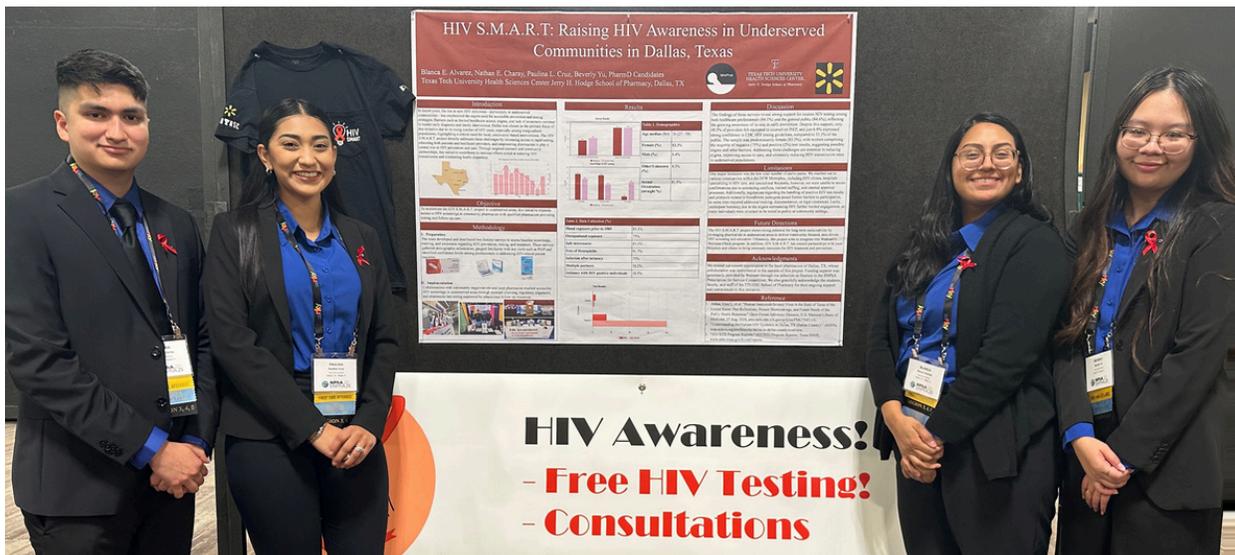


NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

TTUHSC.EDU/PHARMACY



STUDENT TEAM WINS NATIONAL COMPETITION

The TTUHSC - SOP's Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) Chapter's Prescription for Service (P4S) team, Nathan Charay, Paulina Cruz, Blanca Alvarez, and Beverly Yu, won 1st place for their HIV SMART project in the Walmart P4S national competition. The team was awarded \$10,000 in scholarship funds. Nathan, Paulina, and Beverly were also awarded additional individual scholarships from the national conference.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear SOP Team Members, Students, Alumni, and Friends,
In this newsletter issue, you will read about community services and outstanding accomplishments from our team members, alumni and students, including championship at competitions and community services across West and North Texas. The start of the academic year has been celebratory as the School welcomed the Class of 2029, including our second cohort of Pioneer (hybrid) Pathway students. Hope y'all enjoy fall festivities!

—Grace M, Kuo, PharmD, MPH, PhD



NEW STUDENTS WELCOMED AT WHITE COAT CEREMONIES

In August, we had the pleasure of welcoming 145 incoming first-year students from the Class of 2029 at annual White Coat ceremonies for the Dallas, Abilene and Amarillo campuses.

The Dallas ceremony was held on August 2 at the Creekview High School Auditorium.

The Abilene Ceremony was held on August 3 at the Historic Paramount Theatre.

The Amarillo ceremony took place on August 9 at the Sybil B. Harrington Auditorium on the TTUHSC Amarillo campus.

During each event, students received their traditional white coat, one of the most visible symbols of the health care profession. Receiving the white coat is a reminder of the commitment our students make to an honorable and trusted profession, and it marks the beginning of their four-year pharmacy school journey.



HENDERSON HONORED WITH NATIONAL AWARD

Taygan Henderson, PharmD, Class of 2025, was the recipient of an USPHS Excellence in Public Health Pharmacy Award. She was 1 of 89 pharmacy students from across the country nominated for their efforts in addressing current public health challenges and 1 of just 10 selected for the award.

TTUHSC RECOGNIZES YEARS OF SERVICE



A series of Years of Service recognition ceremonies were held across TTUHSC campuses this summer. Awards are presented based on the team member's years of service to the university in five-year increments. The 2025 School of Pharmacy honorees included:

- **5 YEARS:** Md. Rakibul Islam, Allison Rogers
- **10 YEARS:** Nadezhda German, Alexander Mdzinarishvili
- **15 YEARS:** Michelle Sperbeck, Stacy Schaffler, Steven Pass, Tiffany Coomer
- **20 YEARS:** Sara Brouse, Thomas Parker, Kenna Payne
- **25 YEARS:** Tom Abbruscato, Ulrich Bickel, Krystal Haase, Eric MacLaughlin, Rebecca Perry

BROWN HONORED WITH STAFF AWARD



In August, **Jacey Brown**, assistant director at the Dallas campus of the Office of Experiential Programs, was honored at the 2025 Distinguished Staff Awards ceremony. Brown was awarded the Quality Staff Award, which is presented to team members who continually demonstrate the TTUHSC value of Beyond Service by creating and delivering positive defining moments, anticipating the needs of others, and going the extra mile.

BRAIN DRUG DISCOVERY CENTER HOSTS SYMPOSIUM AND HONORS DR. SMITH

On August 29, the TTUHSC Brain Drug Discovery Center hosted a Research Symposium, where Keynote Speaker, Quentin Smith, PhD, Grover E. Murray Professor, presented on the Progress from a Life in Blood-Brain Barrier Science and Academics. The Symposium featured several other presentations by researchers, rapid fire presentations, a panel discussion, and the following awards:

- **Patent Awards:** Tom Abbruscato, Mahmoud Ahmed, Hiranmoy Das and Nadia German
- **Research Award:** Mahmoud Ahmed and Jenny Wilkerson
- **Service Impact Award:** Matt White
- **High Impact Publication Award:** Quentin Smith

The event ended with the recognition of Dr. Smith's years of service and accomplishments, which include but are not limited to:

- 1997:** Joining the TTUHSC School of Pharmacy as Professor and Chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- 2001:** President's Excellence in Teaching Award
- 2007:** University Distinguished Professor
- 2008:** American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists Fellow
- 2009:** Transition from Department Chair to Associate Dean for Research for the School of Pharmacy.
- 2012 - 2022:** Served as Dean of the School of Pharmacy
- 2017 - 2019:** Concurrently served as TTUHSC Senior Vice President of Research.
- 2020:** Heritage Award from the West Texas Pharmacy Association

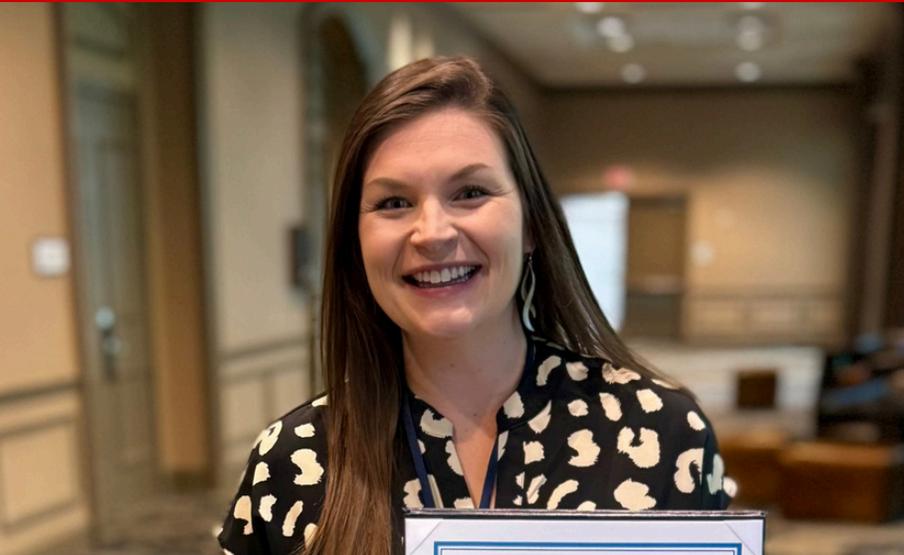
During this time, Dr. Smith:

- Taught in over 27 different PharmD courses and 6 different PhD courses and received numerous teaching awards
- Became recognized as the developer of the In Situ Brain Perfusion Technique.
- Has had more than 12,500 citations in other published papers, giving him an H-Index of 57.

Dr. Smith retired on August 31 and the Board of Regents conferred the title of Professor Emeritus to him for his long and faithful service to TTUHSC.



VAN DYKE WINS PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR AWARD



Alaina Van Dyke, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy practice at the Dallas campus, was selected as the 2024 Department of Pharmacy Practice Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Publication of the Year award winner. Her work, titled “Prioritizing Faculty Well-Being: Why it Matters, What Schools Can Do, and a Call for Action” was published in the American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education (AJPE) and will be implemented in the upcoming SOP strategic plan.

RESEARCH TEAM MAKES NEW BBB DISCOVERY



A team of scientists from the TTUHSC-SOP Amarillo campus has published new evidence suggesting that the brain’s protective shield — known as the blood-brain barrier (BBB)— remains largely intact in a commonly used mouse model of Alzheimer’s disease. The discovery challenges long-standing assumptions that Alzheimer’s disease causes the BBB to “leak,” potentially reshaping how researchers think about drug delivery for the disease.



TEAM EARNS NINDS RENEWAL GRANT

A collaborative team in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the TTUHSC Amarillo campus was recently awarded a five-year competitive renewal grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke - NINDS to continue its stroke research.

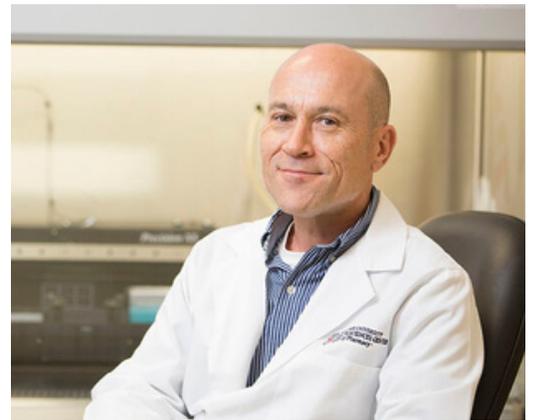
HCHF AWARDS \$50K GRANT FOR GROUNDBREAKING CANCER RESEARCH



Hiranmoy Das, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical sciences, received a grant from the Harrington Cancer and Health Foundation to support groundbreaking cancer research. The funding will help advance the study of circulating tumor cells (CTCs), rare but powerful cancer cells that play a central role in the spread of cancer from one part of the body to another. By isolating and growing these cells in the lab, Das and his team hope to better understand how cancer metastasizes and develop targeted therapies to stop it. Read more [here](#).

DIB TEAM'S RESEARCH PAVING WAY FOR NEW STRATEGIES

Maciej Markiewski, MD, PhD, professor at the Abilene campus, and his team from the Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology (DIB) are uncovering how a TP53 gene variant (P72 vs. R72) impacts macrophage activation—a key player in immune defense. Their findings reveal that P72 triggers heightened inflammation, which may contribute to cancer progression, sepsis, and cardiovascular disease, particularly in populations where this variant is more common. This breakthrough links genetics, immune response, and health disparities, paving the way for new precision medicine strategies.



TTUHSC WINS GREAT COLLEGES HONORS



For a sixth year, the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center has been recognized as one of the best colleges in the U.S. to work for, earning honors in the job satisfaction and support, shared governance and faculty experience categories. Learn more [here](#).

MINZE TAKES PART IN WEBINAR



Molly Minze, PharmD, Associate Dean for Student Affairs & Admissions, was part of a national webinar hosted by the Student Services Special Interest Group of the American Association of Colleges of

Pharmacy (AACCP). The webinar, titled Innovative Practices in Holistic PharmD Admissions Processes, showcased approaches to admission with aims to recruit qualified students with varied experiences.

BAILEY SPEAKS AT MCKESSON EVENT



Trista Bailey, PharmD, associate professor and division head for geriatrics/pediatrics, spoke on navigating the complexities of care for older adults at the McKesson ideaSHARE 2025 meeting in Nashville, TN.



HIGBEA PRESENTS ON/PROMOTES IPE

Ashley Higbea, PharmD, Associate Professor and SOP Interprofessional Education (IPE) Director, had a busy summer proudly representing the innovative and dedicated work TTUHSC and the School of Pharmacy does to prepare future health professionals for collaborative, patient-centered care through IPE.

- Texas IPE Consortium in Lubbock, she collaborated with colleagues and co-presented with Dr. Holter from the School of Nursing on the newly developed IPE activity with P1 Pioneer Pathway students.
- CAB (Collaboration Across Borders) she joined IPE leaders from across Texas in Omaha to present about the newly developed Rapid Teaming Certification Course from the TX IPE Consortium.
- AACP in Chicago she had a poster presentation highlighting the in-person IPE event for P1s and MS1s, introducing early learners to how interprofessional collaboration improves patient safety.

STUDENTS AWARDED AT TPA



During the 2025 Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA) Conference & Expo, two TTUHSC-SOP students received scholarship awards and one placed in the Patient Counseling Competition.

- **Reagan Bills, P4**, received a general scholarship from the Texas Pharmacy Foundation
- **Mackenzie Gunn, P3**, received the George Webb scholarship from the Texas Pharmacy Foundation
- **Grace Onaiwu, P4**, won second place in the Patient Counseling Competition

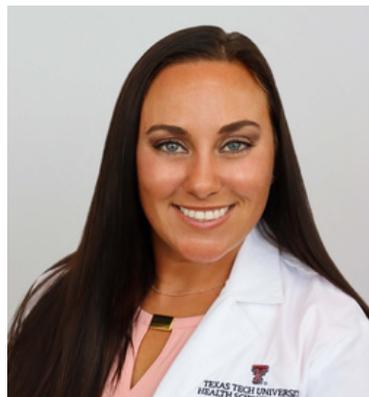
TAH 1 OF 5 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Becky Tah, P4 at the Dallas campus, was one of just five recipients of the Nexus 2025 AMCP Southwest Student Scholarship. Recipients of this scholarship demonstrate exceptional dedication, excellence, and passion in their fields.



DENCE, OAKES WIN CLINICAL PHARMACY CHALLENGE

Katlyn Dence and Alyssa Oakes, P3s at the Amarillo campus, took first place in the 2025 Local Clinical Skills Competition and will go on to represent TTUHSC-SOP in the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) National Clinical Skills Competition at ASHP Midyear in December.



TWO STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO ALBERTSONS INTERNSHIP



Jocelyn Ferguson, P2 at the Dallas campus, and Sara Nguyen, P2 at the Amarillo campus, were accepted into the Albertsons Summer Internship Program. They got to tour the Albertsons central fill facility in late July and worked both inside and outside the pharmacy with immunization and diabetes clinics over the duration of the internship.

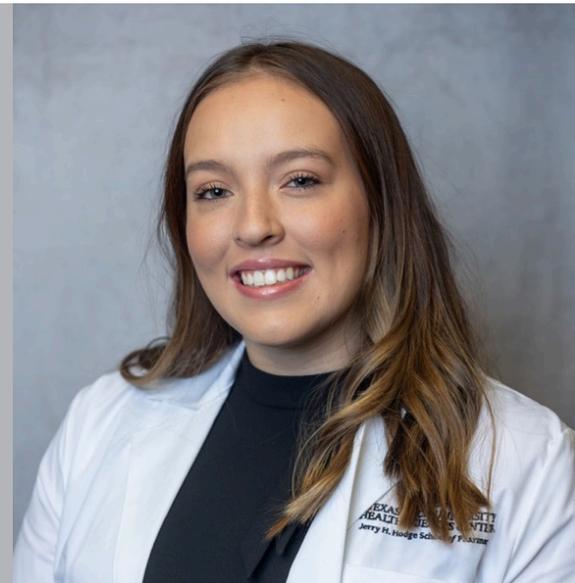
SCHUBERT TO SERVE ON STUDENT FORUM



The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) announced that Travis Schubert, P4 at the Dallas campus, will be serving as a member of the Pharmacy Student Forum Executive Committee for the 2025-2026 term.

MULLINAX ACCEPTED INTO AACP SUMMER PROGRAM

Madelyn Mullinax, P3, was accepted into the 2025 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy - AACP SAS Summer Research Exchange Program under the mentorship of Dr. Natalie Hohmann at Auburn University, Harrison College of Pharmacy. Based on the merit of her application, Mullinax was also awarded the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education \$2500 scholarship.



CAMPUSES HOST RX SUMMER CAMPS



In June, the TTUHSC-SOP Abilene and Amarillo campuses welcomed high school students for an immersive introduction to the pharmacy profession. During the events, campers practiced compounding techniques, explored pharmacists' roles and learned how pharmacy fits into the health care system. Current pharmacy students and faculty joined the campers throughout the week, offering hands-on guidance and mentorship. The Rx Summer Camp program serves as a pathway for students exploring careers in pharmacy and health care.

LUBBOCK CAMPUS WELCOMES BACK STUDENTS

The Lubbock campus recently held a welcome event at Main Event where TTUHSC-SOP students, faculty, and staff were able to have fun bowling and playing games while enjoying each other's company.



TEXAS PHARMACY MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTED ON KAMR

The history of pharmacy on the High Plains can be found at the Texas Pharmacy Museum inside the TTUHSC-SOP Amarillo campus. Krystal Haase, PharmD, regional dean at the Amarillo campus, stopped by KAMR Local 4 News to explain how this hidden treasure preserves the roots of pharmacy science—and why understanding our past helps proudly shape our future in health care. Learn more [here](#).



FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS GET INTRODUCTION TO IPE

In August, first-year pharmacy and medical students came together for their first IPE event where they learned about IPE and its importance in patient safety. The event featured an engaging panel of two physician–pharmacist pairs who shared real-world experiences and advice in collaborative practice. Students also learned with and from each other through hands-on activities in the anatomy cadaver lab, lung histology, and an inhaler technique demonstrations that each focused on the importance of teamwork, communication, and roles and responsibilities.



COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIRS



In August, Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) members provided blood pressure screenings and hypertension education to attendees at the St. Barnabas Health Fair in Richardson, Texas.



Dallas campus students, Mena Masry, P4, Yousseff Ibrahim, P4, and Morgan Norona, P3, recently provided smoking cessation and over the counter medication safety education at the Union Gospel Mission Center of Hope Women's Shelter and pediatric health fair.



In September, Amarillo campus students partnered with the Buddy Walk to spread awareness and raise money for kids with down syndrome. Students educated community members who came by their booth on the importance of heart health and maintaining blood pressure as well as common medications that are mistaken for candy.



FALL MEDICATION CLEANOUTS CONCLUDE

The Texas Panhandle Poison Center (TPPC) hosted collection events at the TTUHSC Lubbock, Abilene and Amarillo campuses in October. Community members were able to drop off unwanted medicines and sharps to dispose of them in a free, legal and environmentally responsible manner. School of Pharmacy student volunteers had the opportunity to collaborate with students from other TTUHSC schools and see first-hand the issues with non-adherence to medications.

- The Abilene event collected 849 pounds of unused or expired medication and 148 pounds of sharps.
- The Lubbock event collected 1739.5 pounds of unused or expired medication and 221 pounds of sharps.
- The Amarillo event collected 1606.5 pounds of unused or expired medication and 330 pounds of sharps.



On May 29 and June 26 some of our TTUHSC-SOP Dallas team members volunteered at Feed My Starving Children. Together with other teams, they packed a combined 234 boxes and 49,942 MannaPack® meals specially designed to help reverse and prevent undernutrition around the world.

TTUHSC-SOP and TTUHSC GSBS welcomed students in the Amarillo College HSI STEM Grant Program to shadow TTUHSC students. The program provides resources and support to help underrepresented students succeed in science, technology, engineering and math programs.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI HONORED

Each year we invite nominations to acknowledge the impact of our fellow alumni on the pharmacy profession. In October, the TTUHSC Alumni Association honored two SOP alumni at the 2024-2025 Distinguished Alumni Awards.



Pharmacy Leadership Award

Ajith Pai, PharmD

- Class of 2007

Dr. Pai currently serves as President of Texas Health Harris Methodist Southwest Fort Worth, a Premier Top 100 Hospital, and has held this position since July 2022. As president, he oversees operations, works to advance physician recruitment and alignment, service-line development and promotes effective employee, governance, and community relations. He ensures the hospital meets goals for patient safety, clinical and non-clinical quality, operational performance and patient, physician, and employee engagement.



Excellence in Practice Award

Karmen Stephens, PharmD

- Class of 2010

Dr. Stephens is a nationally recognized clinical pharmacy leader with over two decades of experience spanning long-term care, community pharmacy, and telehealth. As Vice President of Clinical at Consana Health, Dr. Stephens oversees clinical development and process improvement for a pharmacy serving patients in all 50 states. She leads a team of over 30 pharmacists, manages strategic partnerships—including a 1.8 million-member health plan—and drives innovation in Comprehensive Medication Management and Medication Therapy Management.

BEHIND THE COUNTER → BEHIND THE SCREEN

Osita Najomo, Pharm.D., MBA, a 2004 graduate of the TTUHSC-SOP, is not a typical pharmacist. It would probably be more accurate to describe her as one part pharmacist and one part entrepreneur. Najomo founded Westlake HB Pharma in 2017 in Garland, Texas. Her focus is on affordable over-the-counter products that she compounds and manufactures through an Ohio-based manufacturing plant. Read more [here](#).



MEET THE 2025 SOP ALUMNI BOARD



Athena Cannon - Communications Officer

Class of 2020, Abilene
Clinical Pharmacist - Indian Health Board Medical
Clinic & U.S. Sports Pharmacy Group



Mikala Conatser - Member at Large

Class of 2011, Amarillo
PIC New Solutions Functional Wellness Pharmacy



Daniel Capps - Member at Large

Class of 2020, Amarillo
PIC at Hometown Pharmacy in Plainview, TX



Amber Elliott - Chair

Class of 2009, Amarillo
(Pharmacotherapy Residency 2011)
Associate Director, Medical Science Liaison - Sandoz



Abimbola Farinde - Secretary

Class of 2010, Abilene
Professor with Columbia Southern University and
Clinical staff pharmacist with Vibra Health



Ike Oguejiofor - Member at Large

Class of 2018
Clinical Pharmacist & Residency Program
Coordinator at Terry Reilly Health Services



Dustin Wynne - Chair Elect

Class of 2011, Amarillo
Pharmacy Manager at BSA Harrington Cancer Center



Jacob Rogers - Past Chair

Class of 2020, Abilene
Ambulatory Care Clinical Pharmacist at HSC Health -
Center for Older Adults and Assistant Professor of
Pharmacotherapy at UNTHSC

THE ROLE OF THE ALUMNI BOARD

The Alumni Board is the official representative for the larger SOP alumni group. The primary goal of the Alumni Board is to connect past graduates with the TTUHSC-SOP to promote collaborative efforts across current students and past graduates.

WHAT WE DO

The Board works to enhance the TTUHSC alumni network, asks alumni for feedback on Board supported initiatives, and encourage alumni to submit initiatives that impact their pharmacy practice.

HOW ALUMNI CAN GET INVOLVED

- Provide continuing education (CE) content on a topic of interest/expertise
- Mentor current TTUHSC student pharmacists
- Attend alumni and TTUHSC sponsored events
- Donate to "Adopt-a-White Coat"

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Vida Haddad, PharmD, BCPS, BCCCP, Class of 2017

Haddad knew she wanted to work in healthcare from a very young age. She was raised in Dallas, TX and worked at an independent compounding pharmacy as a high school student. That experience solidified her desire to become a pharmacist and, after earning a BS in Biochemistry from the University of North Texas, she completed her PharmD at TTUHSC School of Pharmacy in 2017.

Post-graduation, she did a PGY-1 residency at BSA Health System in Amarillo, TX, where she currently serves as a critical care pharmacist and preceptor for P4 students and PGY-1 pharmacy residents in the ICU.

Motivated by her love of helping people, Haddad enjoys keeping up with the constant challenges in the ICU, navigating ways to problem solve, and ultimately improving patient outcomes.

The most rewarding part of Haddad's career so far has been having the opportunity to be part of an interdisciplinary team that diligently works daily to provide evidence-based medicine to critically ill patients. She enjoys the daily meeting of the minds to discuss patients and is grateful to contribute to making a positive impact, all while learning from various disciplines.

Outside of pharmacy, Haddad loves to watch movies, make potter and ski in the wintertime.

WANT TO SEE YOUR OR A COLLEAGUE'S CURRENT WORK OR LIFE EVENTS HIGHLIGHTED?

Email alumni photos and the following information to the Board at sopaa.ttuhscc@gmail.com.

- Tell us about yourself.
- Where are you now?
- Where do you practice?
- What keeps you motivated?
- What has been the most rewarding part/moment of your career so far?
- What are your favorite things to do outside of pharmacy?

UPCOMING EVENTS



Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center will be observing several holidays over the next few months. We hope you all enjoy your time away from the office.

November 27 and 28: Thanksgiving Holidays

December 24 and 26: Winter Holidays

December 25: Christmas Day

January 1 : New Year's Day

January 2: Winter Holiday

January 19: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

NOVEMBER:

- 11: Veterans Day
- 20: National Rural Health Day

DECEMBER:

- 2: Giving Tuesday
- 2-4: P3 Final Exams
- 2-9: P1-P2 Final Exams
- 7-10: ASHP Mid-Year Meeting, Las Vegas, NV
- 10: Abilene HSC Holiday Luncheon
- 17: Amarillo HSC Holiday Luncheon

JANUARY:

- 5: First Day of Class for Spring Semester
- 12: National Pharmacist Day



Fun Around Campus



Rx Summer Camp



IPE



TPA



Have something or someone you'd like to see featured in the SOP Newsletter? Send a photo and a brief description of what you would like to see featured to amber.bustos@ttuhsc.edu