VISION: The Ferris State University College of Pharmacy drives health care outcomes through pharmacy innovation.

MISSION: The College of Pharmacy educates and supports professionals who positively influence and impact the health outcomes of the people they serve. We will accomplish this by:

- Providing the highest quality professional education to students and practitioners;
- Promoting and delivering patient-centered care by pharmacists that are committed to the safe and appropriate use of medications;
- Developing and maintaining professional relationships, collaborations and strategic alliances that advance the goals and objectives of the college and the profession;
- Facilitating personal and professional development of individuals to meet the demands of a dynamic curriculum and profession;
- Creating a professional culture within the College community that embodies the principles of ethics, fairness, honesty, civility and respect for diverse ideas, beliefs and cultures;
- Promoting research which advances science, health care and pharmacy education; and
- Attracting and retaining the highest quality faculty and staff.

Adopted July, 2012
Dear Alumni,

This edition of Pharmacy Magazine reflects the growing local and global involvement of our faculty, students and alumni, and their commitment to delivering innovative pharmacy education. Ferris Pharmacy is making a difference around the world and around town.

Students’ interest in international experiences is growing rapidly, triggered in part by a significantly increased level of university support, but also reflective of the global world we all live in. In spring 2013, students under the mentorship of Drs. Kierstan Hanson and John Jameson provided services in Mexico and Guatemala, respectively. Dr. Hanson’s work with the children of Mexico is a collaborative effort that includes Rotary International and the University of Iowa, led by Hazel (Hilton) Seaba, a 1967 Ferris College of Pharmacy alumna. Dr. Joel Robertson, class of 1974, was recognized with an Honorary Doctorate in 2013 for his multiple and successful efforts to improve global health care through technology.

We continue to participate in a healthy exchange program with both the United Kingdom (University of Bath) and France (University of Angers), and expansion to additional countries is very likely next year. This activity provides faculty and students with the opportunity to contrast our health care system with widely varying systems, while at the same time improving the quality of life of those they care for.

Our attention to West Michigan also continues to grow. Spring 2013 marked the completion of our first full academic year in the 25 Michigan Avenue instructional center. The facility itself and the access it affords to the growing Grand Rapids health sciences center are truly impressive. In Big Rapids, through the extraordinary efforts of Dr. Jeff Bates, the College of Pharmacy has opened a “model” pharmacy to serve patients of the Hope House Free Clinic in Big Rapids. Dr. Bates recognized the significant need for a pharmacy designed to serve the needs of those in the local area unable to afford prescription medications. The Ferris Pharmacy Care Clinic is open three days a week to ensure patients of the Hope House Clinic receive in-depth patient care services. All medications are provided without charge through various grants and generous support received by the Hope House Clinic. The clinic also serves as an internship site for many of our students, and several faculty members and local pharmacists are providing volunteer staff support. It’s a great step forward to have patients routinely visiting the pharmacy and experiencing the high-level of care our students and faculty can provide.

In academics, this edition features Dr. Rick Hult, who retired at the end of 2013. Many of us remember Dr. Hult’s “dry humor” as we struggled to match drugs and receptors; he will certainly be missed. The magazine also features the new DIRECT model for clinical clerkships that Dr. Dean VanLoo is piloting at Bronson Methodist Hospital. I had the opportunity recently to meet with Dr. VanLoo’s latest cohort of students — their positive review of the program is impressive. As you will see in the article, Dr. VanLoo has thought through the educational needs of a fourth-year student and built an almost seamless experience for them.

Over the past two years, the College of Pharmacy’s Alumni Board of Directors has undergone significant development. In its 2011 summer retreat, the board developed a strategic plan to serve as the foundation for a new set of bylaws expanding the board from 12 to 16 members and specifying temporary protocols for new membership selection. The board also implemented a new organizational structure of four subcommittees taken from within the board — the Executive, College Engagement, Alumni Communication and Fundraising subcommittees. In addition, this summer marked the transition to a new board president. Mr. Andy Young had served on the board for over two terms, most recently as president. Board members had chosen to continue Andy’s presidency through summer 2013, to provide continuity and guidance through the transition. I know of very few alumni who have contributed to the College of Pharmacy as generously as Andy. With the board’s development complete and Andy’s term concluding, Dr. Rick Dettloff was elected as the new board president. We all are indebted to Andy and Rick for their leadership in the board’s development. I feel strongly that the new structure will provide the College of Pharmacy with important support and direction from its alumni base.

I invite each of you to engage in Bulldog Pharmacy, building upon our rich tradition of opportunity, commitment to patients, pride in the profession and support of our students, the pharmacists of tomorrow.

Go Bulldogs!

Stephen Durst, B.S., ’81, Pharm.D.
Dean
In Memoriam

This edition of the Pharmacy Magazine unfortunately marks the passing of three important members of the College of Pharmacy’s family. They and their contributions will be greatly missed within the College of Pharmacy and their communities.

With sadness and admiration, we dedicate this edition in memory of:

James Cwengros

James Cwengros (P’83) was killed with his wife, Rita, and members of their church group in an automobile accident during his fifth medical mission trip to Haiti on Jan. 11, 2013. Jim’s mission trips provided medical care and supplies, building assistance and water filtration systems. He played a key role in developing several clinical initiatives at Spectrum Health, served as director of Clinical Research at the Cook Institute and as director of Medical and Research Specialists for Pfizer. His enthusiasm for the profession is shown in his children; Eric is a graduate of the College of Pharmacy, and Laura is pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy degree at The University of Michigan.

Lucy Ngoh

Lucy Ngoh lost her life after being injured in a tragic bus accident in her native Cameroon on Dec. 30, 2012. As was her custom, she was delivering supplies and medications to friends and family members over winter break. Lucy’s research focused on health literacy, service learning and international health. She joined the College of Pharmacy in 1992, serving on the Academic Senate, the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Advisory Group, and the International Education Committee, and as a facilitator for the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia.

James Turner

James Turner (P’49) passed away peacefully at home on Feb. 17, 2013. Deeply involved in the practice and instruction of pharmacy as well as advocacy for students, Jim joined the College of Pharmacy in 1975 and taught Pharmacy Practice before serving in college administration, contributing significantly to the development of the post-Bachelor of Science Doctor of Pharmacy Program and retiring as Associate Dean of Student Academic Affairs in 1994. He was recognized with the Clark A. Andreson Alumni Recognition Award and known for his service to Relay for Life of Mecosta County and Meals on Wheels.
Memorial Scholarship Carries on Jim Turner’s Legacy at Ferris

Colleagues and former students of Jim Turner will remember a kind-hearted, dedicated pharmacist, professor and student advocate. A 1949 Ferris State University College of Pharmacy alumnus, Jim practiced as a pharmacist throughout Michigan for 16 years before returning to teach Pharmacy Practice at his alma mater, where he ultimately became associate dean of Student Academic Affairs.

Fellow Big Rapids community members will remember Jim as an active volunteer who chaired the Survivor’s Walk for the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life in Mecosta County for 10 years and gave generously of his time delivering Meals on Wheels for the Mecosta County Senior Center.

After Jim peacefully passed away at home at age 85 in February 2013, his wife, Wanda, thought of how he might want to be remembered. Upon his retirement, the College of Pharmacy had honored Jim with the Clark A. Andreson Award, of which he was very proud — it recognized him for his remarkable advocacy and care for students during his tenure as associate dean.

Wanda, herself a professor emerita of Ferris’ College of Business, thought it fitting to further Jim’s legacy of helping Ferris students by establishing the James B. Turner Endowed Scholarship for Pharmacy students.

“Establishment of the scholarship supports Jim’s dual passion for pharmacy and the College of Pharmacy’s students,” Wanda said. “Jim’s lifelong career in pharmacy will be continued through those students receiving the scholarship.”

Provided annually to at least one full-time graduate student majoring in Pharmacy, the scholarship will help students with tuition costs. It is awarded by the College of Pharmacy’s scholarship selection committee and may be renewed in subsequent academic years for eligible recipients.

“I think this is about the best thing I could have done to remember Jim’s legacy,” added Wanda.

For more information about scholarships and endowments, visit ferris.edu/foundation.
Faculty committed to making a difference are using education and practice to address needs in communities around the world. Some are fueling student interest in community service as an important element of Ferris' academic mission and core values.

Matt three College of Pharmacy faculty members who have taken their hearts for public service on international adventures:

Kierstan Hanson

She is: A former assistant professor of Pharmacy Practice, who precepted P4 students during their ambulatory care rotation at Spectrum Health Family Medicine Residency Center in Grand Rapids

The mission: Deworming clinics for 3,500 children

Where: Xicotepec de Juárez, Puebla, Mexico

“This. Changed. My. Life.”

Kierstan Hanson emphasized each word with a slap on her knee.

“This changed my life forever.”

Hanson was a PharmD student at the University of Iowa in 2007 when she decided to enroll in a new interdisciplinary service-learning course that prepared students for a spring break of volunteer work in Mexico.

The course is offered in partnership with the Rotary Club of Xicotepec de Juárez in Puebla and Rotary District 6000 in Iowa, which started the Xicotepec Project in 2001. Teams of volunteers travel to Xicotepec de Juárez, Puebla each March for various projects, from construction of new classrooms to providing fluoride treatments to children.

“The experience of immersing myself in another culture as a student helped me take the concepts of cultural competence from the classroom into real-life practice,” Hanson said. “Traveling to Xicotepec not only expanded my understanding of another culture, but it offered me the opportunity to explore how culture can impact a patient’s view of healthcare.

“I was forever changed by that experience, and it has made me a more compassionate and effective pharmacist.”

Hanson was teaching at Ferris in 2011 when she ran into faculty from her alma mater at a conference, including Hazel Seaba, an associate dean in Iowa’s College of Pharmacy. Seaba happens to be a 1967 graduate of Ferris’ College of Pharmacy and is a champion of the Xicotepec Project.

That’s when Ferris joined the team.
For the past two years, two Pharmacy students (Malorie Katch and Sean McGlothlin in 2012, and Devin DeCator and Paige Procter in 2013) took the Iowa course as an elective and joined students studying Mexican culture, intercultural competency and effective teamwork. Accompanied by Hanson, they traveled with more than 70 Rotarians and Iowa faculty and students majoring in dentistry, engineering, business, liberal arts and, of course, pharmacy, on the March trips to Mexico.

The Pharmacy students provided anti-parasitic (deworming) medication to 3,500 preschool through sixth grade students at 16 schools and at a local orphanage over a five-day period. The children are given a chewable anthelmintic drug to prevent intestinal parasites often found in those living in low-income areas without access to clean water.

Pharmacy students serve in various roles during the day-long clinics, from Student Pharmacist in Charge to managing medication, supplies, records, site logistics and transportation.

“There are huge advantages to participating in an international effort like this,” Hanson said. “Students need these experiences to be an effective pharmacist here.”

While the program is designed to enhance students’ knowledge, understanding and leadership skills for their primary disciplines, it also impacts their personal growth.

DeCator, a fourth-year Pharmacy student from Lowell, said she was thankful for the opportunity to use her training to help others and for the exposure to another culture.

“I think by having skills that not everyone possesses, I’m doing my part to give back in the best way I can,” she said. “It was an incredibly eye-opening experience, and I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

DeCator said she was touched by the appreciation shown by local residents.

“At every school we went to, we were given gifts of some sort to thank us for bringing medicine, from a song and dance to paper flowers and notes to real plants,” she said. “Even the children seemed to know the importance of (the medication), and even if they thought it was the grossest thing they ever tasted, they were grateful and thankful, and that is something I will never forget.”

That’s exactly what Hanson hoped for.

Hanson, who recently accepted a position with Manchester University in South Bend, Ind., and returned to her residency clinic, still plans to help fuel Ferris’ continued collaboration with Iowa and development of a more autonomous relationship with the host city.

Continued on page 7
Mary Frances Ross

She is: A professor of Clinical Practice who serves as a preceptor for P4 students on their ambulatory care rotation at the Family Health Center in Kalamazoo

The mission: Her multiple visits have had different objectives, from working in a medical clinic to leading delegations from her church and serving as an international observer for elections to participating in a clean water project.

“I guess my mission is to be in solidarity and walk with the Salvadoran people, and to facilitate opportunities for others to do the same,” she said.

Where: El Salvador

When Mary Frances Ross first visited El Salvador in 1995, she didn’t speak a lick of Spanish.

She does now.

Ross initially traveled there to meet a high school student she sponsored for three years as part of the Salvadoran Scholarship Program at her church. She went with a delegation from St. Thomas More Catholic Student Parish in Kalamazoo to visit the young woman she had been corresponding with.

It was during a return visit to San Salvador in 1998, just two weeks after Hurricane Mitch wreaked havoc on Central America, that her commitment to the country was cemented. She was with another delegation to visit St. Tom’s sister parish, Maria, Madre de los Pobres (Mary, Mother of the Poor), when the pastor there suggested she stay.

Despite the language barrier, she agreed to spend the next two years there, working in a small medical clinic that served only Spanish-speaking residents in a poor area of the capital.

“The pastor there planted the idea, and I went with it,” Ross said. “They had never had a ‘real’ pharmacist work in their clinic pharmacy before.”

Ferris granted her a leave-of-absence, she sold her home and her car, and five months later moved to San Salvador. She spent a month studying the language, then went to work in the clinic where no medications were labeled and they were dispensed in plastic bags.

“I had my work cut out for me,” she said.

Ross used a rubber stamp to make prescription labels and spent much of her time counseling patients on prescription use, including a blind man she taught to find his medications in various pockets of his clothing.
“Besides Spanish, I learned a lot,” said Ross, who helped train a native worker to take over when she left. “When you immerse yourself in the culture and integrate yourself in the community, you’re getting back as much as you’re giving.

“I really learned what’s important in life and what’s not.”

Ross has returned to El Salvador numerous times, leading delegations from St. Thomas each November. She also helped start a back surgery medical program with surgeons, anesthesiologists, physical therapists and other medical professionals from Kalamazoo working in tandem with staff at the National hospital in San Salvador to learn new surgical techniques.

While she has not taken Ferris Pharmacy students on her medical missions, she precepted a medical student and several medical residents on rotation when she lived there, she said.

Ross’ love for El Salvador was fueled by her medical mission work, but her involvement in the country doesn’t end there. She serves on the U.S. board of the Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (Center for Exchange and Solidarity), an organization that promotes social and economic justice and participatory democracy.

She also is a member of the Kalamazoo-based Clean Water for the World nonprofit organization, which provides water purification systems to communities without access to clean drinking water. During her last visit to El Salvador in April 2013, Ross helped dig 650 feet of trenches and mixed concrete and cement by hand for a water purification system after a community’s rain water collection system was compromised.

While her international efforts have been personal, she hopes integrating her education and experience into training students during their ambulatory care rotation at the Family Health Center in Kalamazoo fuels interest in medical missions and cultural understanding that can be applied locally.

Ross recently completed a master’s degree in Public Health, with a concentration in Health and Social Behavior at Harvard University in Boston, Mass., during a 2011-12 sabbatical granted by the university. Her goal was to obtain further training in prevention, health initiatives and disparities on a community and global level.

“The majority of pharmacists will continue to work in their local communities, but the problems are the same as on the global front,” she said. “We will need to work together as a health-care team to solve them.”
John Jameson

**He is:** A professor of Pharmacy Practice, Jameson is a preceptor for P4 students’ ambulatory care rotation at Grand Rapids Family Practice Residency at Mercy Health St. Mary’s in Grand Rapids.

**The mission:** Medical service

**Where:** Zacapa, Guatemala

It was a student who taught John Jameson about the power of service opportunities in Guatemala.

Sean Loftus was a sophomore PharmD student when he spent spring break on a mission trip to Jamaica with Christian Pharmacy Fellowship. His group joined Waynesburg, Pa.-based Hands and Feet Ministries, whose leader invited Loftus to gather a group for a week-long May 2012 trip to Hope of Life International, a humanitarian organization in Guatemala.

He recruited 25 people from the Grand Rapids area that included a dozen Ferris Pharmacy students and Jameson.

“We fell in love with the ministry and the people there,” Loftus said.

That led to a May 2013 trip of 31 Michiganders, including 18 students and Jameson.

“We all came back different people than when we went,” Jameson said. “When you meet people who are eking out an existence, it goes to your core level.

“I know there is a debate over the value of short-term missions, but I believe there is great value to both the people who are helped and those who go to serve, especially when teaming up with an existing, long-term ministry.”

Hope of Life was started by Carlos Vargas, who returned to his native land in 1988 to help improve the quality of life for residents living in poverty-stricken communities. What began as a small mission has grown into an organization that offers medical, food and housing programs, humanitarian aid efforts and rescue missions.

“This is an astounding organization,” Jameson said of Hope of Life, which is based on a 3,000-acre campus in Zacapa that houses an orphanage, senior living center, special needs facility, schools, vegetable gardens, tilapia and poultry farms, and a six-story hospital that is scheduled to open this year.

The team’s Pharmacy students spent four days serving in mobile medical clinics, which included determining needed
formulary, treating a variety of ailments, providing vitamins and anti-parasitic (deworming) medication and drug counseling.

“Patients were seen by a team that included a nurse, a recent PharmD graduate and a medical assistant,” said Loftus, a Port Huron native who graduated in May. “PharmDs wrote prescriptions for common ailments and referred more difficult cases to Dr. Jameson’s team.”

They served about 2,700 people, among them several patients suffering from respiratory infections.

“We discovered the problem was a result of wood smoke exposure from cooking indoors,” Jameson said. “They cook indoors because the smoke keeps the bugs out of the house.”

In addition to providing medical services, the team also served meals to homeless residents, helped secure the foundation of the hospital under construction on Hope’s campus, painted houses and curbs, and helped build two houses. One of the houses was dedicated to a family that had been living in a chicken coop, Loftus said.

“Both trips to Guatemala have been truly humbling experiences,” he said, noting the impact on his Christian faith. “This trip further confirmed my heart to serve underserved populations.”

Loftus was particularly affected by the case of an 8-year-old boy born with a birth defect that left him paralyzed from the knees down. He developed an infected ulcer on the top of his right foot that earlier had been evaluated and cleaned at a hospital.

“His father didn’t have enough money to afford the appropriate antibiotic to treat it, but we were able to give him an antibiotic free of charge that would fight the infection and hopefully heal his wound and save his foot,” Loftus said. “We were able to pray with the boy and his father, and provide them with encouragement to get through this.

“What an awesome impact we as pharmacists can have on this world.”

Jameson agreed.

“I will have a lifelong bond with these students because of what we experienced together,” he said. “They did a lot of growing up. It stretches a student professionally to stand in front of a table of medications and know that they have the responsibility to determine the best treatment.

“I have realized how vital it is for all of us to have a cultural conscience, to be very much connected to global issues instead of living in our own colloquial world.”
Robertson’s Efforts Empower Caregivers Worldwide

Dr. Joel Robertson wants to change world medicine.

The 1974 College of Pharmacy alumnus is dedicated to improving quality of life by providing health information technology. He is the driving force behind medical software that helps health care workers and physicians diagnose and treat patients anywhere in the world.

“My vision is of a truly global medical solution — one that would save lives worldwide through faster, more accurate diagnosis,” said Robertson, who founded and oversees the Robertson Health network of for-profit and non-profit organizations.

One of those organizations — Robertson Global Health Solutions — developed the RHealthAdvisor medical software nominated by Microsoft for a ComputerWorld Honor in medicine. It was one of five finalists in the program that recognizes technology that benefits society.

The “amazingly smart” and low-cost web and cell phone software provides pre-screening and treatment advice, educational health tips and a reference guide of diseases, symptoms, labs and tests. It also includes an electronic health record customized by age, gender and geography, and is regionalized and language-specific. Unique to the software is its ability to offer suggestions to help diagnose a disease using artificial intelligence.

“For example, if you entered that your patient was a 22-year-old female, living in Andhra Pradesh, India, in the month of June and was having a cough, the software would ‘know’ what diseases are most prevalent in that gender, in that location and at that time of the year, and begin to suggest questions to ask or procedures to run in order to reach a confident diagnosis,” Robertson said. “Once the diagnosis was made, treatment recommendations and/or referral, based upon the user’s skill set, would be offered.”

A 2008 study by Nizam’s Institute of Medical Sciences in Hyderabad, India, to determine diagnostic accuracy results showed RHealth Advisor was almost equal to a physician in making diagnoses for these types of conditions.
Robertson believes a global diagnostic and database system has “amazing” potential to save millions of lives.

“I find that what I do is something that I love,” Robertson said. “I enjoy it and hope to someday make a difference.”

Robertson is an internationally known expert on brain chemistry and a widely recognized clinician, bestselling author and in-demand lecturer. The 1974 College of Pharmacy graduate (BS) said his Ferris education prepared him “to interact, develop, discuss and perform at the level that was asked of me through the years.”

He was honored by Ferris at its May 2013 commencement ceremonies with an Honorary Doctorate of Health Services for his effort to enhance lives and advance the knowledge of health care professionals, and for his passion for the university and higher education.

Robertson earned a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Michigan and completed postgraduate studies in chemical dependency and family system therapies at Harvard University.

Robertson created brain chemistry optimization programs used by consumers, professional athletic programs and corporations worldwide, and worked with the U.S. Department of Defense to develop national treatment protocols for behavioral emergencies and for cardiovascular emergencies for emergency medical services.

He is a featured speaker at numerous American Medical Association and other professionally sponsored conferences. More than 500,000 people have attended Robertson’s presentations in 80 countries.

He is the author of eight books and multiple self-help audio series and television shows. His research assumptions have been published in such journals as the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of the American Medical Association.
Associate Professor Dean Van Loo believes future pharmacists can benefit from taking the DIRECT approach.

That’s why the Kalamazoo-based College of Pharmacy faculty member started a patient-centered learning program for fourth-year students that allows them to complete their six required rotations in one place.

“I call it pre-residency,” Van Loo said.

The literal meaning of the DIRECT program? Developmental Instruction Relationally Engaged with Clinical Teams.

In layman’s terms? Ten students working side-by-side at one institution to gain the competency needed for success beyond Pharmacy school.

That institution is Bronson Methodist Hospital, a key teaching site for Ferris’ College of Pharmacy. The program redevelops student clerkship activities to provide more opportunities for projects and research in one location under one main preceptor to facilitate growth. It also promotes teamwork and requires only one orientation process, which allows students “to hit the ground running,” Van Loo said.

Students work with multiple pharmacists in their fields of expertise and become part of the hospital’s medical team. They also have the chance to publish a research project and volunteer for community outreach opportunities.

“The experience they get is valuable, because they are ready for a post-graduate, broad-based residency,” Van Loo said.

Joleen Bierlein, who graduated in May 2013 after participating in the DIRECT program, landed a PGY1 Pharmacy Practice Residency for Carilion Clinic at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital in Roanoke, Va.

“I didn’t feel like just another Pharmacy student passing through for a few weeks – I felt like another member of the Bronson pharmacy team,” said Bierlein, who touted the program’s elimination of multiple orientation processes.

“When I was on my institutional rotation, I spent a few days with both the pharmacy technician and pharmacist in the emergency department. When it came time for my emergency department rotation at the end of the year, I already understood how the pharmacy services in the ER operated, and I was able to immediately begin doing medication reconciliations and other activities. I was able to jump right into the rotation.”

Students are required to complete a research project, participate in a Weekly Journal Club, make case presentations and attend DIRECT meetings twice per rotation.

“The research opportunity is done in an area the student wants to study,” Van Loo said. “It’s not high-level, informed-consent research, but it gets them in the mode of doing research. Residencies are competitive, and these experiences are valuable and make them more marketable.”

And that was of particular interest to Bierlein.

“We all presented our projects as posters at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ Midyear Clinical Meeting, and it gave us great experience and, of course, additions to our CVs,” she said. “As a resident, I have to conduct research over the next year. When my director was discussing the deadlines and procedures, nothing came as a surprise. In residency, our cup overflows with projects, presentations and various commitments. It means a lot to me to know that I have the skills needed to take on these projects, because my skills were tested as a student, and that’s one small stressor that I can eliminate from my life as a resident.”

Van Loo acknowledges the program exposes students to just one system and fewer preceptors, but believes the benefits outweigh that. One of those benefits is stronger, more thorough assessments and evaluations, he said.

That’s why fourth-year Pharmacy student Emily Kearney sought a spot in the program.

“I applied because of its reputation and the opportunities that would be available to me,” said Kearney, of Macomb, who also
works as an intern at a Meijer pharmacy. “Since I started, my experience has been nothing short of that.”

The camaraderie among her peers and the professionalism of hospital staff has provided a positive learning environment, she said.

“Every pharmacist I have worked with has shown a genuine interest in my education that has resulted in not only a valuable experience, but an inspirational one as well,” said Kearney, who credits Van Loo with the program’s patient-centered learning focus. “He has a wealth of knowledge and knows just how to relay it to us so that we gain a lot from each conversation. As a preceptor and a role model, he pushes us to continuously try to achieve more.”

Van Loo, who has an extensive history of leadership within local and state pharmacy associations, previously was a staff pharmacist, clinical coordinator and residency director at Bronson before accepting a full-time faculty position to focus solely on teaching.

“I have a heart for service, and I wanted the challenge to grow as a practitioner,” said Van Loo, who also serves as adviser to the American Society of Health Systems registered student organization at Ferris and teaches in the infectious disease course in the second year of the professional curriculum.

When he accepts students into the DIRECT program, he’s not just looking at their GPAs.

“They have to be able to handle the academics, but they also have to have an attitude of service,” Van Loo said. “They are serving the patient and the community.”
“Care” is a little word with big meaning in Ferris State University’s College of Pharmacy. Efforts to build a culture of caring are no more evident than in its Pharmacy Care Clinic, where faculty and students are working to improve the health of people in need.

Since it opened in April 2013, the clinic has served patients of Big Rapids’ Hope House Free Medical Clinic, which provides medical care to area residents who don’t have health insurance.

Housed in the college’s former Model Pharmacy, the clinic also provides a learning opportunity for students.

“We can’t do in the classroom what working in a care setting does for students,” said Jeff Bates, an associate professor in the College of Pharmacy. “The clinic allows students to understand the concepts and practice the skills they learned in the classroom to serve real patients.

“I have been amazed by the change in our students. I see a difference in them.”

Ferris’ relationship with Hope House began about six years ago, when the free clinic began operating one day a week at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Big Rapids. The number of patients grew to the point that Hope House had to go to an appointment-only system and many had to wait eight months between visits.

But Hope House was able to move to a new space on the east side of Big Rapids in April and expanded its clinic hours to two days a week. That sliced the wait time in half and allows the
clinic to accept new patients again. The Pharmacy Care Clinic is open three days a week, extending the window of opportunity for Hope House patients to get their prescriptions filled.

“We have about 660 patient encounters per year, and 95.4 percent of the time, patients are picking up and taking their prescriptions,” Bates said. “To see that kind of adherence is phenomenal.”

The Pharmacy Care Clinic, which is staffed by faculty members, local volunteer pharmacists and volunteer interns, is open 10 hours a week (3-5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays). During a typical Wednesday, the clinic fills 60 prescriptions. About 90 are filled each week from its formulary of 140 mostly generic medications. A prescription assistance program is available for higher-cost drugs.

The clinic, funded by grants and donations, primarily sees patients suffering from chronic pain, diabetes, hypertension and infections, impacts patient wellness by providing smoking cessation coaching and over-the-counter products, and ensures diabetes patients have access to testing supplies that help them manage their own care.

“The clinic will supply diabetes patients with 15 or 16 cases of glucometer test strips in the next year, and we’re averaging three A1C tests a week, which will help these patients control their diabetes,” Bates said. “We don’t just give them a product; we teach them how to use it. This will prevent dozens of hospitalizations each year.”

The effort to provide access to life-saving medications complemented by sound medical advice is why second-year Pharmacy student Carlee Schafer wanted to volunteer at the clinic.

“I have worked in community pharmacy for many years now, and I have witnessed so many patients struggling to pay for their medications or simply not getting their prescriptions filled because they cannot afford them. The Care Clinic’s bottom line is patient care, which is why I couldn’t wait to get involved.”

Three students of varying experience typically work three-hour shifts at a time in the clinic. Some have never set foot in a pharmacy and are honing skills learned in the classroom, mentored by others who have filled prescriptions and counseled patients regarding proper use of their medications.

Bates hopes to make working in the clinic an elective rotation among those required for the doctorate degree. He also hopes to affiliate the Care Clinic with Ferris’ Interprofessional Wellness Clinic, a collaboration of optometry, nursing and pharmacy students and faculty to aid in diabetes management.

Volunteering has proven beneficial for Schafer, who wanted additional experience counseling patients and simply to spend more time in a pharmacy setting.

“It is great to work with patients who are willing to listen and grateful for any help you offer them,” she said. “The Care Clinic is great for the community, because it allow access to healthcare for those who have no affordable options. This can be life-changing for some patients — think about a diabetic going without insulin simply because they can’t afford to see a doctor or buy the medication.”

The clinic gives Ferris an opportunity to connect with the local health care system and to serve people in the community students call home.

“It shows the community Ferris is bringing more than students to the city of Big Rapids,” Schafer said. “It shows Ferris cares.”
Q&A with Alumnus-Turned-Professor Richard Hult

He is: A Ferris State University graduate and professor emeritus of Pharmacology who retired in December 2013 after 37 of service

Hometown: Big Rapids

Education: Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy, Ferris State College (1968); Master of Science in Pharmacology and Toxicology, Oregon State University (1974); Ph.D. in Pharmacology and Toxicology, OSU (1976)

Honors and Involvement: Michigan Optometric Student Association Choice Award for Outstanding Professor; Greek Educator of the Year; Phi Lambda Sigma pharmacy leadership society founding faculty adviser; Phi Delta Chi pharmacy fraternity co-faculty adviser

Other interests: Active member of First United Methodist Church in Big Rapids and its campus ministry, Wesley House

Professor Richard Hult has helped train hundreds of pharmacists since he joined Ferris State University and the College of Pharmacy 37 years ago.

But his association harkens back to 1963, when Hult began his quest for a pharmacy career as a student, the same year Ferris Institute became Ferris State College.

What motivated you to become a pharmacist?

When I was just an infant, my dad, a native of White Cloud, came home from World War II, and we left our home in Grand Rapids for Chicago and a job opportunity there working with his father (my grandfather). We moved to the western Chicago suburb of Clarendon Hills when I was 5. Just as I started high school, a local pharmacist moved in next door. When I started looking at colleges and career choices, he encouraged me, because of my interest in science, to explore pharmacy.

I took his advice and decided to pursue an undergraduate pharmacy degree that I could build upon in any number of graduate ways. Ferris was my college choice because of an extended-family support system from White Cloud to Muskegon.

I first saw Ferris in July 1963 from the top of the hill on old M-20 (between the first tee and second green on Katke Golf Course). I believe I was in the third class admitted to the new five-year Pharmacy program at Ferris. I graduated in the spring of 1968, magna cum laude.

At that time, prospective pharmacists could only get up to six months of what then was called internship prior to graduation. I only had between two and three, so I continued interning at Gould Rexall Drugs, an independent pharmacy in Mount Pleasant, where I had started the winter of my senior year. I sat for the pharmacy boards in the summer of 1969 and was hired on at Gould. It didn’t take long for me to realize that:

I did not have a keen business sense in terms of marketing and sales;

I was not fully utilizing my education. I was too busy filling prescriptions, checking inventory and stocking shelves to fully interact with and teach patients as well as other medical personnel about drugs.

Why did you decide to become an educator?

I had a talent for getting ideas and concepts across to my peers all through pharmacy school, so I decided to pursue graduate school with the idea of going into education.

I was always interested in how drugs worked, so pharmacology seemed the natural fit. I was accepted by Oregon State University in May, went there for a visit in July, bought a mobile home and moved there in August 1971.

I started my advanced training with five other individuals. Two of us received our stipend as “teaching assistants” while the others were “research assistants” under individual professors. As a teaching assistant, my responsibilities were to prepare and assist in the undergraduate pharmacology laboratories and to prepare a few lectures in areas of interest for presentation to the undergraduate pharmacy pharmacology class.

It was here that my interest in teaching as opposed to research was further developed.
I was scheduling my Ph.D. defense in the spring of 1976 when Richard Ohvall, dean of Ferris’ School of Pharmacy, was named dean of the College of Pharmacy at Oregon State. That summer, I accepted a job at Ferris. Dean Ohvall and I spent a couple of evenings talking about our respective work situations and communities, and which institution had gotten the better of the “trade.”

Following completion of my dissertation, I joined the faculty at Ferris on Oct. 15, 1976. I am somewhat unusual in the fact that I have been here ever since.

Do you have a particular area of interest?

I was trained as a generalist rather than in any one specific niche of pharmacology and also took various education courses for my graduate degrees. Both of these have served me well. I have taught most of the topics in pathophysiology and basic pharmacology as well as the toxicology elective at one time or another during my career.

What is the job’s greatest reward?

When you see the “light bulb” come on in a student’s eyes, whether it’s over a subject covered in class, a discussion about potential career choice or even concerning a personal matter. And then the “thank you,” verbally or unspoken, that comes along with it.

How has the practice of pharmacy changed?

During the late 1980s/early 1990s, I did some work with the late Edward Griffin, a professor in the School of Education, and recently retired College of Pharmacy professor Robert Krueger concerning the possibility of delivering didactic pharmacy lessons in a self-paced/self-directed approach. Our humble efforts (there wasn’t a whole lot of money available) were overwhelmed by the rapid advancement in computer technology and internet expansion.

This leads me to what I feel is an important aspect concerning where pharmacy education should be going.

When I was an undergraduate, students were required to sit in on the annual pharmacy seminar each spring. Presentations often concerned development of a new concept called “clinical pharmacy,” which paid or reimbursed pharmacists based as much on their skills at transmitting drug knowledge as on their fee for filling prescriptions. While it has taken longer than some would have liked, we are professionally slowly evolving towards this. But now, information on just about anything is readily available in bulk on the internet; the trick is properly discerning the good information from the bad.

How does the education community need to adapt?

We need to do a better job of teaching pharmacy students how to educate the public to differentiate between what is good, rationally based drug/herb information and the anecdotal/unsound tabloid types of articles that are out there so that they (the public) can make sound decisions concerning their health.

My gut feeling, admittedly biased, is that to attract students, you need to first attract quality faculty to quality facilities — a faculty that will develop and teach quality programs that gain a good reputation.
Pharmacy students Paige Procter and Devin DeCator spent Spring Break 2013 in Mexico to participate in daworming clinics for 3,500 patients.