



Frances Spaven

Developing the Business

BY GWEN NEWMAN

Frances Spaven, PhD '86, had the first inkling of her love for the sciences when she was a first-grade student who begged her mom for a chemistry set. The bottles, vials, and mixtures captivated

her and that curiosity

would remain a constant throughout her lifelong career in the pharmaceutical sciences.

That passion would carry her through more than a decade with corporate giant E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co., and then with UPM Pharmaceuticals, Inc., where she was the first employee hired. She's now combining what she learned from both experiences in her role at FS BizWorks, an Illinois-based sole proprietorship working with startup companies in the initial stages of business development.

A 1981 graduate of Loyola University Maryland who earned her PhD in pharmaceutical sciences from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, Spaven's first job was as a process chemist at du Pont and over the course of her 11 years there, her job expanded into management roles, special task forces, and leadership initiatives.

That progression prepared her for what she says has since been the most exciting part of her career — helping UPM morph into a successful multimillion-dollar enterprise now based in Bristol, Tenn.

"I was the first employee they hired when it was two professors and a lab," says Spaven, who served as vice president of business development there. UPM originated as University Pharmaceuticals of Maryland, a drug formulation and CGMP laboratory within the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, and was initially funded by a Food and Drug Administration

contract to support the development of the Scale Up & Post Approval Changes (SUPAC) guidelines in the early 1990s. The initiative began with a skeletal staff. As UPM began to build a reputation of quality and timeliness, it continued to grow steadily while also attracting experienced professionals to join the organization.

"We all had to wear many different hats," says Spaven, "which was a stark contrast to working at big pharma. It was scary, but at the same time exciting to see how every action impacted the bottom line. I always love to showcase UPM as a made-in-America success story."

In particular, it imparted to her the crucial role of a liaison who can bridge the divide between the scientific inventor who envisions new ideas and the business expertise needed to make it happen.

Always an optimist, Spaven — an avid runner and the mother of three — also is excited about the broader changes she sees for the pharmaceutical field.

"I feel the industry is at a tipping point to make some real meaningful changes, which will likely involve input at international, government, and private-public levels. And as always, we need policy reforms that don't dis-incentivize innovation. The School of Pharmacy is already playing a role in the changes through its curriculum, programs, and centers," Spaven says.

"I'm most excited about the Pharmapreneurship™ initiative that Dean Eddington unveiled last year that will help get students thinking about how to manage their skill sets in this challenging environment, where pharmacy mega-mergers and other supply chain consolidation have greatly reduced the need for traditional pharmacist dispensing roles. The Pharmapreneurship initiative will bring together entrepreneurial experience, academic discipline, and disruptive thinking that I believe will have compounding results well into the future." ☪