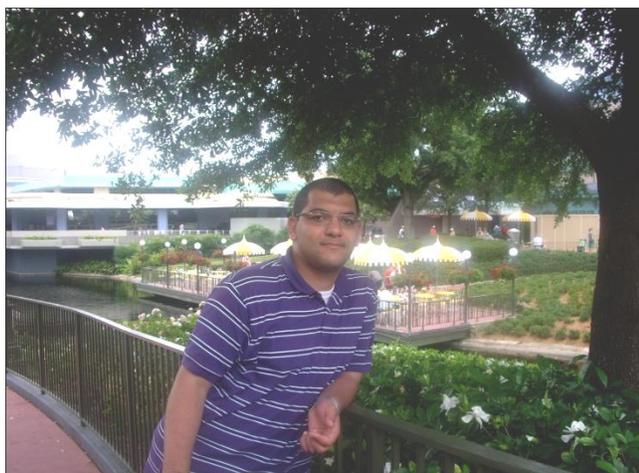


## Alumni Spotlight: Osama Shoair



Osama is a doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant in the Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science Department, VCU School of Pharmacy. He is also pursuing a Certificate in Aging Studies from the Gerontology Department, VCU School of Allied Health Professions. Osama is expected to graduate with a combined degree from VCU in 2012. Before coming to VCU, Osama received his Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences in 2005 from Misr International University (MIU), School of Pharmacy in Cairo, Egypt. He then joined the Pharmacy Practice and Clinical Pharmacy Department in MIU School of Pharmacy as a teaching assistant and drug information specialist for 3 years. He also practiced pharmacy as a community

pharmacist in Egypt during this period. Osama has served VCU School of Pharmacy as Graduate Student Association (GSA) Vice-President, and he is currently serving on the VCU Honor Council Executive Board. Osama received the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement in spring 2010.

**PFF Program:** What does the “Preparing Future Faculty Program” mean to you?

**Osama:** It was my first year in the graduate program when I first heard about the PFF program. Though I worked previously as a teaching assistant for 3 years before I joined the graduate program at VCU, I got very interested in the PFF program as I felt that teaching should not be a haphazard process. I felt that this program would provide me with real hands-on experience in teaching along with the insights and modern teaching strategies provided by the faculty who are members of the PFF Program. I thought it would be an opportunity to get ready for my upcoming faculty life that could not be missed while I am at VCU.

**PFF Program:** How did your experiences in the PFF Program enhance your understanding of what it means to be faculty and impact your plans for a career in academia?

**Osama:** The PFF Program stretched my mind and expanded my horizon about what a day-to-day faculty life is. It addressed the full scope of faculty roles and responsibilities, including teaching, research and service. Also, it was the first time for me to hear the terms “tenure and non-tenure tracks”. I learned what the differences between these are and how to pursue a tenure track in a competitive institution. I learned how to identify and state clearly my teaching philosophy and develop it. For the first time, I could make a 5-year academic plan that included my goals regarding teaching, service and research. I was also glad to have a very good insight about mentorship and the relationship between mentors and mentees. I could carefully observe all the passionate faculty members who taught us in the PFF Program while they help every student in the program identify their strengths and weaknesses as future faculty, improve on their weaknesses and develop their strengths in a systematic approach. I got a very good idea about how to use technology in managing courses and classes, and I also learned about the role that technology can play today in improving education. The PFF Program made it clear for me that faculty life is changing. It also inspired me to know what I should expect in relation to faculty life from viewpoints of different systems and institutions.

***Continued on the next page...***

### ***Alumni Spotlight, Osama Shoair, continued...***

**PFF Program:** How did experiences with the PFF Program and receipt of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement give you an “edge” in your career?

**Osama:** My experiences with the PFF program provided me with mentors at VCU School of Pharmacy who were very willing to share with me the opportunity to become highly involved in the faculty life in the areas of teaching, research and service. They are now confident to have me lead classes, teach a large number of students, and involve me in other faculty activities such as assessing and evaluating students. After I graduate from the doctorate program, I am confident that this certificate will add a lot to my curriculum vita and will make employers aware that I am not just interested in being a faculty member or that I just did a good job in my graduate degree - it will show them that I also invested my time and effort to explore the roles and responsibilities of faculty in academic life. It will show that I learned what faculty responsibilities are and demonstrate to them that I am capable of performing these responsibilities because of the skills and knowledge I received from the PFF program.

**PFF Program:** Tell us a little bit about your internship/externship experience, and share with us the impact that the project and the mentoring relationship had on you.

**Osama:** My internship experience in the PFF Program was such a good opportunity to live a part of what a faculty member does every day. It really concluded the PFF Program for me because it prepared me to know what to expect as a young professor and how to employ what I learned through two semesters of courses in the PFF Program. My experience with the internship was non-traditional as I participated in the teaching and related activities of both a lecture-based and a laboratory-based courses for professional pharmacy students. I worked with my mentor, Dr. Patricia Slattum, to set objectives for the courses, develop the teaching materials, assign blackboard readings, develop and grade assignments and assess and evaluate the students’ ability to achieve the course objectives. The most imperative part of the internship was based on the mentorship relationship. Dr. Slattum helped me a lot to ‘walk the walk’ and ‘talk the talk’ of a future faculty member. She continually provided me with advice and feedback about my teaching content, style and activities. She was always insightful about her experiences with leading a research team, prioritizing research needs and building scientific integrity in research environment. I learned from Dr. Slattum the importance of service either to the institution I am working in or to the community, and I also learned about the different types of activities that qualify as service. She also discussed with me the different components of my curriculum vita and I got advice from her on how to keep track of changes throughout my career and have a professional curriculum vita. Throughout the internship I learned how to be a skillful teacher, how to solicit feedback and use constructive criticism to develop my skills and abilities as a young faculty member. This internship taught me that being a faculty member can sometimes feel like a ‘dilemma’ and because of that requires a lot of balance and continuous development.

**PFF Program:** What is the most crucial piece (or pieces) of advice that you would give to students currently enrolled in the PFF Program coursework?

**Osama:** With all passion, I do recommend all graduate and postdoctoral students who would like to pursue an academic career to join the PFF Program at some stage in their training. It will definitely prepare them for the roles and responsibilities of a changing faculty life and it will provide them with the opportunity to observe and experience what makes faculty life very challenging but also valuable. The PFF Program is challenging but it is achievable if you have the interest and passion to know what the academic profession really looks like.

**Are you interested in reading more PFF Program Alumni Spotlights?!**

**Go to the PFF Program’s “Resources” page:** <http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/programs/pff/resources.html>!