

Health profile

Pharmacy: It's in her blood

Daughter of professor becomes dean of Drake's pharmacy and health sciences department

By Estela Villanueva-Whitman
Special to The Register

Wendy Duncan, the new dean of the Drake University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, comes from a family of pharmacists. Her father was a pharmacy professor at the University of Toronto, and she and her sister both ended up in the field.

Although she practiced for a while, Duncan admits she lacked the temperament to be a practitioner and didn't enjoy her pharmacy education much. She pursued academia to create change.

"I thought maybe there are things in education to make it more engaging and relevant. That's sort of what I've dedicated my life to, and I've found it's a little harder to change things than I thought," she said.

What attracted you to Drake and what are some strengths of the department?

One of the faculty members here was a mentee of mine at a leadership/fellowship program. I had known about the Drake program for a long time and I thought it would be such an opportunity.

Drake graduates are



WENDY CAROLYN DUNCAN

Title: Dean and Professor, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Drake University

Age: 56

Family: Children, Derek, 29; Sean, 14.

Hometown: Grew up in Toronto. Lives in Des Moines.

known for their communication skills and their professionalism. They are pretty good clinically as well — a large portion of the students go on to residencies. The other thing that's special about the pharmacy program is the amount of individualization students have the opportunity to exploit. We have joint degrees, so students can get an MBA, a law degree or a public health degree. There's a concentration in diabetes and several minors.

How will the new Johansen Skills Assessment Laboratory prepare students for the future?

There's a huge need for primary care in the United States. A lot of people who go into medicine are not going into primary care; they're looking at subspecialties.

There are many professions that are trying to find ways to be extenders for primary care physicians. Pharmacists, with their expertise in medications and a lot of the

chronic diseases, are in a position to be helpful in the long-term for patients. The lab provides the patient assessment skills a pharmacist needs to provide that extended primary care.

What are some goals you're working on for the department?

» Augmenting teaching with educational technology. There's a lot of research that shows you get better outcomes than with just face-to-face instruction. A series of our courses use a flipped classroom — rather than lecturing, the students access the material outside the classroom. The first thing that happens when they get into the classroom is they take a quiz. Then they get together in a team and take the quiz again. That gives them an opportunity to teach one another. If there are still some points that are not quite clear, the faculty member may give a mini lecture. The rest of the time, the students work in their teams to use the ma-

terial they've read by themselves to solve problems.

» Through strategic planning, looking at influencing pharmacy practice and starting new, stackable master's level programs. There are little bits of credentials people can take, often at a distance, that supplement what they're already doing in practice. Over time, they can add up to a master's program. These are specifically directed toward the kinds of new skills that are going to be needed to meet the Affordable Care Act requirements.

» Putting more resources into international rotations. This gives our graduates a chance to see that the world is a more complex place and I think ultimately that will make them better citizens and better practitioners.

» Starting an inter-professional center. We've started conversations between Des Moines Area Community College, Des Moines University, Grand View and Iowa Methodist. We're trying to put together programs that allow all of our students to learn together and from one another so that they better understand how to work together. Ultimately, that will help improve the health care system.