



A Note from the Dean

March 29, 2021

Saturday's UGA College of Pharmacy White Coat Ceremony just wasn't the same. This time-honored tradition was delayed by nearly eight months. The ceremony was heavily reliant upon technology, social distancing, and separate yet simultaneous events across three classrooms and two buildings. No friends or family could attend. There was no processional. There were no moments for each student on the stage. There was no reception afterwards, no opportunity to bring together hundreds of proud family and friends, student ambassadors, and faculty and staff to celebrate the P1 students. On the surface, so much was missing.

Although it was all so very different, for each element I am grateful.

- A team of dedicated faculty and staff, notably those in the Office of Student Affairs, embraced the challenge of the moment and developed a program that may have been the most heartfelt I have witnessed in my career. For these colleagues, I am grateful.
- Student volunteers and leaders from across the PharmD program spent their Saturday assisting with setup, guiding P1 students to their assigned locations, and leading students through the RxDawgs pledge. For their leadership and voluntarism, I am grateful.
- Six faculty members chose to play vital parts in the ceremony, rather than to be outside on a glorious Saturday spring afternoon. And an incredible alumna speaker shared words of wisdom that continue to ring in my ears. For Drs. Beach, Brooks, Cummings, Hannings, Huang, McEwen, and Seagraves, I am grateful.
- The students we celebrated hail from across the state of Georgia, the southeast, and 12 other countries. As I noted in my message yesterday, their "...life experiences, faith and belief systems, race and ethnicities, gender identities – these and a host of factors that make each of you [them] unique – combined reflects one of the most diverse classes ever enrolled at our college." Our ability to make UGA College of Pharmacy a place that welcomes, supports, and celebrates all as future colleagues in the profession is reliant upon the work of so many – our alumni and preceptors who encourage potential students to consider UGA; our

Admissions Committee members and Student Affairs team members who have embraced the opportunity to employ and shape best practices; our faculty and students who connect with the applicants during the admissions interview process; and so many others. For all of them, I am grateful.

- Supporting all of our missions as a College of Pharmacy takes so many people. Those people have had to continually reinvent what they do and how they do it, all the while facing a host of challenges that the pandemic has brought to our daily lives. For our faculty, staff, and preceptors who carry on our commitment to excellence, I am grateful.
- Overcoming a pandemic takes innovation, persistence, resilience, calculated risk-taking, and so much more. The scientific advances that have brought us to this point, the broad access we now have to vaccines, and the important roles pharmaceutical scientists, manufacturers, public health and policy professionals, regulatory scientists, and front-line pharmacists have played in this process all make me incredibly grateful.

Yes, masks may have obscured the smiles on their faces, but pure joy was in the eyes of all who participated yesterday. That gives this Dean, professor, and pharmacist so much hope for the future. I cannot wait until we can gather together more frequently, return to those events and activities we have had to postpone or cancel, and use what we have learned from this pandemic as we seek to elevate the health of all.

Until then, Vax Up and Mask Up, PharmDawgs!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly M. Smith, Dean
UGA College of Pharmacy