

Notre Dame offers prescription for shortage of pharmacists

Pharmacists do a whole lot more than fill prescriptions, and there's greater demand for them now than ever before.

So the timing could hardly have been better for the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, which will welcome the first students to its new School of Pharmacy in the fall.

The opening of the school comes as aging baby boomers rely on more prescription drugs, new pharmaceutical products abound and health care challenges grow more complex. "Many times, people think of pharmacists only from the standpoint that they fill prescriptions," said Dr. Anne Y.F. Lin, dean of the School of Pharmacy. "But the realities of what pharmacists can do in terms of positively impacting the health of patients is much more than just filling prescriptions."

They counsel and educate patients about safely and effectively using prescriptions, and they serve key roles in public health by, for example, promoting and administering vaccines.

Demand for pharmacists, Dr. Lin said, has grown at community pharmacies, medical centers and other health care facilities.

"The reality is we need pharmacists who understand public health issues and are able to engage in that so they can, in fact, have an impact on the health of the community at large," Dr. Lin said.

Notre Dame's School of Pharmacy becomes only the second in the state - the University of Maryland also has a pharmacy school - and the first established on the campus of a women's college in the United States. The School of Pharmacy also becomes the college's first professional degree program.

The program, open to women and men, will focus on leadership development and health care across the lifespan with an emphasis on learning through experience.

The school has received more than 500 applicants for 70 slots, Dr. Lin said, and projected annual tuition is \$29,680.

Because of the planned small class size – classes at some pharmacy schools exceed 200 students – the faculty will be able to mentor students, Dr. Lin said. The school will eventually have a faculty and staff of 46, she said.

“In program sizes like this, students do not get lost,” she said. “We expect there’s going to be a very good relationship between faculty and students from a mentoring standpoint, and that’s what we’re here to do.”

Students, who will earn a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, will be expected to apply what they learn in community and clinical settings.

Dr. Lin said the program aims not only to train pharmacists but equip students to become leaders in their profession and serve a diverse patient population.

The School of Pharmacy stresses ethics, public health and the complex world of medicine and health care far beyond Notre Dame’s North Baltimore campus.

In December, for instance, the school played host to a forum on the rising cost of health care, prescriptions, health insurance and the role of the pharmacist. At the forum, Dr. Lin told of skyrocketing health costs, 45 million Americans without health insurance and inadequate investment in prevention and public health.

Dr. Lin knows of what she speaks. She brings two decades of experience in pharmacy education.

She came to Notre Dame from Midwestern University in Glendale, Ariz., where she had served as dean and professor of the College of Pharmacy – Glendale since 2004. Before that, she was the founding chair of the department of pharmacy practice at Wilkes University’s Nesbitt School of Pharmacy & Nursing. She has also served as director of the Doctor of Pharmacy program at College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions at St. John’s University in New York.

Dr. Lin earned her Doctor of Pharmacy degree and Bachelor of Science in pharmacy from College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions at St. John’s University. She

also completed a clinical pharmacy residency program at the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals in Richmond.

“I took this position at the College of Notre Dame,” Dr. Lin said, “because I think my vision for the school is very much in alignment with the vision of the college.”