



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

College of Letters & Science

UCSB

Alumni Spotlight

This month's Spotlight features Becky, a former Biochemistry: Molecular Biology major who, after attending one of the most prestigious pharmacy programs in the country, is now tackling the hectic, hands-on world of being a pharmacist in low-income communities.

Becky Gayle: PharmD



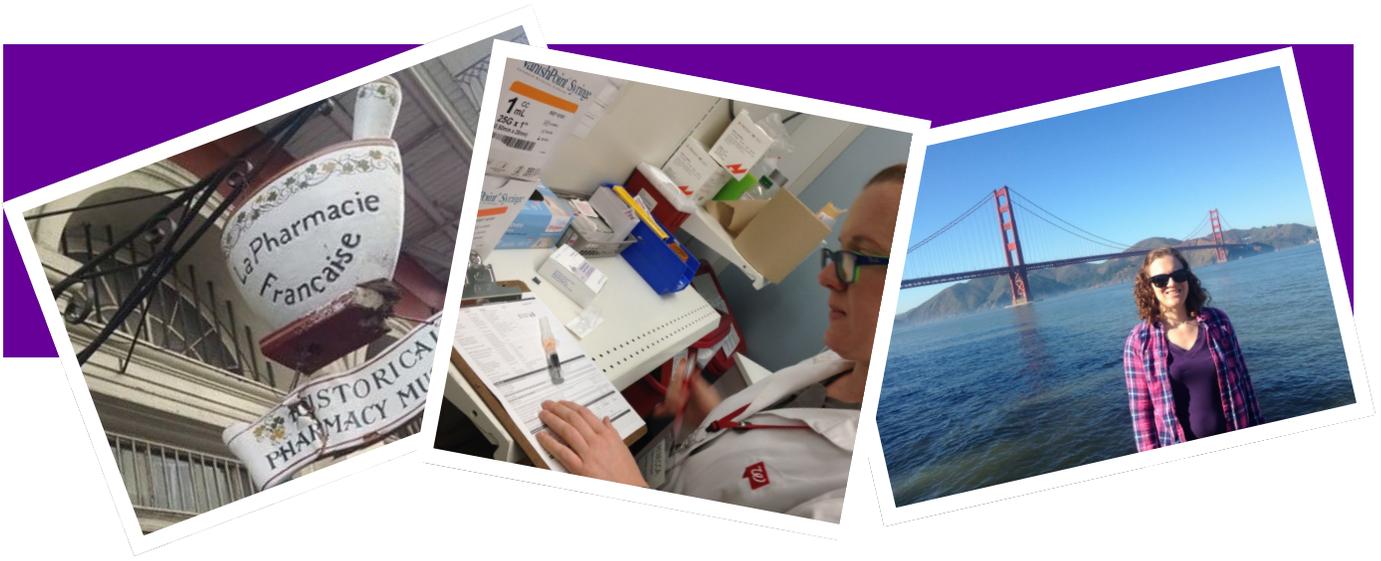
What are you up to now, post-graduation?

I am an assistant pharmacy manager and staff pharmacist at Walgreens. Every day, I help people manage their health and their prescriptions. Not only do I verify that the correct patient receives the correct medication at the correct dose, but I also make over-the-counter recommendations, administer vaccinations, answer patient and provider questions, clarify prescriptions, and resolve drug interactions and insurance problems on a daily basis. As a pharmacist, I work in a fast-paced environment at the heart of healthcare where medicine intersects with policy, and I communicate with a wide variety of people, ranging from the general public to specialized physicians and other healthcare professionals.

How did you get to where you are?

I was a Biochemistry-Molecular Biology major at UCSB and attended the UCSF School of Pharmacy. Planning ahead, in terms of coursework that met the requirements for pharmacy school admission and to get my bachelor's degree, and developing strong study habits were really key in helping me get into the UCSF School of Pharmacy. Also, maintaining my varied interests – namely, my interest in learning and speaking Spanish – has always played to my advantage in getting to where I am today and making me stand out from my pharmacy colleagues and classmates.

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I would say the most difficult part of getting to where I'm at now was adjusting to the changes in workload and expectations of graduate school. (You really have to want to achieve your goal to afford the huge investment of time and energy that is graduate school, especially if you go straight into it after undergrad like I did.) After becoming a pharmacist, it was another challenge to adjust to the expectations in the workplace, which were very different than what was expected of me as a student.

What was the best thing you did as an undergrad to help you get to where you are?

It might not make too much sense, but the best thing I did as an undergrad to help me get to where I'm at now happened outside the classroom at my part-time jobs.

During my four years at UCSB, I worked as a copyreader at the Daily Nexus, and it was the best experience of my undergrad career! Not only did it make me stand out in my

applications to pharmacy school, but it also made me a strong communicator, which is essential in the healthcare field. When I reflect on what I do now as a pharmacist, I realize that I'm basically applying the same analytical and editing skills I learned and mastered as a copyreader at the Daily Nexus in the pharmacy when I verify prescriptions to make sure they're both correct and appropriate. Go figure!

“...I'm basically applying the same analytical and editing skills I learned and mastered as a copyreader at the Daily Nexus in the pharmacy...”

In my last two years at UCSB, I also worked at Longs Drugs – now CVS – on State Street as a part-time pharmacy clerk. My experience in the pharmacy as an undergrad was extremely valuable in helping me to solidify my career decision. I would definitely recommend getting your

feet wet in the profession that you're interested in – whether it's through a part-time job or even volunteering – and making sure that it's something you want to do in the long run.

Even though my extracurricular experiences really helped get me to

where I am today, I cannot discount the importance of being a diligent student and making classes and studies a high priority, especially if graduate school is anywhere on your radar. If I were less dedicated to my classes and prioritized time on D.P. over time in the library, I would not have made it this far.



“I feel like I have gained more than I lost from this ‘failure,’ which was really just an unplanned detour.”

What do you wish you had known while you were in undergrad?

The most valuable life lesson I wish I would have appreciated more in undergrad is not to get discouraged by failure. I don't care how amazing of a student or person you are – not all of your life experiences are going to be successful. As a student who is used to doing everything possible to pass exams and avoid failure so you can get your degree, this is a tough lesson to learn, and a lesson I have struggled with myself.

The job I have now is not the type of pharmacist job I envisioned having during pharmacy school. I always wanted to be an ambulatory care pharmacist, working in a clinic in a role similar to that of a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. After pharmacy school, I got matched with a first-year pharmacy residency program that I was really excited about. After a few months, though, it was obvious to me that it was not a good match for me, and I ended up deciding to quit.

Looking back, I wish I would not have been so hard on myself for choosing to quit my residency. The experience taught me a lot about myself and what was most important to me in my life and in my career. Now, I feel like I have gained more than I have lost from this “failure,” which was really just an unplanned detour.

For better or worse, failure is a part of life. If something you try doesn't work out, you shouldn't beat yourself up about it. Instead, you should look at it, not as a failure, but as an opportunity to learn and grow. You may even find yourself in a pretty good place you never expected to be!

What was the best thing about being a Gaucho?

The best thing about being a Gaucho was the camaraderie. Even though many of my classes at UCSB were very challenging, I always felt that they were challenging in a supportive way that really encouraged personal growth and self-directed learning. I never felt suffocated or intimidated by overly competitive classmates; I have always felt supported by my class-

mates and colleagues, who seemed more focused on their own learning than on squashing the competition. As a Gaucho, I have always felt like a person that was cared for personally, whether it was by my friends, professors, or T.A.s. For me, that is definitely



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For articles like these, reminders of important deadlines, and more, like our Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/AskJoeGaucho

If an alum's story is meaningful to you, consider reaching out with questions using the contact information provided.

what made my UCSB experience the great experience that it was and why I am still very proud to be a Gaucho!

Any final words of wisdom for the current Gaucho generation?

Follow your dreams and pursue your interests! Don't let anyone tell you it doesn't make sense for you to pursue an outside interest of yours. You never know when these skills will come in handy! Assuming you already have the background knowledge and require-

ments for the job you want, in the real world, the details of what you're doing don't matter as much as the overarching skills you gain from all your experiences.

Plus, if you don't infuse a bit of who YOU are into what you are doing, you will be miserable at work. Your outside interests and pursuits not only provide unique value, skills, and personality to your workplace, but they are also the keys to ensuring you are genuinely happy in the profession you choose.



Becky welcomes UCSB students to contact her via LinkedIn with questions about the field and for advice on how to use your time at UCSB to become competitive in the teaching world. Requests to look over student resumes or inquiries about open positions will not be responded to.

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