Mission is at the Core of Who We Are
by Thad Franz, Phillip L. Thornton, Jeff Huston, Melody Hartzler, Emily Laswell, and Kasandra Chambers

Mission Requirements
In an effort to foster the value of character, ethics, collaboration, and global focus, Cedarville University School of Pharmacy (CUSOP) has instituted a policy whereby each student pharmacist must complete a week-long medical missions experience. The purpose of this requirement is multi-faceted but is centered around development of a heart for servant-leadership and a missions-focus. Some of these experiences are described later in this article and consist of both domestic and international medical missions. The key component for these experiences is that there must be an unmet need, and the students must develop a plan to meet that need. At times, that may consist of a weeklong visit to meet health needs acutely. However, it is our goal to bring an innovative focus on these opportunities as well. Essentially, we ask our students to identify areas in which they could help the community meet their long-term goals to improve health and use this as a means to share and spread the gospel throughout the communities.

Domestic and International Experiences
While much focus is placed by some on meeting the healthcare and spiritual needs of people internationally, we have tried to place an equal focus on meeting the needs of those in our communities. It is often easy to see needs of people in underdeveloped countries without seeing the needs of those around us. Indeed, there are many communities in the United States where people live in sub-poverty conditions. These conditions often co-exist with low levels of health literacy, health education, and resources for good healthcare. This often results in increased health risks and disease which can lead to hopelessness. To this end, we see both domestic and international experiences both necessary and rewarding. We have established several medical mission opportunities and continue to seek partnerships to advance this focus.

Cedarville University is located near several medically underserved communities and poverty-stricken areas, most notably in Appalachia, Ohio and Kentucky. We have established partnerships in Athens County, Ohio with Good Works, Inc., with churches and pharmacies in southeast Ohio (centered around Lawrence County), and with Kentucky Mountain Mission in Beattyville, Kentucky. We have also partnered internationally with several underserved communities through the university’s network and the local church. In each of these opportunities, our students meet the health needs of the constituents and identify long-term ways to help the community.

Good Works, Inc.
Good Works, Inc. is a non-profit organization that is centered in Athens, Ohio but serves the general Athens County area. This is an area that has long been burdened by poverty and homelessness. Good Works has set up an innovative program whereby they provide practical assistance to those in need, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, shelter for those without a home, and help for those with physical or financial needs to maintain their current habitat. One area of need that was not currently being addressed was healthcare. While there is a medical school and hospital in Athens and many great pharmacies in the area, the access to these facilities are limited due to finances or transportation issues. In this unique partnership, we are striving to provide our students with the insight of need and how they can help meet needs in a tangible way, not just financially. They have had the privilege of cleaning the home of a paralyzed gentleman, restoring the stability of a home for an elderly, widowed woman, and many other opportunities such as these. However, we are also fostering the relationship building within each of these events to identify ways in which we, as pharmacists, can meet the medical, physical, and spiritual needs of our neighbors in our communities and surrounding communities.

Kentucky Mountain Mission
Kentucky Mountain Mission (KMM) is a diverse experience. There are many opportunities for our students to act as the camp “healthcare professional” during children and youth camps. The student pharmacist serves as intake for all medications that are brought into the camp and provides appropriate doses to the children and youth. The student pharmacists have had experiences in which they could counsel the children on how to correctly take their medication (especially inhalers) or check on their disease state (e.g., diabetes). This has allowed students to ascertain the health literacy of the children and teach at the level of the “patient.” KMM is located in Appalachia Kentucky, and there is a dearth of medical care in the immediate area. Health literacy is low and disease rates are high. KMM has used this information to provide an important outreach to the local community where they provide dental care to the community twice a year. The student pharmacists partnered with the dentists, dental assistants, and dental hygienists to provide medication advice to the prescribing dentist as well as giving disease and medical education to the community. This interaction led to an initiative in health habits, which is just beginning. The students recognized the lack of education on diet and exercise and the impact that this can have; not only on health of the patient’s teeth, but also their overall well-being. Students are now developing materials to provide to the patients at these dental clinics and have begun initial steps in establishing bi-annual medical clinics as well.

India
During the spring of 2015, a pharmacy team consisting of a faculty leader and six pharmacy students spent seven days serving the people of Northern India through a partnership with the Delhi Bible Institute.
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In addition to opportunities in Athens and India, students had
opportunities to serve in different areas in Honduras. Each of these
mission trips involved medical care, including triage by a nurse, a visit
with a physician, and a small bag of prescriptions. These mission trips
also allowed students to interact with other healthcare professionals
in a different environment. During the trips, students were able to
interact with physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and healthcare
educators. Students rotated through a variety of different areas
during the trips including triaging patients, helping with medication
dispensing, and providing health education, further expanding their
appreciation for other healthcare professionals and their roles in
patient care.

In addition to the medical care they receive, the patients are also
presented with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the patients wait
for their prescriptions to be filled, mission workers are able to talk
about the importance of healthy living and share ways to improve
their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Because of this unique
component, over twenty Honduran people at a single missions trip
came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Not only did the experiences impact the way the students perceived
others in the United States, the missions in Honduras also rejuvenated
their spiritual walks. One student commented, “Jesus says in Matthew
25:40, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters
of Mine, you did for Me.” The physical and spiritual needs in Honduras
are so great, and the work we did felt like just a drop in the bucket.
I was reminded by one of my teammates that God is not concerned
with numbers. He doesn’t count the amount of people we served or
the number of prescriptions we filled. If we were able to help just
one person come to know the Lord, isn’t that worth everything?” To
watch the students grow both as healthcare practitioners as well as
Christians was an amazing encouragement.

Jamaica
In 2012 and 2013, a clinical pharmacist faculty member working
within a family medicine residency program organized an
interdisciplinary team to join Medical Ministry International (MMI)
on their Jamaica project. The team consisted of family medicine
physicians, medical residents, pharmacy residents, pharmacy and
nursing students. The pharmacy residents were engaged in the
planning and execution of drug acquisition and prep work that is
required for this type of experience. During this trip the medical
residents and attending physician saw patients after they were
triaged by nursing students and other nurses on the projects. Our
pharmacy students also rotated through triage. After the patient
had been seen, they came to the pharmacy and integrated health.
Integrated Health Education (IHE) is part of each MMI short term
project. As patients waited for their medications, they were given
health education tailored to their specific health issues. During this
time, pharmacy students and residents provided diabetes counseling,
asthma education, and medication counseling; they were also able
to lay hands on these patients in prayer. The gospel message was
shared during this point in the clinic work-flow. Often patients heard
the message before they even arrived at IHE! The focus on health
education and spiritual support allowed the patient to leave with
something much more sustainable than just a prescription for a few
months. Below is a testimony from one of the pharmacy students that
participated in this project.

I finally got comfortable enough where I was also able to start praying
with some of the patients. I was so encouraged by their faith and how
happy they all seemed to be with so much less than what we have. One
of my favorite songs we would sing with the patients was “I am blessed.”
Even now when I think of this song, it nearly brings me to tears to think
that these people living in poverty have a better understanding than I
do of what really matters in life and the meaning of the word “blessed.”

Conclusion
CUSOP strives to provide students ways to grow in their servant
leadership and live out the Christian missional life both domestically
and internationally. Each student has taken advantage of the
opportunities laid before them and God has provided fruits of blessing
to the students and school from their experiences. CUSOP desires to
continue to grow and develop service learning types of experiences in
“...Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8,
NIV). The school also continues to look for like-minded partners
to collaborate with, so that God’s glory might be revealed through
pharmacy students as they meet the needs of patients and impact
their lives now and in eternity. We encourage you to contact us if
you have any domestic or international mission needs in which we
can partner. †

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where he provides medication management to patients
with chronic disease. His desire is to see his love for the Savior and passion
for pharmacy to be interwoven throughout his work and that this would
impact the students and others around him. God has blessed Thad with
the opportunity to take his practice experiences as a pharmacist to relate to other
pharmacists in the community, as well as, bringing a different perspective to
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