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Students Attend Prestigious Professional Leadership Conference

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STUDENTS ATTEND PRESTIGIOUS PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE *School of Pharmacy Encourages Leadership Development*

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Three students from Cedarville University’s inaugural Doctor of Pharmacy class recently participated in a distinguished, statewide leadership training conference. Jenna Lawhead, from Saint Petersburg, Fla., Jayson Brewin, from Shamong, N.J., and Allison Henry, from Roseville, Minn., were invited to attend the Ohio Pharmacists Association’s (OPA) Young Pharmacy Leadership Conference held on Sep. 29, 2012 in Columbus, OH.

“Regardless of where we work, we will be leaders in our field,” Henry said. “It is important to develop leadership skills early on, because opportunities for leadership can arise throughout our educational career, through group work, projects, organizations and jobs.”

Only 20 students were invited from the state’s seven pharmacy schools and colleges, evidencing notable leadership characteristics in each student selected. “OPA is looking for individuals with demonstrated leadership skills, those individuals who the school or college believes has the potential to be a significant leader within the profession,” said Jeffrey Lewis, Pharm.D., associate dean of the Cedarville University School of Pharmacy. “What OPA wants to do is further develop that skill base. They want to introduce these students to other student leaders.”

Students who attended the daylong conference experienced perspectives on leadership, both from leaders in the pharmacy profession and from other students.

Conference speakers included OPA president Tom Whiston, former president Steve Burson, member Mark Pilkington and executive director Ernie Boyd. Their sessions focused on the development of leadership skills within the pharmacy profession.

Lawhead said she enjoyed Burson's presentation on leadership and communication skills. "His session was the most practical in that he provided specific concepts and examples to follow in order to become an effective leader," she said.

Students were able to gather in small groups to discuss what they had heard. "I loved having the opportunity to interact with students from other universities and hear about their experiences throughout pharmacy school," Henry said. "We were the youngest students to attend the conference, so it was fun to hear about the upcoming years and encouraging to know that other students understand what we're going through in school. It was also interesting to learn why other students chose pharmacy school, and the different paths that each student wanted to take."

Lewis is glad to see his students interacting with similarly minded students. "The attendees are those individuals in their respective programs that are notable in their character, in their leadership skills and in their academic success," Lewis said. "Getting to know students from other programs like that will prove very valuable to them in the years ahead."

Lawhead said she found the conference helpful because it allowed her to gain valuable information about being an effective leader. "Pharmacists have to be able to work with a team of other health care professionals and staff members," she said. "Having good leadership skills is an integral component of teamwork."

Leadership development is a strategic focus of Cedarville's Doctor of Pharmacy program. "We have recognized that leaders in the health care professions are lacking in number," said Lewis. "It's our desire to leverage as many opportunities as we can to help our students develop leadership skills."

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