

Graduate Student Spotlight



Amber Goedken

PhD - Pharmaceutical Socioeconomics

Pharm D., Pharmacy - The University of Iowa

Winner of 3rd Place in the Biological & Health Sciences Division at the 2007 James F. Jakobsen Graduate Conference

Please describe your thesis project in a short sentence.

I am still deciding exactly what my project will be; however, it will involve studying how insured patients' medication use is affected by the cost of their prescriptions.

How did you decide to go to graduate school?

When I was a pharmacy student I completed a small research project with my current advisor and liked what I was doing. After graduating from pharmacy school, I completed a pharmacy residency, and during that residency I got to work as a teaching assistant. I enjoyed working with the students, and the combination of that and my enjoyment doing research led me to pursue graduate school.

What made you decide to go to graduate school at Iowa?

I was taught by the faculty in my department while I was a pharmacy student and really liked them and what they were doing. Also, I love Iowa City, so it was an easy decision.

How has being a graduate student at Iowa prepared you to achieve those goals?

The faculty members in my program strive to build the strength of their students' preparation for research. Additionally, I've been given the opportunity to experience teaching firsthand and give lectures to the pharmacy students.

You are a winner of one of the top awards at the Jakobsen Conference in a previous year. What did you enjoy most about the Jakobsen Conference experience?

The best part of the Jakobsen Conference was the interest the audience took in all the presentations despite not being fluent in the particular topic that was being presented. The comraderie in the room in which I presented was fantastic, and it was very interesting to hear about other students' projects and see what a wonderful job they are doing. It demonstrated the strength of the University's graduate programs across campus.

What are some of your interests outside of school?

Spending time with family and friends, riding our motorcycle with my husband

What are your long-term goals beyond your graduate degree?

I can see myself as a faculty member at a pharmacy school or a researcher studying the choices patients make about their treatments.

Are there any particular challenges you've faced as a graduate student at Iowa?

My biggest challenge is staying focused on the overarching goal of graduate school and not fixating on the pieces. Graduate school is not about completing assignments, surviving exams, or finishing projects. It is about building your knowledge, becoming a critical thinker, and developing an appreciation for your area of interest. However, those goals are easily overlooked when many assignments and projects are vying for your attention. I have to remind myself to step back and think about what I am really trying to accomplish by being here.

Do you have a particular mentor who has played an important role in the development of your thesis or your career trajectory?

I consider myself incredibly lucky to have found an advisor whose research interests match my own and whose personality and advising style suit me so well. Dr. Julie Urmie is available anytime I have questions or concerns and is willing to offer guidance on life as a graduate student and research projects alike. She keeps me challenged but not overwhelmed, and I know she takes my best interest into consideration.

She knows that I enjoy teaching and finds opportunities for me to do so while also keeping me involved in various research projects. Graduate school is challenging, but I believe having her as an advisor would make it easier for any student to succeed.

Please note any significant honors you've received .

*UI Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, 2007,
American Federation of Pharmaceutical Education
Fellowship, 2007-08*