

## UC San Diego to Graduate First Doctor of Pharmacy Class on June 3

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**S** *Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences is Southern California's only Public Pharmacy School*

Trained to meet the needs of patients, and to become leaders in drug development and delivery in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, the first class of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) will graduate on Saturday, June 3. The 24 members of the School's charter class – 16 women and eight men – will walk across the stage at the Price Ballroom on UCSD's La Jolla campus to receive their Doctor of Pharmacy degrees at the 10 a.m. ceremony.

"Pharmacy practice has moved beyond the mortar-and-pestle approach of the past," said Palmer Taylor, Ph.D., founding dean of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science and Associate Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences at UCSD. "These outstanding graduates have been trained to have a detailed understanding of drug actions and interactions. Soon, human genome information that predicts how an individual will respond to treatment will become an essential component of pharmacy practice, leading to customized therapies for patients. These graduates will be at the forefront of developing and managing these new drug regimens."

The charter class entered the new Skaggs School in 2002 and is the first to complete the four-year program leading to the doctorate in pharmacy (Pharm.D.) Twenty-three members of the class received their undergraduate degrees from California institutions. The graduates are going on to a wide variety of careers – most staying in California, which has one of the nation's largest shortage of practicing pharmacists.

Over half are going on to clinical residencies to get the additional specialized training required for hospital pharmacy, health system provider or faculty teaching positions. Eleven are starting careers in pharmacy practice, in positions ranging from community pharmacies to appointments at Children's Hospital and Health Center, San Diego, the UCSD Ambulatory Care Center, and Kaiser Permanente.

***Student Pioneers***

As the second public pharmacy school in the state, and the only public pharmacy school in Southern California, the Skaggs School of Pharmacy attracted a stellar class of students from a variety of backgrounds.

Isabel Mactal, District Pharmacy Supervisor for Walgreens Co., has had the opportunity to work with students from the Skaggs School of Pharmacy, many of whom will be working in Walgreens' summer internship program for pharmacists.

"The quality of the students from UCSD, their intelligence and leadership qualities, set them apart," Mactal said. "I think these graduates will be prepared to work and succeed anywhere, whether retail, academic or clinical settings."

The School's four-year program leads to a doctorate in pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree and offers unique classroom and clinical training in conjunction with UCSD's School of Medicine. Second-year pharmacy students at UCSD share classes with the first-year medical students, and in their fourth year, pharmacy students participate in clinical training alongside medical students. The School also offers a joint PharmD/Ph.D. program – envisioned to be closely aligned with the drug development process, therapeutic practices and outcomes – as well as post-graduate residencies for the Pharm.D. graduates.

The Skaggs School currently accepts 60 new students each year, but members of the first class will remember their experience as something special.

Payman Shillian left his homeland of Iran as a teenager with his mother and sister to come to the United States, which offered the Jewish family not only religious freedom but better educational opportunities. His father was forced to stay behind. Shillian chose Pharmacy as a profession after seeing his younger sister become extremely sick when they were both youngsters in Iran, and remembering his happiness when a doctor found a drug that could cure her infection.

He was excited when UCSD launched the Skaggs School because, he said, "they were opening a new school, and it was a chance I'd always wanted – to be part of something big. As the first class, we have had input into the curriculum and have been able to start several student organizations on campus."

Joseph Ennesser echoes this enthusiasm. "I chose UCSD because the faculty I met showed such a strong personal commitment to the new school. Probably the most challenging thing we all experienced was being part of the evolving curriculum as the courses progressed. Sharing second-year coursework with the medical students was also challenging, but was also extremely valuable in developing relationships with them before we all went into clinical rotations."

San Diego native Brandi Bain, a licensed nurse for seven years before entering the Skaggs School, had a 12-week year old daughter when she began. Now four-months pregnant, she will be working at San Diego Hospice and Palliative Care after graduation. Bain **will be helping to develop**

an expanded pharmacy presence for the San Diego Hospice in the Carlsbad area, a community with a growing number of seniors.

Her classmate, Jason Lam, who is from the Los Angeles area, follows in the footsteps of generations before him. "My family and I came from Taiwan in the early '80s, where my grandfather was a physician of Eastern medicine," said Lam. "In Asia, many physicians both see the patient and make the drug or medication or herbal remedy for the patient to take. For generations before my grandfather, my family members were all physicians in Eastern medicine, each passing down the legacy to the next generation." Lam adds that in the Skaggs School's educational model, pharmacists are trained to follow much of what his grandfather prided himself on: compassion for patients and a commitment to improving their lives. Lam – who also speaks Chinese and Spanish – is going to work as regional manager for Rx Relief, based in Fresno, so will be instrumental in working to fill critical shortages of pharmacists.

"Our program emphasizes the critical role of pharmacists as key partners in the patient care team," said Edward Holmes, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of UCSD's School of Medicine. "With UCSD's long history of scientific excellence and patient-care opportunities with the School of Medicine and Medical Center, the Skaggs School is uniquely positioned to train pharmacists as consultants to the patient and to other health professionals."

As Founder and Chief Business Officer of Asteres, Inc. and a local business leader who has developed several innovative new companies in the area, Linda Pinney appreciates the value that a School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences brings to the biotech community of San Diego.

"I don't think we can overstate the impact that the Skaggs School and its graduates will bring to Southern California in the coming decades – not only in terms of service to the health care industry, but in the areas of research, drug testing and development," Pinney said. As an example, her company manufactures prescription storage and self-checkout machines for retail pharmacies, and the School is working with Asteres in testing and evaluating the impact of this novel tool on the retail pharmacy industry.

The Skaggs School of Pharmacy is also well-positioned geographically, with strong partnerships to UCSD's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the School of Medicine, science departments, the San Diego Supercomputer Center and Jacobs School of Engineering all providing collaborative opportunities in drug design and development. San Diego's booming biotech industry offers additional opportunities for innovative research collaborations.

### ***Beyond Graduation – Serving the Community***

In an era of aging Baby Boomers, and with the focus of health care delivery emphasizing management of chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma that involve

increased reliance on drug therapy and complex drug regimens, the role of the pharmacist has become more important than ever.

Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences students are preparing for a multitude of career choices – including hospital or clinical pharmacy, community pharmacy, pharmaceutical management, or drug development in the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industry – through their training in a variety of scientific, computer, drug-study and patient-management courses.

Dean Taylor notes that UCSD provides a variety of clinical settings for its pharmacy students to hone their patient-care skills, having a diverse health care system with outpatient clinics including the UCSD Moores Cancer Center, two major hospitals, plus affiliations with the Naval Medical Center San Diego, Kaiser Permanente, Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System, and Children’s Hospital and Health Center, San Diego. Many more local pharmacists serve as mentors to the students, who must fulfill 1,500 hours of supervised training supervised before applying for a pharmacist license.

In addition, the Skaggs School has been nurtured by its strong and collaborative ties with leaders San Diego-area biotech, pharmacy and pharmaceutical industries. The Dean’s Advisory Board members comprise executives from companies ranging from Johnson & Johnson and Elan Pharmaceuticals to Safeway Food and Drug Stores and Biocom, working with the Skaggs School to position our graduates for success.

“Until we opened our School in 2002, San Diego was the largest metropolitan area in the United States without an accredited pharmacy school,” said Dean Taylor. “There are 5,000 pharmacists in San Diego county, and the practice of pharmacy in the community and in health systems is changing rapidly. The first UCSD graduating classes can and will influence these trends. I am proud that their presence will impact California’s large and growing biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry.”

### ***Commencement Ceremony Details***

The commencement ceremony will be held on Saturday, June 3 at 10 a.m. in the Price Center Ballroom on the UCSD campus. Guests will include keynote speaker Henri R. Manasse, Jr., Ph.D., Sc.D., executive vice president and chief executive officer for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) based in Bethesda, Maryland. ASHP is the 30,000-member national professional association that represents pharmacists who practice in hospitals, health maintenance organizations, long-term care facilities, home care and other components of health care systems. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and one-time president of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy.

Manasse will be joined by UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox; Robert C Dynes, Ph.D., President of the University of California; Richard C. Atkinson, Ph.D., President Emeritus of the UC, Holmes and Taylor in addressing the graduates.

The Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences was named in recognition of a \$30 million gift from The Skaggs Institute for Research. The largest gift ever given to UCSD Health Sciences, the funding has been instrumental in building and equipping the new school's auditorium and education center, recruiting top-tier faculty and supporting scholarships for pharmacy students. L.S. "Sam" Skaggs, nationally recognized as a pioneer in the retail drugstore and grocery business, and his wife, Aline, created and funded The Skaggs Institute for Research primarily to support medical research, and chose to support UCSD's School of Pharmacy because of its innovative, integrative approach to expanding the boundaries of the profession. The School celebrated the opening of its state-of-the-art, \$45 million Pharmaceutical Sciences building at a dedication ceremony last month.

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