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UM Professor Edits Guide to New Approach in Pharmacy Education

UNIVERSITY, Miss. – The University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy long has been recognized as a leader in pharmacy education and research, and the release of a new book edited by an Ole Miss pharmacy professor helps position the school at the forefront of a new approach to pharmacy education.

Recognizing a need for greater accountability, pharmacy school faculty are embracing an approach called abilities-based education, where the focus is on developing specific skills and attitudes in students in addition to imparting and assessing knowledge. The “Handbook for Pharmacy Educators: Contemporary Teaching Principles and Strategies” (Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2000), edited by Dr. Noel E. Wilkin, is the first book designed to help educators understand and implement abilities-based education in pharmacy programs.

“After attending national meetings, I realized that many pharmacy educators were unsure of how to make this shift,” says Wilkin, an assistant professor of pharmacy administration and research assistant professor in the Research Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences. “They weren’t able to go to all the conferences on the topic ... but they were participating in this concept because they were teaching the courses. My intent was to compile information to help pharmacy faculty understand the principles and help them develop strategies they can use in the classroom.”

Wilkin came up with the idea for the book about two years ago, originally envisioning it as a special issue of the Journal of Pharmacy Teaching, a peer-reviewed journal that at the time was edited at Ohio State University. He solicited chapters from educators at Ole Miss, the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, University of Maryland and Auburn University. Wilkin also edited

the book and contributed a chapter.

The volume includes peer-reviewed chapters on abilities-based assessment and assessment as learning. It also includes peer-reviewed chapters on teaching strategies, including active learning, communications skills, electronic presentations, creating effective handouts and using the Internet as a support tool.

Administrators at several prestigious pharmacy programs have praised the book. Dr. David A. Knapp, dean of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy lauded it as “A superior compilation ... a down-to-earth guide to pedagogy.”

Wilkin, who recently was named as editor of the Journal of Pharmacy Teaching, plans to work with the book’s publisher to develop more books aimed at strengthening pharmacy education.

“It is exciting to know that the publisher has agreed to continue the handbook theme into a series,” he says. “So there eventually will be a set of volumes that I hope pharmacy educators will find to be useful for improving pharmacy instruction.”