

Research experience leads alumna to residency program

Motivated by the learning environment at Dominican, Natalie Aquino '12 earned her doctorate of pharmacy last month at the University of California San Francisco. Now she is matched to the UC Davis Medical Center (PGY-1) acute care pharmacy residency program that will start this summer.

"I'm a lifelong learner. Why not keep going?" says Natalie, a [Biological Sciences](#) major who also minored in [Chemistry](#) in the [School of Health and Natural Sciences](#). "Thanks to my research experience at Dominican, which included breast cancer research, I would like specialize in oncology pharmacy after completing my PGY-1 residency."

When Natalie arrived at Dominican, she thought she would become a high school biology or chemistry teacher someday. One of her first mentors, Dr. Maggie Louie, suggested she obtain her pharmacy technician license, which led to an internship with Golden Gate Pharmacy and a new turn in Natalie's career.

"She saw potential in me to go farther in my education," says Natalie, who was a research lab assistant for Dr. Louie. "Now that I have gone through four years of pharmacy school, I feel like I'm a teacher to patients and other health care professionals. I can teach doctors and nurses about medications – I still have that aspect of being a teacher."

Natalie praised the "rigorous" courses at Dominican for preparing her "to succeed at a national level graduate school" at UCSF. She appreciated the accessibility she had to her Dominican professors.

She also was heavily involved in the [Kapamilya Club](#). Her younger sister, Ria Aquino '14, followed Natalie to Dominican and became president of the Kapamilya Club. Ria is now pursuing her master's degree at Graduate Theological Union.

In addition, Natalie was Summa Cum Laude at Dominican and thrived in the [Honors Program](#).

"It added a different level to my education because we talked a lot about culture and aesthetics. I felt like I had a different way of learning from my professors," Natalie says. "The whole experience was an aha moment. I had great professors. I was able to experience my own personal research projects here, which I don't think I would have been able to do at other colleges."

At UC Davis Medical Center, Natalie's role as a clinical pharmacist will focus on medication management in several areas including oncology, infectious diseases, pain, and cardiology while in the acute care setting. She also will have the opportunity to conduct multidisciplinary lectures and precept pharmacy students.

"I'm applying what I learned as an undergrad," she says. "At Dominican I saw research from a cell model, but now I'm actually applying that knowledge of how medications work in patients. I'm here to make sure that patients' medication regimens are both effective and safe while in the hospital and to provide medication counseling when they are ready to be discharged."

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