For the 13th time, faculty and staff from the School of Pharmacy said goodbye to an outstanding group of graduates when we met in Lubbock May 19 to celebrate the Class of 2012 at the annual Hooding Ceremony.

Each of our graduating classes have been special in their own ways and the ceremony gives us the chance to reflect upon the unique contributions these students have made during their four years in our program.

The Hooding Ceremony also affords us an opportunity to recognize the individual accomplishments of some of our graduates.

Special honorees for the Class of 2012 included Brian Terrell, who received the Banner Bearer Award for having the highest GPA, and Jacqueline Petty, recipient of the Bowl of Hygieia for her character and all-around contributions to leadership and professionalism inside and outside the classroom.

In addition, Associate Professor Dr. Harold Miller (Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences - Abilene) was named the Most Influential Professor by the Class of 2012.

As always, I want to express my thanks and appreciation to the faculty and staff who helped make this graduation weekend a successful event for our students and their families.
Shawna Thomas Nunez honored for character, leadership

In life, the highway to success is marked with potholes of adversity and character is often the means by which we navigate past those trouble areas.

Shawna Thomas Nunez, the most recent recipient of the Dean’s Student Leadership Award, has faced the kind of adversity that would lead many to seek the nearest exit ramp, but her character has remained steady and reliable.

Nunez was diagnosed with stage III B breast cancer in January 2010. When she crossed the stage in May to receive her diploma, she had completed her degree on time despite undergoing eight rounds of chemotherapy, enduring a radical double mastectomy with reconstruction and withstanding many radiation treatments. If the character she displayed in battling back from each grueling procedure amazed many of her classmates and teachers, then the attitude with which she met her enemy head on inspired them.

Associate Professor Dr. Rebecca Sleeper nominated Nunez for the Dean’s Student Leadership Award, which Nunez received at the Class of 2012 Hooding Ceremony.

“Shawna displays a grace that most people recognize, but few can teach to others or master themselves,” Sleeper said. “As a parent of a young daughter, I find grace to be one of the most challenging concepts to try to convey. But sometimes you see someone that not only displays grace, but does so in the face of unimaginable stress. Shawna models that type of grace.

“On the days when I’m feeling crabby or impatient and allow my frustration to show, the example Shawna sets is a centering one to remember. She displays a type of leadership that does not require an office or a title, yet in its own quiet way is intensely powerful. It’s not the type of leadership that is just followed, it is the type that is emulated.”

Nunez’s ability to lead others didn’t end when class was over. She served as class secretary during her second year of pharmacy school and was an active member of several student organizations, including the American Pharmacist Association and the Double T Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists. She also served as the 2010-2011 vice president for the Lubbock Pharmacy Club and was the 2011-2012 Lubbock vice president for Phi Lambda Sigma.

“Student involvement provides us with a sense of community, a way to be involved and connections for the future,” Nunez said. “Everyone says that pharmacy is a small community and I never understood that until my later years in school. It seems that everyone knows everyone in the pharmacy world.”

Nunez said she is blessed to have had many role models in her life, including professors, family and friends, but she attributes her work ethic and desire to help others primarily to her parents. Her father is up at 5 a.m. each day to put in 12-hour days at two jobs and her mother has always been a caregiver. Both are involved in various community projects through church and volunteer organizations.

“When I was younger my dad would come home from a long day at work and help me with my homework until it was time for me to go to bed,” Nunez recalled. “My mom was a born leader, having to help raise her six brothers and sisters. Before meeting my father, she was a single mom raising two sons, and when I was 13, they adopted two younger sons. I have been blessed with two parents who are so outstanding that some of that was bound to be absorbed by me.”

Through her work and rotations in various clinics during
pharmacy school, Nunez learned the important role pharmacists play in patient health care; being a patient has taught her the importance of having a great health care team.

“At the end of the day, it is all about the patient,” Nunez said. “I like being a leader because I understand what it is like to be the health care provider and the patient.”

She also draws upon the example put forth by her husband, Shaughn, who is preparing for his second year as a pediatric medical resident. The two first met as undergrads and Nunez said she was a bit cautious at first because he was the guy who ruined the curve for everyone else.

“At first I thought he would be this arrogant, pompous man because he is so smart,” Nunez said with a smile. “But I found out that he is very humble and I really admired that. He is also a great teacher and he encourages me to become a great pharmacist because I get to see how much he cares about his patients and I want to replicate that sincerity. He will go above and beyond what is required, taking care of things for his patient even after hours.”

Nunez also credits her husband with strengthening her spiritually and helping her develop a stronger Christian faith.

“Whenever I am down about anything, he always has encouraging words and re-directs me to the Lord.”

In April, Nunez was told that her cancer had returned in her spine. Despite two surgeries to remove the tumor, she was ready to march with her class at graduation. At the hooding ceremony, when Sleeper and Lubbock Regional Dean Dr. Charles Seifert announced that she had received the Dean’s Student Leadership Award, Nunez wasn’t quite prepared.

“I had recently undergone back surgery and everyone at the school was so kind to cater to my needs for a pillow in my chair, water and anything else I needed,” Nunez said. “I was slouched in my chair, my shoes were off and Kennedy Offoegbu and Brett Noteware were fanning me with papers. I heard them describing the recipient and the words were so kind. As soon as Dr. Seifert started reading the verse from ‘Wind Beneath My Wings,’ I started tearing up and I didn’t even know they were taking about me.”

When her name was called, Nunez said she had to scramble.

“They called my name and I had no idea what to do, so I frantically put on my shoes and stood up with everyone else. I did not realize they wanted me to go up to the stage, so I stood there for a minute until someone ushered me to the stage. It was a huge honor to receive the award and it’s something I will never forget.”

Kandala named Outstanding grad student for 2011-2012

Prabodh Kandala, a student in the Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences (GPPS), was named the 2011-2012 Outstanding Graduate Student by the TTUHSC Graduate School in Biomedical Sciences.

Kandala worked in the lab of Dr. Sanjay Srivastava and completed his doctoral degree in May. After receiving the award May 19 at the graduate school’s Convocation in Lubbock, he carried the school seal May 20 at the TTUHSC Commencement Ceremony.

Kandala is the fifth GPPS student to receive the graduate school’s Outstanding Graduate Student Award since 2005.
**Chhadua selected for Distinguished Alumnus Award**

Some people search for years before finding the company or profession where they want to spend their career. TTUHSC School of Pharmacy alumnus Dr. Raj Chhadua (‘02) found both at Walgreens years before he earned his Pharm.D. His accomplishments since graduation earned him the school’s 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award for Excellence in Pharmacy Practice, which he received in May at the annual Hooding Ceremony in Lubbock.

Chhadua started his career with Walgreens as a photo clerk and then moved behind the drug counter a short time later to work as a pharmacy technician. He was promoted to pharmacy intern after completing his first year in the TTUHSC Pharm.D. program and then to staff pharmacist in 2002 after he graduated and received his Texas license.

After a short period as a staff pharmacist, Chhadua was promoted to pharmacy manager, moving between several Walgreens pharmacies in the Dallas area, each with divergent clientele, volume levels, sales and profit, staff proficiency and operating standards. Each store presented Chhadua with unique challenges and the opportunity to prove himself as a knowledgeable and skilled pharmacist who could manage a multi-million dollar business and motivate, train and develop employees in a manner that elevated the standards of the entire pharmacy.

In July 2007, Chhadua was promoted to district pharmacy supervisor; today, he has complete oversight of 42 pharmacy locations, 126 pharmacists and roughly $185 million in pharmacy revenue.

With approximately 65 percent of U.S. pharmacists working in a retail drugstore environment, Chhadua believes they have unlimited potential to affect overall patient health care. Throughout his career, he has been a staunch advocate for pharmacists and community pharmacy; his efforts continually seek additional opportunities for pharmacists to play larger roles in direct patient care by providing health and wellness services that produce more positive patient outcomes.

Chhadua presently serves as the Texas Pharmacy Association’s chair-elect for the Academy of Chain Pharmacists, a position that has refined his view that the pharmacy profession provides patient-centered and population-based care that optimizes medication therapy. He said the profession is one where the patient’s health outcome is the product, not the medication. He foresees a day when pharmacists will have the authority and autonomy to manage medication therapy and be accountable for the patients’ therapeutic outcomes, all while working cooperatively with practitioners from other disciplines to care for patients.

Walgreens’ pharmacists currently provide Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis), HPV, meningococcal, influenza, pneumonia, hepatitis A and B, polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and varicella vaccinations to Texas patients as part of Walgreens’ health and wellness program. As the immunization leader for North, Central and West Texas, Chhadua was instrumental in transforming each of Walgreens’ 296 stores in these areas into Immunization Centers of Excellence and he seamlessly executed a program to provide immunization training and certification to the 675 pharmacists working in these stores.

In 2009, Chhadua worked with vendors across the country to bring in enough vaccine to assist with the state’s response to the H1N1 pandemic, helping pharmacists play a pivotal role in providing preventative care. In January, Chhadua helped to ensure sufficient quantities of meningococcal vaccine and immunization-certified pharmacists were available to care for the thousands of students enrolling in Texas colleges and universities.

Although it is still under construction, Chhadua recently launched a website (www.onerxvoice.com) that will seek to bring all pharmacists together and to unify the profession regardless of setting. His vision is to create one professional voice that has the power to affect legislative decisions in Texas and across the country.

Despite his accomplishments, Chhadua said he was surprised and humbled to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award and he is grateful to everyone who has helped him along the way.

“The training I received at TTUHSC-SOP taught me to be a forward thinker and provided me the education needed to succeed,” Chhadua said. “Our profession is changing and it is our responsibility to always practice at the top of our profession the moment we graduate and strive for excellence. It was a true honor to be recognized by the professors and staff that I admire.”
A letter from Dr. Josh Rodgers (Class of 2003)

As many of you know, the School of Pharmacy Alumni Association (SOPAA) board embarked upon a fundraising campaign to create an endowed scholarship for future TTUHSC pharmacy students.

This initiative, known as the SOP Alumni Pioneers Endowed Scholarship Fund, began in April 2011 and came from a desire to provide additional financial assistance to students in need. For many of us, especially those in the first few SOP classes, scholarships were few and far between, so the opportunity to give back to our school was appealing.

Another attraction was the desire to have this scholarship be funded solely by us – the School of Pharmacy alumni.

Fast forward a year or so, and I’m pleased to announce that — thanks to your generosity — we have successfully reached and exceeded our goal by raising $11,000. We achieved this through gifts large and small ranging from $10 to $1,000.

This campaign shows the power that a collective effort can have and how we can succeed when we put our minds to it.

On behalf of the entire SOPAA board, we sincerely appreciate all those who contributed to this effort. And if you’re so motivated, we will continue to accept funds for this scholarship or for any other pharmacy school scholarship.

To make a contribution, simply visit www.give2tech.com and look for the name of the fund to which you’d like to donate.

So where do we go from here? This endowment will spin off a scholarship, and hopefully multiple scholarships, as it continues to grow well into the future. We anticipate that the first award will be made next year and we plan to provide an update and introduce you to the recipient at that point.

In the meantime, thank you for fulfilling the “Oath of a Pharmacist” and creating a legacy of support that will benefit future generations.

Sincerely,
Josh Rodgers, Pharm.D.
Class of 2003

Abilene schools field formidable team for March of Dimes

The schools of pharmacy and nursing joined forces in an interprofessional partnership that raised $3,385 for the March of Dimes in 2012. The two-month effort culminated May 5 with the three-mile Walk for Babies at Redbud Park in Abilene.

Assistant Professor Dr. Lisa Brinn and Unit Coordinator Melissa Edwards organized the pharmacy team. Abilene IT specialists Carol Walker and Bill Davis led the nursing team.

The TTUHSC-Abilene team was recognized as the Top New Association for the 2012 campaign. Brinn, who raised more than $1,000 during the Walk for Babies, was named Top New Walker for 2012.

“When comparing top sellers, the TTUHSC-Abilene Team finished in fifth place,” Brinn said. “We were competing against big teams like Walmart, First Financial Bank, Kmart and HEB, so we should all be proud of our accomplishments.”

In addition to the walk, the group collected online donations and raised more than $500 by selling T-shirts. They also raised more than $200 during a three-day bake sale and more than $450 at a potluck. Brinn said the group also received the one-day sales proceeds from a Subway in Abilene.

“I want to thank everyone who participated,” Brinn said. “Without your help we could not have done this. I also want to give a special thanks to Melissa Edwards for all her help in coordinating the events and for creating our T-shirt design.”
Adkins’ hard work reaps big rewards

Thanks to his work in the laboratory, Chris Adkins, a Ph.D. candidate with the School of Pharmacy's Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences in Amarillo, has been the recipient of several honors in recent months.

In May, the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education (AFPE) Board of Grants awarded Adkins a one-year, $6,500 Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in the Pharmaceutical Sciences that begins September 1.

AFPE awards the fellowships to encourage outstanding pre-doctoral students to continue their studies and earn their Ph.D. in the pharmaceutical sciences at a U.S. school or college of pharmacy. Recipients must have completed at least three semesters of graduate study and have no more than three and a half years remaining.

Adkins competed for the fellowship against other pre-doctoral graduate students from across the country. With a maximum of 44 such fellowships awarded each year, Adkins is now a member of a very distinguished group of men and women who have received the award since 1942.

“Being awarded an AFPE Pre-Doctoral Fellowship is truly an incredible honor to receive,” Adkins said. “If you take a look at past recipients of this fellowship, there’s no doubt as to AFPE’s prestige. This fellowship does not simply provide money for tuition and other educational expenses, but it provides a sense of encouragement regarding my future in research and academia.”

Adkins also received a $3,100 fellowship from Nikon in May to cover his tuition, room and board for the 14th Annual Quantitative Fluorescence Microscopy, a national techniques course in fluorescence microscopy and imaging organized by the top academic and industry leaders in quantitative fluorescent microscopy.

The course took place May 18-25 at the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory (MDIBL) in Salisbury Cove, Maine.

MDIBL is a community of scientists and students who study a variety of non-mammalian organisms to learn about the basic biology of life. Adkins estimated more than 30 participants ranging from graduate students to principal investigators attended the course.

“I likely would not have been able to attend this outstanding course had it not been for the generous fellowship that Nikon provided,” Adkins said.

Adkins received another honor in June when he was named a Best Poster Award recipient at the 2012 Barriers of the CNS conference at Colby-Sawyer College in New London, N.H.

The CNS Conference is part of the renowned Gordon Research Conferences, which are designed to maximize interactions between students, post-docs, industry researchers and academic investigators in narrow fields of research. CNS Conference attendees include the top researchers and experts in the field of blood-brain barrier (BBB) research. Many attendees prepare at least one poster containing unpublished, cutting-edge research to facilitate discussions and talks leading toward advancements in BBB research.

Adkins said there were only three poster awards handed out at the 2012 conference. The six-member panel that judged the posters consisted of some of the foremost BBB researchers in the world.

“Receiving the Best Poster Award came unexpected, but it certainly provided me with a sense of accomplishment from the years of hard work here at TTUHSC. It also gave me a sense of recognition that my research is important in the eyes of many prestigious BBB researchers.”
From the Dean’s Desk

Amarillo hosts 11th Annual Research Days

School of Pharmacy faculty researchers, graduate students and residents converged upon the main campus in Amarillo in June for the 11th Annual Research Days.

Those who attended the event learned about research activities that have taken place at the school during the past year. They also exchanged research ideas and interests and discussed possible interdisciplinary collaborations.

Dr. Leslie Z. Benet was the keynote speaker for the event. Benet is a professor for the Department of Bioengineering and Therapeutic Sciences, Schools of Pharmacy and Medicine at the University of California-San Francisco.

Dr. Richard A. Glennon, professor and chair for the Department of Medicinal Chemistry at Virginia Commonwealth University, delivered a special invited medicinal chemistry presentation.

Dr. C. Patrict Reynolds, director for the TTUHSC School of Medicine Cancer Center and the South Plains Oncology Consortium, delivered the Distinguished Research presentation.

There were also 11 invited podium presentations made by various School of Pharmacy school faculty, graduate students and residents. In addition, 56 pharmacy faculty, graduate students and residents entered the annual Research Days poster competition that highlights research activities undertaken during the past year.

In the Biomedical Sciences category, Upendra Gumaste, Ph.D., took first place. Second place went to Srinivas Reddy Boreddy, Ph.D., and third place was awarded to Sharad Sharma, B.Pharm.

Md. Kowser Miah, B.Pharm., received first place honors in the Pharmaceutical Sciences category. Kamrun Nahar, M.S., earned second place and Brijeshkumar Patel, M.S., garnered third place.

The nod for top prize in the Pharmacy Practice category went to Robin Rajan, M.S. Shatha Farah, M.S., finished in second place and Shanna James, Pharm.D., was the third place honoree.

Abilene campus continues Pharmacy Camp tradition

In June, the Abilene regional campus played host to a group of aspiring pharmacists at the Fifth Annual Raider Red Pharmacy Summer Camp.

The 2012 camp included 35 high school juniors and seniors who spent a week exploring the profession through hands-on learning experiences and activities. Thirty-four campers were from Texas and another was from California. Abilene Christian University provided overnight dormitory accommodations.

The campers participated in several on-campus activities, including a safety orientation, an introduction to simulation center and assessment skills and lessons about the anatomy. They also worked in the compounding laboratory making lip balm, lozenges, effervescent powder and lollipops.

In addition, the campers visited two institutional pharmacies, worked on their interviewing skills and learned about the School of Pharmacy admissions process.

“This was our largest summer camp since its inception,” Unit Coordinator and camp contact Melissa Edwards said. “We had a great summer camp and a great group of inspirational students.”

In addition to their daily pharmacy-related activities, campers participated in a scavenger hunt and were treated to a hamburger cookout, swimming, volleyball and bowling. They also played miniature golf at Primetime Entertainment Center and attended demonstrations at the Abilene Zoo.

The 2012 camp was made possible through the support of the James A. “Buddy” Davidson Charitable Foundation, First Financial Bank, the Abilene Teachers Federal Credit Union, Hendrick Medical Center, Big Country AHEC, TTUHSC and the School of Pharmacy.
As a graduate student working in the Texas Tech University Libraries development office some years ago, Carrie Croley remembers hearing about plans for a new pharmacy school. At the time, she had no idea she would one day end up working with the school.

Today, Croley is a development officer based at the school’s Dallas/Fort Worth-Southwest campus where she splits her time working with the pharmacy program and the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women’s Health (LWBIWH). Her role is to increase awareness of both entities, build relationships with alumni and other interested parties and to secure philanthropic funding to benefit the pharmacy school, the LWBIWH — and most importantly, she said — the students.

A native of Fort Worth, Croley earned a B.S. in biomedical sciences from Texas A&M University and later became a Red Raider by earning her MBA in health organization management. She continued her development work at Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colo. and later at Children’s Medical Center-Dallas. Her two passions are education and health care.

“I’ve been fortunate to work for organizations that allowed me to tap into my educational background as well as those passions,” she said.

Croley and her husband, Brenton, live in Carrollton and have one cat, Buster, who they rescued from the street. She enjoys traveling, shopping, going to museums, exercising and watching sports like college football “and even NASCAR,” she said.

Carrie said she is continually striving to explore new subjects and won’t hesitate to look something up to find out more.

“Learning about new things helps me relate to people and is an asset to my job,” she adds.
At the May faculty retreat in Amarillo, faculty and staff got together for a rousing game of SOP Jeopardy! Brittany Patterson (left) took care of the game board while Summer Balcer (right) kept the rowdy crowd under control. Below, contestants Dr. Chris Tawwater (left) and Dr. Maciej Markiewski concentrate as they await the next thought provoking answer.

I had the honor of presenting Shari Morris with a Quality Service Award May 23 at the Quality Service and Employee Service Awards Ceremony. Shari is the graduate student advisor for the Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences in Amarillo.

The Abilene campus had a good time hosting the Fifth Annual Raider Red Pharmacy Summer Camp. Pictured from left (front row): Experiential Programs Assistant Director Randi King; Experiential Coordinator Shannon Ferrill; Unit Coordinator and camp organizer Melissa Edwards; Camper of the Week Odelia (Smiley) Kim from Plano; and Regional Dean Debra Notturno-Strong. On the back row (from left): Assistant Professor Nishil Desai; Assistant Unit Director Mike Nall; and School of Pharmacy supporter Jay Strong.

Renovation and construction is under way to expand and update the Dallas/Fort Worth Southwest regional campus location. The work is slated to be completed by the end of July and should be ready for use in early August.

Dr. Anna Karanyan helps a pair of middle school students prepare lip balm. The Amarillo TTUHSC campus hosted the students June 21 as part of the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation Summer Camp.

Amarillo P2 Justin Thomas takes a blood sample from a patient May 5 at the Trinity Baptist Church Health Fair.