

Professor Rises in Medical Chemistry Organziation

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U. Kansas gained worldwide recognition this month when the Society of Pharmacognosy appointed Barbara Timmermann, distinguished professor and chair of the University department of medicinal chemistry, as its future president.

Timmermann's selection marks the second time in the society's 52-year history that a woman will be president. Timmermann said she hoped her role would help inspire other women in science, specifically in chemistry.

Timmermann has spent more than 30 years studying pharmacognosy — the study of medicines derived from natural resources, such as plants. She contributed extensively to the medicinal garden that was recently built at the West Campus greenhouse, 1865 E. 1600 Rd. Her hard work was recognized at the 2010 annual joint meeting of the American Society of Pharmcognosy and the Phytochemical Society of North America.

Timmermann was announced as the new vice president of the Society of Pharmcognosy on July 10 in St. Petersburg, Fla. For the next year, Timmermann will act as vice president, shadowing and learning from the current president, before becoming president at next year's annual conference in San Diego. The three-year program will also include a year of post-presidential responsibilities. Her role in the Society of Pharmcognosy will provide unique opportunities for University students, Timmermann said.

"It puts KU on the world's map," Timmermann said, "and will give a chance to the younger scientists to participate at conferences." Timmermann said she plans to bring graduate and post-doctoral medicinal chemistry students to various conferences, programs and meetings.

Juan Araya, a graduate student and Fulbright Fellowship winner from Costa Rica, accompanied Timmermann to Florida last week, where students participated in the conference through poster presentations. Araya also gave an oral presentation to the society about methods for natural product extraction. He will accompany Timmermann next summer when she is inducted as the new president.

"I think we will have the chance to show other investigators more about our research group and KU in general," Arayas said.

Hank Zhang, a post-doctoral student from China, said Dr. Timmermann was one of the leading natural product chemists in the world.

“We are excited to know about Dr. Timmermann’s new position,” Zhang said, “and all the members in our labs are proud to work in her advanced labs and be a part of her fascinating projects.”

While she is acting as president, Timmermann will host a pharmacognosy conference with other nations that occurs only once every five years. The event will be held in New York and will allow students to network with scientists from all over the world. Timmermann said she was looking forward to the event because she thought her ability to speak six languages would be useful when communicating. But Timmermann said being in New York wouldn’t be all business.

“I’ll probably go shopping, too,” Timmermann said. “That’s the woman in me.”