as many years, will bring \$525,000 in its first year, with an anticipated total of \$2.6 million over the five-year project. Over the past several years, NSU has received more than \$9 million in Title V grants. 



## **NSU Cell Therapy Institute Joins Research Center**

The university is at the forefront of conducting pioneering cell-based biomedical research with the launch of the new NSU Cell Therapy Institute—an international collaboration with prominent medical research scientists from Sweden’s world-renowned Karolinska Institutet. The organization is globally recognized for its Nobel Assembly, which annually awards the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine. The institute will be located in NSU’s 215,000-square-foot Center for Collaborative Research (CCR), which is one of the largest and most advanced research facilities in Florida.

The NSU Cell Therapy Institute is dedicated to the discovery and development of innovative, translational biomedical research that focuses on the potential of cell-based therapies to prevent, treat, and cure life-threatening and debilitating diseases. The institute is accelerating the advancement of next-generation approaches to precision medicine, which includes targeted immunotherapy and regenerative medicine with an initial focus on targeting cancers, heart disease, and disorders causing blindness. 🍷



## NSU College of Pharmacy Campus Locations



# It's Time to Get Published!

Tell us your stories and see your name in *NSU Sharks Rx*. Please let us know if you have

- been promoted or accepted a new professional position
- had a major article or book published
- been appointed to a committee or board of directors
- conducted research
- received any special awards or recognition

Announcements about births or recently deceased alumni are also encouraged.

We want to know about your achievements, so please email your information to [copalumni@nova.edu](mailto:copalumni@nova.edu) by November 11, 2016. Please include a high-resolution, original photo in a JPG or TIF format.

We look forward to hearing from you.