



MARYLAND MENTOR

A Newsletter for the
University of Maryland
School of Pharmacy's
Academy of Preceptors

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From the Assistant Dean for Experiential Learning

Dear Preceptors,

As we begin another academic year, I am especially excited about what this fall represents for our students and our experiential learning community. With the rollout of the M-Pact PharmD curriculum, our first-year student pharmacists are beginning their experiential education earlier than ever, starting with IPPE 1000: Pharmacist Career Exploration.

Through IPPE 1000, P1 students participate in five one-day observational experiences across diverse pharmacy practice settings throughout the semester. These experiences are intentionally designed to complement their didactic coursework, giving students an early opportunity to see the profession they are preparing to enter while beginning to connect what they learn in the classroom with what pharmacists do every day in practice. And those connections are already happening! Recently, one of our faculty members shared an experience from her P1 didactic course that brought this to life for me. She watched a student's face light up as the student realized that the pharmacist they had just observed during IPPE 1000 was, quite literally, putting the Pharmacist Patient Care Process they were learning about in class into practice. It was one of those wonderful "aha" moments in education when something that had been conceptual suddenly became real. I hope this is the first of many such moments.

There is tremendous value in giving our students opportunities to encounter pharmacy practice while they are still building their foundational knowledge. They may not yet understand every medication, disease state, or clinical decision they observe, but they can begin to recognize the purpose behind what they are learning. Then, when they encounter those concepts in the classroom, they have a real-world experience to solidify their understanding. The introductory career exploration rotations throughout the first two years of the M-Pact curriculum were created to facilitate exactly this early integration of knowledge, skills, and pharmacy practice while introducing students to the breadth of the profession and establishing a foundation for future experiential learning.

This is also why your role as a preceptor is so important. What may feel like an ordinary day of pharmacy practice to you may be a P1 student's very first opportunity to see a pharmacist counsel a patient, collaborate with another health professional, solve a medication-related problem, or advocate for a patient's needs. Those observations can give meaning to what students are learning in the classroom and shape how they understand our profession.

As you read this edition of *Maryland Mentor*, I hope you will see that same theme throughout: experiential learning helps students connect knowledge with purpose. Whether through early career exploration, advanced clinical and industry rotations, or even experiences across countries and health care systems, our preceptors and partners make those connections possible.

Thank you for welcoming our students into your practice environments, sharing your expertise, and creating the experiences that lead to these moments of discovery. I am excited to see how many more lightbulbs turn on this year.



Mojdeh Heavner

Mojdeh Heavner, PharmD, BCCCP, FCCM, FCCP

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Welcome

We welcome the following newly appointed preceptors:

- Fadeke Akinlami
- Andrew Ballentine
- Eva Alexandra Barany
- Meredith Beavin
- Victoria Blake
- Jennifer Campbell
- Sierra Corrigan
- Jianyu Dai
- Claire Decker
- Helen Fita
- Patrick Fuh
- Mukundwa Gael
- Elizabeth Gleeson
- Ciara Graf
- Hazem Hassan
- Azhar Hussain
- Mehrnoush Karbassiafshar
- Parminder Kaur
- Andrew Keeler
- Nolan Kauffman
- Bomin Kang
- Myung In Kim
- Kevin Kirubakaran
- Hayatte Koulamallah
- Rachel Kruer
- Ciera Lewis
- Corey Magwood
- Marco Matlock
- Kimberly Meany
- Michael Mioduszewski
- Kareemah Muhammad
- Obinna Nwaudo
- Safiya Nur
- Anoluwapo (Anu) Olofinula
- Poonam Panchal
- Samichhya Paudel
- Shalin Patel
- Shannon Purcell
- Jennifer Reinke
- Stephanie Robertson
- Dania Rizwan
- Bryan Sackey
- Rahaf Safadi
- Elizabeth Shearin
- Pushti Shah
- Josette Siek
- Daniel Skoloda
- Emily Vanerian
- Brady Wilburn

What the ELP Office Needs from Preceptors

Please help us be 100 percent compliant with preceptor requirements by doing the following:

- Submitting all required midpoint and final evaluations by their due dates.
- Entering your site requirements in CORE ELMS by clicking “My Requirements.”
- Reading all emails that come from the School via CORE ELMS.
- Completing one hour of preceptor development each reappointment cycle.
- Providing a brief description in your preceptor profile in CORE ELMS by clicking “Profile Information,” then “Description.”

Library Access

One of the many benefits of being a School of Pharmacy preceptor is having offsite access to eFacts and Comparisons Online and Micromedex only through the University's Health Sciences and Human Services Library (HS/HSL). **Access is limited to School of Pharmacy preceptors who are scheduled to take a student for at least one block in the current academic year.** Please note you will only get access during the blocks/rotations that you have students scheduled. If you would like to take advantage of this benefit, please contact the ELP Office at elp@rx.umaryland.edu for more details.

Support Experiential Learning Scholarships

As preceptors, you have an incredible impact on the growth and confidence of our student pharmacists. If you are looking for another meaningful way to make an impact, please consider supporting our students through the **Experiential Learning Support Fund**.

Each year, many APPE students face financial barriers - travel, housing, relocation, and other expenses - that can limit their ability to pursue the rotations that best match their passions and career goals. Your generosity, no matter the amount, can help remove these barriers.

Your support directly helps our students and strengthens their professional journeys.

Interested in helping students thrive? You can make a tax-deductible contribution at the [UMB ELP Donation Site](#) or via this QR code:



School News

A Global Exchange of Knowledge: Alexandria University Students Reflect on their Maryland Experience

By Tuan Huynh, PharmD, AAHIVP, HIVPCP, and Nathaniel Thomas, MBA

The University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP) continues to expand global experiential learning opportunities for pharmacy students through the development of strategic international partnerships. In December 2025, the Office of Experiential Learning met with Egypt's Alexandria University to establish a student exchange agreement aimed at fostering cross-cultural learning and professional development for pharmacy students from both institutions.

As a result of this collaboration, UMSOP's Experiential Learning Program (ELP) had the pleasure of welcoming two visiting pharmacy students, Youssef Saleh and Rana Mohamed, during the summer of 2026. As the first students to complete rotation experiences through this partnership, their visit represented a defining moment forward in expanding global partnerships and enriching pharmacy education through cultural exchange and international collaboration.

During their time in Maryland, Youssef and Rana completed experiential rotations at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), where they worked alongside pharmacists and health care teams in diverse clinical settings. Near the end of their experience, they visited the ELP office to reflect on their experiences, discuss lessons learned, and share how their time in Maryland helped shape their future professional aspirations.

Expanding perspectives through global experiences

For Youssef, the opportunity to complete a rotation experience in the United States was driven by a desire to deepen his understanding of clinical pharmacy practice, particularly in medical oncology. Having previously participated in an exchange program in the U.S., he was eager to further explore the American health care system, learn from experienced clinicians, and gain insights that he could take back to Egypt. Reflecting on his motivation, Youssef shared, "most importantly, I saw this rotation as an opportunity to challenge myself, expand my clinical knowledge, and better understand the type of pharmacist I aspire to become."

Rana was similarly drawn to the experience by her passion for global health and her desire to learn firsthand from a health care system different from her own. After participating in an exchange program in Romania, she developed an even greater interest in understanding how health care is delivered across different countries and cultures. The opportunity to train in the United States felt like a natural next step in that journey. "The United States, being globally renowned for health care innovation and scientific advancement, seemed like the perfect place to pursue this goal" she explained.



Youssef Saleh

While their motivations were unique, both students arrived eager to broaden their perspectives, challenge themselves academically, and gain a deeper appreciation for the pharmacist's role within an interprofessional health care team.

Lessons beyond the classroom

Through their experiences, both students gained a deeper appreciation for the role lifelong learning plays in their professional growth. For Youssef, he witnessed firsthand the commitment pharmacists in both inpatient and outpatient oncology practice had in continually building on their knowledge, staying current with emerging evidence, and applying those insights to optimize patient care. Equally impactful was the passion his preceptors brought to education. Their dedication to teaching, sharing clinical expertise, and mentoring future pharmacists highlighted the profound influence preceptors have on the next generation of professionals.

For Rana, one of the most valuable takeaways was gaining a broader understanding of the pharmacist's role in delivering patient-centered care. Through her experiences at UMMC's Coordinated Care Center, she observed how pharmacists help bridge gaps, improve access, support underserved populations, and collaborate with patients to address their unique needs. "Working at the Coordinated Care Center taught me the importance of communicating with patients both empathetically and professionally, approaching each patient holistically, and ensuring that all of their needs are addressed."



Left to right: Sara Touchan, PharmD, and Rana Mohamed

Shaping future career goals

Experiential learning has a unique way of helping students define not only their career interests but also the type of professionals they want to become. For Youssef, the rotation strengthened his interest in advanced oncology practice and reinforced his desire to pursue a career that integrates clinical practice, research, and evidence-based decision-making. Rana hopes to take the knowledge and perspectives she gained back to Alexandria University as a future teaching assistant, where she can mentor pharmacy students and share insights from clinical pharmacy practice in the United States. Looking ahead, she also hopes to help advance patient care in Egypt by incorporating innovative practices into its health care system. Together, their reflections highlight that experiential learning extends far beyond the rotation, providing opportunities to broaden perspectives, discover new career pathways, build confidence, and develop meaningful connections that transcend borders.

A shared commitment to learning

As their rotation experience ended, Youssef's and Rana's stories highlighted the transformative

power of experiential learning and the value of creating opportunities for students to engage with health care systems from a global perspective.



Left to right: Nathaniel Thomas, MBA, Tuan Huynh, PharmD, Youssef Saleh, Rana Mohamed, and Mojdeh Heavner, PharmD.

We are grateful to the dedicated preceptors and health care teams who made their experiences possible and look forward to continued collaboration with Alexandria University in the years ahead. We also celebrate Youssef's and Rana's accomplishments, professional growth, and willingness to embrace new perspectives throughout their time in U.S. This exchange program reflects the School's commitment to advancing global pharmacy education, fostering international collaboration, and creating meaningful opportunities for students to expand their perspectives through experiential learning abroad. Their experiences remind us that while health care systems may differ across countries, our profession remains connected by a shared commitment to learning, advancing patient care, and professional excellence.

Preceptor News

Celebrating Our Experiential Learning Community

By Tuan Huynh, PharmD, Assistant Director of Experiential Learning



The start of the fall semester provides an opportunity to celebrate the collaborative spirit that drives experiential learning. Across diverse practice settings and health care environments, our preceptors, site coordinators, and organizational partners create meaningful opportunities that shape the professional growth of our students. As assistant director of experiential learning, I am reminded that the success of our program is rooted in the shared commitment to make these experiences possible and help our students learn, grow, and thrive.

During the 2025-2026 rotation cycle, I visited 53 experiential sites across a diverse range of pharmacy practice settings, including health systems, community practice, acute care, ambulatory care, administrative pharmacy, and specialized patient care experiences. These opportunities allowed me to interact directly with 79 organizational partners and encompassed

more than 276 preceptors who played an important role in mentoring and supporting our students in their rotation experiences. These visits provide valuable opportunities to observe the high-quality learning experiences our students receive, engage with preceptors and site coordinators, explore emerging trends in pharmacy practice, and identify ways to enhance the student experience. Beyond that, they reaffirm the dedication and enthusiasm of our preceptors and site coordinators, whose commitment to experiential learning enriches student learning and drives the success of our program.

As we look ahead to another academic year, I am grateful for the ongoing collaboration of our preceptors, site coordinators, and organizational partners with our students. The commitment to teaching and mentorship not only enhances the student experience but also advances our shared mission of developing the next generation of practice-ready pharmacists. I look forward to continuing to strengthen these partnerships and working together to create exceptional learning opportunities for years to come.

Student News

Reflections on an Early Oncology Industry APPE

By Sana Bedair and Michael Bekele, Fourth-year PharmD and MS in Regulatory Science students, and Elie Pommier, PharmD, Clinical Scientist at AstraZeneca and APPE Preceptor

During our final APPE year, we each had the opportunity to complete an industry rotation with the Early Oncology Clinical Science (ECOS) team at AstraZeneca. Before these experiences, we understood the broad stages of drug development, from first-in-human studies through registration. However, we did not fully understand what an early oncology clinical team does day to day. Through our rotations, we gained a firsthand view of the people, decisions, and collaboration behind drug development. We hope sharing our experiences will provide future students with a better understanding of this unique career path.

Planning for industry rotations – Sana and Michael

Before applying for an industry rotation, it was important to think about which functional areas we wanted to explore and what we hoped to gain from the experience. One of our main goals was understanding how clinical teams evaluate their own data and use it to guide the development of an investigational therapy. Having that goal early helped us identify the right opportunities, be more intentional when connecting with industry professionals, and determine whether our interests aligned with the work once we experienced it firsthand.

We also prepared before starting our rotations by learning about the therapeutic area, the team's work, and ongoing clinical trials. That preparation helped us begin the rotation ready to ask meaningful questions rather than spending valuable time learning terminology and acronyms.

What makes an industry rotation unique – Michael

Industry rotations show you the work that happens long before a therapy reaches patients, an aspect of drug development not typically emphasized in traditional clinical pharmacy training. In EOCS, I watched a study team turn raw trial data into decisions in real time: reviewing adverse event patterns, checking whether dose modifications and expansion strategies should move forward, and deciding whether a gap in the data was a true treatment interruption or just a missing entry.

Nothing about it was theoretical. This experience highlighted the collaborative nature of the clinical scientist role. Each person helps shape how a study is planned, carried out, understood, and improved.

I was particularly struck by the extent to which the work involves applying professional judgment in situations where information is still developing. A protocol tells you the plan, but the team still must interpret what the data is saying. That shifted how I think about my own work: less “Did I complete the task?” and more “What decision does this support, and for whom?”

Looking back on my Early Oncology Clinical Science APPE at AstraZeneca – Michael

My EOCS APPE represented one of the most meaningful experiences of my professional training. I am grateful to the UMSOP Experiential Learning Program and the AstraZeneca EOCS team for facilitating this industry exposure, which enabled me to apply my PharmD and regulatory science background in a context distinct from traditional clinical pharmacy. This experience clarified my professional aspirations. I entered the program with a PharmD and a background in regulatory science, motivated by curiosity about clinical development but lacking a clear understanding of a clinical scientist’s day-to-day responsibilities.

During the rotation, Dr. Nick Caprio provided practical insights into the clinical scientist role. He reviewed study team structure, oncology disease states, unmet medical needs, study design principles, and protocol development and implementation. I learned that a protocol is not merely a static document; it guides decision-making, ensures consistency, and keeps the team focused on the primary research question.

A particularly notable aspect of the rotation was observing how the rolling deck functioned as a central working environment for the study team. It facilitated the organization of evolving information, supported discussion, and maintained alignment among various functions. This experience demonstrated how clinical, safety, regulatory, statistical, operational, and other perspectives integrate to inform decision-making.



From left, Nick Caprio, PharmD, and Michael Bekele

I also contributed to project-based work aimed at enhancing the team's ability to visualize complex information and improve workflow efficiency. This involved exploring the potential of emerging and AI-enabled tools to support data organization and visualization. The most significant lesson was that such tools are valuable only when combined with thorough review, clinical judgment, and effective communication.

Beyond technical learning, this rotation had a lasting professional impact. Dr. Caprio and the broader team were deeply invested in my growth. They encouraged me to ask better questions, communicate more clearly, build meaningful professional relationships, and appreciate the significance of each task. I also learned that even when outcomes are suboptimal, the work can advance scientific progress by enabling earlier learning, redirecting resources, and preventing patient exposure to potentially ineffective treatments.

This experience changed how I view early oncology development and drug development in general and strengthened my appreciation for the people, decisions, and teamwork behind life-saving treatments. I was frequently reminded of how much I still need to learn. However, I now possess a clearer understanding of the nature of this work and a more defined vision for my future career.

Looking back on my Early Oncology Clinical Science APPE at AstraZeneca - Sana

During my rotation at AstraZeneca, I had the opportunity to work with two clinical scientists, Dr. Negar Hamidi and Dr. Elie Pommier, across two clinical studies and gain hands-on exposure to different aspects of early clinical development. One of my responsibilities was drafting an informed consent form, which gave me a better understanding of how complex clinical and scientific information must be translated into language that patients can understand while still meeting study and regulatory requirements.

I also worked on efficacy and safety assessments, including evaluating tumor response using RECIST 1.1, mRECIST, and iRECIST criteria. On the safety side, I reviewed adverse events and considered their clinical significance, potential relationship to treatment, and the supportive care or premedications that might be needed. This was where I found myself using much more of my pharmacy school clinical training than I initially expected. Understanding disease states, laboratory values, adverse effects, and pharmacotherapy helped me look beyond the data itself and think about what those findings could mean clinically for a patient participating in a trial.



From left Sana Bedair and Negar Hamidi, PharmD

For my final project, I focused on combined evidence assessment and developed a tool to compare different products and evaluate their associated adverse-event profiles. The project challenged me to bring together clinical evidence from multiple sources and organize it in a way that could support a more structured assessment.

Another part of the experience that stood out to me was the culture at AstraZeneca. I expected a large pharmaceutical company to feel very formal, especially as a student joining for only five weeks. Instead, I found a highly collaborative environment where individuals were approachable and genuinely willing to share their time and expertise. I was encouraged to connect with people across different functions, ask questions, and learn about their career paths. Those conversations showed me how differently each function can look at the same development program and the extent of collaboration needed to move a potential therapy forward.

Building skills in early oncology: a preceptor's perspective – Elie

I remember my first industry rotation well, and it played a significant role in shaping both my decision to pursue a career in industry and my professional development. I have precepted several UMSOP students and each and each student's unique background and experiences help shape their rotation with AstraZeneca Early Oncology Clinical Development. My only requirement for students is that they come here hungry for new knowledge and development towards their goals, whether those goals are in industry or otherwise.

The UMSOP student rotation program at AstraZeneca provides a distinctive opportunity to gain insight into the pharmaceutical industry while developing experience in the early oncology space. This field is scientifically demanding and continually evolving, exposing students to questions that require clinical understanding, analytical judgment, regulatory awareness, and clear communication.

Throughout the rotation, students participate in projects that strengthen both technical and professional capabilities. Data-cleaning assignments demonstrate the importance of accuracy, consistency, and attention to detail before analysis begins. Students then apply critical-thinking and clinical reasoning skills to interpret data, evaluate findings in context, recognize limitations, and consider how results may inform future decisions.

In clinical development, our students gain experience reviewing and applying relevant guidelines to real-world practical scenarios. This experience reinforces that guidelines are not simply documents to memorize; they are resources that support thoughtful, evidence-based decision-making. The complexity of early oncology topics ensures that students must draw on a broad range of skills, including literature evaluation, problem-solving, scientific writing, and the ability to communicate uncertainty appropriately.

Professional development is a central part of the rotation and is reinforced through mock interviews and fellowship preparation. These activities help students articulate their experiences, respond to technical and behavioral questions, and reflect on their interests and career goals.

The rotation concludes with a final presentation. Preparing this work challenges students to synthesize information, construct a clear narrative, and present complex concepts to a professional audience.

Advice to future students – Sana and Michael

Figure out what you want to achieve by the end of your rotation and share those goals with your preceptor during the first week. We found that being open about our interests made it easier for our preceptors to connect us with projects, people, and experiences that aligned with what we wanted to learn. A preceptor cannot help you reach a goal they do not know about.

We also encourage students to keep asking questions, even after they begin to feel comfortable. The people around you have spent years developing expertise in their areas and are often willing to explain their work and share their experiences when approached thoughtfully. Be proactive about introducing yourself to people outside your immediate team as well. Some of our most valuable learning came from conversations that helped us understand different career paths and see how the various functions within industry work together.

Advice to future students: a preceptor's perspective – Elie

My advice to students interested in pursuing a career in industry is to approach their rotations with curiosity, preparation, and purpose. You are not expected to have every answer; rather, you should ask thoughtful questions, seek feedback, and understand how each assignment contributes to a broader objective. The pharmaceutical industry, and early oncology environment in particular, offers an exceptional learning experience, allowing students to explore complex scientific questions while building skills that can support their future contributions to drug development and patient care.

Disclosure: The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of AstraZeneca.

Campus and School Resources for Students

Mental Health First Aid: Building a More Supportive UMB Community

By Tierra Major Kearney, MS, UMB Student Counseling Center, and JuliAna Garcia Brammer, MBA, Director of PharmD Student Services, UMSOP

In 2023, the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Student Counseling Center (SCC) launched Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to reduce mental health stigma and provide support to students. The training was introduced in response to a growing need for mental health awareness and intervention skills within the university community. UMB is committed to fostering a culture where students can prioritize their well-being and access support when needed. As trusted members of the university community, faculty and staff and even preceptors are well

positioned to recognize concerns early and guide students toward available resources.

MHFA equips participants with practical tools to identify concerning behaviors, engage in supportive conversations, and connect individuals with professional assistance. By empowering members of the UMB community to respond confidently and compassionately, the training helps bridge the gap between students experiencing challenges and the resources available to support them. Ultimately, MHFA contributes to a university culture where fewer students fall through the cracks on their journey toward academic success and personal well-being.

After taking the MHFA training, one faculty member shared, “I believe this should be a required part of our education. Mental health challenges are so common, and outcomes would be much better if there were more people out there who could aid in the recovery process.”

This perspective reflects a growing recognition that mental health awareness is not solely the responsibility of counselors or clinicians. Creating a supportive university requires participation from all members of the community. Offering MHFA to students is particularly valuable and through MHFA, students learn how to recognize warning signs, provide support without judgment, and encourage others to access available services when needed.

Mental Health First Aiders, as those who are trained are known, focus on creating a safe environment and helping individuals connect with appropriate resources. The emphasis on safety is particularly important. First aiders become familiar with UMB campus resources, learn how to de-escalate potentially difficult situations, and are empowered to make direct and specific referrals.

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, the SCC surveys UMB community members who completed MHFA training. In the 2025 survey, 60 percent of certified Mental Health First Aiders reported supporting someone experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis in 2024, and 80 percent discussed options for seeking professional help. These findings demonstrate the meaningful impact of MHFA training and reinforce the importance of continuing to build a culture of awareness, support, and action across the university.

As UMB continues to prioritize well-being as a core value, MHFA empowers every member of the university community to foster a more supportive and connected environment. Students interested in participating can register for university-wide MHFA sessions offered through SCC. By becoming familiar with community resources, individuals can play an important role in helping others access support, reminding us that a single conversation, connection, or referral can make a meaningful difference.

Knowing where to get help at UMB

The most important lesson Mental Health First Aiders learn through the training is how to support someone by knowing the appropriate and available resources in their community. UMB offers a variety of services designed to support students' wellbeing. Within the School of Pharmacy, students have access to the Office of Student Success. The Office of Student Success is designed

to assist students in successfully navigating the academic requirements of UMSOP's PharmD program, and to engage students in opportunities for academic readiness, professional career guidance, and personal growth. The office offers support services such as academic tutoring, academic coaching, guidance on student policies, career readiness, and student events.

For preceptors, knowing these resources can make a meaningful difference in supporting students during challenging times. While preceptors are not expected to serve as counselors, they are often the first to notice changes in a student's well-being, engagement, or performance during a rotation experience. By maintaining open communication, recognizing concerns early, and connecting students to resources such as the SCC or the UMSOP Office of Student Success, preceptors can play a vital role in helping learners access the support they need. Familiarity with these services allows preceptors to respond with confidence and reinforce a culture of care and well-being where students can thrive both professionally and personally.

University of Maryland, Baltimore Resources

Student Counseling Center: Solution focused counseling, medication management, mental health referrals, and consultation services.

410 - 328 - 8404

jsilverman@umaryland.edu

Educational Support and Disability Services: Coordinates academic accommodation and executive functioning support.

410 - 706 - 5889

disabilityservices@umaryland.edu

Student Food Pantry: Facilitates student access to basic needs and nutritionally rich meals and snacks.

University of Maryland School of Pharmacy Resources:

Office of Student Success: Supports pharmacy student achievement and retention by providing personalized advising, connecting students to resources, and offering career guidance.

410 - 706 -7828

pharmdstudentsuccess@rx.umaryland.edu

National Resource:

9-8-8 National Mental Health Response Line: Call, text or chat online to connect with a trained counselor immediately for mental health support.

Disclosure: Microsoft 365 Copilot was utilized solely for editing purposes in the preparation of this newsletter. All content and ideas were created independently by the authors.